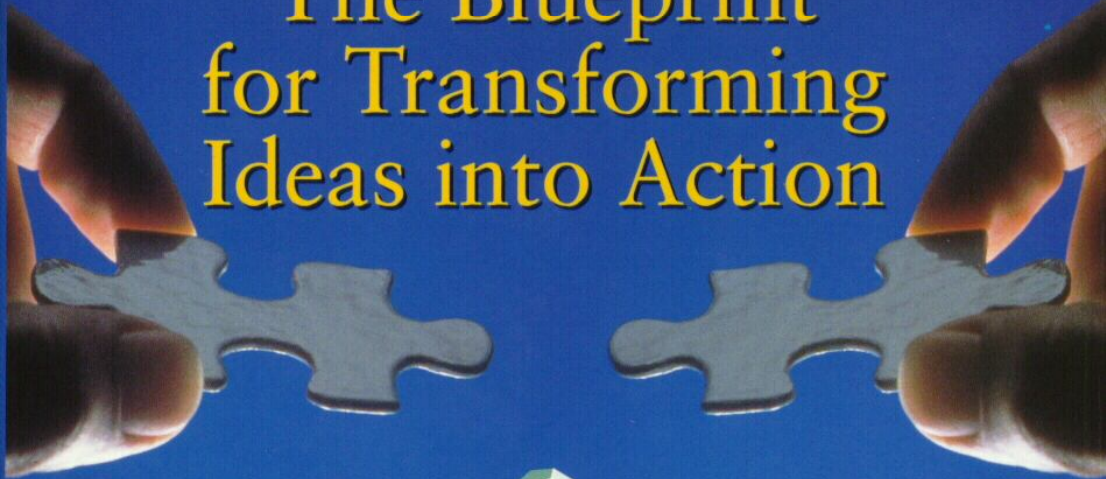


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# Putting Strategy to Work

The Blueprint  
for Transforming  
Ideas into Action



Eddie Obeng



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# **For Susan**

## **My Mega-Inspiration**

## Preface

After I completed the manuscript for '*All Change! The Project Leader's Secret Handbook*', I knew that I would have to write a companion book to go with it. The original idea to write a book on project change had come from members of an executive programme on *Implementing Strategic Change*. But I had written '*All Change!*' to help people to deal with day-to-day change management and operational projects. *All Change!* had become a popular management text book and yet it provided little for the people who gave me the original idea. I felt guilty. I knew that I would have to write something for the people who gave me the idea in the first place. I would have to write something about that special type of change, Strategic Change and the only way we seem to be able to systematically handle it, through programmes of projects.

I had a problem. I didn't know how to write it. In my years of running business education courses, I've had dozens of phone calls from managers asking whether they can really learn anything about *Implementing Strategic Change* on a course and especially on an open enrolment public course which is attended by people from several different organisations because their particular situation is different from all others. They can't see how Programme Management can have common threads. They believe that they are solving a unique problem. I agree that there are differences. There must be or else the implemented strategy would not give you a sustainable competitive advantage. Indeed the long term success of the strategy is heavily dependent on the ability to create something different. I do however believe that there are similarities. It is these similarities which I explain in this book.

Strategic change is weird. Strategic change is different. With strategic change, projects may fail but you may succeed overall. The effects of strategic change are immediate or soon or far in the future. With strategic change you may never experience the effects of your decisions. Others may learn from your mistakes. Leading strategic change carries great responsibilities. You, all by yourself, influence the future forever. It is for this reason that I have tried to make Putting strategy to work a dark comedy with a sense of pressure and gloom which only lifts as understanding of the situation is gradually gained.

For my courses I invented a concept which I call an "Individually Tailored Open Course". I design into the course significant space for one-to-one tutorials, diagnostics, clinics and learning groups all supported by learning resources and research. The only way I could see to replicate that exactly in a book would be through an electronic book or multimedia CD-ROM or, on an ongoing basis via an electronic notice board or conference. So I have decided to approach writing this book in a different way to mainstream textbooks. Instead of being too specific I've stuck to the main learning areas and covered the techniques common to successful programme management in greater detail. This means that anyone implementing strategy should be able to get a good proportion of the learning needed to ensure success. If however you feel that you need more individual tailoring or you want a peer group or mentor for support over the longer term of your implementation programme you will have to give me a call or join Pentacle the Virtual Business School's network.

I wish you all the best of luck. Enjoy!

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## Acknowledgements

*“There is no such thing as a problem without a gift in its hands for you...  
Richard Bach.”*

I would like to thank the many clients and course delegates who helped me with their gifts.

Over the period that I learnt the contents of this book, I had to give up a number of 'Old World' beliefs even if I couldn't immediately discover their 'New World' equivalents. In that 'World before Midnight'<sup>1</sup> I held many views which although right then are not appropriate now. One Old World belief I gave up was that successful strategies can only be implemented top down, another was that all the parts of a strategy necessarily fit obviously together another was that you needed to tell everyone what the overall strategy was and finally that *you can actually appraise* the contribution of those most useful to preserving the life of the organisation.

The ideas and inspiration for this book came from many sources. There are some sources in particular I wish to draw attention to.

A some years ago I did some work for Cable & Wireless' Mercury Communications Ltd. Mercury was at that time the fastest growing company in Europe. I was asked to work with their Corporate and Major Division. It was part of an overall Change Management programme. My work was on helping managers to grasp the concepts of Virtual Teams and to find out how to turn virtual teaming into a day to day skill and set of behaviours for achieving business advantage. As part of this work, in the latter stages a number of job moves meant that the top team composition was changed significantly. Some of the new power brokers did not really understand how virtual teams worked and saw them as a threat to their power bases, which of course by their nature of putting organisational goals first, they were. I was asked to prepare a 'virtual future' for the organisation if the actions which were being embarked on continued. This I did. I presented it internally but made little progress. By then the political environment was getting too hot and I was seen as too close to the previous power structure. I was saddened though not surprised when now, two years later most of the things outlined in the virtual future have now occurred. It is my sincere wish that I find a way of helping people to see their virtual futures before they set off to create and live in them. Especially if that future is not one that they would have chosen.

My thanks go to Sylvia Hope Urwin and Laurence Udell for allowing me to have this experience.

My thanks also go to the gang at Rolls Royce Motor Cars Ltd., especially Steve Watmore and Ron Pearce for demonstrating the dedication to implementation more senior executives should possess.

Much of my thinking on the techniques described in this book was developed as I tailored the Implementing Strategy through Projects programme for Nuclear Electric PLC. Support from Dr John Collier and Dr Bob Hawley allowed me to extend the programme into the workplace. Three months after the formal

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<sup>1</sup> Making Re-engineering Happen Obeng E.D.A and Crainer S. Financial Times Pitman 1994

course the participants were invited to create an exhibition which showed the projects they had worked on and demonstrated. The business (money) improvements they had made over the course of the implementation. The first programme paid for itself about a thousand times over in terms of tangible business improvements. My thanks go to Tony Allen, Paul Rann and Howard Kirby

My thanks also go to the teaching team of the *Implementing Strategy through Projects* course.

I would also like to thank the other Members of Pentacle the Virtual Business School for bringing the theory to life.

Eli Goldratt for his brilliant new 'gender-full' words:

And finally I would also like to thank my publisher Mark Allin for waiting so long for this manuscript.

### **I need your help...**

10,190 words into this book I had a problem. A problem I didn't know how to solve. Depending on whether the reader (i.e. you) is male or female, sections of this book needs to say either HIS or HERS, etc.

I didn't think that referring to YOU, the reader as 'It' was polite enough. So you'll need to select the correct gender to keep you reading in first person.

So when you s/he chose she or he, if you see his/hers or him/her just fix the problem for me.

Thanks. I couldn't have made the story work properly without your help.

# Putting Strategy Work

Preface

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All those new words

## ***Chapter 1: All hell is breaking loose!***

It's red. Or at least I thought it was, but now it's green. A loud blaring horn behind me suggests impolitely that I move on. "All right! All Right! Keep your shirt on." I shout.

"What?"

"No not you, I'm talking to the imbecile behind me." I crane my neck and say more calmly into the little black car phone microphone which is suspended above my head. "Where were we?"

"I've just arranged another meeting for you for next Friday to finalise the budgets."

"I guess that means at least I have a week before I'll find out if it is stop or go." I say with mixed emotion under my breath. I think silently to myself, "After all the effort I've put in. And with our current unimpressive business performance that would be a disaster. No it would be worse than a disaster. It would be more like committing corporate suicide. At least I think so." My senses pulse. It is essential to get the go ahead and all I have is a week to influence the outcome.

"Also" continues the voice sounding slightly metallic and nasal now. "Julia Roberts from Legal called to say that there was some problem with the contracts on the IPR and could you call her back. Do you have the number?"

"Yes." I lie. I know that the problem with the contracts is just going to have to wait. There are more pressing problems. I need to get approval for the next stage I have to get the budget through. But I don't want to say that. It would make my life seem, to Gina, even more out of control than she knows it is. "Look Gina, could you call Legal for me and tell them to fax me a note of what the problem is?" I pause to wait for a reply, nothing, so I glance down at the main phone handset. The 'no service' indicator light glows brightly red. "Blast!" I exclaim frustratedly. I slow down as I approach the end of a slowly moving queue of traffic. I look at the clock. Forty minutes left for an hours' drive and now the traffic has

come to a complete standstill. I suppose I had better phone ahead to let them know that I'm going to be late. I look down at the handset the no service light is off now. It should work now. "Great!" I punch numbers into the handset and press 'send'. A rapid series of beeps tells me that now I can't get a line on the network. This technology drives me crazy. It's full of promise but constantly fails to deliver.

The traffic has come to a full stop now. My horizon is marked out by a long line of red brake lights and traffic cones. "Come on, Come on," I say impatiently and half in prayer as I start to feel a gentle pulse in my temples. The gentle pulse which will, in time, transform itself into a steady and dull throb of pain.

Today is turning out to be like yesterday only worse. Yesterday another of our best account managers handed their car keys in voluntarily. Our half year financials were the fourth in a row to show slowly falling profits. Yesterday I heard that one of our major clients had signed up with our biggest rival. And then I discovered on the grapevine that one of the big new accounts, a sale which had been on the front pages of the internal 'brownie point' newsletter, had actually been sold at a price below break even. But for me the thing that really killed off yesterday, was spending three hours in what had been billed as a budget approvals meeting only to discover that the board wanted instead to spend time talking about the need to 'define the strategy'. Three hours and twenty-five flip charts later we still hadn't completed the task of defining the strategy but more importantly we hadn't really discussed my initiative either. To top it all instead of showing off my skills at **implementing strategy**, I instead demonstrated conclusively, to a complete stranger, that I didn't really understand very much about it. I was really embarrassed because the stranger had come to visit me to learn **from me** how it should be done. And our discussion made me realise that I was not being as successful with it as I had thought I was. Yesterday was the pits.

Today I discovered that there is a legal action pending against us for some infringement in one of our product developments. Today I discover that the Chairman has approved the funds for the dx22-c project, a project which is basically a repeat of the dx21-c. I wouldn't care but the dx21-c project didn't make any money either. And then to top it all I've discovered that there has been a spending break declared on the 'Return to Core Corporate Competences' initiative, my main initiative.

As I sit inhaling traffic fumes I try to bring to words the gut feeling I'm getting that my Core Corporate Competences initiative looks as if it going the same way as the Business Transformation Initiative, the Customer Values initiative, the Business Processing Re-engineering initiative, the Benchmarking initiative, the Networking initiative and the Quality Improvement initiative before it. Going out of vogue. Going downhill fast. It's not just the meeting yesterday and the budget hold. It's more than that. True I seem to have verbal support from the top but something feels wrong. Something I just can't put into words. All I can say is that my initiative is showing the same elements as I saw the others showing. After the initial buzz of excitement, cynicism and apathy are creeping in and I sense a mind-set of people aiming at a slow return to business as usual.

About six months ago I'd been stuck on a train for three hours and had got so bored I'd picked up and read cover to cover the in train magazine. I'd read an article on strategy. It was different from the normal articles written with frameworks and arrows and boxes with checklists and academic advice and homilies. This article had seemed very pragmatic and practical. It started by warning you that most attempts to implement strategy fail. It quoted studies done on TQM and re-engineering and empowerment. I remember being amazed at the proportions claimed. I think it was something like 70-80% of implementation attempts did not yield the business benefits sought. This stark announcement was followed by a lighter section with anecdotes. I remember laughing at the part of the article which suggested humorously that

most organisations started initiatives by choosing the method which **sounded right** rather than by considering which of their **problems** it would help with. The article then went on to exhort would be Management Gurus to choose the titles of their new methodologies carefully. Macho names, like re-engineering will sell better to macho companies. Feeling or bonding names, like 'mutually supportive teams' would sell better to trendy 'New Age' companies. The article went on to ask what it really meant to be one of the 20% who succeed. It argued that it would be absolutely brilliant to be one of the minority. Since being one of the 20% with any success in implementing strategy would give you instant and enviable competitive advantage. You could thumb your nose at competitors and your customers would be delighted with you. What a dream! I'd thought. I'd love to be in an organisation which was in that position. It would be really great to be one of the 20%. That was why I offered to take on leading the initiative. The chance to **really make a difference**. That and the fact that the success of the initiative would probably be very useful to my career. It could provide the springboard for that final leap onto the board. Then it had all seemed so clear. Just get the initiative done and entire new worlds of opportunities would open up. But right now I can't see it. Right now I feel like one of the failing majority. I'd torn the article out of the magazine. It was somewhere in one of my drawers maybe I should have another look at it.

We start to move again. This time I'm smart I don't allow my spirits to rise I show and feel no emotion just in case it is a false start. I'm glad I decide to expect nothing because nothing is what happens. Four metres and then Halt! The traffic really seems stuck it seems to find it difficult to get going again.

I don't know if it's just me being critical but it seems as if Alcorp is a really frustrating place to work. The people are bright, especially at the senior levels, but *they all act as if they know how it should be done*. How a business, our business, should be run. And as business has got harder we seem to play at change. As if we don't really need it.

All I know is that however we try to dress up changes to make it **look** as if we are making progress, At the top we've done little different from what we've done over the past ten years and half of that time was boom time. It's as if we believe that everything happens in cycles, and that there is nothing really new that we need to respond to. As if we believe that if we wait long enough and do nothing too drastic it will all come round, come good. All I know is that *as time passes it seems to get more and more difficult to make any real change*. I guess I see things differently because I haven't been with Alcorp all my working life but... My thoughts are interrupted again as the traffic starts to inch forward. This time I am slow to keep my emotions in check, I say out loud, with relief, "At last!"

But inch is all that it does, "Blast!" I say out loud to myself as my spirits plummet to a new low. I wonder how long this 'tailback', as all radio traffic reports now call traffic jams, is going to last. Tailback is a clever positive expression that media people use to mislead us so that they don't have to tell us bad news in case we hold it against them. It's the traffic equivalent of the rainy episode expression used in weather forecasting. I've no way of finding out how long the tail back will last. I can't tune into the local radio station to find out because I don't have a radio in my car. It's at times like this that I wish I did. Other people find that strange. The fact that I have a car, a modern relatively expensive company car, with no radio or sound system. I stopped having radios in my cars when I first became a manager. The organisation I was working for at the time was really tight on the car policy and the only way I could get the model I wanted (the injection model with the spoilers), was by not having a radio. The saving helped me just squeeze in below the cut off price. Now, not having a radio in the car was part of my life. The bonus was I'd discovered that without a radio I got at least an extra two hours *thinking time* driving to and from work. I called it 'my *competitive advantage*'.

I ignore the throbbing in my temples and try to focus on something. There really is only one thing to reflect on. I

reflect on the unsettling experience I had yesterday afternoon.

I come out of the fifth floor board room into the green lobby and stand opposite the silver elevator doors next to the two foot UFO shaped ashtray. It over ran. It over ran by an hour as usual. I was there to report progress on the programme and to get approval to spend more money I wasn't sure why the directors were there. Much of the discussion was actually internal political posturing. Marking out patches and so on. They all seemed to be *signing on verbally* but making absolutely sure that they *did not* have to *give up any resources*. This they did, it seemed to me by stalling and continually insisting on the essential and urgent need to define strategy. Eventually we ended by discussing and agreeing a time to spend more time on completing the process.

I've never been any good at politics so I just kept my mouth shut and watched it all reflected in the very shiny surfaces of the large mahogany table. I just want to deliver results. I can't see the need for wasting so much time on trivia. I think with a wry smile, "Perhaps someday when I'm CEO I can cut through all the BS."

The lift arrives. I punch in a number and three minutes later I'm outside my office. I'm sure that at least another hundred e-mail messages have accumulated since I've been out. I can't face going straight back to the into office I decide to carry on past my door to check with Gina if there's anything urgent I need to cope with. Four more paces. "Hi Gina. Any panics?"

"Nothing this afternoon I've put some phone messages on your desk, there's one from the hotel about your team building event they want some details about what you want. Oh and by the way your visitor's waiting. He was in with Janice and Pablo but they've had to leave so I put him in your office"

I frown, "Visitor? What visitor?"

"The Professor." She says with an 'Of course you know what I'm talking about. Oh no! You've forgotten again.' expression on her face. "You know." She prompts. "The one who's here to interview you?"

My hand slaps noisily against my forehead "Oh my Goodness. I'd completely forgotten. Has he been here long?"

"About half an hour. "

"Damn." I think, I say, "Drat, I was thinking of doing some real work this afternoon."

Like all good ideas whose time had come, this good idea had changed into a bad idea. At the time Janice Aldren suggested it seemed a good idea. Maybe even a great idea to be interviewed by one of her ex-business school teachers for a case study. She'd talked excitedly about this chap teaching about '**Laws of Change**' and how remembering the laws could help to avoid unnecessary heartache. I couldn't really remember what these Laws were or how they helped. I must confess I hadn't really been listening to her. All I was really listening to was my ego. It made me feel good to think of being immortalised in a case study on Corporate Competence. Neat. Corporate Competence is the current business buzz. To think about all those executives discussing what I had done was exciting I guess I agreed out of vanity. It's not everyone who gets asked to have their biography written for them. But now that the time has arrived I wasn't so sure it was a good idea. I wasn't sure that I could afford the time. And I wasn't sure I had anything particularly interesting to say. 'No.' I conclude. 'It was definitely a bad idea.'

"I'd better go in and meet him." I say resignedly.

He's standing with his broad back to me looking at Esher painting I have on my wall as he hears me enter he turns. I'd been expecting a typical professor stereo type. You know horn rimmed glasses boring jacket, dusty corduroys. Instead all I see is this broad grin. A broad grin, sitting two inches below intense hawk like eyes and two feet above an extended hand. "Hello." He says, "I'm Franck."

"Pleased to meet you." I reply extending my hand. I feel my knuckle bones crunch against each other as he squeezes.

"It's good of you to see me. I know how busy you are." He says with an accent, as he reduces my hand to jelly with a pneumatically powered handshake, adding "Janice has told me a bit about what you are trying to do to your organisation and how much work it all is."

I wave vaguely towards a chair, "Please sit down. I'm sorry I was late my meeting over ran."

"That's OK. I've been well looked after. I've been chatting with Janice and Pablo, so my time hasn't been wasted. You said your meeting overran?" He quizzes in a slight drawl.

I nod confirmation.

"Is that something which happens often?"

"Yes." I reply especially this one.

"Oh?" he says with interest, "What's different about this one?"

"It was a board approval meeting, you know, to approve funds for the next phase of my initiative. The board always seem to forget why we are doing the initiative and constantly need reminding." As we sit he reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out a calling card which he pushes across the table to me. I take it and read. Under a green geometric logo his job title says 'Educator'. I reach into my case, extract one of my cards and swap it for his. Absentmindedly, instead of putting his card into my in-tray for database entry, I put it in my case. I'm keen to move the meeting on and for a fleeting moment struggle to decide whether to offer coffee or not. An offer of coffee, especially the particularly hot variety from our vending machine, means that the meeting will last a minimum of half an hour. In the end my inbred good manners win over my desire to attack my in-tray. I say hospitably, "Anyway, can I offer you some coffee?"

"Yes please he says eagerly."

"How do you take it?" I ask.

"Black, without," he replies, "only the poison." He emphasises his selection as if he is used to people assuming he want's something else.

I leave the room and head round the corridor to a tall, bright yellow and orange machine. A machine which in-

spite of its poor colour co-ordination, offers a dazzling selection. Offerings are described in fourteen graduations as Full Roast through to Aroma Fresh. Amazing that the human palate can discern the difference in taste. I choose by sound. I think the description Aroma Fresh sounds perfect and punch the button twice. A few minutes later I return with the coffee. I hand Franck a cup which he accepts gratefully. I taste my selection Now I think of it, Franck's description of it as poison was precise.

As I settle into my chair he says, "I'm afraid that our meeting will have to be very short I have a five o'clock flight and the taxi will be here to pick me up in half an hour."

"Hurrah!" I think to myself, "he'll be out of my hair soon. So I will be able to get some work done this afternoon." I lie. I say politely, "I'm really sorry we'll have to make the most of what time we have." And I settle backward in my chair.

"I've heard some good things about you from Janice about how supportive and empowering you have been."

"Oh!" I reply slightly embarrassed, "I absolutely deny any rumours you may have heard."

"Janice tells me you've been with Alcorp for some time."

"Yes." I reply, "Five years."

He asks, "So what exactly do you normally do around here?"

"Well normally I look after new product development but I've recently also been asked to help to run the Corporate Competences Initiative"

"I see." He says without managing to sound in least surprised, "And how is it going so far"

"Fine." I reply, sounding as confident as I am able.

"And are you going to make a success of it?"

"Yes," I say, my right index finger runs itself down the right hand side of my face rubbing my nose betraying the fact that my honest thoughts don't quite match the words coming out of my mouth. In reality I'm afraid that my initiative may go the way of previous corporate initiatives with devastating results.

Franck blinks rapidly twice as he notices my body language leakage but says nothing. He simply waits for me to continue.

"I am doing quite well so far I say I've got top management approval right from the top I say pointing towards the ceiling."

"Oh." He says flatly.

I try to impress. I try to convince him that I stand a good chance of success. I say, "I've set milestones and developed a detailed overall plan."

Franck raises his left eyebrow tilting his head slightly in the same direction. "So you've run a Corporate Competence programme before?"

"No." I reply.

"But this organisation has." He suggests, leaning forward and stirring the air horizontally with the forefinger of his right hand.

"Er, No." I reply uncertainly.

Franck suddenly becomes motionless as he hears my reply. His eyes flick quickly to the left.

I think he knows that I don't know. As a habit, I try to reassure him that I have everything under control. Over the years at Alcorp Inc. I've learnt that demonstrating that you know all the answers is a key way of maintaining your reputation. "I've established the objectives and the key progress measures." I say in as calm a voice as possible." I reach across into the top left hand drawer of my desk and pull out a blue folder it is a folder containing all the acetate transparencies I used at the Board briefing last month. I lay the folder on the table and start to leaf through it talking him through the first introductory slide. "This presentation," I say, "covers my overall implementation plan." I look up at him as I start to speak. I work my way down the stack of transparencies as if I was making a presentation. Franck listens patiently nodding as I flick over sheet after sheet. I approach the end of the folder saying, "And as you can see I've established the objectives and the key progress measures."

Franck sat through my desktop presentation almost motionless. He hardly reacted each time as I tried to

confidently put the points of my case across. Now he is looking at me with an intensity I have never felt from any one else before. I guess in any one else such a stare would appear to be rude. But instead it simply makes me feel as if he can see right into my soul. In contrast to his unrelenting stare he asks calmly, almost with compassion, "Why are you telling me this?"

I'm confused by the question. Confused for two reasons. Firstly for someone who I have just met he seems incredibly direct. And secondly because I don't really know what answer to give him. I can't say I'm telling you this to reassure you that I have it all under control so that you'll think I'm doing a good job even though I don't really have a full understanding of what I'm trying to do or how it's going to be achieved. I can't say I've nothing really to tell you which will help towards the case study you're writing.

So instead I say, "What?"

"Why," he repeats even more calmly and compassionately, "are you telling me this?" This time the contrast between voice and intense stare is even more stark. It's almost as if he is daring me to tell the truth. I feel urged to drop my guard so I do. Speaking softly I say, "I guess it's so you'll think that I know what I'm up to."

"But you don't?"

"Not entirely I say almost with a sigh of relief at being able to speak the truth."

"So why do you pretend that you do?"

I'm about to explain how things are at Alcorp and what we do and do not do. I'm also acutely aware of the importance of having the right PR for this initiative out in the great wide world and then I remember what he is here for. He's here to develop a case study. For a second I worry that he might not represent our efforts in the best light, so I say, "Perhaps before we talk anymore I need to establish what you will and will not be publishing. Have you signed our confidentiality agreement?"

"Yes. I did that last week." As he speaks he glances at his wrist watch "I've also signed a contract that says that you

get final decision over what is and is not to be published. I'm not even taking notes yet"

I start to relax again and to try to explain my predicament. "Well, how can I be sure that I'm on the right track unless I can have clear objectives and timetabled measurements? I mean..." I protest, struggling to get my words out. "How can I hope to succeed unless I have top management commitment and provide clear concrete plans and direction."

"I see." he says as if slowly seeing my point of view. "So you find it easy to get top management commitment?" He asks.

I remember the meeting I've just been in for the past three hours and confess hesitantly, "Er not so easy. And then I reiterate but you must get it."

He ignores the second part of my reply and asks, "Tell me why do you think that it is not so easy to get senior management commitment?"

I think for a second and reply, "I guess that they are very busy, perhaps too busy to take time to understand what I am proposing."

"Is what you are proposing an extension of current thinking and practice, simply more of the same?"

"No." I say firmly, "It's very different from what we are currently doing."

"So it takes some effort and time to understand precisely what you are trying to achieve."

"Yes it does," I say, pleased that Franck can see my point of view. And then the penny starts to drop. Franck is still talking, "And are you the only one trying to get their commitment to a proposed initiative?"

I barely hesitate, "No." I begin to really understand how my difficulty is being caused.

Franck is nodding. "Is there any other reason why it is not so easy to get their commitment?" He asks.

They also have many other things to which they have to be committed to so I guess it's difficult to be fully committed to just one thing.

Franck continues nodding but he doesn't yet look satisfied in fact his expression reminds me of a very

hungry cat. "Is there any other reason that they find it difficult?" he demands.

I hesitate I'm trying to work out what he's getting at. Franck has turned his cat-like expression fully on, towards me. I'm starting to panic, 'What is it? What else does he expect me to say?' I'm thinking. My brain is blank. The corporate habit of wanting to seem to know all the answers to everything is making me extra anxious. I stall by talking "You say there is another thing which dampens their commitment?"

Franck nods confirmation unhelpfully.

And then it comes to me. "I guess that they are not really sure what they are committing themselves to."

Frank is nodding again so I must be near his jackpot. He says, "And these are successful people who've made it to the top. I suspect that they are pretty astute and won't back a horse they can't see. In case it has three legs."

Franck smiles at the analogy but he carries on pressing me for a full explanation, "Do you know why they do not know what they are really committing themselves to?"

It's obvious now. "It's probably because the organisation has never done a Corporate Competences initiative before."

"And?" He prompts.

They've not taken the time to understand it."

"And?" He prompts again.

"Whenever we have attempted a similar initiative it's failed." I say with a half joking grin, just in case I'm wrong.

Franck pounces, "Now do you understand why it is so difficult to get top management support?" He says triumphantly.

This time it's my turn to nod.

"Tell me?" he quizzes again. "If you've never done a Corporate Competences initiative before, how can you plan the whole thing."

'I can't.' I think. Even now, I know that all my estimates of how long it takes to do things and how much they will cost are inaccurate and I keep discovering things I need to do which were not part of the original schedule. I

know I've been backed into a corner by Franck. So I just stare at him and say nothing.

He doesn't seem to notice and just keeps talking, "And also won't the business environment have changed by the time you deliver your results? How will you make sure that what you implement eventually still makes good business sense?"

I know he's right. It would make sense to have a more flexible approach to implementing the strategy but how? I ruminate on this for a while and say. "That sounds great in theory but what would you do in practice."

Franck looks steadily at me and for the first time in our conversation actually offers an opinion. Two opinions to be accurate. He says, "I don't know where you got your ideas about successful implementation but you're just not thinking deeply enough. And," he adds, "the truth is *you can't fully plan what you don't know how to implement but you can implement successfully what you can't fully plan if you **do it in chunks.***"

Chunks? What chunks? I think silently to myself. I'm sceptical. Why Chunks? "What do you mean by chunks?" I ask out loud.

"Did you notice how your meeting over-running led to our meeting being shortened?"

"Yes." I reply wondering what my meeting over running has to do with his comment about chunks.

"Have you noticed how *altering one thing always seems to alter something else.*"

"At least **one** thing." I say agreeing vigorously. "Absolutely!"

Franck says, "***One change leads to another.*** I call that the First law of Change."

I'm thinking, "That sounds a bit grandiose. It's just the way mother nature works."

Franck interrupts my thoughts by asking, "Your Corporate Competences initiative as you call it, is that **Change?**"

"What do you mean?"

"Is your Corporate Competences initiative **Change?**"

I can't see what he's getting at so I try to bluff. "I say Change management is high on the agenda of most managers and executives they all seem keen to learn how to manage change."

Franck is looking at me as if I have ducked the question, which is exactly what I have done.

"Change is important but I think that sometimes you can have too much change and it's not all for the better." I'm still ducking the question I don't understand.

"Why are you carrying your Corporate Competences initiative out?"

"Because our organisation is facing a more competitive environment than it has in the past." I reply flatly.

"Let me see if I understand what you are saying." He says. "You're trying to counteract the effect of **earlier**, but **unattractive, Change** by carrying out **another Change**. This Change you have decided to call The Corporate Competences Initiative?"

"You could put it that way." I say and then recognise that Franck is simply finding another way to repeat his point about his '**First Law of Change**' but this time setting in the context of my initiative. "Very funny." I say, as I try to think of a more apt response.

He smiles broadly. A warm smile which evaporates any negative feeling I may have been growing and says "A '**chunk**' of change is just a *parcel of the linked changes we choose to carry out. It is the smallest set of linked activities we must carry out to achieve the results we desire.* Some people call these chunks **projects**."

I see his point. But what a convoluted way to make a simple point. The only bit I don't see is that he seems to think that my Corporate Competences Initiative is a project. I'm not sure it is. At Alcorp projects, are the things you give to people when you want to move them sideways or whilst they are waiting for their out placement to come through. A project is something junior managers do or stage managed events like marketing campaigns or product launches. Or a project is something that belongs in R&D. I'm running an Initiative and a Strategic Initiative at that. I challenge him. I say, "I

hear what you say about projects being change but I'm actually responsible for strategic implementation."

"*Strategy implementation is also just change.*" he says slowly, almost hypnotically, "but it is a special type of change. Strategic change is weird. Strategic change is different. With strategic change, *chunks may fail but you may succeed overall.* The *effects* of strategic change are **immediate** or **soon** or **far in the future**. With strategic change you may never experience the effects of your decisions. Others may learn from your mistakes. Leading strategic change carries great responsibilities. **You,**" he says pausing and looking at me with that uncomfortable intensity, "all by yourself **influence the future forever.**"

As he speaks he looks at me but almost seems to be looking through me as if I'm not there and he's actually talking to himself. I'm too busy watching him to listen closely, so when he stops speaking I think, 'What is he on about?' and ask, "What do you mean?"

He replies, this time actually talking to me and looking at me, "Strategic change is change which helps *unfold the future.* Some actions you take **now** or **soon** can be **completed immediately** however they have a **lasting long term effect** and will continue to initiate the changes you currently desire far into the future. That makes them Strategic. Other changes take a **long time to implement.** *Simply because of the time they take they pre-determine what is going to be happening for some time.* Often people choose such changes because they hope that *after the change itself is complete its effects will last further into the future,* *Again continuing to initiate the changes you currently desire far into the future.*"

I don't understand what he is saying. I say, "I don't understand."

"When you start a strategic change you are at the start of *a continuous thread of activities which will persist long into the future.*" He reaches across onto my desk to the multi-compartment blue plastic desk-tidy which sits on the corner and picks out a yellow HB pencil. He holds it vertically, point downwards with his index finger on the top. "Could you tell me which way it will fall if I let go?"

"Towards me." I reply, it looks as if the pencil is leaning slightly in my direction.

He releases it. It falls to the side.

"You win." I say.

"No I don't. I don't win until you tell me what that demonstrated"

"It demonstrates that it is difficult to predict which way a vertical pencil will fall" I say raising my eyebrows and shoulders simultaneously and pointing my palms upwards.

"Almost, but not quite." He holds it up again. "What is absolutely critical in deciding which way the pencil will fall?"

"How you hold it at the start?" I say bemused at the change in the direction our conversation has taken.

"Precisely!" he says in a congratulatory tone. I don't understand what he is so congratulatory about. "So, now tell me what this tells you about strategy implementation?"

I don't have the faintest clue. I guess. "*The starting conditions of strategic implementation have a big impact on the long term success?*" I say this unsure it is in anyway right.

"Absolutely!" he exclaims in an even more enthusiastically, congratulatory tone. "Not only must you *effectively manage the implementation* it also helps tremendously if you select the *right starting conditions.*" This time he holds the pencil upright slightly tilted away from him and lets it fall as it starts to fall he deftly uses the index fingers of both hands to flick it back and forth it gently comes to rest lined up perfectly with the centre of my chest. **"To implement strategy successfully you need to understand both the starting conditions and the principles of guiding and influencing the programme over time."**

Franck has just made it from London to Paris via Rome again. Another convoluted explanation. I'm trying to decide what this conversation means for me. My initiative has been running for months now, how can I be sure that I set off with the right starting conditions? And what skills and techniques do I need to guide and

influence it? Is Franck really explaining the reasons why organisations find it so difficult to successfully implement their initiatives? How can I be sure that I'm doing the right things and do I have to do a lot of very different things? I'm deep in thought with question after question coming into my mind.

"Some frown you've got there mate." My state of mind is showing on my face. He begs. "Go on ask me."

I try to put together a meaningful question. "How can I... I mean should I... Er what do I Er need to know to make the starting conditions right and to provide the right guidance?"

Franck's voice drops to a whisper as he begins to answer. He glances furtively over his shoulder as he begins to speak. It's as if he is about to divulge a centuries old secret.

"What I have found he says is **no matter how complicated any problem seems it is unusual to find more than six key things which determine everything else**. In the case of strategy implementation you are even luckier I think that there are **only three key things** you need to understand or do. Admittedly they are three very difficult and complex things." He adds under his breath. "But three nonetheless"

"My instinctive reaction is disbelief. "Three key things?" I whisper back.

Franck nods.

"What are the three things?"

"Why are you whispering?" He asks.

"I don't know." I say raising my voice back to the normal level, "You started it."

Franck is grinning back at me. I'm determined to find out what he thinks these three things are, so I repeat my question "What are the three things?"

Franck glances at his watch before replying, "If you are in the middle of a strategic initiative I'm sure that you'll find out yourself soon." He is dodging my question.

I become instantly suspicious. "Why are you ducking my question I ask."

"Because," he replies, "if you are in any way curious, you'll find out yourself before long."

"But how will I know what the things are?" I ask. "How will I know if the initiative is succeeding or failing?"

"There, you see." He says smiling warmly at me, "I knew you could figure it out by yourself you have such great insight and intuition. You are absolutely right and I agree. **You can only judge the success of a strategy of this nature by looking back on it.** And then he lowers his chin whilst lifting his eyelids. The simultaneous actions appear to turn his hawk-like eyes in full 'hunt' mode. I feel like a mouse caught out in the middle of a field. His voice reverberates as he instructs, "**Go into the future and find out.**"

'Go into the future?' 'Go into the future?' My internal voice repeats in a high pitched tone. 'For a while back there I thought he was turning out to be a genius but the man is mad. How can I go into the future? For a short while back there I had thought that he was going to help me to understand the nature of our strategy to help me learn what I needed to select the right strategy and more importantly how I could implement it and now he is instructing me to do the impossible. He is instructing me to, 'Go into the future?'

I must not be masking my thoughts very well my perplexion must be written over my face. Franck is looking at me as if I am a 12 year old who can't do some simple math homework. I'm starting to feel insulted.

"How did we get here?" He asks in a more normal voice.

"Where?" I ask impatiently.

"Here. Us. To this meeting? To this conversation?"

"You met someone I work with, who recommended Alcorp as a case study in implementation." I reply puzzled again.

"So me meeting Janice and you being put in charge of the Corporate Competences initiative is why we are here?"

"Yes." I reply, "I guess so."

"So we are here because of two other events which occurred each of which is probably dependent on previous events?"

"Yes, I guess so," I reply again. I can't see where he's leading and I'm still angry at him for looking at me as if I was a dumb kid."

"The present arises out of the events of the past he states." as if saying something profound.

I nod. I have to agree but I'm feeling miffed with him so I add in a slightly sarcastic tone, "Of course, that's obvious."

He carries on not seeming to notice my tone. "The present is the most likely route out of the past."

I nod slowly and purse my lips with the increased concentration of trying to follow where he is leading. I am learning about his convoluted explanations. This one seems so obvious, I guess I must be missing something. "Errr yes."

"Don't you understand, **you live in the most probable of all worlds.**" He says this with such concentrated intensity pushing each syllable at me it is almost as if he wants me to remember what he is saying forever. *"If you wish to create a future you must **make it more probable.**"*

"What does that have to do with me implementing strategy successfully?" I ask. I'm still acutely aware of the fact that he still hasn't told me what the three key things are.

*"Unless you understand the how the future might look you are not sure **which events to influence** in order to bias the probabilities towards the future you actually want. There are many more possible futures than the one which will actually happen. **Implementing strategy is about increasing the chances of the future you want by reducing the choices of other futures and the chances that they will occur***

My brain is in a buzz. I'm completely baffled by his last point. What is he on about? I can see some theoretical sense but what does it mean in practice? What will I have to do? I'm about to start to ask when he exclaims, "Gee is that the time! I have to be somewhere else." He rises suddenly from his chair. I stare at the wall clock. It stares back with 4:15 written all over its face.

Franck looks down at me and says, "I'll leave you with a thought." he promises, "It's not my thought, though I wish

it was." He grins broadly and says, "I would have said it but Einstein beat me to it. 'For us (believing physicists) **the distinction between past, present and future is only an illusion, even if a stubborn one.**"

I stand as I say, "Let me walk you to the door." I want another chance to quiz him. What are the three key things I need to master? How do I go into the future? I hope that the opportunity of another three minutes might be enough to wring some answers out of him.

Franck replies with a request, "Tell you what, Do me a favour. Could you keep in touch by phone and let me know of any other thoughts or experiences you have which I could use in my case study. And" he says pushing his luck further after how he has mentally pushed me around, "perhaps we can meet again."

In spite of it all I nod in vigorous agreement and then accompany him to the front lobby at a brisk pace. I try talking as we walk but at the speed he walks my words get carried away by the slipstream so I make little progress with my questioning. We shake hands, exchange pleasantries and he's gone. I return to my office and spend the rest of the afternoon failing to get any meaningful work done. Instead I spend most of my time thinking about my strange brief encounter and Franck's instruction to 'Go into the future'.

That was yesterday. Today is traffic jams. This time the blare of the horn reminds me that as I've been day dreaming The horn sounds more like a belching goat than a mechanical device. I look up. I've allowed a 10 metre gap to form between me and the car in front. I slip the gear into drive on the automatic transmission and glide forward.

## ***Chapter 2 In the land of the blind...***

The sun is setting as I turn into the car park. Nothing spectacular, just bands of greyish clouds tinged with red. Somehow it looks different. I can't exactly say how. Maybe it's a bit more autumnal than I remember. I must be working too hard not noticing the passage of the seasons. I make a mental note to my self to slow down and get more out of life. I enter the main lobby, Jo our receptionist is sitting head bent over the switch board. I say a greeting but do not receive the customary response. Jo doesn't even look up. I'm about to investigate when I hear the loud 'ding' of a lift arriving and change my mind and instead walk towards the lift. The brass plaque by the elevator seems shinier than usual someone has given it a good polish recently. Luck. The lift is empty and the doors are starting to close. Someone has already selected my floor so I don't even have to push the button. I come out on my floor and head for my office. Pablo is sitting at his desk on the other side of the glass partition. As usual his papers are neatly organised on his desk, pencils arranged in a straight row along the top. Suit jacket hung neatly on a wooden hanger hooked onto the hat stand by his desk. He's on the phone. I wave a greeting. He doesn't respond. I'm starting to get fed up with being ignored. "OK. Be like that." I think to myself. The door to my office is half open I slip inside. And then I realise that there is someone sitting at my desk. A figure hunched up as if to keep out the cold. The face stares, wide eyed at me. The first thing I notice is the look of utter astonishment and then shock on the face. And then I realise. I realise that it's me. It's definitely me. Me with a little bit more grey hair. Me with a few more wrinkles. Me looking as if I've lost the ten pounds I've been trying to lose for years. A long moment passes, and then I speak. "Who on earth are you?"

"Who, are you?" The face asks me in return. "Are you me? Are you..." The other me is struggling to get the words out, "a ghost?"

"No." I reply, "At least I don't think so. Are you?"

As the other me begins to answer Gina pokes her head round the door and looks directly at the person in the chair and says, "Julia Roberts called. Urgent." And she continues addressing the me in the chair "She wants you to call back at once."

"Gina!" I exclaim. "What's going on?" I plead, arms outstretched. As if she can somehow make sense for me of this impossible situation. She totally ignores me. Then she pulls her head back and is gone.

I stand arms outstretched for a short moment and hear the other me start to speak. "I guess that settles it." says the other me accusingly, "You're the ghost."

"But I'm not. I'm not a ghost" I protest. "I'm ME!" I can't remember anything happening to me which felt remotely like death. Believe me, I'm sure if I'd died I'd remember. Even I would remember something as momentous as that. I rack my brains to try to remember noticing death. I can't remember anything. So I decide, if in doubt, challenge and I do. "I don't think you're real." I say as I stretch out my hand to touch the cheek of other me. It's solid. "If you're not a ghost who are you?"

"I'm ME TOO!" The other me replies and then it offers an explanation "If you're not a ghost and I'm not a ghost then maybe you're from another dimension and our timelines have just crossed."

It's unbelievable but I'm willing to grasp at straws. "OK." I ask, "What date is it today?"

The other me stares for a second at the computer screen, then moves the mouse bringing up the calendar. "It's the 26th of September....."

'Accurate but useless.' I think it's the 26th of September too. I'm just about to interrupt him/her and ask what country it is when s/he completes his/her sentence.

"...1999"

"1999!" I exclaim.

"1999." Comes the calm affirmation.

"Oh my goodness! I thought it was 1996. Are you sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure."

"I seem to have lost three years during my drive to the office."

"Long drive." The other me replies wryly.

I reach out my hand to turn the computer screen for a better look. My hand passes through the case. We stare at the computer in disbelief so I try again. Same result. Then the other me reaches out to touch me on the cheek. The fingertips brush against my face. I can feel them. They are solid. I'm starting to understand the ground rules I'm only real to the other me.

"So you're some sort of double, some sort of doppelganger?" The other me says reflectively.

"No." I insist. "I'm me. I think you're the doppelganger."

"But it can't be. I'm Me too." And then a worried look crosses his/her face "You're not dangerous are you? Not here to suck my blood or turn me into one of the undead or any thing like that are you?"

"No!" I protest "Absolutely not!" I'm revulsed by the idea that the other me thinks of me as some sort of monster. "I'm not a monster, I'm me." I say half to him and half to convince myself.

"That doesn't prove anything because I'm 'me' too."

I'm starting to notice that each time I protest that I'm 'me' the other me insists on being 'me too'. That seems about right. A second me, 'Me2'. As I stand there looking down on my other self in spite of the circumstances, I start to smile. I smile to myself at my private joke. The figure I'm starting to think of as 'Me2' doesn't notice but says flatly. "From the past eh?"

"I guess so."

"Then you're to blame. I suppose that this means that you've come to apologise." Me2 says accusingly. You've come to say you're sorry.

"Sorry?" I ask indignantly. "Sorry for what?"

"For lousing up the Corporate Competences initiative."

"What?" I ask astonished.

"It's all your fault." S/he says. "If only you had set it up properly I wouldn't be in this mess. I was all set for my next step onto the executive board and you had to louse it all up for me."

"But the initiative is going very well" I insist.

Me2 looks at me with an expression of disgust. "If you didn't louse it up then how do you explain the fact that I'm sitting in the same old grotty office doing the same old grotty things three years later. Did you come into the future to find out, to gloat?"

"NO!" I deny his accusation and add. "I've never gloated over anyone in my life." I look round the room the doppelganger is right. It's the same office with all the spice and zazz drained out of it. It's like the office of a time serving civil servant, no promise, no trophies just faded, past momentos. As I take this image in, I notice my legs grow weak at the knees. Me2 must have been through a dreadful time over the past three years to be so lacking in self esteem and energy. I settle quickly into the chair by the table I saying in a hushed voice full of concern "What happened? What went wrong?"

Me2 throws his/her hands into the air. "Everything! In the end the changes we made were irrelevant to business success And what was worse our competitors beat us to it and so when we finally delivered our new strategy our customers were very unimpressed. Didn't you notice when you came in the building that half of it is sublet we've been shrinking for years!"

"How? What happened?"

"You treated the whole Corporate Competence initiative as if It was one of your new product launches."

"Of course I did. I know it was a strategic initiative but so?" I say puzzled.

"No it wasn't just an initiative no it wasn't just a project. It was a **programme to implement a strategy**. You idiot. It was a collection of projects."

"Project, programme, initiative, what's the difference?" I say shrugging my shoulders.

"The difference, you dummy," says Me2, whose voice is starting to rise as it loses patience, "is that the Corporate Competences Initiative was a **number of different but linked projects**. Each project needed to be led in a style to match the challenge the project posed. Each one needed a different framework of steps. Together they **all** needed to be led

*as a whole, a single programme. They needed to be co-ordinated as a whole. They needed to be pulled together across most of the functions of the organisation. They needed to be managed in the strategic context of the organisation. They were the future of the organisation, the person running them had to make everyone across the organisation want to follow their lead. And **you** lost leadership of them and **you** did not co-ordinate what they did, or when they did it and in the end they delivered nothing."* This monologue is delivered with steady heavy emotion.

I'm stunned. I can feel my mouth going dry. I can't believe it. From where I stand, things seem to be going well.

Me2 senses that I am getting caught up in my worry and disbelief and for some reason takes pity on me and asks helpfully, "So what are you doing right now?" Where are you up to?"

I start to reel off an inventory of the things I have achieved so far. "I've managed to get support from Bill. I've held a terms-of-reference meeting to define the strategic goals we are pursuing. I've given responsibility for implementation to the other heads of department. And I've set milestones timelines and a report structure. How could it possibly go wrong."

Me2 stares straight into my eyes The steady unwavering concentration makes me feel as if s/he is looking into my soul. The unnerving feeling I get from this reminds me a bit of how Franck made me feel.

"Would you like to hear about your future?"

I shake my head. I can't accept what I'm being told. I've done all the right things all the things that the textbooks say. There is no way that this dejected beaten up guy knows anything about my future. My future is success.

Me2 repeats the question phrasing it differently, "Would you like to hear about **my** past?"

This time I nod.

Me2 continues. "When I ran the initiative it actually started very well. I did what I was supposed to do I got our then CEO, to help launch the initiative"

I nod appreciatively that after all is what you are supposed to do, get top down commitment. That is exactly what I did a fortnight ago.

Me2 carries on speaking in a low voice almost as if speaking to himself, "We also laid out a plan with milestones and deliverables we set up a steering group made up of most of the heads of department with quarterly review meetings. And then to gain 'buy in' I set up a **stakeholder** meeting. I'd hoped it would get people involved early but because of the fast track nature of the initiative I decided that I should go for the highest leverage and instead of spending time with the staff in general or any specific stakeholders, I would focus my efforts entirely on the heads of department.

I nod. It's amazing s/he's describing last week to me. If s/he mentions the progress report and budget approval meeting I think I'll just panic.

Me2 continues the quiet monologue almost without seeming to need breath, "The next milestone was the approval of the rest of the budget for the programme. I had to get sign off from our Directors so I met with them only to discover that we spent three hours arguing over the need to 'define the strategy.' It was fruitless and frustrating and a complete waste of time but in spite of that several of the a key players felt that it was essential to meet again to continue and complete the process."

As Me2 describes the events I feel my breathing become shallow as my mind starts to panic. Me2 is describing in exact detail what happened to me yesterday. 'How does s/he know these things?'

Me2 becomes more animated looks directly at me but asks calmly, "Have you done these things?"

"Yes." I reply, trying hard not to let my nervousness be heard in my voice which nonetheless trembles slightly.

"Do you want to know what happened next?"

By now I'm really beginning to believe that Me2 does actually come from my future. I've just had described to me exactly things that I have been through for the last month. I nod slowly as I start to give in and to listen to what Me2 has to say, but suddenly I feel a cold shiver of

fear run down my back. It breaks the spell. I suddenly refuse to surrender to this unusual situation so instead I challenge, "I can't see how the initiative could have gone so far off the track. You've started it in the right way. You're doing all the right things." S/he seems to wince slightly as I use the word initiative. It reminds me that Me2 had said earlier that it was a programme and not an initiative.

"I know I started in the right way. But it didn't all go right. I had only included the heads of departments, and of those, only the ones I thought I could get together I hadn't really canvassed the whole organisation."

"So?"

"I'd forgotten to *include the **people who themselves would have to change** as the programme was implemented.* People who would have to change what they did day to day in their jobs."

I'm puzzled I can't see what the problem is after all you can't talk to everybody.

"I know that I can't talk to everyone at once but don't you understand I have to make contact with the key ones the ones whose resistance could really mess things up!"

I'm sceptical. Most of the people at Alcorp are pretty bright. I'm sure that once it is fully explained, they'll understand what is required of them. I say, "I can't see that. They're all pretty smart. They can follow logic I'm sure once you explain it they'll understand what you want of them and get on with it."

Me2 looks at me as if I'm from another planet or perhaps time zone and says, "Don't you understand as you try to **create change** others will try to **constrain change,**" And then the look softens and becomes more sympathetic. "Of course you don't," s/he says, "I didn't when I was you either. It's taken me several miserable years to work it out. You see it's how human beings are designed. Human beings hate change and if you try to change things around them they simply resist it?"

I don't agree and am about to speak when Me2 puts an index finger to his/her lips bidding me to be silent and asks. "Have you ever had this experience? You've arrived

home to be met by your other half who buoyantly announces that they have stayed at home that day and have spent the day either re-arranging the front room or clearing out the den or some similar situation."

I nod remembering the shock of the announcement even the memory makes my guts tighten and I can feel a surge of acid into my stomach. I think briefly how does this person know this about me and then I realise that Me2 is actually describing last month to me but by pretending not to know about my past is simply not being presumptuous. I reply "Yes."

"How did you feel?"

I say, "I think You know how I felt. "

Me2 smiles and says "Possibly, but just to be doubly sure you tell me."

"I felt a combination of fear, panic and a slight twinge of anger."

"I hate to say this but that's not a very *logical* reaction and" says Me2 with a smile and the twist of an assassin's knife, "And to have such an emotional reaction to such a *trivial change*."

I'm speechless for a second. The gap gives Me2 an opportunity to explain what s/he is saying. "You see, human beings were designed specifically millions of years ago to react to changes in their environment in a very specific way. Imagine your ancestors at the dawn of time out one morning doing their hunter gatherer bit. Armed with a stick for protection, walking through the primeval forest. There is a steady chirp chirp of the birds and the moaning of the wind in the trees above."

I'm thinking, "What is s/he on about?"

"Suddenly the birds take flight and there is a loud rustling noise in the bushes behind them. What do you think your ancestors did?"

"I guess they ran away." I say shrugging.

"Are you sure they didn't go and investigate the rustling noise?"

"No." I say firmly. It's obvious. "They definitely ran away"

"A better description would be that **our** ancestors simply *fled in mindless terror*. *The **change in their environment** was perceived to be a **threat to their security***. And then when they felt they were safe and they got their breath back they thought and discussed what the source of the rustling might have been was it a mouse was it a sabre toothed tiger or a brontosaurus?"

I nod in agreement it seems plausible but I'm still not sure why I'm being told this.

"Don't you see?" Pleads Me2, "**Our** ancestors are not the ones who, when they heard the sudden noise, stood around being **logical**. The ones who saw Change and treated it logically first and emotionally second are extinct. They're dead. They didn't make it. You and I are here because **our** ancestors reacted **emotionally first** and then **logically second**. It's how we are designed that is why it is so critical to involve the key stakeholders. Quite simply if you leave them out of the process you simply *surprise them* and then *they will react* they will see the *change as a threat to security* and they will **react emotionally**."

I'm following this

"And once they react emotionally you're stuck. Does logic work against emotion?"

I know the answer. I know that **logic can't win against emotion**. I know that it doesn't. I know that logic doesn't win because the argument which followed the surprise arrangement about the re-organised house was entirely logical but went on loudly for hours. I was not pacified. I couldn't even hear the logic. I even went so far as to search through the dustbin for my tattered old overalls, claiming that 'they were still fine' and that there were 'tens of years of life left in them.' It wasn't until much later that evening that **emotion played against emotion and won**. We kissed and made up and then, seeing it all in a different light, I voluntarily returned my overalls to the dustbin. I think all this but say absolutely nothing.

"Now do you understand why *leaving out the key stakeholders* was such a *fatal error*"

I nod thoughtfully.

"Sometimes it doesn't matter if you get an emotional reaction because you can always overcome it by using another one. At work you can always use fear. You can say to them 'So you are worried you'll be out of a job if the project succeeds, well if it fails you'll definitely be out of a job.' The fear you generate gets them moving. The **problem with using fear to get them moving is that you can't use it on everyone**, some people you do not have authority over, especially if they are in other functions or if they have more authority than you and anyway the **effects tend to wear off relatively quickly**. You must also remember that with **overuse** people stop being so frightened. So the seventh time you threaten their jobs they don't react they don't even bother working on their CV's."

Me2 is right. I've seen it. Nowadays the annual exhortation from Bill at the staff meeting has little effect. In '89 when he first started the Staff Briefing. He spent an hour telling us about the competitive position and how business was getting tougher and more at risk. The sense of impending gloom was deep and the mood induced convinced even the most stubborn to accept minuscule changes to working practices. He actually had some members of staff come to him and offer to have their salaries reduced if it would help. They were so worried about the message of the threat to their livelihoods. It doesn't happen these days. I say, "I get your point. I can see that you are absolutely right. But I still can't see why for the Corporate Competences **programme**," I use the right words this time, "it is so critical?"

Me2 asks, "Who is pushing for the Change to happen?"

"We are." I reply, "I mean the organisation is. At least many of its executives are."

Me2 nods in agreement, "And who is going to be delivering it?"

It's the same answer. "I guess we are. I mean the organisation is."

Me2 explains, "The programme is **internal**. **We are driving the change and We are delivering it within the organisation**. The only way the *programme succeeds is if we make money*. And the only way **we** make money is if

people *stop doing* some of the things that they used to do and *start doing* the things which the programme requires. Don't you see?" Me2 implores, "By leaving out the stakeholders who actually had to change, change themselves, I was simply ignoring the *need for **gaining buy-in*** and that would come back and haunt me a year later. For example Wayne Williams and his sales force could see the fact that we would be asking them to interact with a new group of customers. It was obvious that to achieve that we would be changing the bonus structure, which at the time was a marvellous way to get rich without working. They could see it coming a mile away so they started early trying to undermine what I was trying to do. This was disastrous since delivering the new competence base to the customers was almost completely dependent on them. They did everything they could not to be involved, so that when the computer based customer management system needed to be specified the specification was almost completely carried out by the IT department. With the result that..."

I nod as I start to see this flow and finish the sentence off for him. "The system was great technically but useless in the field."

Me2 looks at me dead pan as if s/he hasn't noticed and keeps talking, "The other real killer was Bill's help. He kept asking me what he could do to help. I thought that this was great top management involvement and all that. But he kept driving activities through the executive and the heads of department. Straight down the line."

"That sounds great it must have made things go much quicker."

"Precisely! quicker in the wrong direction. Corporate Competence was new to us we'd never done it before. We needed new ideas. "We needed debate on the new organisation. What would it look like? How would we be measured?" Me2 pauses briefly for breath. "Instead what we got was all the heads of departments simply used it as a cue to continue the processes that they were pursuing without any creativity or by getting any input from the staff who were closer to the customer than they were."

What we needed was a free exchange of ideas and information, to increase peoples' ability to tolerate ambiguity and an increase in the curiosity and challenge in the organisation. Instead all we got was the annual budgeting process by another name."

Me2 is making a very good point maybe it's *a bit dumb to attempt to transform a business by using the same old command and control methods* we have used for a century.

"What was worse and quite unexpected was that because Bill had effectively nailed his colours to the mast he had declared himself fully committed to our Corporate Competences project being geared towards delivering customer value, so as it became more and more apparent that the programme was actually going to force us into developing new non-traditional customers and developing supplier-partnerships Bill stuck rigidly to the original position he'd adopted. What was worse he got corporate PR to draft a whole series of leaflets on the CC project. Not surprisingly our strategy leaked to all our competitors and they took the time we had laid aside for the pilot trial to tell most our customers that they were doing exactly the same thing as we were and that their benefits would show up three months later and would be better than ours. Naturally all our key accounts held back on closing any orders."

'Good grief!' I think, 'This story is turning into a real nightmare.' My logical mind is frantically scratching around in the dust of facts I've been told. 'How, from what seemed such a great start, has Me2 got to this terrible outcome?' "What happened?" I ask in a voice full of curiosity. "How could this possibly happen?"

"I thought you weren't interested." S/he says sullenly. "You tell me smartarse."

I almost react to the sarcasm but I'm too caught up in the tragedy of it all. "I'm not sure." I reply.

"It's worse than you think. Not only did we deliver obsolete product and service offerings to the market we were late to market as well."

This extra information has me completely stumped. The one thing I was pleased about so far was my planning

and milestone systems. "But," I say frustrated "I put in milestones so that we could control and monitor progress."

"But how far apart did you set these milestones?"

"Quarterly."

"Why?"

What does s/he mean, 'Why?' "Because that's the way I've always done it. Don't you realise how hard it is to get the heads of department together?"

"But was quarterly frequent enough?"

I start to reply, "Yes I should think..."

But Me2 cuts me off, "How fast were things changing? How fast was the customer changing? How fast were our competitors reacting? What on earth makes you think that one slight shift in your course in three months is enough?"

I sit feeling winded. Me2 is right I may have set my milestones too far apart. I'm trying to comment but the torrent continues.

"And, and, look at *what* you were *checking for progress* at each milestone Not, *closeness to customer need*, not *financial impact* but progress against your own blasted plan. Progress against a plan you'd put together half a year earlier when the business environment was completely different. You were acting as if you were in a completely unchanging and stable business environment!" Me2 says all this without appearing to take a single breath. You idiot!" S/he finally screams.

This time I react to this insult. "Now look here." I say, "No need to be so rude." I'm thinking Me2 is a pretty unstable the way his/her mood swings from accusatory to helpful to aggressive. I really hope that I never turn into this person.

"Rude!" Exclaims Me2, "Rude! You think that calling you an idiot is being rude?"

"Yes." I reply calmly.

"OK. Genius then, answer me this," Me2 says sardonically, "How easy is it in your current business environment is it to predict where the next business challenges or opportunities will come from?" Me2 is

speaking more clearly and seems to be getting his/her breath back.

"Not so easy." I say cautiously. I have the feeling I'm being drawn into a spider's web.

"So if you can't predict far in advance where the next opportunity or challenge will come from then the best approach for any organisation is to concentrate on building an ability to **react with 'awesome velocity' to any challenge.**"

"Of course." I say nodding but looking out for the strands of silk. "That is just common sense."

"Oh is it?" S/he says, "I would have thought that if you can't predict that far in advance where your next opportunity or challenge will come from then the best approach for any organisation is to build an ability to *get in first*, that is *push change yourself, be proactive.*"

I nod tentatively as I feel the slight tug of sticky silk on my limbs.

"Well which one is it?" S/he demands.

"A bit of both." I say unsure. "Its a balance."

Me2 throws his/her head back and laughs a loud long wicked laugh. "That's beautiful a balance of two equally difficult to achieve abilities! Don't you see the conflict. **To gain influence over a chaotic business environment** you must either operate **using rapid analysis followed by rapid implementation** or you must **have high levels of innovation followed by creative implementation.** You." S/he says, "had neither. You didn't really understand modern strategy. The **best way to survive the future is to create it.**" Me2 pauses looks upwards at me with a sidelong glance and waits for a reply there isn't one I know when I'm beaten.

I'm feeling pretty low and gaining an awareness of both how dumb I am now and how smart I will be once I have gained my 20/20 hindsight. I'm also getting a feel of what an obnoxious, unbalanced, unfeeling prat I will become.

Me2 ignores my lack of reaction again and just continues talking. S/he carries on with complaints about how I had gone about planning and co-ordinating the Corporate Competences programme. "You made the plan and the

progress checking of the project look as if you knew *both what to do and how to do it* as if your options were clear and **closed** whereas in reality, all you and anyone else in the organisation, really knew was that we had a problem."

I start to protest at his/her suggestion that I didn't know what I was trying to do. "I did..." But I get no further Me2 glares at me angrily.

"You didn't know! That's why you are having all those difficulties with your meeting to try to 'define the strategy'. Because we didn't know what the outcome was going to be and because we were trying to drive it top down. We excluded many of the people who would have to change their jobs and behaviour in order for it all to succeed. That was really dumb. You know why? Me2 asks the question pauses as if waiting for a reply but then doesn't give me a chance to answer but instead answers himself. "Because once they saw what was coming they **all**, not just Wayne, put all their effort into undermining it!"

I stand in the middle of the office feeling stunned. It's as if I have been repeatedly banged on the top of the head with a metal tray. My ears are ringing. The ringing turns more into a blaring noise and then into a loud cacophony of different pitched horns. I awake with a jerk simultaneously opening my eyes and mouth. I blink. My heart is pounding at such a rude and sudden awakening from such deep sleep.

I look forward. The coned off lane of road is clear of traffic for as far as I can see. I hit the accelerator and speed off. The impatient motorists shrink rapidly in my rear view mirror.

What was that? Was it really only a dream? It seemed so real. My goodness what a shock. What a dreadful future. As I sit behind the wheel thinking of Me2 and how unhappy s/he had been, I hear a phrase drift past me almost in my subconscious, 'Did you come into the future to find out...' I've heard something similar recently I try to remember. It comes to me 'Go into the future and find out.' That was exactly what Franck had instructed me to do. I drive another mile deep in thought and emotion. A

tangled emotion for me and my looming future and for Me2, an alternate me caught already caught in a future of my doing. A miserable future. Franck was right *I need to understand the seeds I am sowing right now which lead to that unpalatable future so that I can **make that future less probable.***

I need to speak to Franck to find out if he understands what I should be doing. 'Drat.' I don't have his number. Then I remember I put his card in the side of my case I do something foolish. I try to reach the back seat to get my case. It's just out of reach. As I stretch for it I feel a sharp pain in my shoulder but I can reach it now so I haul it onto my lap on the front seat. I massage my shoulder and then retrieve the card.

### ***Chapter 3 The First Skill: New World Strategy***

"Hello!" a smiling voice at the other end sings with a slight warble. "How can I help?"

"I'm trying to reach Franck." I say, "Is he in?" I'm sitting in my car on a straight stretch of motorway wide awake. The road runs slightly downwards in a broad cutting which opens up half a mile ahead. Down in the distance neighbouring artistic farmers have contrived to weave a pattern of subtle shades from the brown gold stubble left after cutting the hay. One farmer has ignored straight lines and has instead followed the contour of the hedgerow along the north face. From where I am it looks like an army of stiff W's lined up for inspection. In spite of the beauty I am still well aware of how late I am for my appointment the real difference now is that my phone has a signal but instead of using my first opportunity to call ahead to apologise for being late for the meeting, I'm using it to call Franck.

"Yes." The voice replies, "You're very lucky he's having a tea break. He may be able to take your call. Who shall I say is calling?"

I spell out my name. A few seconds later I hear Franck's lilting tones. "G'day mate, Grand to hear from you. Shoot fast we only have ten minutes."

I start to babble, slightly embarrassed at what I'm saying. "You're not going to believe this but I've been into the future to see what the possible outcomes of my current approach to implementing strategy are." I pause expecting to hear some exclamation of incredulity. Nothing. So I continue. I try to tell Franck all the issues which Me2 had described. It falls out in a garbled mess, like overcooked spaghetti being tipped out of a pot. After about a minute and a half Franck interrupts.

"So tell me, why do you think that all this is happens in the future you are describing?" He asks unhelpfully.

"I really don't know." I say rather pathetically.

"Hmm" says Franck obviously trying to find a more organised way to unravel what he is being told. "Let me

see. How can I phrase it. I have it. What exactly did your 'future twin' say happened first."

I try to paraphrase as clearly as I can remember. "Me2 said that I had chosen the *wrong measurements and controls*, I had set my *milestones too far apart* for the turbulent business environment I was operating in and that I had *forgotten to include many of the key stakeholders*."

"Was there anything else?"

I try hard to remember, scrunching my face up with the effort. "Yes there was also something about '*not having or understanding strategy*' and s/he said Bill, Bill's our Chief Executive," I say in hurried explanation, "*had been too helpful*."

"OK," says Franck calmly "So, let's take them one at a time. What did Me2 say about your controls?"

"That I had spaced them out too far. Well too far for the rapid rate of change I was trying to deal with."

"And why had you done that?"

"I don't know Me2 didn't really explain."

"No," he says in clarification, "I meant why do **you** think that you've spaced the controls out the way you have."

I think for a second then reply, "Well, Practicality. It's very difficult to get the heads of departments together."

"I understand." He says supportively, "But what do you know think was actually needed?"

"More frequent communication?"

"And why does this particular strategy need such high levels of communication?"

"Because **we do not fully know what we are doing or how it is to be done**. I reply, it's very **open**. We are having to **learn as we go**." As I answer it is starting to appear obvious to me.

I hear an encouraging 'Um. OK,' down the line followed by another question. "Now tell me about excluding the key stakeholders. Why have you done that?"

"Well," I protest trying hard to find a reasonable excuse, "you can't include everyone, so I just included the key players."

"Do you mean that you only included those **you** recognised as key players."

"Um yes," I reply. I can see a glimmer of where this is leading.

"But you just told me that you have to learn as you go."

"I know I said so but..." Franck talks over me.

"So how did you know, in advance, who the key stakeholders were?"

I'm stunned How dumb of me. I'd assumed that the stakeholders were the same as the key players in the existing hierarchy. I hadn't even considered *that anyone other than the topmost hierarchy would learn anything which would contribute to the success of the implementation.* And, even dumber, it hadn't occurred to me that *over time, as a direct result of the Corporate Competences initiative the key players might change, new ones emerging and others fading into the background.* I say quietly. "I see your point."

I hear Franck mutter something incomprehensible to someone at the other end of the line. Then he returns to our conversation. "OK are you still there?" I reply quickly sensing that he is running out of time. "Now tell me can you see how having to 'learn as we go' creates the other two problems?"

"No." I reply. I can't see what he is getting at.

"If you are having to learn as you go is it possible that Bill could act before he understands the implications of his actions?" He says patiently but with a voice which insists on an answer. I don't answer. "and if you are having to learn as you go is it possible that your key executives may try discussing problems before they fully understand them? Now do you see how having to learn as we go creates the other two problems?"

I now see what he is getting at. I speak in reply softly and slowly using my newly gained insight "I guess *Because we are in a situation where we are having to learn as we go along it is very difficult to fully define or describe the strategy so when the senior and more experienced executives meet to discuss it they find that they run out of language and concepts to explain what they are thinking and also they mix up the new learning with the old concepts as a result discussions about the strategy become very circular and often emotive.*" I'm listening to

myself as if I am hearing this from someone else for the very first time.

"Fantastic!" e says, as though this was a conclusion he himself had only just reached. "And what effect do you think it has if someone, someone with enough power not to be opposed, tries to **drive** the strategy through."

It's easy to answer this time I'm getting the hang of his questions. "*Well because our strategy takes us outside the areas we already know, trying too hard to drive the change through, top-down simply drives it in the wrong direction.*"

"And why is this?" he enquires to check my understanding.

"I guess because to drive it though you need to be pretty near the top and that means that you probably gained your experience and knowledge in a different business environment so you may be making assumptions which were correct once but no longer hold." Another thought occurs to me. "*Driving it from the top makes it much harder to 'learn as we go'.* Because the top-down drive convinces everyone in the organisation that 'someone somewhere knows the answers' and this stops everyone else in the organisation from learning and innovating."

Franck interrupts with an empathetic 'Uhuh' but I ignore him and carry on, fascinated by the stream of thought coming out of my mouth. "And that is also why Me2 was so critical about my measurements and milestones. Instead of monitoring what we had learnt and what we still needed to learn I was monitoring something else, altogether more pointless."

"It sounds as if you have got a handle on what, even now, at these early stages of your programme, is going wrong."

"I think I'm starting to." I answer. "But I'm really surprised by the enormous effect my early approach seems to have on my long term success. It's almost as if I really need to work out the whole situation before doing anything at all. Why is this?"

Franck chuckles, "It's all to do with the Red Queen Hypothesis."

"The what?" I ask in incredulity.

"The Red Queen Hypothesis." He says calmly adding. "I really have to go soon. I'll make it quick. Do you remember reading Lewis Carol as a kid"

"Vaguely." I reply confused.

"In 'Alice in Wonderland' there is a part of the story where Alice and the Red Queen are trying to get out of the garden. The red queen grabs Alice's hand and drags her along running and shouting to her 'Faster! Faster!'"

I nod remembering the scene vaguely. And say an equally vague, "Yes?"

"The Red Queen shouts and shouts, 'Faster! Faster!' but no matter how fast they run they make no progress. The scenery stays exactly the same. After a while Alice is completely out of breath and complains about all the effort she is making, only to be told by the Red Queen that **'it takes all the running you can do to stay in the same place.'**"

I nod silently on the phone trying to guess where this is leading. I'm beginning to learn patience.

"These days we all take it for granted that the business environment has sped up and become more competitive and more complex and less predicable."

I say, "Yes." but I'm thinking, "So?"

*"You see, I think it's led to a situation where all the very **best business organisations** in the world are **running as fast as they can to stay in exactly the same place**. Just as fast as they learn and build up organisational experience and competence the business environment changes further. So relatively they make absolutely no progress. The business environment changes partly as a result of its own complexity but also because as these organisations accelerate the speed at which **they** change it has an impact on all **their** key **constituencies, the groups of people they interact with as an organisation; staff, customers shareholders, suppliers** They forget that they share markets and suppliers with competitors. They loudly promise more or demand more. So their competitors hear about what they are trying to do and guess what happens? He pauses and then asks rhetorically, And guess what their Competitors do? **They***

*react which also impacts on their constituencies. This in turn speeds up the rate at which the business environment changes causing the other organisations to react again."*

He pauses to let the impact of what he has described sink in. *At the same time non-business, social and political changes are also both feeding into and driving these changes and because the world now operates globally in most respects, so the world moves on. The world moves on faster and faster."*

I nod as I try to grasp the implications of what he is describing. I say conclusively. "It sounds like a vicious cycle to me."

"More like a web of interlocking vicious cycles. Most organisations find the ground below them their business foundations are now more like a series of parallel moving loosely linked travolators. The faster they run the faster they increase the rate at which the world moves on. So depending on how fast you are running on your range of travolators you end up facing a range of strategic problems arranged as a spectrum." I hear Franck speak to someone in his world, saying 'One minute I promise.' And then to me. *"Sometimes the problem means that you need to do **more of the same in different conditions** Your organisation already has the experience required to solve it. Or you may find yourself falling behind so that it requires an effort to regain your position. In this situation you no longer have all the relevant experience in your organisation. You **know where you are and have a good sense of where to go but getting there is demanding.**"*

Franck pauses to check I'm with him I can see what he's getting at. "The difference is in being able to use your experience entirely as the springboard for actions and finding that you do not have all the answers." He pauses again. I mumble something incomprehensible down the line at him. He treats the noise as a coherent, 'Yes I'm with you'

*"And then the world really starts to outpace you so that you discover that strategically you have an **idea of where to go but are unsure of how to get there.** You may be tempted to carry out some feasibility studies before deciding your strategic direction. If you are lucky the world will remain*

similar enough through your studies for the results to have meaning. If you are unlucky it will be an exercise in futility. Finally the world is travelling much faster than you. *You need to do things completely outside the organisation's experience. You didn't run fast enough so you're actually falling behind. You know that something must be done but you **don't really know what to do or how to do it but you can't stay where you are.** There is no point in studying the environment because the results will be obsolete by the time you have them.* Do you follow?"

"Yes." I reply trying to work out how I can explain this to my colleagues without the reference to children's books. This conversation is going slightly too fast for me. "No." I change my mind. "Could you explain a bit further?" I request.

"Let me ask you, and answer me honestly. How do you and your colleagues really feel about your strategy and its implementation?"

I only pause momentarily, "It feels as if we have been thrown by the rapid changes in our business environment are groping for a solution but we are confused, lost and if I dare admit it slightly frightened."

"So you're at the second end of the spectrum, the end characterised by the feeling that *you **don't really know what to do or how to do it but you can't stay where you are?***" He phrases this question as a statement.

My instinctive reaction is to think "Smartarse." He didn't do what I asked. He didn't explain. Instead he pigeon-holed our programme. But much as I hate to confess it, he's right.

He doesn't even wait for me to confirm his guess but continues, "So these days you really need to approach implementation differently from how you have ever had to in the past. *The actions which bring you joy and success at one end of the spectrum one will get you wiped out at the other.*" Franck pauses briefly and then asks. "Do you think that it's possible to implement a strategy which actually makes the organisation's performance worse?"

"I guess it's possible" I reply tentatively.

"At which end of the spectrum do you think that that is more likely?" He demands hurriedly.

It's obvious it's most likely at the more uncertain end. I say so but with less disdain.

Franck hardly pauses before asking, "So tell me why do starting conditions have such a big impact." I can tell he is in a real hurry.

"I guess it's because *the starting conditions have such a big impact on how best to go about implementation. and whether or not you will do the organisation more harm than good through the implementation.*"

"Precisely!" he exclaims says triumphantly. Now do you begin to understand why *most modern strategies almost certainly fail.*" he pauses briefly and then says, "OK" I can tell he is closing the conversation.

Now I protest. Although I've got the gist of what has been said, I haven't really understood Franck's argument and now he's become too controversial for me. I know that implementing strategy is difficult but claiming that most strategies most certainly fail is just too much. This is all too fast for me. Last time he left me wondering what his three key things, the three things I needed to guarantee success were. This time all he's leaving me is perplexed and confused. "Wait!" I shout down the line. "Hold on. I don't agree. I need you to explain!"

"Explain?" He asks. "What do you want me to explain?"

"All of it just go through it slowly for me."

I can feel a shrug down the phone line. "Up until very recently Business Strategy was taken from ideas on military strategy." He says, "Did you know that?"

"Yes." I lie. I am now feeling slightly embarrassed at my outburst asking for more help. I'm not so keen to demonstrate my lack of understanding now.

"And do you know what was common to all the great military strategists?"

"Er..." My mind frantically searches its data banks for any residual School History facts. I remember something about hidden ditches and something else about marshes. It doesn't sound plausible so instead I opt for, "Planning?"

"No it was more than just planning there was a high level of excellent military information. They put a lot of energy into understanding the lie of the land establishing where the enemy troops were and then using the knowledge to best advantage."

Now I wish I'd said something about those ditches and marshes.

"Strategy was about learning about the environment and then obtaining the best fit between your resources and the environment to the detriment of the enemy."

"Sounds good to me." I say.

"You would then plan in detail how to execute the resulting strategy."

That still sounds fine to me. It even sounds a bit like our five year planning process. We do our PEST which tells us about the lay of the land and then we do our SWOT to determine how we could take advantage of it all to our competitors detriment and then we write it all up on a detailed plan. I say, "Sounds great to me."

Franck's voice deepens as he asks, "But what do you do if the environment is so complex and is changing so fast that you can't accurately map it out?"

I'm not sure. I say joking, "Hire consultants."

I don't hear laughter in reply only further questions. "And what do you do if the enemy is not just one enemy but instead many enemies, some of whom are entirely new and don't even provide the same service or products you do?"

"Panic?" I suggest.

"No. I won't allow you to do that." He says.

"I guess then," I say, still trying to joke my way through this, "I'll just have to come up with a new way of creating and implementing my strategy."

"Exactly!" He exclaims, "Well done. And how exactly will you do this?"

I have to think now. I suppose I'd form a clear idea of what the upper and lower bounds of winning the war might look like.

"And?" He prompts.

I'd try to influence current events towards that goal."

Franck is relentless. He continues prompting "And?"

I'd try to set up some actions which in time will bring me towards my desired result."

"What happened to the view of strategy as planning to exploit the 'fit' between the organisation and the environment?"

"I guess I've moved on a bit."

"So now if someone asked you what you meant by strategy and that someone was in a bit of a hurry and required a short concise clear explanation what would you tell me strategy in the current business environment was?" He says hurriedly.

I reply, really speaking to myself wide-eyed in instant revelation. **"Strategy is the conscious continuous manipulation of the future." Implementing strategy is about increasing the chances of the future you want by reducing the choices of other futures and the chances that they will occur. New World strategy is about simultaneous prediction and feedback"** I suddenly understand the baffling statement Franck made when we first met.

"I knew that you could discover it for yourself with a little prodding." says Franck I can hear his pride in my success in his voice.

"Thanks." I mumble.

"Are you now happy with where we have gotten to?"

"Yes," I assure him, "I am."

"Good because I have to be upstairs twenty seconds ago, I must run. Keep in touch and let me know how you are getting on with discovering the other two skills."

"Sure." I reply and the phone is dead.

I drive on lost in my thoughts. I've had the car a month and it hasn't yet had time to develop any noises of its own. Even the engine is almost noiseless. More than one type of strategic situation, actually a spectrum. What does that mean? How do I discover which type of strategic situation I'm in? Other skills. What might they be? I'm not sure what Franck means. In real life it's a lot more complex than simply flicking a pencil about. The journey passes with me cocooned in my own thoughts and

cocooned in the steady deep bass hiss of the road in my  
tyres.

## **Chapter 4**

## ***Its the People, Stoopid!***

Alcorp Ltd is off the main roundabout in the business park. Between the artificial lake and the mini shopping mall. It's an 'L' shaped,' box like red brick building hung with panes of blue and brown coloured glass. Hung as if, in an afterthought, the architect strapped them to the inner angle of the 'L' to make it looks suitably modern and to act as an entrance hall. I pull into the carpark this time for real, I think, I hope, and wedge the car into one of the undersized parking spaces. Squeeze my body though the narrow gap which the open door provides, taking care not to catch the buttons of my jacket on the car door, retrieve my case and head off towards the blue and brown greenhouse.

It's been a long day. The sort of day which deserves to be named after a month. I work my way up to my office. I tease the door open. It looks empty. I continue to stand outside allowing my arm sneaks round the door jamb, fingers reading the bumps in the wallpaper like Braille, searching for the light switch. Click and the room comes to life.

I breathe a sigh of relief. There is no one sitting at my desk. In fact there is no one in the room at all. I settle in to my chair and flick on the switch on my PC. 12 seconds of hieroglyphics and non musical bleeps and my organiser flashes onto the screen. I check the date and the year. So it was only a daydream after all. But it felt so real.

I pick up the phone to call home. "Hi darling. I'm running a bit late as usual." I pause as I listen to the other half of the conversation. "OK darling see you at midnight." 'See you at midnight' was our ritual good-bye. It lowered joint expectations of seeing each other so that a 9:00 p.m. return home felt like a reward. 'Someday,' I think to myself, 'someday I won't be so busy, someday I'll find a way of getting this programme to run without it using up all my life.' I smile wryly to myself both at the thought of a future where I had more time and at my use

of the word programme. My chat with Me2 earlier really had a profound impact on me and one of the things I noticed myself doing all afternoon through my meetings was referring to the Competence Initiative as a programme. I still don't really understand the difference but fortunately no one quizzed me on it. I guess they, like me, assume it's just a word. Even Malcolm who is supposed to be sponsoring the 'project' hadn't reacted to the fact that I had changed the name.

My conversation with Malcolm had been tough though. I'd been trying to get him to arrange for me to spend some time looking at the individual divisions to see how they all fitted together. It was likely that one of our possible Corporate Competences lay in our ability to keep such a diverse group of divisions together. For some reason Malcolm kept insisting that I stick more strictly to actual programme brief. In the end he'd won.

Well, I suppose I'd better get on. I reach for the phone and punch in a fistful of numbers to access my voice mail. It's Pablo's voice. He's asking me for some detailed information on an aspect of the part of the programme which he is supposed to be responsible for, establishing the Corporate Competences of our competitors and identifying market opportunities for competence application. I know it's a bit of a wide brief but no one is expecting results immediately. I move on. Ten minutes later and I'm through all the messages. I'm starting to feel a fondness for the past. The days before voice mail. The days when you could gauge your workload by the depth of paper and memos accumulated in your in-tray. And you could scan the work without having to listen to someone else's laconic voice in real time. And not only do they do little to speed up their voices and reduce your pain, there is never any humour in any of them. I guess they're afraid to be caught, on tape, having fun. It's enough to send you to into a light coma.

Eventually the torture ends. I leave a retaliatory voice mail for Pablo, speaking far slower than I do normally and using the clearest diction and enunciation I can muster at this time of night, to make up for him passing

the buck to me. And then one for Malcolm thanking him for his support in helping gain access to the real comparative unit costs at the meeting in the afternoon. I restrain myself from complaining about his short-sightedness in not allowing me to study the divisions in detail.

'That's it. That's enough.' I think. 'Home-time. Anything else will have to wait till tomorrow afternoon.'

I fill my case with documents I won't be looking at until tomorrow and set off back downstairs, towards reception, towards the car and then home. As I approach my car I think that I can see the courtesy light on. 'Car Thieves.' I think. I duck my head down and approach cautiously, trying to keep from being spotted by crouching behind the bonnet of each car I pass. I reach my car from behind. I creep up the side of my car, noticing momentarily that it could do with a trip to the car wash, my right arm snakes up to the door handle, bites it and pulls, yanking it open, whilst my left recreates a fully formed fist. The person in the car spins round to look at me.

"Oh my God!" I say anticlimactically. "Not you again."

"Who are you?" The person sitting behind the wheel asks in a nervous voice. It's me. It's happened again. As I stare, the face which looks back at me seems far more terrified than it should be, especially since we've met before. And then it dawns on me We haven't met before. This must be a **different** alternative future. I begin to realise how terrifying it must be meeting a younger version of yourself late at night in a dimly lit car park. I raise my hands above my head and say apologetically, "I'm really sorry I startled you. I mean you no harm. Let me tell you who I am. I'm sure you'll have a hard time believing me." Ten minutes later I've convinced this character, who I have nicknamed Me3, that I am an earlier version of them. Three years earlier to be precise. I find it perversely amusing to have to convince someone from **my** future that I'm from **their** past You'd think that they would recognise themselves immediately. But I guess it doesn't work that way.

"Well." Me3 says eventually, "I'm setting off home. Do you want to come with me? We can talk on the way".

"Sure." I reply without hesitating, I'm keen to learn more about futures I may wish to avoid, and get into the passenger's side. As I slide into my seat I grab my chance to get a closer look at his/her face whilst the cabin light is still on. Me3 doesn't look as beaten-up and worn down as Me2. "Progress." I think." I'm dying to ask about how things are going but I remember the hostile reception I had from Me2 so I decide to wait. I don't have to wait long. Me3 starts up the conversation. In spite of the fright I must have given him, Me3's the voice is surprisingly warm and friendly. "Three years ago eh? That would be before The board room coup and take over."

"What?" I say surprised. The car has accelerated to quite a speed and Me3 is driving with only one hand on the wheel.

"Yes, that was definitely after **your** time." S/he says in a voice rich with the humour of what it was conveying, as if a board room coup and a take-over were the punchline to some joke s/he had been secretly aware of for sometime.

"That's nothing to laugh at." I say self righteously.

Me3 looks across at me. "It is if you bought low and can now sell high and get out. Don't look at me like that." says Me3 without any real shame. "I bought low because I bought shares with my own money to try to bolster morale as the organisation began to slip under the waves because the Corporate Competences project did not relieve our fortunes as quickly as we had hoped. I'm just lucky that the take-over terms were so generous."

"It didn't work?" I say more concerned about the fate of my programme than the demise of our organisation.

"Nope!"

"Why not?"

"Well you know all that stuff you're doing now about establishing our customer base?"

"Yes?" I say eagerly

"And you know all that stuff you are doing about looking at the core activities of some of your more lucrative profit centres?"

"Yes?" Now I'm getting impatient.

"And you know how you keep asking Malcolm and Bill for support so that you can find out more about what happens in the different divisions across the organisation?" Me3 speaks slowly, teasing me, playing with me like a cat with a mouse.

"Yes!" By now I'm almost screaming.

"It's all a total waste of time."

"What!" I exclaim.

"It's true. What you don't realise is that it was all pointless."

"What?"

"Why do you think the organisation was in trouble anyway?" S/he asks using the same humour laden voice.

The first few drops of rain start to blot the windscreen. The road ahead looks wet and shiny but Me3 keeps up the speed and apparent lack of concentration. I reply, "I guess it's because our markets were a bit tight."

Me3 nods. "So how much do you think that our then *current markets valued our historical Corporate Competences*. The activities we saw as core to our business?"

I think for a second and reply as the point hits home. "Not enough to pay large amounts for them."

"Given that these were the things historically that we felt made us great what do you think we had done as we set up profit centres."

I think for another second. "I guess it's obvious. Our profit centres probably make use of what were our historical strengths."

"Got it in one!" says Me3 in a self satisfied voice. "We got the definition of 'core' wrong. **Corporate Competences are not to do with what we currently do they are to do with the things we need to do both now and in the future in order to continue to make money.** And," s/he continues, "guess what happens if you start with the right conclusions on the wrong Corporate Competences?"

I don't reply. I'm still a bit confused. I thought Corporate Competences were the things that we were historically good at. What Me3 is saying is that Corporate Competences are about the few things we do today which give us a real edge and the things that we will do tomorrow which will maintain the edge. Core is not core because it describes the bulk of the activities we think are important today. The future will be valued by customers who are not satisfied with us merely doing more of what we do today. I'm still trying to fathom this out. Now the rain is falling steadily and in the background silence of the car, silence because I've noticed that Me3 doesn't have a radio either, I obviously haven't changed in some respects, the windscreen wipers are beating a steady rhythm to my thoughts. Me3 is saying something unflattering about weather forecasters and their inability to predict the weather more than a second ahead of them. s/he is complaining about the rain which predictably shouldn't be falling. Me3 is describing in graphic detail an innovative torture for all weather forecasters involving thermometers and wind vanes. In the background the noise level changes with each whump whump whump of the wind and rain lashing against the side of the car.

Me3 keeps talking twisting his/her head from time to time to look at me as s/he speaks. It really unnerves me. Taking his/her eyes off the road. I'm beginning to understand how Jo feels. For years I've had feedback about not taking my eyes off the road when I talk to hem. It's interesting being at the receiving end. Slowly I switch back from watching Me3's driving and thinking distant thoughts, to listening to hem. "

"...so of course I couldn't make much progress."

"Er what? I er missed what you said at the er beginning of the er sentence." I say sheepishly, having to confess I'd been somewhat caught up in my daydreams.

Me3 obliges. "Well every one of the heads of departments and division heads, the profit centre owners spent the whole time telling me how important the project was and how much they wanted to help but that I

couldn't have any of their key people as resources so of course I couldn't make much progress."

I nod agreeing energetically.

Me3 notices, "I guess that's already happening. I bet you haven't come to the next bit though the bit where the board directors including Malcolm, who as sponsor is supposed to supporting you, start to obstruct what you are doing?"

"What? Obstruction from the board itself. I don't believe it" I'm still playing 'Company Person'.

"Well that's what happened to me. As I began to get the programme under control and there seemed to be some glimmerings of success each time I asked one of them to do something for me I met with a stony silence."

"That's impossible I protest, they've all signed up in blood on their support of the programme and I'm getting masses of support and involvement from Bill."

"Well all I can tell you is what happened to me, What I discovered was that the more progress I made the harder it was to actually get support. Now you'd think that there would be increased support from the board as I begin to build the foundations of the organisation's future, but surprisingly there wasn't. One of them actually sent me a memo complaining about an internal update newsletter I'd put out for the Corporate Competences project saying that it did not demonstrate the support that the board were giving to the programme."

"No!" I exclaim incredulously.

"Yes!" Me3 insists. But can you guess who?"

I guess, using the executive's nickname, and get it right. We giggle uncontrollably. Only it isn't funny. It isn't in the least bit funny. We are laughing about a series of events which in time prevents the successful implementation of our strategy and ends with the company being sold off. I suddenly and quickly sober up. "Was there anything else?"

"What? Do you mean anything else which got in the way of implementing the programme?"

"Yes." I say seriously.

Me3 pauses briefly and then says, "There were a couple of other things which happened. I guess the worst was about the innovation."

"What about the innovation?" I quiz.

"Well partly because I was so limited on resources my team didn't have much time to innovate. And anyway because I was so busy rushing around trying to keep it all on track..."

'Like a headless chicken' I think but say nothing.

"I didn't really encourage them to innovate but what was even worse was that we got little innovation from the rest of the organisation in terms of how we could apply the competences to new markets or to grow the existing markets."

"But, but, but..." I stammer uncontrollably, "that was the whole point of the exercise what do you mean you got little innovation out of the rest of the company? Why didn't they contribute?"

"I don't know for sure." Says Me3, letting the end of his/her sentence trail off. "It could have been because in the early stages when Bill was making his speeches about the way in which we would exploit the competences he was pretty explicit, so maybe our employees thought that they were just being asked as a formality to rubber stamp a decision that the executive board had made anyway. Or maybe because there were not allowed to directly participate in the programme by their division heads and department heads, so they never really saw what was going on." S/he chuckles inwardly. "I mean *progress in that sort of project is pretty hard to see or measure. To anyone not directly involved it might as well be **invisible**.* Or maybe it was me maybe I just didn't get around them much, I was pretty busy." Me3 seems genuinely reflective. It's almost as if this is the first time that s/he had genuinely thought about what went wrong. I snort at the realisation that his/her behaviour is just like mine. I never really reflect. It definitely is the very first time that Me3 is thinking back in detail on what happened.

The rain continues to blatter against the windscreen and for a while we drive on, not talking although not entirely

in silence. Eventually I break the pattern. "Was there anything else which happened to you that you'd like to tell me about,"

Me3 looks at me directly for a split second taking his/her eyes off the road.

"Gee, I think I wish you wouldn't do that." I say.

"Hmm anything else? Oh yes one thing which surprised me was As s/he starts to tell me a car pulls out of a sideroad in front of us Me3 slams on the brakes. with such force that I am relieved at the ABS sign which flashes up bright orange in a one inch circle in the middle of the dashboard

"CHEESE!" S/he says as s/he pulls out and accelerates past the miscreant.

A moment later the tension has passed and I feel I can nudge Me3 back towards our conversation. "You were telling me about something else which surprised you."

"Oh yes," comes back the reply along with the customary and terrifying side glance, "I was surprised at the number of managers who outwardly singled me out and came and confronted me because they were convinced that I was making trouble and making waves. They felt that in changing anything at all, I was putting the organisation at risk. They couldn't see that I was trying to save it."

"What?" I say surprised.

"Yes. Strange isn't it. But actually I think that it is even more difficult than I first thought to take people along.

"Now I come to think of it, perhaps it wasn't that surprising after all."

"What do you mean?" I ask.

"Well, I, I mean we spent ages, days and days working with the board understanding the scope of the problem and so on."

'And on pointless activities like trying to 'define the strategy,' I think silently.

At the next level down, the head's of departments we spent less time but still put in some considerable effort we made up reams of overhead transparencies and forced them to sit through presentations. From there down the amount of energy and time we put into making sure that

people understood what we were trying to achieve decreased exponentially. By the time you got to the bottom of the organisation communication was more like operating a 'sheep dip'. We'd bring them in batches, bring **them** briefly into contact with **our** ideas wait for them to bleat and then move onto the next batch." Me3 giggles silently to herself at the analogy.

I can see the point and the funny side of it as well but I can't see the alternative. "There are far too many people in the rest of the organisation to spend too much time on." I say. "They've all got plenty of work if not too much work to be getting on with we can't waste their time on getting them to understand the details. And anyway there is also the sheer expense of trying to communicate with them."

Me3 is nodding in agreement, "It is a real problem. I hadn't really thought about it until now. We just told them the answers, and if they were really lucky some of the **logic** behind what we were planning to do, gave them little time to come to terms with it **emotionally** and work out what it meant they would have to **change** in their day-to-day jobs and then were surprised that they didn't welcome the results with open arms."

"But we couldn't I mean you couldn't have one anything different, could you?"

"I don't know." Reply's Me3 pensively, "For it all to work we need to have effective *strategic analysis and implementation*. And this we must do although the ground under our feet is constantly changing."

I nod remembering that I've heard a similar analogy before from Franck. Franck described it as the Red Queen Hypothesis.

S/he continues talking only glancing at me infrequently now, "*Because of the complexity of the changes we are trying to implement, we will need a **small dedicated group to learn the full scale and scope of the information needed. This means that we must select a specific group and focus them on creating the strategy,*** I guess the usual approach is to set the senior management on this task."

I nod in agreement and say, "Sounds like common sense to me."

"Ah but!" Says Me3 as if seeing something which was blurred clearly for the first time, "But, on the other hand to succeed with implementation. we must concentrate **all those involved in running the day to day business on changing the way that they operate.**"

"Now Me3 takes his/her eyes off the road completely to implore, "Don't you get it? *The strategic challenge is huge and it is discontinuous, success today doesn't guarantee success tomorrow. We have to do many fundamentally different things. Things which are different from our historical corporate competences. So both analysis and implementation are complex and multi-functional. In order to succeed we have to do two conflicting things simultaneously. We must involve the few people with the broadest overview to make rapid progress in analysing the business situation at the same time we must involve as many people as possible with a depth of understanding of the implications of any action to make sure that the strategy is realistic and can be implemented.*

It hits home for me. Another paradox - apparently insoluble. 'That's why organisations either seem to create brilliant strategies they can't implement or mundane "me-too" strategies which get rapidly implemented but take them no further than their competition.' I'm pondering this when Me3 exclaims, "Got it! It's all about the people. I know how to get out of the dilemma."

"How?" I ask.

Me3 starts to reply but the words get carried away in the noise of the rain which starts to beat down even harder and the loud and rushing sound of the wind lashing against the car. The car is hit by a particularly noisy sheet of rain.

I awake with a start, snorting as I do so and noticing that my mouth is half open. The vacuum cleaner is just outside my door. The person wielding it looks up and smiles at me. I wave back running the fingers of my left hand horizontally across my left eye a procedure I repeat with my right hand and eye as if sleepiness were something that could be rubbed away. I then repeat a

variant of the process in which both sets of fingers are placed on both eyes simultaneously and drawn downwards to meet in a temple over my mouth. This procedure works. I come fully awake. As I start to rub my forehead rhythmically against the palm of my right hand I realise that Me3, meeting Me3, the driver from hell, was little more than another very very realistic dream. I pick up my case and head off home This time I hope it's for real.

## ***Chapter 5 The Second Skill: Invisible Leadership***

It's Wednesday. It's morning. It's really early morning and it's raining. Well, more like a steady drizzle. Not quite dismal but not quite right for uplifting the spirit. I'm back in the car again. This time on the driver's side. It's early because I need to make an early start. I've got a 9:00 with a supplier in Rochester to discuss what their views of our Corporate Competences are. When I made the appointment a fortnight ago it seemed like a brilliant idea; get there early, quick meeting, back in the office just after lunch but now that time has wound on it's not brilliant at all it's just early. I think, 'I'm going to learn to do a mental check on the reality that brilliant ideas eventually turn into.'

There is little traffic which is probably just as well. I need to concentrate. I need to think through what Me3 told me last night. I chuckle, "Me3." I say that almost as if Me3 was real rather than just a product of a sleepy but fertile imagination.

I'd love to tell Malcolm my sponsor about the possible futures I'm discovering. I'd love to tell him because I'm acutely aware that I only have till Friday to make sure that I get the financial 'Go ahead' from Malcolm and his colleagues. I'm aware that they also need to understand the nature of strategy. And they need to understand and the importance of the Corporate Competences programme to our organisation's survival. I'd love to tell him but I'm not sure how he'll react. I could, in a short sentence or two completely destroy both my credibility and my reputation for sound judgement it's taken me years to build. I have no choice, I have to phone him. I have to call Franck. I have to learn more so that I can explain it more clearly to them. I have to explain it to them clearly or they may wimp out on the programme and not approve the money I need. That would be very bad news indeed.

I retrieve Franck's card from my case, this time sensibly placed on the front seat, proving that pain helps me learn faster, and start to punch in his office number. My hand stays for a short moment whilst I consider whether it is too early to call. I convince myself that first thing in the morning is always the best time to receive phonecalls. I'm easy to convince. I want to make the call. I change my mind but only slightly. I decide that I'm probably more likely to get him in his car on the way to work rather than in the office. I cancel my entry and redial using his mobile number.

"G'day." A cheery voice answers full of energy. "It's Franck here. How can I help?" It's sickening to hear someone so full of energy so early in the morning. I say my name in response.

"Hi. I was just wondering when you would call again. How are you getting on with your 'future dreaming'?"

"Fine." I reply feeling surprised. How does he know that it's happened to me again.

"You're probably wondering how I know that you've been dreaming of the future again." He says, still in the cheery voice full of energy.

I nod forgetting I'm on the phone and then say belatedly, "Yes."

"It's quite simply because once you start travelling into the future to discover the strategic implications of what you are doing now it's a bit difficult to stop. It sort of becomes a habit see?"

"Yes I see." I say not seeing anything. I'm about to launch into a description of my last encounter My encounter with Me3 when the line begins to crackle.

"Are you in a car too?" He asks.

"Yes. I'm on the R4 heading for Rochester" I reply.

"I thought so." He says. "I could hear the background rumble. Which road are you on he asks?"

I repeat what I have just said.

"I have to do three junctions of that bit of motorway." He says.

'What a coincidence.' I think. I say surprised, "What a coincidence!"

Franck responds not sounding in the least surprised, "Not really, cosmic law." His drawl really stretching out on the final word. "How far are you from Exit 12?"

I look round for signs trying to guess where I am. No clues. "About ten minutes." I say uncertainly.

"Good." he says through the crackles, "There's a restaurant area at Exit 12. I'll be there in about fifteen minutes. Why don't we meet there? You can buy me breakfast and we can chat for about half an hour."

"Sounds great to me." I reply.

"See you there then." He says and the line is dead.

Now I'm sitting by the window of the restaurant. The restaurant feels new and clean. I turn my head to face the window. A window which looks out over the carpark and on to a muddy construction site. The site announces itself as the site of a new motel. The announcement is made in foot high letters in blue against a green background. It also announces predicted completion in about four months time. Finally, in a feeble attempt at good manners, it offers an apology for inconvenience. So much easier to write apologies once for thousands, than to speak them to several thousands once each time.

It's still raining and in the distance I can see the in the pattern of water droplets thrown off the cars and trucks on the motorway as they flash thunderously past. The spray forms a grey yellow mist which swirls and dances unpredictably in the dull glow of the overhead street lamps. I watch transfixed by the ever changing pattern.

I don't have to wait long before a green powerful looking coupe swims gracefully into the carpark. I glance at it and ignore it I'm looking out for Franck who, I am expecting, like any normal academic probably drives something far more sensible and practical, probably a beaten up old station wagon or a mid-range ford. Much to my surprise Franck emerges from it, notices me framed in the window and grins a welcome. He seems not to have noticed the steady drizzle falling on him. A few seconds later he is seated opposite me across the red plastic table top.

"So." He says, "How's my mate the time traveller!" I can't tell from his tone of voice whether he is genuinely interested in my story or if he is gently mocking me. I decide to be thick skinned and ignore any negatives. Instead I say, "This is really amazing. What a coincidence. Nothing like this has ever happened to me before. Has anything like this ever happened to you before?"

"Only when it needed to." comes back the dry reply. "Anyway, we don't have much time. I'm running a Board Workshop an hour and a half away from here in two hours time so lets make good use of our time. Tell me what you discovered on your last trip into the future."

I tell him about Me3. Franck listens intently indicating his attention by saying, 'Got it.' at irregular intervals. I finish recounting the tale saying, "Well that's what Me3 said and s/he seems to have a different set of problems from those I heard from Me2."

"And-what-would-you-like-to-order?" A waitress in a red checked uniform with a matching hat and white pinafore is standing over us with a notepad placed in an upturned palm. A palm inclined as if the owner was gesturing to accompany a question of great interest. The pad lies in an inclined plane waiting to be stabbed by the poised pencil. I motion to Franck to order first.

"Bacon, well done; mushrooms as they come; hot baked beans with hash browns done both sides and some coffee, black, mild roast." And then, before she gets a chance to ask about the coffee he says, exactly as I'd heard him say before, "Just the poison."

"Tea and toast." I say.

I start to return to our conversation. "Me2 and Me3 *described **different** outcomes to the **same** strategy.*"

"Brown-or-white?"

"What?" I ask.

"Brown-or-white-bread?" She sighs.

I don't even think about my choice. I just want her to leave. "Brown." I say hurriedly and then to Franck "Why should that be?"

"Earl-Grey-or-English-Breakfast?"

I'm grounded again. "English breakfast."

I'm about to start-up again when I notice that the waitress is still hovering so I apply some patience and look up. "Do-you-want-butter-or-margarine?"

"I'll have margarine and a selection of marmalade and jam. Thank you!" I say trying to sound polite.

She looks satisfied, if somewhat miffed that I have ended our conversation without letting her go throughout her full routine.

I try to return to my question Franck is looking bemused at me. "Why are the outcomes different?"

Franck's expression turns into a smile as he asks, "What just happened to you?"

I'm puzzled. "I ordered breakfast."

"Yes I know he says still looking as if he has a private joke, "and what was taking place between you and the waitress."

I answer flippantly, "A lot of hassle." But he doesn't react so I continue. "She was trying to make me more precise with my order"

"'Precise' is precisely what it's about, choices and ingredients. I think Me2 and Me3 were simply trying to make you choose your ingredients more precisely. If you are trying to create a specific future, I think it helps if you choose the starting conditions and the subsequent sections precisely. Your starting point has an effect on the pattern you end up in."

I'm trying to remember where I've heard that before or at least something like it. It was Franck the first time we met. When he was playing with the pencil.

Franck continues. Instead of picking up my story of what Me3 has said he starts in an entirely different place. "Do you remember when we first met?"

"Yes." I say tentatively. He must be thinking about that meeting too.

"You were late for our meeting because your previous one had overrun. Is that something which happens to you often these days?" He asks.

"All the time. Is that part of your research? How much time executives spend in meetings? Don't bother with the

research, I'll give you the answer, far too much time. That's the truth"

I'm joking but he looks back at me with a serious expression and replies, "I'd agree with you overall but it must also depend on what you were discussing in your meeting. I mean if you were discussing the problems faced by your Corporate Competences Programme that wouldn't be a waste of time would it? If the discussion were helping people to decide how best to align their actions towards the common goal It wouldn't be a waste of time. The programme seems pretty key to your organisation's survival. I agree it would be far too much time, a real waste of time if most of your discussion was about things not on the agenda or things which have little or nothing to do with the actual problems of implementing the programme or running the business." He pauses, "Was your discussion *more about actions or about politics?*"

I'm immediately defensive. I am not used to having such a direct question on the sort of thing you tend not to mention to people outside the organisation. Especially if they are planning to write a case study on you. I say "Well every company has politics." He doesn't react so I keep speaking. "It's part of the fabric of organisational life."

"In many cases that's true." His voice drops to a conspiratorial whisper and as if compelling me to answer continues, "But tell me, even now, are you finding that you have to spend more and more time working the internal politics?"

He seems so keen to find out the answer that I surprise myself and confide in him completely. I nod slowly thinking, 'Yes and I'm not very good at it so I keep hoping it will go away but it doesn't seem to.' "It wears you down."

Franck nods in agreement and asks, "Why do you need to spend more time working the internal politics?"

"I guess it's because everyone is finding it difficult to find the resources they need to support their agenda."

"How come?"

"Well these are tough times. We've had a hold on recruitment for a year and we've let some people go."

"So your fellow heads of department and division heads are **all** are finding it hard to resource up to achieve their goals? I guess, that there is no slack in the organisation at all, at any time. It's all a constant rush, rush, rush. Not a second left anywhere."

"Er, No. There are still peaks and troughs in activity and some functions seem far more busy than others." And I add. "For the right things, time can always be found.. and sometimes..." As I speak I realise that I don't **really** know why resources are so short. I'm struggling but I'm saved by the breakfast which arrives at just that minute.

I decide to pour out our drinks. I pick up the coffee pot and turn to Franck. "How do you take it?"

"Black please, only the poison." He grins. I pour him a cup. "You were explaining why it is so why is it so difficult to find the resources to support your agenda."

"If I'm honest I have to say that part of the problem is that no one feels like giving anything away. My current pet theory is that as resources get shorter we're only human so we feel less like co-operating or being flexible."

"You only react that way because you are human?" He says. He's tucking into his bacon and hash browns

"Yes. That and the fact that we are not all cosy and friendly"

"What do you mean?" He asks.

"Well, It's really difficult to make yourself work with some departments. It's just a thing in this company for example HR and sales have never got on. It's like marketing and production they don't see eye to eye."

"Do you mean they tend to hate each others guts."

I giggle. "That's a bit strong."

"Perhaps but the real question is are the relationships getting worse?"

"Mmm not all the time and slowly overall. Some relationships are getting much worse and overall it goes up and down. We have had some of the more vocal and strident people leave. That eases up the tension for a while."

Franck nods as if he knew I was going to say that. He looks at me and challenges. "So are there any other reasons why no one feels like giving anything away?"

I pause as my brain tries to cope with this new direction which our conversation has taken, away from the surreal situation with Me3. I repeat his question in order to buy time to think. "Reasons why no one feels like giving anything away?"

My ruse works Franck thinks that I haven't heard him and repeats the question. "Yes. Any other reasons why no one feels like giving anything away?"

"I've mentioned the natural antagonism that and the fact that most of us have already overspent our budgets."

"What do budgets have to do with it?"

Franck seems naive. What else would you expect from an academic? "No one wants to overspend their budget."

"Why not?"

I'm patient. I reply, "Because when business is tough we keep a very strict and constant watch on them. Overspending on your budget is a very visible sign that you are failing."

"So your behaviour is determined by the way your budgets are set?"

"Well of course. But I would much rather say influenced than determined. After all. that is why we set the budgets in the first place."

"How often do you set these budgets?"

"Like everyone else, once a year."

Amazing He exclaims so your organisation can predict a whole year in advance **in great detail** it's specific spending needs. Even in this chaotic and turbulent business environment you can predict so far in advance. And you are so good at it that you only do it once a year.

I wouldn't exactly say that we can predict that far in advance but every organisation needs a game plan a yard stick to see how we are doing

"I agree but tell me why do you choose a **year** as the basis? And why does the budget end suddenly on the last day of your year as if there is no tomorrow and then start almost like a phoenix the next day?"

I'm confused by this. I'd thought that every one knew why accounts are done on an annual basis. That is the way it's done. So I say "I don't think I understand your question."

Franck looks at me as if I'm the one who is being dim. "Do you know who invented accounts and why?"

'I've never really understood finance I've always found it a bit dry. I'm more of a people person myself.' I say. "It's a legal requirement."

"That's true but why do we do **annual** accounts? I pull a face to indicate that I do not know. He continues. "It's from the traders you know, Marco Polo and his mates. Each year they would wait for the ice to melt or the storms to subside and then they would provision the ships and load up with trading stock, beads and the like and set sail."

I'm thinking to myself, 'Why is he telling me this?'

He doesn't seem to notice my quizzical expression. "At each port of call they would stop and trade. Beads for cotton, cotton for silk, silk for emeralds, emeralds for gold. Trading something which was in abundant locally for something which was not with the overall aim of returning home with something very rare indeed and very sought after at home. They would then return home in late autumn before the winter storms and spend the winter sitting in front of an open log fire counting their profits. Or in our terms doing the accounts."

"Why the history lesson?" I ask.

"Because for **them** a year was a logical and reasonable business cycle. Is that the case for you? How long is it from the time you have signed off your painfully put together accounts, to the time you start to make adjustments. A month? A week?"

Involuntarily I smile. It's true no sooner have we put the accounts to bed than the variations start to occur. You dip into your contingency fund or start to move money allocated for one thing to pay for another. And that after all the time and effort spent in putting the blasted thing together. They ask you for your budget which you duly submit only to receive a memo a week later asking you to

take 10% off it. After the first time you get caught out like that you know for next time and so you build in and hide some contingency. Which is just as well because it's this contingency which stops you being caught out. He's absolutely right.

He carries on, "Ten years ago was a year a long time or a short time?"

"A short time." I reply ten years ago if you'd been with the company five years you were still a novice things happened but not so much different more more of the same.

"And now," he demands, "is a year a long time or a short time."

"Now it's a long time. Goodness only knows what could happen in a year. He's right but I can't see where it is all leading, so I ask, "What does this have to do with organisational politics?"

"Just one more question." He begs holding up an index finger. "When you put together your budgets is it focused on the balanced demands of what you need to do both today and in the future?"

"Ah that's fine in theory," I say, "but let me tell you if you don't stay in business today you can't be in business tomorrow."

"True but tell me, if there is crises a choice between doing something to protect today or doing something which might help with tomorrow and you are torn between the two actions which are you more likely to take?"

I have to admit. "The one to protect today, It usually has a better yield of 'brownie points'"

"But *if you can not manage to **fairly** split your resources between today's needs and tomorrow's you not only see the budget setting process as largely arbitrary but **it actually interferes with doing what you know to be right for the longer term.***"

I'm taking this in it's not a blinding flash of revelation but the common sense of what he is implying is striking home hard.

He concludes, "So you do not have a fair or even business focused method for allocating resources."

I get defensive. "Well it's not really that bad ....." I start but Frank interjects

"I believe you. I'm sure that it's not really that bad." He smiles at me but the overall expression on his face gives me the feeling that what he is thinking is 'It's not really that bad it's worse.' But he says, "Lets go back to this issue about politics. You said that 'no one feels like giving anything away'. Why is that?"

I repeat what I said earlier. Today Franck seems particularly slow on the uptake or is this just his convoluted way of getting an answer out of me again? he just. "Partly historical traditionally some departments have never gotten on well like sales and HR or production and marketing or R&D."

He nods. "And you said it was getting worse."

"Yes the antagonism between departments and between operating divisions is getting worse."

Again he pushes. "What is causing that?"

"Partly the fact that we publish league tables of performance between the divisions and well, I think that people who gain resources are seen to have gained them unfairly."

"What do you mean?"

"Well," I say actually thinking about my own abilities, "some people are better at working the politics than others."

Franck isn't buying my explanation. "But that has always be true why should that be causing increased antagonism now? And," he booms, "the resources are not seen to have been allocated fairly in the first place. Is there anything else?"

"Well some of them have got the time. I mean I don't really have enough time for all the politicking and if you remember I'm the one who was complaining about the time I end up wasting on politics." I say this almost as if Franck were accusing me of causing all the political hassle in the organisation and then it dawns on me. A slow realisation. It's so obvious I can't believe I hadn't seen it

before. I say out loud "*Because I have to spend more time on politics and the resources are not fairly allocated in the first place and because some people are much better at politics than I any one who has enough resources, I immediately assume has gained them unfairly so I view them antagonistically and there is absolutely no way that I am going to help them out. I'm doing this and so is everyone else and so we are all finding it difficult to find the resources to meet our agenda so we need to spend more time on the politics! It's a vicious circle.*"

"Yes. I know." He says trying to hide his smugness behind a forkful of beans and mushrooms. "It's a **loop** and a common one at that. Lots of organisations have that loop but they see it in terms of the individual personalities and 'Politics rather than recognising that their organisation is very sick indeed. Things like an inability to allocate resources in line with actual and future business needs simply make this problem worse. **Initially people will accept a lack of prioritisation of resources as long as they believe that there is 'someone at the top' who knows best and will judge correctly when the time comes.** After a while the selfish side of the altruistic human being takes over, now they cling onto resources without necessarily knowing why. They form themselves into clans or groups of people they see as similar. This effect works particularly well if there are characteristics that they share and if there is no overarching vision. Do you remember what happened to the 'Old Eastern block' after the fall of the Russian empire?

I nod as I think of the degeneration into nationalism and wars that even now afflict the area.

*A generation of managers later and they believe that they are **supposed** to behave like that. .*

Now I'm talking to myself. "**There is a vicious circle in our business which prevents us from working together to meet the challenges the business faces instead it makes us work against each other.** The feeling of anger and despair starts somewhere south of my belly button and moves spreading upwards. "That's terrible! How do we get out of this situation?"

Franck looks pensive acting as if this is a question he has never heard before. "With difficulty." He replies. He's ducking my question again. I'm reminded of the fact that he never told me what the three key things I needed to learn were. I make a note to get the answer out of him this morning before he leaves.

He is still talking though. "Let's go back to the beginning of this discussion what you were telling me that Me3?" he checks the nickname is right, "told you about."

Our discussion about Me3 now seems so far away like a discussion in another lifetime it takes a while for me to bring it back after the past ten minutes of heavy interrogation by Franck. "What," he asks, "did Me3 say the real problems were."

I dredge back up the conclusions of the night before. "One was that Malcolm and Bill did not help me find out more about what happens across the organisation. Another was that the 'powerful stakeholders' had a vested interest in protecting the past strengths rather than developing future strengths and so could see little advantage in loaning me resources for my programme." I pause for a while as I try to recall the points. 'Next time I get stuck in a dream I shall remember to take copious notes'. "Oh yes and eventually when I started making progress some of the people who should have been allies were instead not helpful at all going as far as to suggest that all my work was for self aggrandisement."

Frank looks bemused. "Self aggrandisement." He says with a smile, "Now there's a term I haven't heard in a while."

"Oh and there were two more. One was an inability to get the levels of innovation required of the programme and the other was that many managers singled me out as a person who was putting the organisation at risk rather than one of the few people wedded to the idea of trying to invent a new future for us."

"So," he says, "you've given me five things which Me3 noticed. Should we write them down so that we don't forget them and then take them in turn and see what we can learn about them?"

I nod. At just as I'm finally managing to make decent headway with my second piece of toast, I'm interrupted. I realise that Franck is expecting me to write them down. I grab a pen out of my jacket and start to make a list of the five things on my napkin.

"Why do you think that the powerful people who had a vested interest in protecting the past strengths and so could see little advantage in loaning you the resources you needed for your programme?"

"I guess it was largely because of the vicious cycle we were discussing earlier. That and the self centredness you mentioned and because they couldn't see any real advantage to them in it."

"Why was there no real advantage to them in your programme?"

"I guess I made it so obvious that it was **my** programme."

"How's that."

"I made it clear that I thought that it was **my** problem or," I say, trying to better arrange my muddled thoughts, "I did not make it clear that it was also their problem."

"So why did you hog both the credit and the problem?"

I reply sheepishly, "I guess because I saw it as a way to my next step up the ladder. I wanted all the brownie points."

Franck seems satisfied but decides to pursue another route. "Now tell me." He says, "This bit about you, or was it Me2, said about Malcolm and Bill not helping you find out more about what happens across the organisation? How could such a thing arise?"

"I don't know." I say genuinely puzzled. "Unless they didn't really want me to gain a complete understanding of how the whole organisation operated."

"If that was the case," he says, "if they didn't want you to gain an understanding of what happened across the organisation what else would they be likely to try to do?"

"I guess that they would gently discourage me from venturing outside the strict scope of the programme."

"Has this happened to you yet?"

'Only in a small glimmer.' I think as I remember Malcolm trying to dissuade me yesterday from spending too much time trying to look at how the different divisions were interwoven. "Er, yes. I think so." I reply.

After a brief intermission, during which he finishes off his bacon, he asks, "Why might they not want you to understand the whole structure?"

"They might be suspicious of my motives." I say flatly

"And why might that be?" Franck looks expectant as is he knows what my answer is going to be.

I start to speak realising that I'm about to repeat what I have just said. "They might think that 'I saw it as a way to my next step up the ladder. I wanted all the brownie points.'" I'm beginning to realise that there is a pattern to the answers I'm giving and so I am a bit more wary as he starts his next line of questions."

"So," he says, "why was there so little innovation?"

I've been half guessing that this was going to be the next question. It's the next one on the list and I had started thinking about it slightly before he asked so I am a bit more ready to answer.

"I think it's partly a combination of the fact that *I allowed the strategic problem to stay my problem and so I didn't actively ensure that people understood the need to contribute to it's solution* and I think because, "at this point I pause I had thought that I had worked out the answer but it was only half-formed in my mind and somehow it has managed to slip back into a shadowy corner of my mind. Instead I say, "Er," as I pause for it to re-emerge slowly and cautiously, like a crab coming out from under a rock."

He prompts, "Did you feel that you needed to drive things along?"

"I guess so. I was a senior manager so I could get things moving."

Franck is nodding gravely at what I am saying, his jaws working rhythmically all the time, and pauses only slightly at the end of my sentence to catch my eyes with his intense eagle like stare before asking

"It's something to do with how to get people to do things. I'm not really sure. Me3 said that we forced

answers on them and expected them to comply and do exactly what we expected of them."

"Have you ever played 'Touchtips'?"

"What?"

"I said have you ever played Touchtips?"

"No" I reply. "What's Touchtips?"

Franck sighs, "Another sign of my mis-spent childhood. He raises his hands so that his palms are facing me. It's a game we used to play when we were kids. It was a great way of winning bets of kid's who had never played before. I made a fortune." He says excitedly. "The rules are simple. You operate in pairs with one of you being 'It'. The people start by marking out the room on a piece of paper and marking with a large X what we called the 'Gaol'. Actually it started off being called the 'Goal' only I think we corrupted it. It seemed much funnier as the gaol." Franck's eyes almost mist over as he reminisces. "Anyway, you then stand in your pairs face to face with your finger tips touching. You must maintain finger tip contact though out and you're not allowed to talk."

"I thought you said that the rules were simple" I protest.

"They are." He says. "You should hear me explaining the rules of 'Snap!' The person who is 'It' them has to manoeuvre their partner across the room to the pre planned goal. Who ever gets there first wins."

I cant see what the challenge is. I'm unimpressed. I say. "I'm sorry I don't follow."

"Exactly exclaims Franck. Most kids who've never played before didn't follow either. The 'It' would start by trying to push their partner towards the spot. The partner, having to move backwards would initially go along with being pushed but very quickly would get anxious about not knowing where s/he was being pushed and would push back. The net effect would be no movement as their team began to struggle against each other for control."

I'm picturing this. I can see it happening. "So the team which won would simply be the team who chose the stronger of the pair to be 'It'." I conclude.

"Wrong!" Says Franck provocatively. "You're assuming that we were playing the same way."

I'm silent I can't see any other way to play the game.

"If I was 'It' I would start by backing away from my partner."

'Backing away?' I think

"In order to keep our fingertips touching my partner would be forced to follow. As I led them they could see where they were being led and tended to offer little resistance. In getting people to go where they have never been. I always won. **Leading because the followers chose to follow rather than managing by pushing with my authority.**" He finishes gravely with the comment, "I think you've been playing Touchtips to lose."

It's a simple analogy but it drives the point home.

"And from what you say it's been very obvious that you've been playing. Do you now begin to understand why you are not being allowed access to the other divisions?"

I nod as it sinks in. Although I am now starting to suspect that the whole process has been contrived to force me to do some self reflection and to discover the solution for myself. I ignore that feeling anyway and continue my introspection. "I think you're right. It's definitely something to do with my leadership."

"Yes." he encourages.

"There isn't enough and of what there is it's almost as if it is far too visible."

"Imagine," he says, "that you are trying to change the future course of an organisation whose past has flowed like a mature river down a deep and mature riverbed. It's almost as if you are steadily blocking the current flow of the river rock by rock. What happens if you do this by day and others can see

you building the dam which will ultimately lead to the change in the river's course but do not understand that you are ultimately trying to divert the flow to water new and more fertile lands."

Nice analogy I think, but I try to answer his question. "I guess that they might try to stop you."

"Now, tell me what happens if as you try to construct a new alternate future for you organisation your colleagues see you start to block the flow of the old ways."

I say the almost exact same words that Me3 used. "Many managers singled me out as a person who was putting the organisation at risk rather than one of the few people wedded to the idea of trying to invent a new future for us."

"Precisely," says Franck betraying the fact that he knew the answer all along. "Now tell me about why you felt the need to gain brownie points for the work you were doing."

"I guess I it was about trying to demonstrate my worth and capability to someone else."

"Why did you feel a need to do that?"

I think for a while. "Well it's partly to do with how the organisation measures appraises and rewards me."

"Oh?" says Franck lifting an eyebrow.

"You have to have tangible things you can point to during appraisal because most of our managers are not astute or intuitive enough to understand that you can make things happen without personally having to be seen to be involved in every action."

"And because," adds Franck, "measurement appraisal and reward have their roots in the days when the purpose of measurement was to count up the number of visible pieces that someone had made so that you could pay them the appropriate piece rate. That form of measurement is irrelevant in an information and ideas age of intellectual capital because you can't measure the goodness of

an idea nor can you easily follow its production path through the organisation."

'Of course.' I think, 'He's right it's the old world intruding on the new world' But Franck gives me little time to mull this over. "What was the other reason you felt you needed the brownie points?"

This reason is more personal and starts to make me squirm. "I guess that's more about me and my ego and my need to be at the centre of things, the be all and end all"

Franck looks at me uncharitably and adopts that 'I'm talking to a twelve year old' attitude he used on me when we first met and says with a grin. "And why is that?"

I ignore him. It's obvious that I like many executives still haven't grown up in some departments but I'm not about to say this. I still play the 'here look at me!' game I still crave the teacher patting me on the head and saying well done. I still don't understand that if I can influence others so effectively I don't need brownie points. So instead I just smile bobbing my head up and down rapidly.

"If you wish to lead it comes from within he says One of my colleagues Warren Bennis says it's all about maturing and discovering yourself within I agree with him he says but you are telling me something much more than that. You were telling me about a leadership which goes beyond leadership. Describe it to me again so I can be sure that I've got what you are saying."

"I was trying," I say groping "to describe a different sort of leadership. A leadership where my actions allow people to get in on the action on the ground floor at the level of the strategic problem rather than it's solution. A leadership where I carry out many and diverse actions but only some of these are obvious. Most are subtle and invisible allowing others to take accountability and credit for actions and ideas which originated with me."

Franck seems impressed by what I'm saying. "You seem to have invented a new form of leadership, a sort of **Invisible leadership.**"

"Invisible leadership." I say I like the sound of that.

"I like it too." says Franck warmly. "And what would you say invisible leadership is about?"

*"Invisible leadership isn't just about doing things invisibly it is also about making sure actively that the problem is understood by all, the problem not the solution and that they start to construct an alternative future themselves for themselves I say Being an invisible leader means recognising that you will never get the credit of most of the work you do. In fact you can not get any credit at all for all your best work. It is about beginning to see yourself as **creator-enabler** rather than as **driver-conqueror**. I say coining now terms which mean something at this point in time in this discussion but mean little else any where or anytime else. I am proud of my new insight It really does make a difference to how I feel and I get this sense of a need for more tea and toast."*

There is a quiet stillness for a moment which Franck finally breaks. "I guess what you have just said also has an impact on the question you asked me earlier."

I frown.

"The question about the vicious cycle in your organisation? Your question about how to get out of it."

I remember. "Oh yes the loop."

"Try to break it. What do you now think is the way out of that cycle of doom?"

I continue speaking almost without having to think I'm getting good at this it's almost as if someone else is putting these ideas into my head. "So the only way we can break the loop is by having people who actually understand the full complexity of the problem who are capable of implementing the changes the overall business needs but without attracting the enmity of their colleagues or superiors."

Franck nods.

**"So any organisation which does not have some people with the ability to deliver change without being spotted and blocked will stagnate. And what is crucial is not only**

**that they deliver the change but also that they deliver changes which change the organisations future."** I say.

"Brilliantly put!" He says applauding. He drains the last few drops of coffee from his cup and says, "And now if you will excuse me I have to be somewhere else."

"Thanks for taking the time to talk to me." I say genuinely grateful.

"No problem mate." He replies stretching out his hand. "I think it'll make a real beaut of a case study. Maybe even the storyline for a book." He grins at me suddenly, rises from his chair, turns and is gone, leaving me with the bill and my thoughts.

## ***Chapter 6 Managing Change in Chunks***

I drive along in silence. The rain is sown to a light spatter and a bluish tinge around the edges of the less determined columnus nimbus clouds betrays the end of their dominance of the sky. As I approach Rochester I am starting to feel positively delighted. For the past hour I've played the conversation with Franck back in my head over and over. It really helped me see things more clearly but there is still one thing I don't get. He seemed to know **my** conclusions before I did. How did he know? I had all the facts. How did he know? How did he know?

The sign at the entrance to the town says 'You are now entering Rochester'. It also gives some other factual data like the number of inhabitants and when the town was started. 'Why?' I think, 'do all towns do that? Why do they all use the self same format to present uninteresting facts? Why do none of the signs say, You are entering Rochester. This is a fun zone. Get with it or get the \*!\$% out of here now! or Welcome to Rochester, We don't know why you're visiting this dump but welcome anyway. I guess even town councils get stuck in their own strategic ruts'.

Rochester Riverside is a squat dark looking building which sits like a lump of coal in the middle of an emerald carpet. A carpet of grass which instead of being laid flat, instead slopes gently to my right as I approach the front entrance. The sloping carpet ends in a confused tatter of stones and rocks and mud at the water's edge. The sense is tranquil if somewhat gloomy the grey cast sky is still leaking slightly but the complete absence of wind means that I can almost feel the gentle lapping of the waves at the broken interface of earth and water. My conversation with Franck although a few hours ago is now firmly locked into my history and personal folklore and I feel very good about having had so keen a view into what before I had only almost glimpsed. My mind is still whirring and clicking over my chance to bring it all to life.

I tug at the left side of the double glass doors the side that says 'Please use other door', it wakes me from my daydream. An alternative tug and I'm in. I announce myself to the receptionist and start to head toward the customary coffee table flanked by the pair of customary low 'too soft to be comfortable' seats when I'm called back to the reception desk.

"Could you please wait a minute I think I have something for you "

The receptionist disappears into a back office only to emerge seconds later carrying a fat sheaf of papers. "I think these are for you."

I take the faxes, mumble thanks. I'm a bit embarrassed about being chased round by faxes from work at this earlyish hour, and head back towards the supplied seating. I settle deep into the chair spread the faxes out on the glass top of the table and start to skim them. There is one from Pablo asking for even more detail about his part of the programme. I feel my temper rise out of impatience. I'm sure that I answered all this before. He seems to need to know exactly both the outcome and the step by step detail by detail method of everything before he is even willing to give it a try. His part of the programme is running very late already because I just can't get him to make a start. There is another fax which links to the programme but this one is different it is about problems and disturbances that are being caused by the work of the programme it is from Harvey Trevelyan. Harvey is the sort of division head who proves that the Peter Principle, the statement about people reaching their level of incompetence, is in fact a law of nature. Harvey is a division head. You know Harvey is a division head because he keeps telling you so. And if you ever make the mistake of going into Harvey's office his fake military memorabilia try to convince you of his precise and military mind whilst Harvey's speech and actions do the opposite, interrupted only by him reminding you that he is a division head. Normally, for a memo from an executive I would read between the lines. With Harvey I don't have to. It's obvious, Janice has gone beyond the

brief I gave her and started trying to get information on how the competences across the divisions mesh together. I told her Malcolm didn't want us moving into that area yet. I'm exasperated. She must have done this some time ago before I warned her off. And she hasn't done anything at all about transferring the skills database held by personnel into the tabular format we need. This is all too much. I've got one project leader who won't move without an all I's dotted all T's crossed plan and another who seems to do every thing except the completely simple and completely clear set of project activities they've been given.

This programme sometimes makes me feel under real pressure. It's as if I'm caught between a rock and a hard place. No it's more like being caught between two rocks no even more so it's like being caught between two grindstones on the one hand I have the strategic grindstone slowly lumbering driven by politics with slow progress and the slow development and understanding. At the bottom is a far faster grindstone which is all about the pressures of today a focus on now a focus on the detail, almost a clamouring for detail, quick time scales. *And me caught in between trying to turn unclear strategy into actions and at the same time learning from the actions and trying to use the outcome of actions to inform and influence the future development of the strategy.* I can see the need for both actions but it doesn't half wear you down.

It is in this state of mental anguish that I look up to see the smiling face of my host. My host is Danny Ortega. Danny is a slim young looking 35 year old in a dark blue suit. I've met Danny before. In fact he often calls round our organisation. It's part of his job as Customer Satisfaction Monitor.

"Hello and Welcome," He says vigorously grabbing my hand and processing it and then noticing my expression asks, "Was it really such a bad journey?" When I reply that it wasn't. He then goes on to enquire "Are you feeling all right?"

I insist that I am adding, "It's just these faxes which were here waiting for me on arrival. You know how it is business is all headaches."

My host smiles again and says, "Shall we go up to the meeting room?"

"Yes." I reply and ten minutes later we are sitting with Alison Strato their MD in a small 'white board panelled' meeting room discussing the suppliers view of our Corporate Competences. I've just finished my introductory schpiel I've just told them about the Corporate Competences programme and why we are embarking on it. I've just explained that our top management team are very much behind the programme and see it as a way to increase our competitiveness and profitability. I am telling them how we see the further competences which arise from strong relationships in development and innovation across the organisation as key but also the development of such relationships with our key suppliers. They are nodding at this. I'm explaining how in this *turbulent era of rapid change suppliers are almost more important to an organisation than customers*. I'm explaining that our success is their success and that in many ways we need to be aligned with common goals and to recognise our mutual **interdependence**. I emphasize the need for customer and supplier to **coevolve**. I talk about the need for **trust** and **shared empowerment** and treating each other as **equals**. It sounds good, even to me and they are nodding and seem to be coming onboard.

Danny asks for clarification, "You mean you want us to operate as one team although we are in different organisations?"

I confirm this "Yes." I say. "A tight team which is also a loose team a sort of..." I struggle for the right word but Danny butts in and suggests "**Virtual team?**"

"Yeah, great!" I exclaim smiling at the term and nodding vigorously, "Virtual team sounds about right." The conversation is going well. They are obviously beginning to understand the nature of my visit when the phone rings. Alison picks it up and listens intently for a

moment. Then she stretches her arm out to offer the hand set to me saying, "It's for you"

I have to stand to reach across to take the handset off her as I start to speak, announcing my name. I notice that I can't quite sit down again because the lead is too short so I stand again and try to pick up the base of the phone itself.

The voice of the person comes though loudly. "It's Malcolm." He says.

"Hi Malcolm. I'm in a meeting. Will it wait for an hour?" I pick up the base of the phone, as I do so I accidentally press the hands-free microphone/loud speaker button.

Ian's voice booms into the room. "No it wont wait! he exclaims. "What have you been up to?" He demands. By now my fingers are searching frantically for the 'off' button. I press the microphone/loudspeaker button again. I know it hasn't worked because Malcolm's voice booms through again. "First I have Pablo in here first thing this morning asking me a whole bunch of detailed technical questions I can't answer and what's worse I get summarily called into Bills office and receive a carpeting because..."

By now I'm frantic. I'm pushing all the buttons I can find. I finally notice the orange 'cut' button marked obscurely 'RLS'. I'm in two minds. Should I cut him off and spare my embarrassment and my hosts' embarrassment at the risk of him firing me immediately, he sounds mad enough to do that. Or do I suffer the embarrassing tirade of Abuse in front of my 'soon not to be so close in partnership' suppliers. I look up at them. Both Alison and Danny have faces frozen in horror and embarrassment. I gesture towards the phone asking for help. Malcolm is still in full flow. "Because," he repeats, "one of your programme team."

'Janice.' I think.

"Has been ferreting around the divisions annoying the division heads. Something which I expressly told you not to do."

'Harvey has obviously been complaining.' I think.

"And another thing."

Alison finally springs into action. She says quickly, "There's something wrong with our system the only way you can turn the speaker is to press the release button."

"What? Who's this?" comes back Malcolm's voice, confused at the sound of a female voice down the line.

"What's going on?"

There is a cold wet sheen on my forehead which is starting to form into a pattern of rivulets over my eyebrows as I start to speak. It is all too much for me. "I told you that I was in a meeting. This is a conference phone." I say trying to sound calm and collected as if little harm had been done at my end.

"Oh!" He says taken aback and then curtly, "You'd better come in to see me as soon as you're back in the office." and a click and the line is dead.

Danny starts to breathe again. I look up smile weakly and say jokingly "It could be worse. At least I've got my job until after lunch eh?"

They make comforting noises but I do my best to bring things back to a business footing. Surprisingly the rest of the meeting goes quite well we conclude our discussions slightly early and the site tour which has been arranged for me also finishes ahead of schedule as a result.

Now I am back in the car again. This week I seem to have spent so many hours in it I feel like a cyborg, half-human half-machine and I'm not sure which half is which. I start up what I think is the machine part of me and start to make my way toward the motorway and back to the office. As I approach the motorway junction I realise that since the meetings finished early, it looks as if I'll be back at the office early. This is not good news. I would be returning early to meet a very irate sponsor A sponsor who could fire me. A sponsor who will probably come very close to firing me because I won't really be able to explain what has gone wrong or why. I need more information. I spot a lay-by and pull in.

My first call is to Janice. Ten minutes later I've established in my own mind that apart from the fact that out of a combination of curiosity zeal and naiveté, that and not really appreciating the position Malcolm had set

the day before, Janice hasn't really done anything that bad. What we were looking at was far more political than really operational.

The second call to Pablo drew a very similar conclusion. Pablo was again being conscientious. He was just trying to get the work done, He had only gone to Malcolm because Malcolm had asked him in the corridor how things were going and he had explained about needing some further more detailed guidance from me. The conversation had mushroomed because Pablo had tried instead to get the information from Malcolm

The wasted time had probably been as much Malcolm's fault because he always wanted to know what was going on in greatest detail in order to keep control. I guess that and Pablo's desire for fully defined structure and a keenness to 'do something' were to blame.

I start up again and join the flow of traffic but still don't really feel like going straight back to the office yet. I set off anyway. This is not a part of the country I'm very familiar with and with the main load off my mind I am starting to behave a bit like a tourist, actually looking at buildings and fields. Just before the junction where I'll join the motorway I spot a small turning. It looks like a 'B' road but is signposted or at least the attraction of driving down the road is signposted. It says. 'TO THE RUINS' in home made lettering, brown on a blue background. One moment I have no intention at all of deviating from joining the motorway, the next moment I find myself driving down a narrow half tarmac road in a light wood. The wood continues densely for five minutes and then there is a clearing. The road curves across the centre of the clearing eventually coming to an end at its edge. There is a large flat area which serves as a car park I bring the mechanical part of me, the car, to a halt.

There is a rich deep green valley below to my right. And there are the RUINS. The ruins don't look much. They probably don't even deserve the hand written sign which directed me here, just some badly hewn rock piled up in one corner in two other corners the remains of what must once have been the foundations of a smallish dwelling.

Just beyond them I can see a picnic bench. I walk up to it and sit down at it. It looks very clean either no one has used it for sometime or the last few picnickers cleaned up well after themselves and every one else. I sit drinking in the silence and utter tranquillity for a while, then the silence is broken. There is another car coming up the road. I watch quietly as the car comes through the clearing and parks neatly behind mine. I wonder whether it's someone else bunking off work or if it's a genuine sightseer. It's neither. The door opens and I get out.

The other me strides purposefully towards me hand outstretched

"Hello." S/he says. "I thought I might find you here."

I'm lost for words as I take the hand and shake it. I mumble something incoherent. I can't get over the thought that s/he knew I was here and actually came looking for me.

Me4 is talking excitedly. "I'm really glad I found you because I can now tell you what has happened to me and then you can fix it before it actually happens."

Eventually I gather my wits back and say, "How come you know about me? I've met other future Mes before and it was a real battle getting both sides to believe who we were. Why didn't the other Mes remember my visit?"

"Trauma. It's such a shock to remember travelling through time that we bury it deep in our subconscious. I only remember because I had hypnotherapy for my drink problem."

I stop listening to his/her explanation and instead exclaim, "Drink problem!"

"Oh yes and very bad it was too. I'm now divorced, poor, I still have my job though but things are pretty tough. That's why I came to look for you. You are my only hope. S/he pauses, "You really must get this implementation right. I think that there must be some decision you got wrong early on and then compounded by how you continued to manage the situation. For me," Me4 looks imploringly into my eyes and then speaks emphasising each syllable, "You...Must...Get...It...Right!"

I suddenly start to feel a strong responsibility. A responsibility I have for the me of the future and now I have met myself as another person three times. I am finding it harder to be selfish about my own immediate needs. For the first two encounters I was curious but detached and studied the encounters coldly and academically. Now I am feeling involved. And I am feeling apologetic, no genuinely sorry for not building up a decent skill set. I feel guilty for making life hell for these other People. My altruistic tendencies are growing and I feel a genuine and deep desire to help Me4.

But how can I. I don't know what I did in the first place to create the mess is s/he is now in. I hear these words come out of my mouth direct from the bottom of my soul without passing through my conscious brain, My conscious brain would never have made such a rash promise. Especially since I did not know how I could do it. "I will get it right. I promise I won't let you down."

"Good. Thanks." Says Me4.

"I guess 'I'll need to know a bit more about what happened to me."

Me4 sits down slowly beside me, pauses momentarily to take in the view of the green valley below us and then starts to speak, "Well then, where shall I start?"

I look at Me4's profile. Of the three versions of my future self, Me4 looks by far the best preserved. And in spite of all the terrible things that have happened to him. I think subconsciously, 'At least it's good to know that I will still look great in three years time.' In reply say curiously, "Why don't you start where it all started to go wrong or at least when you noticed that it had started to go wrong?"

"Well it started going wrong when. I noticed that every project I had delegated, as part of the overall programme, seemed to go wrong. Each time creating a crisis which demanded action from me. In fact in my case I really started to realise it on your today. It was gradual but it developed steadily almost as if there was steady pattern to it. I finally began to realise that I did not have a very

effective method for co-ordinating the various projects which made up the whole programme."

"Why was that?" I ask.

"Well, I'd not really thought about them as a *group of projects*. As far as I was concerned, I was simply running one big initiative or project and for which I had some support from Janice and Pablo. I just tried to fill the gaps in by working harder. But because I had so little time, this worked in the short term but in the longer term it became quite impossible. I ended up in a vicious cycle. *Quite simply because I had so little time I could not co-ordinate what was going on, so things would occur which I had neither planned nor had early warnings of. I would then have to fire fight my way out of the problem. Of course because fire fighting takes time I had even less time to plan or replan.* As this started to happen I began to try to have more control over what was going on. I tried to draw all the decisions, however small, to me."

"That makes sense." I encourage. "That should have given you a view of what was going on."

"It didn't. It was a disaster. All it meant was that I had even less time to do any thinking."

I feel an icy chill go down my back as I listen to Me4 it all seems so inevitable. I say nothing but simply nod in empathy.

"And then of course Pablo and Janice started to complain. Janice started first. She accused me of acting like a Soviet Reformer. Starting off by encouraging her to do things and to take risks but eventually turning into a dictatorial monster who wanted to rule by decree."

"What did you say to that?"

"Nothing really. There seemed to be a very large element of truth in it. And the more I thought about it the more the analogy seemed correct."

Me4 pauses for me to comment. I can't think of anything to say, so I say, "Please carry on"

"Next Pablo plucked up enough courage to accuse me of not being clear enough, of setting poor project definitions and then of blaming him when it failed to miraculously work out. But that took some time. In the intervening

period what I noticed was that over time I was finding it harder and harder to get commitment out of them."

"I don't believe that." I say, "Janice and Pablo are just about the most dedicated pair in the division."

"Yes they are **now** at least for your now but what do you think happens to their commitment after two years of missing out on their incremental bonus?"

"What? They missed out on their incremental bonus?"

"Yes of course they did. As you know they were working almost full time on the Corporate Competences project and that was not included on their appraisals. We were in fact punishing them for their company wide commitment and in fact very good performance."

'Of course.' I think. 'How stupid we are. *How can we seriously expect people to be involved in creating a new future when all the measures we use all the rewards all the qudos is generated by the demands of the present.*' "What a paradox." I say out loud. "**To be successful both now and in the future** we need to *do things better today*. Now that means that we must **focus** our time and resources and best people **on improving today's performance** and for this we need controls and rewards for today. And yet to succeed tomorrow, and since tomorrow will probably include several discontinuities, things which are not simply extensions of today, we also need to concentrate on *doing things differently for tomorrow* so in fact we should **focus** all our time and resources and people **on creating for tomorrow** and for this we need them as unconstrained by controls and measures as possible. We can not do both and if we try to balance them up today has all the heavy weight. Today is rewards. Today is qudos. Today is promotion."

Me4 nods as if seeing it so clearly himself for the first time. "Yes," says Me4 slowly, "you are right. What a dilemma. And I fell on one side, the today side without even noticing."

For a short while Me4 seems lost in thought. Me 4 sits with eyes slightly upturned saying nothing and then I speak, softly to bring the conversation back round to

where it was originally headed. I say, "You were about to tell me about the other problems I had from my team."

"Oh yes and that's another thing, they are not really a team."

"What? Not a team?" I say not quite understanding.

"No. Not a team."

I ask. "Is this some strange futuristic use of the word 'team' that I have not yet come across?"

"I don't think so. What do you mean by *team*?" S/he asks.

*"Group of people, common goal, interdependent- can't succeed on their own, linked roles which co-evolve, personal accountability and all that stuff."*

"Same definition here. No. Definitely not a team. And." says Me4 ominously, "Mismatch."

"What?" I repeat now totally confused.

"Pablo hated the project I gave him and so did Janice. In fact Janice left the company last week saying that she was looking for an organisation which would value her creativity."

"What?" I repeat, incredulously this time.

"You seem to keep repeating yourself." Says Me4 unempathetically.

"What?" I say again and then regaining some composure. "Will you please slow down and tell me properly what else happened."

"People have preferences. There are situations where they prefer to lead and situations where they do not." Says Me4 flatly.

I'm struggling to see the point. "Yes," I say impatiently, "and?"

"And you got it wrong. You got it all wrong. You got it all wrong. Too tog tee all rung. Too tot tee tall ong. Now it sounds more like a whistle. A whistled tune. Too tot tee tall ong and its getting louder. I jerk as I open my eyes to discover that my head has fallen back in my sleep and as I look upwards, I am staring at a particularly black blackbird. Black with orange. Black with an orange beak for contrast. A small black and orange bird with a mismatched voice. Instead of having the volume you would expect from such a small bird this one seems to

have borrowed it's volume from a large emu. And then it dawns on me. "Another dream." I pull my head back upright and massage the muscles which are complaining stiffly. I look at my watch. I've been asleep about twenty minutes. I guess I'd better be getting back, that's enough bunking off for today. I stand up and head for the car. All the time Me4's words are going through my mind. "Not a team. Mismatch."

## **Chapter Seven    *The third skill: Leading Project Leaders***

I push at the door to Malcolm's office. I'm apprehensive I'm a mixed bundle of emotions; part annoyed, part frightened, part frustrated, part embarrassed and largely confused. I know that I and Janice are right to insist that the Corporate Competences programme covers the whole organisation and crosses Divisions.' I'm so uptight I miss the pun in what I'm thinking and miss its unintended humour. I know that I'm right, but it still doesn't prevent me from feeling like an emotional ratatouille. The final emotion on my list, confused is largely confused because when I knock on Malcolm's door his, "Come in." is unexpectedly cheery, even hearty.

"Hallo. Come in." He beckons smiling, "Sit down."

Now I'm even more confused. Then I hear these words, the words that were the words I was least expecting to hear, "Sorry about this morning." My mind does a boggle. I hear my logic circuits start to chatter in a flat nasal voice, "Do not compute... Do not compute... Do not compute." At the same time my voice circuits bypass my logic circuits and I hear words come out of my mouth which I swear I did not formulate. "That's OK Malcolm. No problem." 'No problem!' I exclaim in my head. This guy created one of the most embarrassing situations of my life and here I am saying 'No problem'. 'Why?' I ask myself, but get no answer. My logic circuits are still tied up in an endless loop. I'm simply left wondering what has saved me?

Now it is late afternoon the meeting with Malcom, better described as a miniture celebration than a meeting ended some time ago with him saying he would go all out for the funds we need for the whole project and at last I've discovered what has saved me. What has saved me is Franck. I've just discovered that under the pretext of gathering information for the case study he'd called Malcolm and during the conversation had managed to get Malcolm to invent for himself the need for the

programme to be cross Divisional and to put the cross Division study as top priority.

I'm saying loudly, "I don't know how you did it!"

"Invisible leadership." He replies leaning towards me.

"How did you know I was going to be in trouble?"

"You told me yourself."

"When? I ask curiously. I can't remember telling him anything like that. How could I? I didn't know that I was going to be in trouble myself.

"When we met." He says flatly.

"I don't remember telling you about Malcolm, in fact, I couldn't have."

"You told me about your ego and your need to be visible in the programme and then you told me about the fact that the programme needed to work across the organisation."

"So?" I shout still not seeing his point.

"Tell me what happens if you have not mastered invisible leadership and you need to lead change which crosses the organisation."

I smile. When he puts it that way it's obvious. It's obvious that I stand a good chance of becoming embroiled in the politics. I say so.

"Now add to the fact that you stand a good chance of becoming embroiled in the politics, the fact that you have a sponsor who doesn't understand the essential organisation-wide nature of the project."

"Of course," I shout back beginning to understand, "At the first sign of any political rumblings Malcolm will try to retrench his position to keep himself on the political high ground. So that's how you knew." I say. "Some sort of extrapolation technique."

Franck nods. "But be careful." He warns. "Don't become too cocky. Predicting the future is at best an imprecise science a science best left to those with crystal balls. What is *more important is to recognise patterns* rather than to predict the future. I was actually working with a pattern I have seen often before.

I nod understanding.

We are being bounced around above the very noisy engine of an airport transfer bus.

After my meeting with Malcolm I'd tried to get hold of Franck to find out what magic he'd woven to transform Malcolm's attitude. I'd failed initially but his office had told me that they would let him know that I was trying to reach him and that he would get back to me. Thirty seven minutes later my phone had rung. Our conversation went something like:

"Gday time traveller had any feedback recently?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact I have."

"Can't talk now and I'm going to be out of the country and out of touch for three days. Tell you what I've got a flight at 7.30pm. I usually park in the Red Kangaroo car park. If we could meet in island E about 6.00 we can travel to the terminal together and have about an hour to chat before I have to catch my plane."

I hear myself saying "Sure" and now we sit side by side on a black plastic bench seat shouting at each other.

"So tell me what happened in your latest encounter with yourself." He says we are approaching the terminal and the traffic has slowed. The noise level in the bus has fallen to match the speed of the traffic.

"It was a very enjoyable encounter." I say. "Enjoyable might be stretching it a bit, on reflection but it was far better than the previous two." I quickly describe the discussion with Me3 ending by explaining, "What I didn't understand though were s/he said that my team were not a team and something about mismatch."

Franck picks up on the second point. "Mismatch what about mismatch?"

"Something about their preferences."

Franck nods as if understanding the point. However he does nothing to share the understanding. Instead he says to himself "Not a team huh?" Do you remember where we met the last time we met?" He asks leaning towards me.

"Yes," I say, "of course. It was only yesterday"

"What was on the site?" He says intensely.

I'm puzzled simple question simple answer. Why is he making such a big deal of it? We met at one of the more

recent service areas on the R4. "A service station." I reply bemused.

"Had they finished developing the site?" He quizzes in a tone which expresses importance and urgency.

"No." I say, "No they hadn't. I think that they were building the motel or something."

"Precisely!" He responds. "Do you remember how these service areas used to be built?"

I nod not remembering but hoping that he won't probe too deeply. I'm lucky he doesn't.

"They used to build the motorway and then almost immediately build the whole service area; petrol station, shops, toilets, washrooms, motel and then they would announce a grand opening."

This time I nod remembering and agreeing.

He demands, "How do they do it nowadays?"

I pause for a moment to consider the answer. I remember the billboard with the apology. I reply, "They seem to do it a bit at a time. They start with the toilets and the petrol station."

Franck is nodding as I speak. "Do both approaches end up with a complete service area with all the services?"

"Yes."

"So to get to the same end point, the construction companies have changed their approach?"

"Seems so" I reply, wondering where this is leading.

"Why?"

"I don't know maybe it's easier."

"Easier to complete your construction work when the site is swarming with the public?"

"Maybe it's cheaper." I say grasping at straws.

"Cheaper to landscape the area twice and put up huge information billboards?"

"Maybe it's so they don't have to pay... How about, it's so they can get some money in during the construction phase."

"Precisely. Years ago they treated the whole activity as if it was just one big project. If you'd watched the cash flow of such an activity project you'd have noticed money going out in a steady stream until construction was

complete. Then, hopefully, the money would come back in." As he speaks his right index finger draws a two foot deep imaginary 'V' in the air in front of us. They assumed that they could predict the future. Don't forget ten years ago, a year was a short time, the budgeting cycle."

I nod remembering and cringing slightly over our previous conversation.

"Now with a year as a very long time why do you think they construct in the fashion they choose?"

"I get it now!" I say. "It's about risk. They are treating *the activities as a programme of projects. Breaking the programme into smaller chunks each of which is useful on it's own*"

Franck is beaming at me. "What does the cash flow profile for this lower risk programme now look like?"

It's my turn to wave in the air. I inscribe a wavy 'W' shaped line.

"I call this approach *'whistling at the world' rather than being vexed* by it. Carrying out many projects simultaneously in sequence and parallel. It's an important concept in programme management. You however have a slightly different problem from the construction company."

I think. 'My programme involves people changing.' "What do you mean?" I ask.

"You're not building a motorway service area." He says unhelpfully. "Remind me **what exactly** is it you're doing and **exactly how** are you going to do it?"

"That's the problem. I'm not entirely sure. If I don't know what I'm trying to do and how to do it how do I break it into 'W's'?"

At this point the bus pulls up outside the Terminal building. I know it has pulled up because the driver has gone from 30mph to zero in a yard. We tumble out over each other grabbing cases, bags and accoutrements and spill out of the bus and into the terminal. A Short walk and we are in the check in queue behind two smart looking business types and a family. To our left is a group of ten, obviously on a school outing they are humping the most enormous back packs I've ever seen. The basic packs themselves are standard sized but the kids

have slung bed rolls, sleeping bags, pots, sound systems and a whole host of other gear onto them and strapped them on or wedged them in.

"It's probably already broken into chunks for you." He says. "Remember a project is only a chunk of change you decide to carry out in response to an earlier change. Programmes usually fall quite nicely into the projects which are the building blocks. If your programme covers the overall organisation strategy you may need to root out all the projects you need. The only thing to remember though is not to think of them as bricks."

"What?" I was following that but this bit about bricks?

"Do you think that with some of the projects you are likely to know both what to do and how to do it? In short your options are very closed."

"Yes." I say thinking of Janice's project

And with some you may be unsure of what to do or how to do it?

"Erm Yes."

"For those your options are very open. Now can you see why it is essential to think of them as building blocks but not as bricks?"

I'm struggling.

Franck helps. "The *open project*, your goals and methods are likely to be a bit **foggy** aren't they?"

"I can see that."

"And they are likely to evolve as you learn more?"

"Yes." I say groping.

"And the more plannable *closed paint-by-numbers project*, will that evolve?"

"Probably but it really shouldn't change too much from the initial conception unless something goes wrong."

"Talk about building blocks always makes people think about bricks. Bricks fit snugly together. *There are four types of projects* in all. They all come in different shapes with different techniques for running them. Much better to think about your programme as made up of projects which fit together like how these suitcases and back packs will end up in the hold." He says waving his right arm to illustrate his point. "**Loosely coupled but tightly aligned.**"

"I get his point. ***A programme is actually made up of a number of projects. The projects come into being in different ways, either to overcome a significant problem today or to take advantage of some new strategic opportunity. The projects themselves are all different they range from closed to open and each needs to be run with an appropriate approach.***"

Franck is still talking, "Do you remember our conversation about the Red Queen and types of strategic problem and the spectrum of problems you get depending on how fast your travolator is moving?"

'Vaguely.' I think. I say. "Vaguely."

"Well you see the make up and mix of projects is dependent on where you are on the spectrum. At the 'more of the same end you get lots of closed paint-by-numbers projects and guess what?"

As my recollection strengthens I can see the connection. I finish the sentence for him, "At the 'don't know what to do' end you get lots of open foggy projects."

Franck's eyes seem to darken relative to the rest of his face which beams with pleasure and pride in my achievement. "When you get good at this you'll learn how to skew the mix to your advantage." He turns away and steps up to the check in desk.

"I take the break to think. I've begun to understand what implementation is all about and I'm really excited about that but we haven't yet touched on Me4's comments about my team not being a team and whatever s/he meant by mismatch."

"Have-a-pleasant-flight-Sir." The trained voice sings.

"I'll do my best to." He replies and then to me, "Last call is in ten minutes."

I leap straight in. "Franck I see what you've said about the programme but what is this stuff about my team not being a team."

"He looks surprised first and then his 'I'm talking to a twelve year old' look comes over his face he's obviously surprised that I haven't figured it out. He says, "So what makes a group of people into a team?"

I've already answered that today to Me4. It's getting repetitive. I rattle off the list. Franck butts in as soon as I finish saying "Interdependent, can't succeed on their own, co-evolve"

"But they can!"

"What?"

"Janice can succeed if Pablo fails and Pablo can succeed if Janice fails. **They** don't have to co-evolve, and **they** do not have a common goal"

"He's right I hadn't seen it before. Of course I say with complete immediate insight. "They are running **separate** projects."

"The problem is that **you** can't succeed without them. Your problem is that in running a programme you need it all to work to deliver implementation. Your projects must co-evolve. You will push one project at the expense of another or add projects to the overall programme kill projects. That's the big difference between you and them."

"The balancing act?" I check.

"Yes. and worse as programme manager you are playing chess with their projects. Have you ever come across a project manager who would voluntarily kill off their own project?"

"I think for a second. "No." I reply. "That would be like admitting failure. Stopping a project equates to failure."

"But you might remember the importance of understanding new world strategy you have to evolve the appropriate implementation. *You change your chunks to suit the change.* And think about it *a project on it's own is unlikely to destroy the company if it fails but a programme might.* ***If any project takes on such significant strategic implications, turn it into a programme.***"

I nod. This whole thing is starting to make some sense. I am aware that I have little time so I rush to the last point on the agenda I ask. "And the "mismatch'."

Franck rounds on me. His eyes darken. He says, "You're going to have to work this one out for yourself. You already know all the answers you just aren't thinking it through."

"Where should I start?" I plead slightly embarrassed. I know that I've been trawling for quick answers and that his accusation is true.

"What makes up a programme?"

"Projects."

"And are they all the same?"

"No I guess some are more closed and structured than others."

"And who runs projects?"

Project leaders.

And what sort of behaviour and skills and attributes would you want from someone running something closed."

"I'd want them to have experience, plan it and then get on with it."

"A sort of **adaptor**." Says Franck put them on the rails and they just go and boy do they go."

"Yes." I reply.

"And what sort of behaviour and skills and attributes would you want from someone running something open and foggy?"

"Masses of ability to learn be creative, involve others cope with the ambiguity and complexity."

"A sort of **innovator**." Summarises Franck. "And now you're on your own."

He falls silent leaving me trying to make out what innovators adaptors and types of projects have to do with me. I guess I could start by looking at the projects in my programme. I've already established that one is open and one is very closed. And then I think about the project leaders. Janice is and innovator. And Pablo with all his questions and need for clarity is an adaptor. The word flashes in lurid pink neon across my brain 'mismatch!'. No wonder they were making so little progress with their projects. I look at Franck He's laughing at me. "It's so obvious when you know what to look for isn't it?" I say.

"Not really," he replies, "with four types of programme, four types of project and four types of appropriate project leadership styles it's very complex. **Only the pattern is obvious.**"

"Thanks." I say. "Thanks again." I know that he has to leave.

We shake hands. I'm ready this time for the crunch. I count my fingers expecting to have just one large one.

"Good luck putting your strategy to work."

"I'll do my best." I reply.

He turns on his heels and goes through into the departure area.

"I shout after him. "You never told me what the three key things were."

"I guess I didn't." He grins wickedly. "You'll just have to **go into your past and reflect.**" He steps through the metal detector and is gone.

I head off to catch the transfer bus back to the car park.

## **Chapter Eight The End of the Beginning**

It's Friday and it's today! Today is make or break. Today is go or no go. I rise silently from bed trying not to disturb the still form next to me. Ten minutes a shower, toast, juice and I'm off. I climb into the car yet again turn the key in the ignition and switch to automatic pilot.

Up ahead the grey skies are showing a long, broad horizontal crack. The crack runs almost horizon to horizon. A bright almost fluorescent blue strips shows through the crack as the sun streams through the only opportunity it has for miles to reach out its rays to the earth. In steady motion across the middle of the blue band a flock of grey white Canada geese points it's way steadily and rhythmically across the sky. They fly in a tight arrowhead formation which over its length becomes less precise ending with a few out- of sync and out of formation geese forming an irregular tail to their in flight structure. It's a simple but beautiful sight. About twenty enormous and graceful birds twisting and turning in the sky, following a winding but fixed flight pattern. A pattern established for them long before time or at least long before modern memory. All together for a journey which will cover oceans and continents. All starting but not all finishing the long perilous journey. Enough will make it to meet at the other end, mate, have a few parties, sing songs round the camp fire and then journey back to complete their voyage into forever.

A miracle, almost. Twenty geese loosely coupled but tightly aligned.

I say that last thought out to myself out loud. "**Loosely coupled but tightly aligned.**" Why that's what Franck said. He said that about the projects in my programme. My independent but overlapping chunks of change. I smile deeply to myself. What a simple but effective analogy.

Last night I'd decided to take Franck's advice. I'd decided to 'go back into my past and reflect'. Reflecting on things doesn't come easy to me. I'd reflected by

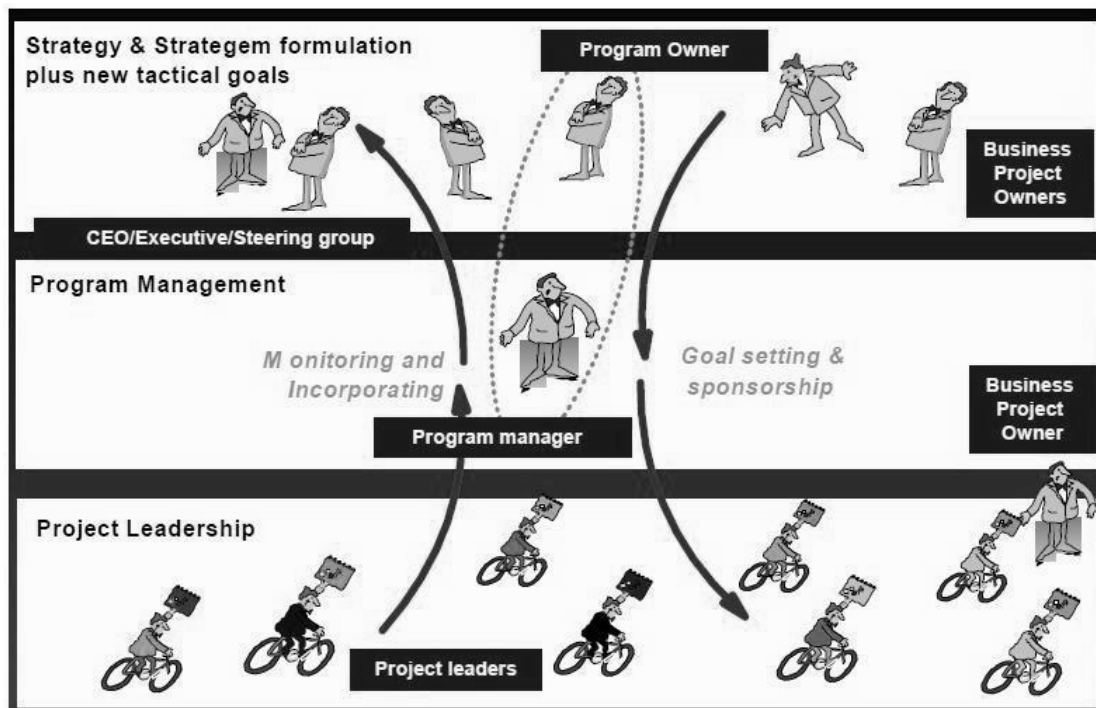
default. By staying up until midnight without the TV or the CD player on. I'd realised before long that he had told me, or to be more accurate allowed me to work out, with his prompts, what the three key things were.

It's close to midnight but instead of preparing for my presentation tomorrow, I'm doing exactly what I always do when I have something urgent and pressing, something else. I'm sitting, for once not in the car but in the lounge, trying to work out what the three key things are. I'm sitting nursing a lukewarm cup of decaffeinated coffee when I decide to scribble. I get up out of my warm hollow in the armchair and venture into the hall. I extract a pen and a sheet of yellow paper from the bureau. I know that one of the three things had something to do with strategy. I remember Franck's reaction to my slow understanding of what strategy really meant. To represent strategy I draw a cloud about a third of the way up the paper. It isn't a very good cloud it's too spherical. I shade it in to make it look more cloud like. It hasn't worked completely.

Next I think, 'I'd better draw in some projects.' These I represent eventually not as bullets, having thought that a projectile would be a good metaphor, but as cgeese, Badly drawn geese. The geese are drawn in the bottom half of the page. I then link the cloud to the chevrons to try to represent the strategy turning into projects. I'm doodling. 'What could the third thing be?' Of course! Me. Me as an 'invisible' leader. I draw a stick person between the images. The picture looks asymmetrical. 'Of course it is.' I say out loud adding a second arrow for balance. *'I have to transfer what I learn from the projects back to inform or change the strategy!'*



I stare at my sketch. The understanding really hits me. It feels just like stepping under a cold shower on a hot day. ***To put strategy to work I have to manage two simultaneous processes one translates the strategy into chunks of change and the other ensures that the implementation I am carrying out is the right thing for the organisation and that the stakeholders believe so. And I can only succeed in the long term by leading this and by leading it invisibly.***



That was last night. Last night I felt great about things. I've learnt a lot but I still have a hurdle to overcome before I can be certain that the Corporate Competences programme will become the reality which helps Alcorp survive into the future. I'm trying to work out how to tackle my presentation. Should I be up-front and confident? No, I think invisible leadership it would be best if they shared in the glory of making it a winner. I drive on in silence as usual working out how to apply what I've learned this week from Franck to my presentation.

I arrive at the office with a quarter of an hour to spare. I'm ready. I decide to check in with Gina before going into the meeting. It is a bad move.

"I'm glad you showed before disappearing into your meeting. I've had Julia Roberts from Legal on the phone non-stop for the past half hour Chasing you about the contracts and the IPR. Apparently it's gone critical. What do you want to do?"

"Could you please call to say I'll come straight across after the meeting. Oh and could you call Janice to say that I think she's a genius setting me up with Franck and that I'll be buying her lunch today." I know that I've been dumb not seeing it earlier but that was the other thing yesterday's reflection helped me to see. Franck's case study writing was just a ruse! Janice had obviously contrived for me to meet him. After all he never actually seemed to take any notes or write anything.

Now I'm sitting in the board conference room. Our discussion is almost over. It's gone like a dream. I've explained about the vicious cycles. We've discussed the paradoxes and dilemmas of programme management, I've managed to get them to invent a 'New World' strategy approach and my leadership has been so invisible you can hardly see the bandages round my head. The programme fell out into a series of linked projects. Three of the directors added in initiatives they were pursuing themselves. And we planned how to keep them aligned. Franck would have been proud of me.

Bill says, "That was a great discussion but were going to have to end it there. We've got to take a conference call with Austria in five minutes time. Can we leave approving the funding of the programme just now and get back to you later."

"Sure." I say and stand up and leave the room.

I head straight for the third floor and the legal department. I head straight into a real jungle.

Four hours later I emerge. It was tough going with the detail and sorting out the key negotiating points but I made it in the end. I missed lunch though I'd had to call and apologise. So I'm a bit tired and hungry. I head back

to my office trying hard not to think about the backlog of work which must have grown in my absence.

The door to my office is half open I slip inside. And then I realise that there is someone sitting at my desk. A figure hunched up as if to keep out the cold. The face stares at me with a broad grin. It's Malcolm. "I was just leaving you a note about the board's decision."

It's green!

That's all folks! Enjoy your game!

## **PART 3**

### ***THE LAWS OF CHANGE***

When I began the research for this book, I had not anticipated finding any hard and fast rules to explain how modern business change happens. Not surprisingly I didn't. I did however, discover six very strong patterns which underpin change. Having found these patterns I called them the Laws of change simply to add some pseudo-scientific credibility to what would otherwise be typical management book mumbo jumbo. I discovered that my course delegates liked the idea of immutable Laws of Change it made it all seem logical predictable reasonable and a lot less airy fairy, so I've kept calling them that.

I've published My Laws of Change in other places before so I decided not to waste your time in the main body of the text by repeating them. Instead I've listed them here with the original sources should you want to do some background reading

- 1st One change leads to another.
- 2nd Adding change to change creates chaos.
- 3rd People create change - people constrain change
- 4th Accomplished change is change chosen and carried out carefully.
- 5th The challenge of the creating change is the converse of the cumulated complacency.
- 6th Resistance to change accumulates over time and the Cumulative need for change can't be carried out all at once.

## ALL THOSE NEW WORDS

*"If you use a word a man can't understand,  
why, you might just as well insult him."*

*John Steinbeck*

### **How to use this glossary**

**This glossary contains a whole range of terms associated with Putting Strategy to Work. I've tried to avoid using jargon when giving explanations, however this is not always possible. I have therefore highlighted all terms which need further explanation. The explanations are provided elsewhere in the glossary.**

### **THE EXPLANATIONS**

#### Big Picture

The big picture gives the context for the project. It is best understood by asking the question, 'Why do they want it?', for each stakeholder grouping. The answer to this question will usually include reasons which relate to the strategic and commercial environment, reasons which relate to organisation structure and politics, and some reasons which relate to personal ambitions.

#### Change Projects

These are internal projects. They are driven by the organisation which has to change.

#### Client

Client is a loosely used term and refers to one or more people in the **client organisation**.

#### Client Organisation

The client organisation which wants to use the output from the project. Specific people in the client organisation include the **key contact**, the **client sponsor** and the **end user**. This is usually the organisation which **drives** the change.

The client organisation can be completely separate from the **project organisation**. For example the client organisation is the company which commissions an advertising campaign from an advertising agency. Alternatively, it can be a separate department or division within the project organisation, for example when the Human Resources Department is asked to implement a new performance related pay scheme in the Operations Division, Operations Division is the client.

#### Client Sponsor

The client sponsor is the person in the **client organisation** who wants the project completed. The relationship between the **client sponsor** and the **key contact** mirrors the relationship between the **sponsor** and the **project leader** in the **project organisation**. Occasionally the **client sponsor** and the **key contact** are the same person.

#### Closed Projects

Closed projects have clear goals and a clearly defined set of activities to be carried out, they are characterised by the phrase 'we will know when we have completed the clearly defined deliverable'. Examples include building a bridge or launching a clearly specified new product.

Colloquially described as **painting by numbers**.

#### Collaborative Project

See Joint Venture.

#### Core Team

In projects where there is a large **visible team** there is usually a sub group of 5-10 visible team members who act as the core team. This core team works with the **project leader** and takes the operational decisions relating to the project.

#### Commercial Projects

These are projects run to make money directly from the project itself. Money is made by the organisation **delivering** the project.

#### Contract Project

This sort of project is **internally driven** and **externally delivered**. Your organisation pays another organisation to deliver a service.

#### Culture

Culture consists of two fundamental elements:

1. The norms and behaviours of a group i.e. 'The way we do things around here.'
2. Unconscious programming of the mind leading to a set of similar collective habits, behaviours and mindsets.

#### Deliberate Strategy

See Directional Strategy

#### Directional Strategy

A directional strategy is a statement of 'where we want to go.' It has clear goals and the way forward is clear. There is little uncertainty so forward planning is appropriate.

#### Drive (Driven, Drivers)

Drivers are the people who demand and define change. Drive is the role of the **sponsor, client** and **end user** stakeholders.

#### Delivery (Deliverers)

Deliverers are the people who create change. The **project leader, core team, invisible team, stakeholders** providing resources etc.

#### Emergent Strategy

An emergent strategy is one which is continuously evolving. It is characterised by loosely defined goals and uncertainty about how to proceed. It involves rapid **Plan-do-Review cycles**.

Typical emergent strategies often appear to be statements of 'how we got here.' Examples include implementing culture change programmes and realigning business processes with customer demands. In both cases it is easier to define 'what we don't want to be' than 'what we do want to be.'

#### End User

The end users are the people in the **client organisation** who have to live with the project deliverables. For example they could be the keyboard operators for a new computing system or the shop floor workers and supervisors responsible for quality output once a total quality management initiative has been introduced.

#### External Projects

For external projects most **stakeholders**, and particularly the **client**, are outside the project organisation. With external projects there is often a supplier purchaser relationship. Also see **Commercial projects, Contract** or **Turnkey projects** or **Joint Ventures**

#### Flock

Flock is the word used to describe a group of projects which make up a programme. They are loosely coupled but tightly aligned.

#### Fog Project (Fog Walking, Walking in the Fog)

Formally known as an **open** project this type of project occurs when you are unsure of both what is to be done and how it is to be done.

#### Going on a Quest

See Quest Projects

#### Hard Objectives

These define what the project will deliver, typically they include the time, cost, specification and terms and conditions.

#### Hem

Him or Her

#### Hes

His or Her

#### Illegitimate Projects

Projects which do nothing to help the organisation reach its goals. A project which does not contribute to the current or future profitability of an organisation or any of its other goals. Pet projects, Out of date projects where business needs have changed since the project was set up fall into this category.

#### Invisible Projects

On invisible projects there is little awareness that the project is going on and progress is difficult to see. Writing a new computer programme is an example of a largely invisible project.

#### Invisible Team

The invisible team comprises all those people within the **project organisation** who are not immediately identified as 'working on the project', yet they have a key input on an occasional basis. For example, the Accounts and Purchasing Departments may be important invisible team members for a project to install new process plant which requires a lot of new equipment and invoices to be paid promptly.

#### Investment

The money an organisation spends on goods/services and information it intends to sell and all the money it spends on skills, knowledge and equipment to give it the capabilities it needs to generate **throughput**.

#### Internal Projects

For internal projects most **stakeholders**, including the **client**, are inside the project organisation.

#### Joint Venture Project

A hybrid type of project which is both **internally** and/or **externally driven** and **internally** and/or **externally delivered**.

#### Legitimate Project

A project which contributes directly to the goals of an organisation in terms of current or future real revenue or throughput, operating expense or investment.

#### Managing by Projects

A management philosophy which uses projects to achieve strategy. The philosophy extends through all levels and functions of the organisation. Teams are set up to implement particular aspects of the strategy, and are dissolved once the desired result is achieved.

At any one time, everyone in the organisation is working on one or more projects. People are recruited to teams on the basis of their relevant knowledge and skills. Every one working on a project identifies clearly with the project objectives and understands their individual contribution.

#### Money Making Loop

The key, dynamically stable, cause-effect relationship which generates the business revenues. Anchored by core drivers a money making loop can persist in an organisation for decades. Within the complexity and chaos of the organisations structure, markets and so on the money making loop acts as a strange attractor. Money making loops are essential to prolonged business prosperity.

#### Movie Project (Making a Movie)

Formally a **semi-open** project. Projects where the means are known but the objective is unclear

#### New World (also see, World *After* midnight/ Real World)

New World refers to a set of conditions which determine that the business environment behaves in a complex and chaotic manner. New world is associated with business environments where organisations actively pursue change, are global in terms of competition and make use of information in order to ensure that most communication to customers, suppliers and employees is very fast global and accurate. These organisations operate in activities where competition is intense and customer expectations arising from this competition continuously spiral out of control. In such industries the convergence of technologies makes the emergence of new, non-traditional competitors commonplace whilst at the same time the businesses need to use a wider and wider range of skills, competences and technologies to produce and deliver their offerings, making the business more and more difficult to directly manage. The people working in businesses expect to be empowered and to contribute to the decision making and business operational process. The intellectual as well as physical contribution of the members of a business to all its activities is paramount.

In general, the rules for business success in New World are very different from the rules for success in more static business environments

#### Old World (See also the World *Before* Midnight)

Old World refers to the business environment where command and control hierarchies provided the best route to delivering business results. The business environment was largely predictable and mass

market approaches were still effective. People working for organisations expected to be un-empowered and quite looked forward to that.

**Open Projects (Also see Fog Projects, Movie Projects, Quest Projects)**

Open projects have loosely defined goals or unclear means. The general direction is understood but the end point is hard to identify. They can be characterised by the statement 'we will get closer than we are'. Examples include implementing transformation programmes, and investing in pure scientific research.

**Operating Expense**

The running cost of the business; all the money that the business spends to produce goods or services it intends to sell - usually equivalent to fixed costs.

**Operating Expense Rate**

The rate at which you need to spend money in order to run a business.

**Plan-Do-Review**

A plan-do-review cycle involves planning a small step to try something out, completing the step and reviewing progress to see what has been learnt before planning the next step.

**Process Consultancy Skills**

The skills to influence people over whom you have no authority, for example those at higher levels in the organisation. People with a high level of process consultancy skills excel at solving complex issues logically and storing the solutions for future development. They are also brilliant at reading group dynamics and interpersonal relationships.

In addition they are able to make interventions which challenge the basic assumptions underlying decision.

These skills are critical for the strategic project leader who needs to get inconsistency and ambiguity addressed in order to implement his or her project portfolio, at the same time as retaining respect and support from above.

**Project**

A project is a process which encompasses the definition of project objectives, by reconciling the objectives of a diverse group of stakeholders, then planning, co-ordinating and implementing the activities necessary to achieve these objectives to the satisfaction of the stakeholder group.

**Project Objectives**

These spell out what the project is trying to achieve in terms of hard objectives and soft objectives. They also provide the context for the project in terms of the big picture. In most projects, some new objectives will emerge as the project progresses.

**Project Organisation**

The project organisation is the organisation which employs the project leader and is responsible for carrying out the project.

**Project Leadership**

Project leadership is the discipline of leading and managing projects. Leading the visible and invisible teams to achieve the objectives of the stakeholders.

**Project Leader**

The project leader is the person who is accountable for getting the project completed.

**Project Portfolio (See also Flock)**

The group of projects which are managed by a strategic project leader. Each project in the portfolio contributes to the achievement of the overall strategy.

**Quest Projects (Going on a Quest)**

Going on a Quest is formally known as a semi-open project. You are clear of what is to be done but clueless about the means.

**Real Revenue Rate**

The rate at which an organisation generates money through sales less real variable costs.

**Real World (also see New World)**

A less emotive way, than 'New World' of describing the current business environment of most industries today. It encompasses change, discontinuity and a real reliance on the intellectual as well as physical contribution of members of a business.

Semi-open Projects  
See Movie projects

Semi-closed Projects  
See Quest projects

S/he  
He or She

#### Soft Objectives

These relate to how the project should be managed in terms of relationships. Typical soft objectives include how the project should be controlled, how communications are to take place, what to do in case of emergencies. A project specific soft objective might be, 'This is very sensitive information, we don't want it widely known'.

#### Sponsor

The person(s) in the project organisation who want(s) the project to be completed. The sponsor is often the project leaders' boss but may be a senior manager from a different part of the organisation. Used well, the **sponsor** can provide influence, information, access to an invaluable network and a good sounding board for ideas.

The **Sponsor's** motivation for wanting the project completed is an important part of the big picture. The project leader must understand this motivation in order to manage the relationship successfully.

Some projects do not have a clear sponsor, in which case the project leader needs to return to the big picture, and ask, 'Why do they want it?' and 'Who is the they?'.

In exceptional circumstances, the programme/ project leader may also be the sponsor.

#### Stakeholder

A stakeholder is anyone who has an interest in the project. A typical project has some stakeholders who support it and some who oppose it. A useful way to identify stakeholders is to ask, 'Who is impacted by what this project is trying to achieve?' and then to produce a stakeholder map.

#### Stakeholder Map

A useful way to understand the relationships between the **stakeholders** is to draw a map. The resulting stakeholder map should show three major groupings of stakeholders, those within the **project organisation**, those within the **client organisation** and those from **supplier** organisations.

#### Strange Attractor

In non-linear systems there is a capability for the system to demonstrate behaviour which is within bounds but unpredictable. Such behaviour is termed chaotic. A strange attractor is the name given to the stable centre of such systems.

#### Strategy

Conscious manipulation of the future. This is a New World definition. In New World organisations acknowledge the futility of detailed long range plans and concentrate instead on visions, frameworks, multiple, overlapping and co-evolving change activities, infrastructure platforms and rolling plans. The intention is to try over time to create the future you have invented before.

#### Strategic Implementation

Concurrent manipulation of a range of changes designed to:

Identify and establish constraints to current /future business performance

Define and discover the gaps between the current reality and the future vision

Decide on the Source of future constraints and designing control and co-ordination systems and measurements

Defining problem set or objectives to be addressed by strategic programme

#### Strategic Project Leader

Strategic project leaders act as the conduit between those who formulate strategy and those who implement it on the ground, the project leaders. To be effective in this role they have to understand how strategy is formulated and the problems faced by their project leaders. In addition, they need leadership and process consultancy skills.

Typically a strategic project leader has a project portfolio and acts as the sponsor for each project in the portfolio. Reconciling conflicts between projects, setting priorities, elements of the strategic project leader's job.

#### Supplier Organisation

Supplier organisations are all those suppliers and subcontractors, external to the project organisation who provide the goods and services which are required for the project to be completed.

#### Throughput

The rate at which an organisation generates money through sales.  
See revenue rate.

#### Turnkey Project

This sort of project is **internally driven** and **externally delivered**. Your organisation pays another organisation to deliver a service.

#### Visible Projects

On visible projects there is a high level of awareness that the project is going on and progress is easy to see. Building a bridge is an example of a highly visible process.

#### Visible Team

The visible team are all those within the project organisation who are clearly identified as 'working on the project'.

#### Walking in the Fog

See Fog Walking

#### World before Midnight (Also see Old world)

This describes the business environment before the full impact of the chaotic, information based change dominated current business environment.