Facilitating Empowerment in Organizations

Bruce Nixon

The Authors

Bruce Nixon, *An independent consultant based in Berkhamsted, UK and would be pleased to hear from anyone interested in this article. Tel: 0442 864856.*

Abstract

Describes the author's distinctive approach to facilitating empowerment in organizations and helping managers enhance their capacity to learn and respond to change more effectively. Expresses the author's views on how the culture of organizations need to change (and the specific changes in attitude and behaviour this requires) if people are to cope well with uncertainty, change, complexity and huge pressures. Describes the methodology used with senior managers and directors in three different organizations over the past five years; the common and distinctive issues in those organizations; how the intervention strategies evolved differently in them; the successes and difficulties and the learning in these initiatives.

There are many different ways of bringing about change in organizations and we are engaged in an unending process of discovering how to do it. Although it is the task of managers to change organizations, a consultant who is outside the system can play a crucial part in the process. Many consultants (I include myself) have deeply held beliefs about how organizations need to change and are overtly trying to influence the way in which they are led and managed. Gently expressed, these views can be both inspiring and empowering. We seek to attract clients of a like mind and offer them partnership and support for their leadership. In this article I shall share what I have learned, thus far, about how to bring about cultural change in different organizational settings. It is based on my work over the past six years, in particular with a large retailer, a borough council and one of the largest of the new universities. I shall compare how the work is evolving differently in these three organizations and draw some conclusions.

The Need for an Empowering Culture

Organizations, and people in them, face uncertainty, change, complexity and huge pressures. Among the factors causing this are: the demand for higher quality and value for money (more for less); higher expectations of quality of life at work and elsewhere; increasing globalization of the economy; efforts to contain growth in public expenditure and transfer services from the public to the private sector; the growing urgency of both equal opportunities and ecological issues and awareness of inequities in the global economic system; and, lately, international recession. How can we find our way through this complex situation which is at once exciting and daunting? It is likely that we shall find ways forward most successfully first, by releasing creative energy, intelligence and initiative at every level; and second, by learning how to unite people in solving common problems, achieving common purposes and respecting and valuing difference. Organizations which do this will have the best chance of surviving and prospering. They

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will attract the most able people and have the best relationships with customers ([Block, 1993](#); [Harman and Harman, 1990](#)).

This implies a different culture: leadership that is inspiring, empowering and nurturing, rather than controlling; an atmosphere of high expectations, appreciation and excitement; a balance between yin and yang; recognition that, normally, internal competition is destructive and there are elegant or "win-win" solutions; an attitude of wanting everyone to excel; acceptance that in today's conditions we are bound to have difficult feelings and that understanding how to deal with our feelings, and how to assist others with theirs, is a key skill. We also need to learn how to tap into the energy to improve things, so often expressed as complaint, criticism and blame, and help people deal with feelings of hopelessness, often masquerading as cynicism.

In my experience there is a widespread desire to change the culture of organizations (although sometimes there is lack of clarity about what the new culture should be or how to bring it about). There is growing recognition of the connection between the quality of life within organizations and delivery of quality and value to the customer. It is behaviour and attitudes which create the culture of an organization. Yet, there is often a huge gap between the espoused culture, values and beliefs of leaders and their actual behaviour. Despite our best intentions, most of us struggle to act in ways that empower and unite people and we learn how to do so with difficulty, partly because we have experienced so few models who act consistently in this way.

At the root of these difficulties are old messages we received about how to lead. These are shown below:

Old Leadership Messages

- How I see things is correct.

- Keep separate from those you lead.

- Never show weakness, confusion or admit mistakes.

- Be consistent to the point of rigidity.

- Overwork and sacrifice self (become unfit and unfit to lead as a result).

- Criticize, manipulate and coerce.

- There is a basic conflict between groups, i.e. win-lose.

- The leader pursues power rather than purpose.

These messages have been developed from the example and experiences of male leaders because, until now most organizations have been led by men. An alternative model designed to create the empowering and unifying culture we need is shown below:

An Alternative Leadership Model

- Develop an inspiring vision of the future - invite others to do likewise.

- Learn to love change and uncertainty.

- Decide to appreciate the whole situation and see that everything goes well - implies listening to a wide range of people.

- Become a leader of leaders, release intelligence and initiative.

- Create an environment of appreciation, high expectations and support.

- See yourself as a life-long apprentice.

- Develop high self-esteem.

- Learn to listen with complete respect and ask empowering questions. Teach others this key leadership skill.

- Put an end to complaining and blaming.

- Develop concrete plans and review them regularly.

This again is a model developed by men (Simmons, 1993) and it would be interesting to see how a new model developed by women would differ. However, it represents a better balance between yin and yang. The vast majority of managers I talk to recognize these "old messages" which reflect their own painful experiences. They also welcome the alternative model as an expression of that to which they aspire.

I shall refer frequently to the gender issue in this article as I believe lack of respect for difference (including class and race) is at the root of many of our difficulties in organizations. Currently, the culture of most organizations is determined by white men. If men and women develop a genuine partnership I believe we shall all benefit from the harmony, balance and creativity that will result. If we make a start with gender we may tackle other aspects of difference more easily.

The rest of this article will be about ways of helping managers change their day-to-day attitudes and behaviour and transform the culture of their organizations.

Strategies to Facilitate Empowerment: First Phase
Below are described underlying strategies, which have evolved in working with major clients over the past six years:

1 Intervention Strategy*:*
*First Phase***:**
- Planning meeting with internal consultant -her/his diagnosis, vision, strategy, planning initial intervention, choice of facilitators.

- Contracting with chief executive - her/his diagnosis, vision, expectations.

- Planning meeting with facilitator team -diagnosis, vision, strategy, "charter" on how we will treat each other, team building, initial plans, selection of participants.

- Consultations with participants - their diagnosis, what they want to change, key issues, expectations, and their advice.

- Design of workshop I - based on key issues of participants; skilling of facilitator team.

- Presentation to chief executive and her/his team.

- Presentation to participants - their diagnosis, the workshop and how the team designed it, objectives, approach and methods.

- Workshop I.

- Implementation.

- Support groups meet.

- Further consultations.

- Design workshop II - based on current diagnosis of needs and key issues.

- Workshop II.

- Continuing implementation and support group meetings.

- Facilitator team reviews and plans strategy.

2 Subsequent Strategies*:*
***Embedding the Values and Behaviour*:**

- Further programmes at same level.

- Network events for past participants.

- Facilitator workshops (to enable participants to become facilitators).

- Further programmes at higher or lower levels.

- Work with top management team.

- Cascading through team programmes in participants' units.

- Deeper work with emerging corporate key issues.

- Work with individuals.

The above is based on a well known consulting model, which advocates:

Consulting Model
- gaining entry;
- developing a clear agreement;
- collecting data;

- making a diagnosis;

- planning change;

- implementing change;

- evaluating, monitoring, reviewing;

- withdrawing;

and a simple change model ([Figure 1](#)).

Figure 1 . Empowerment Model
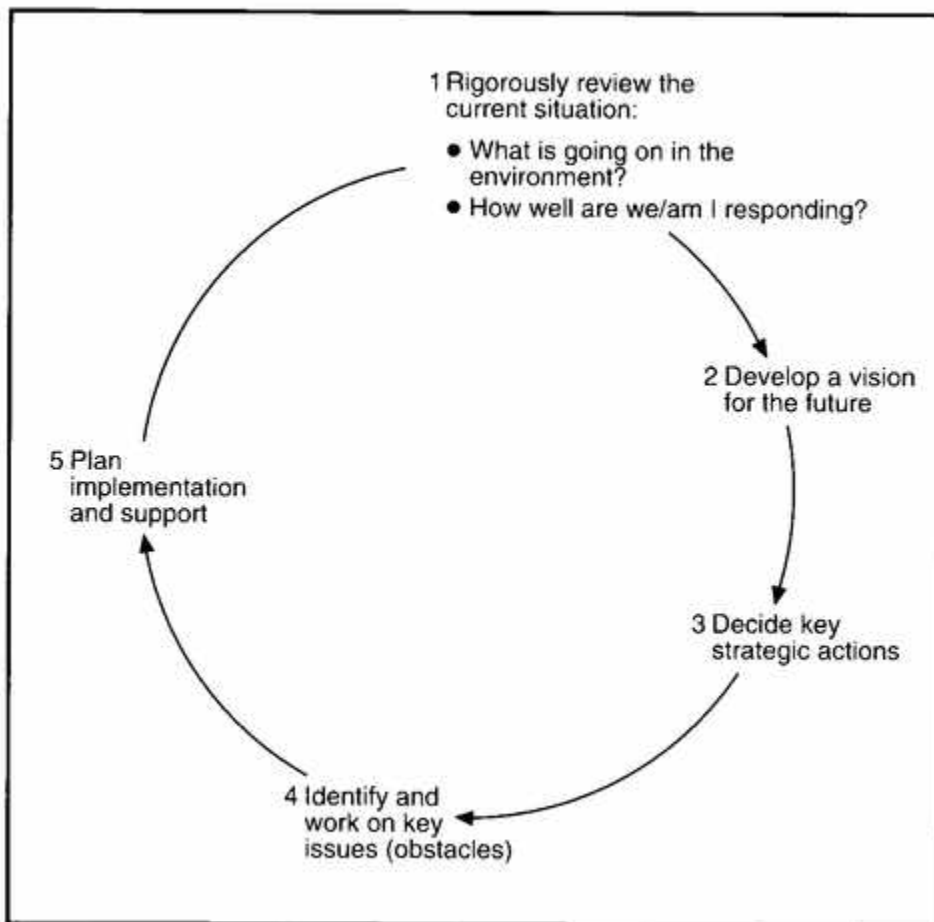
I make the latter explicit to my clients and refer to it throughout the work so that it will become a key part of how we think and work at every stage. My work nearly always starts by establishing a partnership with an internal consultant who wants to take leadership in helping managers change the situation for the better (see *Intervention*

strategy:- first phase). In our planning meeting I work with the client on her/his diagnosis of the situation; her/his vision for the organization and her/his part of it; and her/his current thinking about a long-term strategy to tackle the key issues of the organization and bring about her/his vision. We plan an initial intervention including the level at which this will take place, who the participants will be and who we will invite to help facilitate it. This will be at the highest level at which there is sufficient readiness and energy to change the culture of the organization.

Essentially, what we are trying to do in the initial or pilot phase is complete a highly successful intervention that will make it safe enough for the organization to take the much bigger risk of committing itself to a major programme of interventions. We are looking for participants who will make the very best use of the opportunity and have the credibility to encourage their colleagues to follow them. Ultimately we are seeking to achieve a "critical mass" which will then embrace almost everyone in the organization. It may be that this initial intervention will not be at the top management level and that the strategy will be to work up to this level later. Even if the top management are included in the first phase it may be wiser to involve the chief executive after the pilot programme. Typically the initial intervention will involve more than one level of management and include about 12 people. An ideal facilitator team will be the internal consultant, a respected and potentially skilled member of the client group and an external consultant. The team needs to include both genders, assuming that gender is invariably a key issue in organizations.

The trust, desire for things to be different, commitment and, ultimately, understanding and, in most cases, participation of the chief executive are crucial to the long term success of the intervention. What is her/his diagnosis of the situation and vision for the organization, what gets in the way and how could this intervention help? It is essential that the chief executive continually sees the intervention as a key means of achieving her/his vision and goals. The same is true of the members of her/his team. Hence the importance of presenting the design of the first workshop to her/him and her/his team.

The Workshops

The basic structure of Workshops I and II is shown below:

> **(1) Workshop I-** three days:

- Building the climate; contracting, forming support groups.

- Rigorously reviewing the current situation and our/my response to it.

- Developing a vision for the future.

- Deciding key strategic actions.

- Identifying and working on key issues - the "flexible programme".

- Planning action including support.

- Commitment and reviews.

(2) Workshop II- two days:

· Re-creating the climate.

· Rigorous review of progress since Workshop I; successes, difficulties, changes in the situation, learning, what now needs to be done, best use of workshop, i.e. new key issues.

· Core programme for common issues.

· Flexible programme for individual issues or issues shared with others.

· Further planning including support.

· Final commitments and review of strategy.

Essentially this is an empowering structure. It enables rigorously, develop a strategic vision for the future, identify the obstacles or key issues that will get in the way, and work on them (primarily in the flexible programme) and plan action, including the support they need to sustain their efforts. The focus is on thinking corporately but taking individual responsibility to improve the situation. The subject matter throughout is the actual work of both the organization and each individual. Most of the work is done in small support groups.):

Approach
· Agenda is your own work.
· You do it - it is what you make of it.
· No contrived situations - working on reality.
· Core programme for common key issues.
· Flexible programme for individual or shared issues.
· Climate: honesty, trust, being ourselves, authentic.
· Balance: demanding, supportive, challenging, exciting, fun, serious, humorous, taking care of ourselves, knowing when to stop and when to review process, feeling and task.
· Connection between workshop climate and what people want out there.
· Tutors model what they espouse.
· Variety of methods:

The methods used are summarized below and have been described more fully elsewhere (Nixon, 1987, 1994

Methods
· short inputs;

· time to reflect and review;

· work on own;

· work in pairs;

· work in small groups;

- plenary to brief, review and work on key group or corporate issues;

- regular reviews;

- giving and receiving feedback;

- commitments to action.

The function of the second workshop and the support groups is to provide sustained support for both organizational and personal behaviour change.

A central focus in the workshops is to bring about cultural change which in turn means changing behaviour. This is why we contract with the participants early in the workshops on what climate they want and what this means in terms of behaviour. We consciously model different behaviour as a tutor team and we gently push the participants to try out and practise different behaviour, consistent with the culture they want and the alternative leadership model, e.g. appreciating the whole situation, building a vision, really listening, appreciating themselves and others, giving honest feedback in a helpful form, being open and authentic, being themselves, showing feelings appropriately, enjoying themselves, not over-working, giving up complaining and blaming, taking responsibility and supporting each other rather than being competitive. One of the skills that is taught and practised throughout is listening, as a key helping skill for leaders. Good quality listening also helps with accurate diagnosis of the current situation and problems. None of this comes easily, of course, because it is contrary to the prevailing culture of most organizations and the way most individuals have been conditioned. This difficulty is acknowledged in the frequent opportunities provided by the many stages of the strategy to review progress, refresh and try again.

Although the basic design of the workshop follows a largely pre-determined form, the consultations, the detailed design work that clearly reflects the participant's issues and the presentation of it to the participants are important. (It is also important to be extremely flexible in implementing the design and modifying it in the light of events as they evolve.) Participants are being invited to participate in a learning process unlike anything most of them have experienced before - one in which their own work and issues are the agenda. They are being invited to be honest with themselves and each other about their deeply felt values, their vision and their difficulties. The pre-workshop consultations (in which the questions asked are based on the empowerment model) start the process of building trust with the facilitators and help participants begin to decide what they want to change and the key issues they want to work on in the workshops.

The methods used are summarized below and have been described more fully elsewhere (Nixon, 1987, 1994The presentation stage of the strategy enables them to see their collective diagnosis, find out how much they have in common, and develop sufficient trust in each other, in the tutors and, in the process, to commit themselves provisionally to it.

The strategy is sufficiently rigorous that, provided the facilitators make astute judgements throughout, there is a high probability of proceeding successfully beyond the first phase. Of course there will be difficulties, mistakes and resistance. There will be extreme

nervousness about whether the process will work. Past experiences of management training and various fads and "flavours of the month" may make people cynical and fearful that nothing will come of a long-term investment of their time and energy. When it is safe enough, the participants will present their own individual difficulties and the key cultural difficulties of the organization. These can be extremely nasty to deal with unless we realize that they are presenting them because they (sometimes desperately) want help with them! However difficult at the time, we need an attitude of welcoming and showing great interest in these presentations of the distress of the organization. Inevitably there will be resistance to trying strange new ways of behaving and, at the very least, embarrassment. However, if all has gone sufficiently well by the end of the second workshop, there is likely to be great enthusiasm for embedding these fresh approaches into the way the business of the organization is conducted and great interest in developing a suitable strategy to create a critical mass in the organization. It is important to use this energy and involve the participants at every stage in planning the way forward and gaining the support of their colleagues. It is also important to involve top management, if possible.

Evolution of Strategy
Subsequent strategies: embedding the values and behaviour shown earlier in this article sets out some of the ways in which a strategy can develop. By this stage in the process, there is probably much less nervousness in the organization and greater readiness to share and work on key issues. In a sense, up till now, the organization may have been on its best behaviour! This may be a sensible point at which to involve the chief executive as a participant, though this is likely to increase the nervousness again.

A probable strategy at this point may be more of the same, i.e. further programmes at the same level in the organization. This may be the time to run a facilitator workshop to train participants to co-facilitate these programmes or similar programmes within their own units and those of colleagues. After a number of programmes at a given level have taken place there is likely to be a desire for participants from different programmes to get together in a "network event" so that they can build networking relationships, work on the key issues of the organization as a whole, develop a shared vision, share experience and give each other support.

It is likely that as work is completed at a given level, there will be a desire to cascade the work downwards, which will require the development of more facilitators. If the work did not start at the top slice of the organization, this may be the time to move it up to that level. If the chief executive has been involved and her/his experience has been rewarding and constructive she/he may now wish to initiate work with her/his team. Gradually, a critical mass will have developed and there is a strong probability that the culture of the organization is changing, because behaviour is changing. The ways of the workshops and support groups are becoming the ways of conducting business in the organization - at first with considerable diffidence and embarrassment but with growing confidence as they are seen to work and make a difference. It will be crucial, however, to provide sustained support for these changes, or they will wither.

Support Groups

At this point it may be useful to describe briefly how the support groups work during and after the workshops. The ideal number seems to be about four people. They are self-selected and they choose their facilitator. Most of the work during the workshop is done in the support group, facilitated by a tutor. Essentially they work through the empowerment model. In the process they get to understand each other and their situations extremely well. Support groups are encouraged to (and usually do) continue meeting (without the tutor) after the workshops, to give each other long-term support. Doing this is extremely counter-cultural in most organizations. It contradicts the traditional messages about not trusting and that a real leader does the job alone. They are encouraged to appoint one of themselves as a leader each time and to follow a rigorous process, sharing the time equally between each person. An agenda we suggest is:

Support Ggroup Agenda

- What is going well?

- What is proving difficult? What have you learned?

- What is your current thinking about the situation?

- What will you do to change it for the better?

- What may get in the way which you need to tackle?

- Review and appreciation.

There is a tendency at first for the support groups not be led, nor to work in a rigorous way but, generally, they learn that they will not provide challenging support or add sufficient value unless they are led and work rigorously. The support group method often influences the way in which many other meetings in the organizations are conducted because it provides a rigorous and empowering discipline.

The Issues of Three Organizations Compared
As one would expect, there are both similarities (which reflect the prevailing culture of organizations in this country) and differences in the issues of the three organizations. All three, to varying degrees, face huge pressures, change, complexity and uncertainty. All three face similar difficulties in responding to this situation: a degree of powerlessness at every level (reluctance to take responsibility or show initiative and upward blaming); lack of direct, open communication; difficulties coping with stress; a tendency to gross overworking (working harder rather than smarter); not taking space to think about change and manage strategically; difficulty bringing out the energy, initiative and intelligence of people; difficulties in working corporately or collaboratively; lack of respect for difference and difficulty handling conflict; difficulty giving and receiving feedback and being flexible and open to learning; a punishing climate; over-control and reluctance to involve others and, often, feelings of frustration and hopelessness.
Among the differences was the relative vulnerability of the more senior managers in the retail organization and their reluctance in many cases to admit to issues or development needs of their own, as opposed to those of others; to a greater degree they attached their difficulties to the behaviour of the chief executive and the awe in which he is held is considerable; they were less aware of the importance of gender issues (including the

effect of male gender conditioning on the culture of the organization) and reluctant to work on gender as an issue. Generally, these managers were more cautious in their attitude to trying new ways.

In the borough council there was more awareness of the importance of respecting difference and willingness to discuss gender issues, though, perhaps, not to take them very far. There was more openness to acknowledging and working on personal issues and, generally, to run with the processes, try new ways and apply them back in the organization. These differences may be explained by the nature of the work of the organization and the larger proportion of senior women.

In the university the urgency and pace of change seemed exceptional and there was a remarkable degree of overworking and frequent absences from the workshops. The degree to which people were willing to work on their issues and use the rigorous processes varied quite considerably. Although some men were particularly unaware of gender issues and resistant to acknowledging their importance, the organization was the most interested in working on equality (gender, race, physical disabilities etc.) and they are doing the most work on gender issues (perhaps because of the relatively high proportion of women in senior management). Also, there is the strongest interest in this organization in changing the way the senior and top management work together as a group.

These differences may reflect differences in the interests, competences and relative caution of the facilitators and significant differences in the strategies as well as differences in the cultures of the organizations. Size may be an important factor: 35,000 in the retailer, 1,000 in the borough and 2,000 in the university. Certainly, and not surprisingly, this kind of change takes place more quickly in the two smaller organizations and they are the most immediately exciting, rewarding and fun to work with.

The Strategies Compared

What is different about the three strategies?

The Retailer

The work was contracted with an internal consultant (a man) but not with the chief executive (male); we started working at senior manager level four years ago, and a year ago moved up to a more senior level but not yet top, corporate management. The chief executive became involved at this stage as a contributor and it is hoped that, ultimately, he and his team will become participants. The initial, all male facilitator team consisted of an internal consultant, a manager seconded to training and an external. I withdrew after the first two programmes and only returned when the work moved to a higher level. Recently the facilitator team has included a woman, but no managers. In the second more senior level programme I shall be replaced by a woman external consultant - an excellent step in tackling the gender issue, partly because she will provide a powerful model for the women participants. Ex-participants have networked with each other and a first network event is to be held in Spring 1994. Managers have not been trained as facilitators and, perhaps, partly because of the size of the organization, managers have not been much involved in developing the strategy. My impression is that while participants have been enthusiastic about the programme and have claimed many benefits, the work is owned more by the management development unit than managers in the business. Also, until

recently, a strong connection with the chief executive had not been sought and, consequently, the work may not have had a high enough profile. It may be significant that in this large organization I was one of four or five groups of consultants providing services, several different initiatives were taking place concurrently and the combination of many activities and budget constraints has made it difficult to progress sufficiently rapidly to develop a strong groundswell.

The Borough Council

The work was contracted with the internal consultant (a woman), the chief executive (male) and his team. Work started two years ago at the level of directors and their immediate subordinates. The chief executive got involved as a participant in the second of five programmes at this level. Each programme had three facilitators of whom one was always a director and one a woman. I worked with the first two then withdrew. Similarly, the internal consultant has progressively withdrawn and handed over her role as workshop leader to others.

As all the directors have participated in the programmes and most have been trained to facilitate workshops the effects on their attitudes and behaviour are considerable. This led to the internal consultant and I being asked to facilitate their annual top management workshop and help them improve the way they function together as a team and in their formal meetings. Facilitators' workshops have been held for directors and other selected participants. A second series of five workshops is now planned for less senior managers. A network event is planned for 1994. Senior management have been much involved in developing the strategy and in designing, piloting and facilitating the programme. As a result ownership is high. There are widespread claims that it has made a big difference to individuals and the organization. The programme has progressed quite rapidly. Despite severe budget constraints, ways have been found.

The University

The contract was made with the internal consultant (a woman) and (though perhaps not as adequately as we should have liked) the chief executive (male), but not his top team. Work started 18 months ago with members of what is called the senior management group which comprises approximately three levels including the chief executive. He is a participant in the third of three programmes. The participants have been involved in developing the strategy during each programme. Key features of this are: two network events (one held after the second programme, another to be held after the third); several team events have been held or are planned (some co-led by us and some by other participants); participants have taken other initiatives such as a bulletin article, drop-in lunches for participants and a charter; a facilitators' workshop to help participants embed the values and behaviour in the organization.

Although participants have not become involved in facilitating the main programme some of them will help facilitate the second network event. Currently, the main energy and focus is on how the senior group work together. So far there is much ownership of the programme, considerable enthusiasm for it and many claims about how it is changing behaviour and ways of working. Unlike the other two organizations the facilitator team has consisted, throughout, of the internal and two externals (a woman and a man). This is an interesting combination: the internal has played a major part in accurately diagnosing

and interpreting the situation as it has evolved and staying close to participants between events. Having two externals may have helped the facilitator team to be bolder and take more risks, yet always being able to rely on the judgement and support of the internal. Having a female internal and a female and a male external may have made it easier to work with gender issues - combined with the stronger presence of women in senior positions. Also, recognition of the relationship between equality and quality was part of the original conception of the programme. The senior management group has been particularly willing to work on corporate issues as they present themselves dynamically in the "here and now" of the workshops. This has been exciting, frustrating, terrifying, enormously rewarding and challenging for us. I think we are realizing that we may not have got the chief executive on board, and maybe it does not matter if the aim is to empower.

Lessons Offered by the Three Experiences
What are the lessons offered by these three experiences? Some of my key reflections are outlined below.

The involvement of the chief executive is crucial. This needs to be managed astutely, including the timing: she/he may not be ready to be involved as a participant until the intervention has sufficiently demonstrated its viability; her/his involvement as a participant at the start may create too much anxiety. In some organizations the chief executive's involvement may come quite late in the day; in others it may be completely unrealistic to involve him, in which case the benefits are likely to be very different. Sometimes a chief executive can become scared that she/he is losing control, particularly when the intervention is having an empowering effect, and want to put a stop to it all. The issue everyone has to struggle with is whether they want patriarchy, control and dependency or partnership and empowerment (Block, 1993).

The full involvement of the internal consultant as leader of the facilitator team is equally critical. The internal consultant (who may start out as "gatekeeper") needs to take leadership of the work so that the external consultant(s) can be in a support role and can stand sufficiently outside the system; she/he needs to be an astute diagnostician and strategist, with long term determination and willingness to be bold and take enormous, yet astute, risks. Her/his initial credibility in the organization is important and it will grow as her/his leadership becomes apparent.

The choice of facilitator team is crucial. A good combination for initial work would include the internal, a senior member of the client group and an external. The value of the member of the client group is her/his understanding of that group, its needs, the language it understands and her/his credibility with it. Often she/he will encourage the other facilitators to be bolder! One value of the external is that having travelled this way many times before, she/he can show the way with confidence. The other chief value is that of being outside the system. Both genders need to be represented.
However, there are advantages in having two externals. This is because they may provide each other with the support to take greater, yet wise, risks. A man and a woman may be more able to help clients work on gender issues.

The facilitator teams need to model the values and behaviours they espouse. They need to struggle with their difficulties, if they are to succeed in leading cultural change in the organization. Otherwise the clients will spot and exploit the incongruence.
If they are over-cautious, unaware (e.g. of gender issues) or lacking competence to deal with issues presented by the group, the facilitators will be unable to help their clients and will lose credibility. It is no good being unrealistically hopeful about a facilitator team's capabilities. Facilitators with a strong training orientation are likely to have difficulties and their approach will get in the way.

Only a united facilitator team will be able to help their clients as a group with fundamental issues. Competitiveness may result in splitting of the team and collusion with the clients, especially when the most difficult issues are presented. One or more may become scapegoats.

A high degree of trust, openness to learning and lack of competitiveness in the facilitator team is needed, if they are to keep up with the evolving needs of their clients as they are presented.

There are dangers in using several different consultants at the same time. The potential effect of interventions may be diluted and they may undermine each other or be in conflict. There may be a temptation to switch consultants when there are difficulties, possibly, as a result, avoiding key issues and losing the rich learning to be gained from struggling honestly with difficulties and resolving them. If several consultants are being used it may be necessary to bring them together so that they can collaborate (essential if they are to provide a credible model for the organization) and their work can be co-ordinated.

Management of the ownership issue is crucial. This means continuously involving the client group in decisions about strategy; making judicious decisions about involving them as facilitators; progressively handing over the work to them; equipping them to do it, yet continuing to provide the support they need from outside the system. It also means keeping top management involved and handing over leadership of the work to them.

The involvement of directors as facilitators can be enormously powerful in embedding change in behaviour. Learning helping skills seems to be very liberating and a good way of helping them adopt an empowering approach to leadership.

The way in which the external consultant is used is critical. Changing the culture of an organization is a very long-term task. Using a succession of organization development consultants as resources to do specific pieces of work does not seem to work well and promotes cynicism among managers who are usually well aware of the need for consistent long term support. There needs to be a long-term, strategic relationship with an external consultant who helps the internal to develop strategy, progressively transferring skills to the organization, withdrawing appropriately, returning to help with even more challenging tasks and withdrawing again. At times the organization can resource itself unaided. At times it needs someone who understands the system, has the trust of people in it, yet is outside the system. The relationship needs to be managed without dependency or counter-dependency and this issue is best addressed openly. There may be an

unconscious desire to "sack" the consultant just when she/he is getting closest to the fundamental issues.

It is unlikely that the job of an internal, in developing an evolving strategy to help the organization deal with its issues, is ever finished. It helps to have a challenging and supportive partnership with a core consultant, with an ever deepening understanding, who enjoys the trust of the organization and who is learning and growing at the same pace as the organization. For this relationship to work well the client and consultant need to think strategically about how best to build the consultants credibility with key people in the organization. If the relationship is to provide challenging support, this means taking the external consultant fully into your confidence and not prescribing any area as "off limits". The withdrawal issue is best faced frequently and openly if the best judgement is to be exercised and separation is not to be acrimonious.

Be ready for it not to be plain sailing. It is the very nature of change that it is unpredictable! Anyone taking major initiatives to bring about change needs to be prepared for setbacks and resistance. That is when the cohesiveness of the facilitator team will be tested.

Your feelings about the work and how you are treated by the organization are very good indicators of the key issues of the organization. At difficult times the facilitator team may reflect those issues in its behaviour towards the external consultant.

If the initiative is to really work, it has to go right down to the care workers at the "bottom" of the organization. We are a long way from achieving this.
Finally, if you do not have the conditions necessary for success, at any stage, do not proceed. In practice this can be very hard to recognize and an agonizing dilemma. Proceeding regardless, however, can cause even greater heartache. This is the time to be authentic with the client and to try to achieve the conditions for success. The alternative, if this is not possible, may be to postpone or withdraw. It all calls for careful judgement, great courage and integrity - so difficult when one's living is at stake and one has perhaps become over-involved because of commitment to the client's (and one's own) success. How can someone who is not a superman come out with integrity?

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