



# OE Cam

OE Data and Smarter Decision Making

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"Even in well-performing organisations there can be up to 30% cultural entropy". This is the amount of energy in an organisation that is consumed in unproductive work and serves as an indicator of the level of conflict, friction and frustration. Typically, culture is evaluated by qualitative metrics – but what if you could add more quantitative measures and prove a link between employee values, behaviour and profitability? Leif and Gary show us how.

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## OE Data and Smarter Decision Making

Information has always been an important source of competitive advantage; what has changed significantly in the last few years is the sheer *volume*, complexity and speed of information. The 'Big Data' wave has left many organisations floundering – but some have been able to quickly translate data into real understanding and so provide better insight into leadership decisions. How?

In this edition of *The OE* we explore this data challenge from two key perspectives. Firstly, what is the organisation's effectiveness data that helps us lead our businesses better? Put another way, do we now have the *right* 'big' data to support organisation or talent decisions? Are we thinking smarter? In our lead article, Ann Gammie challenges where to find the most powerful sources of data – she believes that many leaders are simply looking in the wrong places... do you know what's going on at the interfaces? In Chris Legge's article, we look at data in terms of managing performance and how individual performance impacts collective results. Gary Ashton teams with Leif Christiansen from our ACE partners in Poland to connect 'soft', qualitative measures of culture with hard, quantitative data – can you really prove employee behaviour impacts the bottom line?

Our second angle on the data challenge is about neuroscience and decision-making. As business psychologists, we are fascinated with how our brains' cope with all this data! It's all very well measuring everything but who, and *how* can we make sense of it? Knowing how we make decisions is vital if we are to avoid the pitfalls between being drowned in even more information on the one hand, and snap reactions on the other. In Susan Carroll's article we explain how heuristics might trip us up at work and lead to faulty judgments, bias and out-dated thinking. And in our article on Fast and Slow Decision Making, Stephanie Garforth looks at different thinking styles and the implications for leaders of tomorrow – just how do the cleverest of leaders make such foolish mistakes?

We hope you enjoy this edition of *The OE*, and we look forward to your feedback. Have a great Autumn!

Martyn Sakol

**MARTYN SAKOL**  
*Managing Partner*









We need informed and broad-minded yet speedy reactions to performance, emergent issues and opportunities.”

## An Opportunity to Access Different, More Powerful Sources of Data

There are three ‘elements’ common to all organisations and it is what happens at the interfaces between them that I want to explore. My focus is on data – what is it that we take as reliable cues, indicators, measures to inform next moves. The three elements are:

1. **Customer experiences:** the ‘moments of truth’ at which the customer “experiences” our organisation
2. **Organisation journey:** the ‘points of progress’ that inform our organisational journey, as we change, adapt, grow
3. **People optimisation:** the ‘contributions of value’ from our staff which show that we are optimising their capability, will and opportunity to perform, as they change, adapt, grow.

The diagram below illustrates the territory:

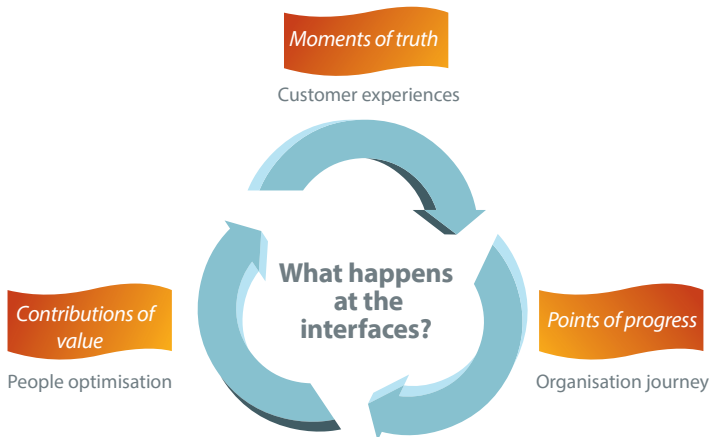


DIAGRAM 1: The Territory

We need to understand how each element is ‘performing’. But these elements interact with each other so the notions of clean data and clear measures are instantly questionable. We need data on all the elements and their interactions to:

- Keep our customers and enhance our reputation
- Move our organisation forwards and deliver to our many stakeholders
- Attract, deploy, develop and let loose our talent bank.

## 1. Customer Experiences as Moments of Truth

To get into the detail of what is meant by moments of truth please refer to our website where I explain what Jan Carlson meant by the term as expressed by the work of Parasurman et al ([www.oecam.com](http://www.oecam.com)). It is illuminating material!

The potential disappointments or joys for the customer include both the tangible product or service, (what I actually experienced compared to what I wanted), and the quality of the relationship between supplier and customer. Additional opportunities to under-perform occur when the design intention fails to manifest into what is created (the big idea compared to what was specified and what was produced).

In today’s organisations of perpetual motion, uncertainty and transient relationships, these potential performance gaps are core sources of data needed to guide and steer improvement and success. What do we need to know to be able to close or prevent those gaps, to optimise the moments of truth for customers?

## 2. Organisation Journey with Points of Progress

In an earlier OE article, “*Kon-tiki of Change*”, I explored the realities of organisations continuously on a journey. Not only do we need to constantly review what is happening at those potential gaps but we also need to revise what we deliver as new customers with new demands appear, along with new suppliers and different staff, using a different mix of resources and tools.

*continued overleaf...*



“ The three dimensions of customer experiences, organisation journey and people optimisation do not just co-exist, they *interact*. I believe it's at these interfaces where leaders can find the most powerful sources of data to inform smarter decisions. ”

That requires a continuous cycle of scanning our market place and beyond, defining possible scenarios to pursue and then determining action - change tack, alter course entirely, keep straight on. So, what do we measure? What will tell us there is an opportunity or risk out there? What about new stakeholders and players – how do I know who is important? The current breadth and depth of data available electronically - about the world, governments, regulation, people, competitors and so forth - poses the problem of what is relevant, how to sift through it, validate it and synthesise it to make sense for us. We need criteria and parameters that guide us, though we also need to review and revise the criteria as events change. Points of progress need to be regularly revised and made explicit, based on the most useful indicators we can obtain.

In the moving organisation, leaders are also faced with questions about what skills, capabilities, attitudes, strengths are best suited to the next phase of progress as roles and structures change. Importantly they need to decide what to specify and what to leave to staff's judgement. Continuous change and adaptation could suggest an industry of continuously updating specifications. But we cannot be fleet of foot if we take that route – too much lag in the system, too much resource not adding value at the customer interfaces. Geary A. Rummier and Alan P. Brache described 'white spaces' to indicate the gaps that open up between jobs when the weight of attention goes into boundary specification at the cost of effective activity flows and emergent value adding contributions.

Effective, agile organisations no longer specify every method and process. Where it used to be prudent to live by 'service level agreements' and boundaries of responsibility, the focus now is more on quality of relationships and the permeable borders between parties that allow mutual optimisation. Organisations charge their staff with delivering required outcomes, using limited sources and resources. We need informed and broad-minded yet speedy reactions to performance, emergent issues and opportunities.

So, what data will inform us about the quality and scope of such relationships? What data will tell me the whole 'system' is working and *moving* - rather than data that's simply a snapshot in time.

We need to measure three things in terms of customer opportunities and partners to guide us along the organisational journey: the range and levels of resources, how they are changing, their usefulness, challenges and breakthroughs in their application; the range and levels of capability and how they are applied and both these as they relate to the third – the specific **outcomes** we seek.

### 3. People Optimisation offers Contributions of Value

We need to observe what capability we have, how it is deployed, where it is working best/worst, what is helping or hindering its contribution? Who is creating the customer experiences, observing what is happening and deciding on next steps? How do leaders galvanise staff to work effectively, flexibly, adapting yet delivering? What do they understand their jobs are about? For what are they held accountable? What kinds of staff are suited to work in this way?

Leaders need to grasp and respond to another three things for value-adding contributions to result: how staff deal with complexity and uncertainty; what motivates or drives them to act with enthusiasm; what personal investment they make to keep learning and developing capability. These aspects apply to leaders, staff, partners, allies, suppliers, competitors, and all.

With psychometric profiling tools, we can access the drivers and personal values that underpin how each of us approaches work and learning, the preferences and traits that shape our ways of working, our technical, cognitive and behavioural capabilities that focus our effort and achievements, and which work environments enable us, in all our differences, to flourish. They give leaders **input data** to inform decisions about who to focus on what. **Output data** is in the form of deliverables and results, comfort with work and environment, turn-over and retention levels. The more we have to depend on people working well together, making judgements, taking responsibility for micro-shaping what is created and made for our customers, the more we need to understand, in an active sense, about our people, how well they are being selected, developed and deployed.

## And Then There are the Interfaces!

Currently, many organisations compartmentalise measurement and data. HR measures most stuff about people, both input and output. Owners of 'CRM' measure the customer experiences. The Strategy, Finance and Change functions separately measure elements of organisational progress. Where and how do they come together to indicate how the system is working?

The three dimensions of customer experiences, organisation journey and people optimisation do not just co-exist, they *interact*. I believe it's at these interfaces where leaders can find the most powerful sources of data to inform smarter decisions. So, where do we look for such measures?

Between customer experience (moments of truth) and organisation journey (points of progress) the sources of powerful data include:

- How we identify the product or service that will be successful, socially enhancing and made ethically. Remember reputational backdrop informs people's expectations of an organisation's products or services.
- How a product or service concept is developed into a deliverable – think of Steve Jobs and his collaborative approach to product quality and functionality.
- How we observe what really happens at points of delivery and how it fine-tunes or drastically changes what is done and delivered. Think of the crew on a yacht continuously reading 3-dimensional signs that inform their micro and macro-decisions.

Between organisation journey (points of progress) and people optimisation (contributions of value) the sources of powerful data include:

- How we scan for and spot potential allies, partners, staff, suppliers who open our eyes and minds to wider possibilities and want to go where we are going, at least some of the way. Think of extracting synergies within conglomerate businesses and successful unlikely alliances, like Visa with Marvel Comics.
- How we sustain the quality of relationships that enable dialogic conversations (see Richard Sennett), collective sense-making and co-creation of mutually acceptable progress. Think of an orchestra with its diversity of instruments and players who continuously learn from each other as well as the conductor to produce great music.
- How we allocate editorship or judgement that ensures real-time decisions add value and work. Think of the nurse or doctor faced with an emergency.

Between people optimisation (contributions of value) and customer experience (moments of truth) the sources of powerful data include:

- How we channel data into meaningful diagnosis and apply editorship to confer materiality on what is best to do next, given constraints. Think of publication editors who work to condense and crystallise data against performance standards for a defined purpose.
- How we engage personal passions to optimise customer experiences, however far removed we are from them. Think of the guy sweeping the corridors at NASA (as was) proudly proclaiming that he was helping put a man on the moon.
- How we galvanise readiness and effectiveness of internal and external parties to work together, at short notice, to be innovative, shape customer expectations and make a difference. Think theatre troupes!

## Abandon Current Measures?

Our decisions are restricted by the current formality of tightly defined roles, legacy measures and reporting techniques. But we must ask how readily they illustrate sound understanding of how the organisation is doing? We still need the bottom line data, the regular indicators of organisational performance. However, we need a more creative look at the nature and sources of 'how' data and making data smarter through synthesis and use.

## Try These Sources of Data

I suggest sources of data that operate dynamically to better illustrate how customers experience the organisation, how the organisation stays agile and how people contribute best.

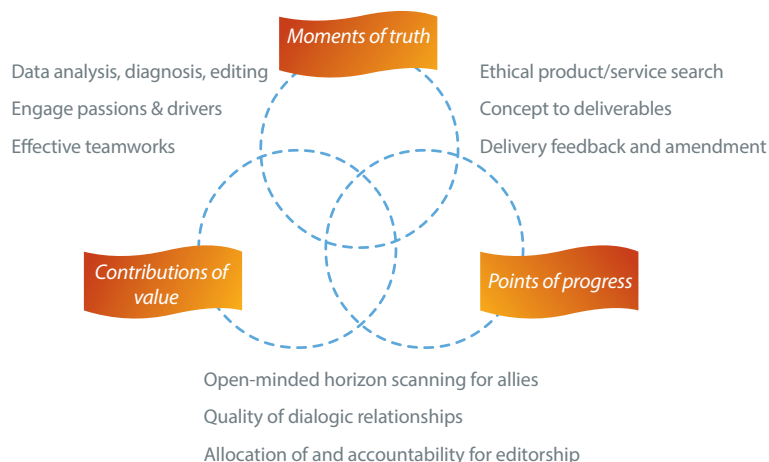


Diagram 2: Smart Data Sources

*continued overleaf...*

## Find the Data that Matters! What to Measure and Where to Find it...

### Two questions for you

To conclude, I have two questions for you:

1. Where are you looking for 'smart' data – data that will inform a smarter operation and deliver more success?
2. Given the overwhelming wealth of available data, much of it opinion not fact, how do you enable more people to act as editor, in its fundamental sense, so that relevance and materiality inform decisions and action, within a wider, shared purpose?

I look forward to hearing what you think!

OE Cam applies its expertise to help our clients determine what data matters.

### Typical OE Cam services to reveal what data matters

- Simulations to experience how differently business could work
- Organisational reviews on degree of alignment across purpose, strategy, business model, structure & performance indicators
- Assessment on readiness to change and previous approaches to change
- Develop mindsets for new ways of thinking and working
- Develop leadership team and individuals to work in different ways using 'different' data sets to inform decisions, while better relating to each other and engaging their staff
- Define future focused capabilities and approach to talent identification and development based on smart data and its application
- Build staff engagement and commitment to optimise contributions
- Profile and place people to optimise capability and enthusiasm
- Develop cognitive skills in editorship, exercising judgement, being accountable
- Develop collaborative working, mutuality of partnerships
- Define processes for identifying, reviewing and revising appropriate interface measures

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# Data and the Heuristic Trap:

## Understanding Bias in Decision Making

by **SUSAN CARROLL**

**My six year old nephew is fascinated with optical illusions. We happily spent over an hour recently chatting about illusions and I was able to introduce him to some he had not seen before - the Müller-Lyer illusion and the Ames room. He was then intrigued to hear that any one of us can misjudge things at times because we might miss certain information even if it is right in front of us. Unless we've seen them before, it's usually not until we take the time to measure the Müller-Lyer lines and understand the technical construction of the Ames room that we have that 'ah hah!' moment and our perception changes.**

### Heuristics and Cognitive Bias

Optical illusions can be perceived differently depending on the individual. They give us an insight into how our minds work and can remind us that at times we need to expend more conscious effort to see and understand available information in a new way. However, as the conscious processing of data is so cognitively demanding, doing this continually would be too exhausting. The human brain has therefore developed a way to tackle this issue helping us make more automatic decisions and thereby conserve mental energy.

As humans, we have an ability to use 'heuristics'. Heuristics are cognitive shortcuts that pull on the knowledge and experiential information we've committed to memory. They are unconscious rules of thumb that reflect our personal view of the world and help us to navigate our lives in a way that makes most sense to us. If we've seen a similar situation before and a fast response is needed, it is reasonable to base our judgments on past experience that worked at that particular time. Heuristics therefore enable us to have an automatic response to help solve difficult problems very quickly, albeit imperfectly.

In an emergency situation, being able to judge what's happening and make a fast decision is obviously a very handy skill to have. There are however times at work when we use heuristics to make judgments when it might be better to slow our thinking down to consciously examine the new data at our disposal (also see Stephanie Garforth's article on this subject). As situations are rarely identical, continually using what has worked before may not always serve us well when confronted with a brand new issue. The context may have changed and new information may be available that could alter our view.

Unless we take the time to explore data more thoroughly (and perhaps check our thinking with others at times) our use of heuristics can lead us to having a biased perception because our thinking is out of date. If our thinking is out of date, it can come as quite a shock to discover we have become cognitively biased because we've missed some key pieces of information.

An obvious example of where we might fall foul of an automatic response in the workplace is in a recruitment situation. We may use a stereotype heuristic with someone we are meeting for the first time to make an automatic assessment about them. Should a candidate (or indeed a potential boss) remind us of someone we either did or didn't like from the past, this could start informing our judgment even before the interview begins. It's important to pay attention to intuition but if we're not attending to more objective information too we could risk missing the best person for the job or hire similar people into the team where having a diverse mix could be more effective. It's an issue even experienced managers could encounter.

In his book *'Thinking Fast and Slow'* Daniel Kahneman<sup>1</sup> cites research by Alex Todorov that suggests we can use a judgment heuristic to sum up the facial features of strangers and make assessments of how likeable or competent someone might be. In Todorov's study, the faces of politicians were used. 70% of the politicians rated by participants as having seemingly higher competence had previously been successful during an election process. Results from a range of elections in other countries showed similar ratings. Informed vs. less informed voters were compared. Compared with those who felt informed, voters who felt they lacked political information were seemingly three times more likely to rely on their automatic response and choose a politician simply on the basis of how competent the politician looked.

### Institutionalised Heuristics?

When making more informed choices, we are likely to base our decisions on the combination of our subjective beliefs and the objective data we have available to us. We use our capacity for reason and logic in addition to our mental rules of thumb. However, as our cognition becomes adapted to our environment (e.g. Brunswik, 1943, 1955)<sup>2</sup> it is highly possible that we also create institutionalised heuristics around our workplace culture i.e. the values, beliefs and practices exhibited at work (see Gary Ashton's

*continued overleaf...*

1. 'Thinking, Fast and Slow'. (2011) Daniel Kahneman

2. 'Organismic achievement and environmental probability, *Psychological Review*', (50), pp. 255-72. (1943) Brunswik, E.

'Representative design and probabilistic theory in a functional psychology, *Psychological Review*', (62), pp. 193-217. (1955) Brunswik, E.

## Data and the Heuristic Trap: Understanding Bias in Decision Making

article for more detail). As these rules of thumb differ between organisations, navigating change and overcoming resistance can be particularly difficult unless time is taken to understand and work with this. When seeking to motivate staff for example, a common heuristic may be to change the bonus plan. This maybe adopted without question as the single best way forward. Although earning more money may increase motivation for some, it may be flexible working, being in direct contact with clients or understanding where personal value is added that motivates staff in other organisations. Our own view could be no more than an illusion if we fail to understand alternative perspectives.

### Leadership and Management Implications

Becoming over reliant or confident in our automatic responses does indeed lead us to having faulty judgment and impaired decision making at times. If it's not essential to use an automatic response, slowing our thinking down to examine a broader set of data could enable a more fitting decision to be made. Allowing time for this enables us to see the issue differently and consider whether an alternative solution could be more effective. Consciously attending to alternative views and data helps to update an old heuristic and offers other options. If we don't do this whenever possible, we fail to keep pace with the reality of others and get stuck in a single perspective that is no longer useful. In an organisational context, the dangers of outdated thinking on a broad leadership and management scale are all too obvious. It can become pervasive, leading a previously good organisation to become less attractive to new talent, fall out of step with the needs of its customer base and become less competitive and efficient.

### How Can we Challenge our Thinking?

A highly experienced lawyer friend of mine told me recently that a junior member of her team asked her why she continued to read broadly when so busy as she seemingly 'knew everything'. As a mentor, my friend kindly reminded her young colleague that being a good lawyer depended largely on the best possible synthesis of a range of relevant information. Some information was entirely new and some may have been updated since it was last referenced. Whether we are managers, mentors or acting as a coach, we can help ourselves and others see the importance of updating our knowledge and thinking.

An aspect of the work OE Cam does is executive coaching and development. As a coach, rather than suggesting what could be done and being directive, it's usual to ask open questions. This helps the person being coached (the coachee) to understand what options they could pursue using their own

insights, knowledge and experience e.g. 'what could you do?' or 'what makes you think that?'. However, to help coachees expand their thinking further, and explore a different range of possibilities, it can also be useful to ask what someone else might do. If the coachee particularly admires someone as a role model, this helps to challenge thinking in attending to a different perspective.

In a recent workshop, we conducted a lighthearted exercise and discussion about different perspectives that exist within a team. This was to illustrate how powerful it can be to bring together different viewpoints to see something from a new angle and potentially solve an issue in a new way. We asked delegates to think of an issue they had and then consider the perspectives of Lord Alan Sugar, Jessica Ennis-Hill, Albert Einstein and Yoda (from Star Wars). Although this provoked some laughter, our bright delegates quickly realised we were asking them what others with different business, scientific, sports psychology or spiritual perspectives might say. Although a little off the wall for some, the objective was to brainstorm within the group to encourage thought around a greater range of options and possibilities. What kind of data might be important to these people? How might they view the world(s)? Challenging our thinking in different ways may seem bizarre at first but even asking ourselves impossible questions (e.g. 'what would you do if you could not fail?') can at times spark an idea that had not been previously considered a possibility.

Our ability to think quickly and use heuristics enables us to save cognitive effort and valuable time when making decisions. Although highly efficient in an emergency, over reliance on an automatic response when unnecessary impacts our judgment and decision making ability. The risk of not taking the time to examine new information or alternative viewpoints is that we could become out dated and unintentionally biased in our thinking. The individual, the team and ultimately the organisation could then lose competitive edge. Being consciously aware of how we might favour a certain approach when making a decision and having the courage to challenge our own thinking at times can serve us well. Retaining an interest in involving others with different thinking styles and asking ourselves some different questions when solving a problem can enable a fresh perspective and help us to see a greater range of options. Who knows, challenging ourselves to think a little differently at times might help us tune in to our inner Yoda or Einstein?

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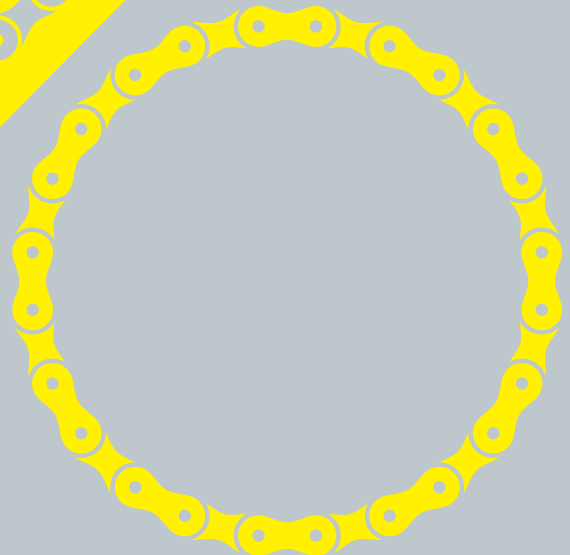
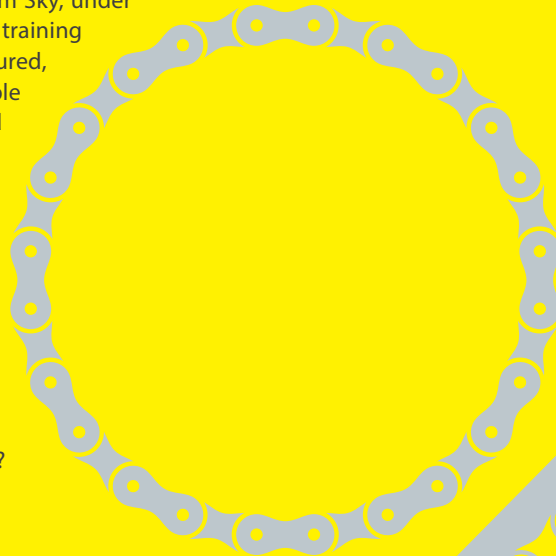
# Measures, Performance & Management

by **CHRIS LEGGE**

When I began writing this article the Tour de France, centenary edition was entering its third week of racing, including three days of successive gruelling mountain activity. By any measure, this is one of the toughest Tour routes in history and was devised to test the best. Whilst Chris Froome from Team Sky was in the lead, the overall performance of the Sky riders was mixed to say the least. In recent years (2011 & 2012) Sky has tended to dominate races, they are usually very well prepared and nothing is left to chance. What was going on this year?

Arguably, to achieve success, significant planning and preparation is necessary and hence the establishment of meaningful metrics. Within Team Sky, under Brailsford's leadership, pre-season training performance is constantly measured, developed, analysed; quantifiable outputs are established and targets set. Riders are continually coached and 'marginal gains' constantly sought. This approach is well-tested and honed during the early season races. So what (if anything) has gone wrong? Have there been unintended consequences of over measurement or were the expected levels of performance for some individuals simply wrong?

*continued overleaf...*



I accept that there are many examples of over-measurement of activity, in both work and personal life, as people attempt to quantify their activity – they run the risk that measurement becomes obsessive and that one loses sight of the goal in pursuit of the numbers - or worse the metric drives a particular type of behaviour or course of action. But I don't think that was the case here. I firmly believe that the old adage of 'you can't manage and influence what you don't measure' still holds true. You can only really know if something is getting better or worse if you have some scale or metric upon which to base a further decision or take a particular course of action. If we don't measure and manage do we risk underachieving? and if so, in who's eyes?

Back to the Tour, a review of performance was necessary along with finding a solution in order to support Chris Froome; no matter how strong he was individually, without a team around him any chance of victory would slip away as other teams strategically attacked. They needed to look at the collective performance.

### Underperformance: Having the Difficult Conversation

Brailsford's conversation with the team revealed that two team members were underperforming – achieving only 80% of their expected levels of performance – which the individuals duly recognised and agreed. Brailsford is reported to have said: *"Nobody can blame you for that. It happens to everyone. What we need is 100% of your 80% (i.e. what you can actually achieve). You do this and everyone (sic) will be happy!"*

Brailsford then outlined his new plan for the two under-performing riders which they set about delivering over the remaining week and for which they received praise and acknowledgement from their teammates – "they were back in the fold". Consequently individual morale improved along with their own performance level.

Situations of underperformance often provide the most challenging situations for managers. Difficult conversations should not be avoided, but discussed with tact and a focus on how the individual can deliver to agreed revised parameters.

The Team Sky situation is a powerful reminder for business managers that it may not always be possible for all individuals to deliver to initial expectations; however, losing the commitment of colleagues to achieve what is still attainable could have a significant outcome, not just individually, but collectively.

Such difficult conversations are often undertaken without due consideration of the other party. In our experience it is important for managers to consider the following:

- The manager should convey positivity and optimism and seek to dispel any negativity displayed by a colleague due to perceived or actual underperformance
- The talk-to-listen ratio in such conversations should be at least 60:40 in favour of the employee
- Seek to encourage action and problem solving from a colleague when reviewing 'underperformance' to avoid them going into a defensive critical analysis of why target / objectives were missed
- Ensure active listening, asking open-ended questions and summarising salient points is undertaken.

Effective 'personal' management of measures by a manager can help to turn around underperformance as long as they are handled well and expectations re-calibrated.

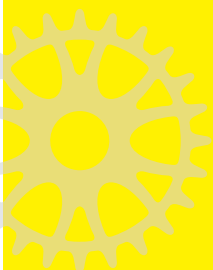
“ Effective 'personal' management of measures by a manager can help to turn around underperformance as long as they are handled well and expectations re-calibrated. ”

### Measurement and Performance: Client Stories

In support of managing measurement and affecting performance, OE Cam is working with a client to develop a focused set of measures and outputs that reflect the business activity, the key deliverables for customers and stakeholders and give employees clarity with regard to their overall activities.

This organisation is very capable and successful in measuring business activity, revenue generation and efficiency across a plethora of metrics and departments however, they lack a collective and focused business perspective and subsequently the opportunity to deliver co-operative management actions and support each other in tough times or when budgets are under attack become forced. This has reinforced 'siloes' reactivity when the numbers don't stack up and consequently only some departments answer the call for constraint or improvement. Going forward, there is also a desire to impact individual financial reward to corporate achievement and not withstanding a primary necessity for collaboration, agreed aspects of measurement must be established.





“ there are many examples of over-measurement of activity, in both work and personal life, as people attempt to quantify their activity – they run the risk that measurement becomes obsessive and that one loses sight of the goal in pursuit of the numbers - or worse the metric drives a particular type of behaviour. ”

With another organisation in the financial industry sector, OE Cam have been addressing criticism of their existing performance management process through re-defining manager's activities in mid -year reviews. Again measurement activity and objective setting is well established and provides line of sight in a very financially driven environment. However, the company has to be responsive to the vagaries of commercial markets and as such targets can change frequently with limited ability for individuals to influence them. Consequently, the ability of managers to reflect upon current achievements, market pressures and subsequently look forward and provide management support to colleagues in the delivery of changing metrics is paramount. This requires a differing skill set of management capability in using the 'numbers' to explore not only 'what' and 'how' the objectives are achieved but the 'why' i.e. what personally/operationally is affecting individual capability?

A historically 'hard' approach to dealing with under-achievement against metrics in a fluid business market has resulted in some individual's performance being recognised, whilst others have been negatively impacted by this approach and consequently overall corporate performance has been adversely impacted through overly prescriptive performance management criteria. The realisation is that numbers/metrics change quickly and it's a managers role to seek the optimum outcome through actively and positively engaging with colleagues in order to achieve 'the numbers'.

## Conclusion

Measurement and monitoring is evident in nearly everything we do in both work and in our personal lives – it is not only hard to avoid, but perhaps it is a necessity and is a consequence of the busy and demanding lives we all have. In fact technology permits us to quantify just about anything via our smart phones, apps and instant connectivity. We are also constantly bombarded with measures and metrics via the news, the press, internal communications and conversations with peers and managers for many of us, it provides a focus for activities undertaken, performance attained and the subsequent output achieved. It can reflect financial, business, customer satisfaction or physical wellbeing and offers the opportunity to achieve better outcomes if guided properly – be that by others or through self-analysis and personal drive.

Whilst the pursuit of the yellow jersey is a very focussed activity, it is a reward for team effort underpinned by a clear goal, measurement, management and performance attainment, and yes it is linked to reward - traditionally the winner gives his prize money to the whole team. Brailsford's management of the Sky team is not dissimilar to typical business activity and as such the following provides a nice summary for achieving measurable success:

- Ensure that you manage and measure what is important
- Assess the likely behavioural consequences of establishing specific measures
- Engage and communicate with employees to address inconsistencies in performance against objectives
- Reward people for achieving / exceeding their goals (but not necessarily financially)
- Reappraise objectives based on changing circumstances
- Manage in a style that respects and understands individual capability.

The process of measurement and management implies that achievement of agreed targets or objectives is anticipated or expected. However, a consequence of establishing metrics is that there will be 'failure' or to be fairer, 'non-attainment'... This can be for a host of reasons and awareness and recognition of this will allow managers to still deliver success.

In case you missed the overall result, Chris Froome won the Tour, supported by all the remaining team working to their individual optimum, but in a collective pursuit of the yellow jersey. I'm sure there were some 'difficult and colourful' conversations on the team bus and I'm not advocating such in the workplace, however, Brailsford and the Team Sky's management approach to re-calibrating expected levels of attainment and consequently supporting individuals had the desired effect.

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# Cultural Impact on Profitability:

## Combining Hard Data with Soft

by **GARY ASHTON** and **LEIF CHRISTIANSEN**

**The power and impact of an organisation's culture is often only felt when it is challenged. For example, when you merge two organisations requiring different teams of people to work together, or when you seek to lift business performance with your existing workforce requiring a change in how the work is done.**

But culture is notoriously difficult to access. One definition states that it is a *"set of shared, taken-for-granted implicit assumptions that a group holds and that determines how it perceives, thinks about, and reacts to its various environments."*<sup>1</sup> (E. H. Schein - MIT). But if it is something that is "taken for granted", and "implicit", then how can we measure and improve it?

When business leaders are asked: *"Is culture important to your business success?"* there are typically three types of answer:-

The first one is *"We don't understand what you are talking about,"* *"We don't have the time for this".*

The second is *"Yes of course – and we do a lot for our employees to motivate them. We conduct yearly employee satisfaction survey and on our website you can find our Company Core Values".*

And the third answer is *"Yes – we use our declared Company Values to help us to steer the business. Our only concern is that the impact is so hard to measure on our results and profitability"*

The first group will obviously be conducting business without being conscious of their organisation's good and bad values and behaviours, which is a business risk - as their aspirations for improved business performance might be blocked by passive resistance that goes unrecognised by the leaders.

The second group usually has many good values and behaviours but they might still not be actively connected "to the way we make business and profit" and therefore might be losing business opportunities.

The third group however focuses on optimising the business using all means – both hard and soft – to achieve better results, and create long-term higher value for all stakeholders. But if this group of managers demand hard data in order to focus their attention and take action, then what data can be provided?

The data-set that OE Cam uses in cultural surveys has been predominantly qualitative, and has been particularly useful for clients at the post-acquisition / pre-integration stage. Through focus groups and interviews, supported by harder follow-up survey data, we get to understand employees' and leaders' perceptions of "how things are done around here" commercially, operationally and corporately. In this way, a picture emerges of the similarities, differences and watch-outs that inform the business during integration.

These insights can then be built on further, by taking a more quantitative approach, that compares employees' and leaders' personal values against their perceptions of the current and aspired organisational culture. Such an approach has been used by our Polish partners ValueCoaching – part of our European ACE<sup>2</sup> network - who have improved business performance through quantifying culture in terms of the impact it has on a client's profitability. The approach is based on the following key principles:-

- **Principle 1** - Cultural capital is the new frontier of competitive advantage
- **Principle 2** - Organisational transformation begins with the personal transformation of the leaders
- **Principle 3** - Measurement matters. If you can measure it, you can manage it

In searching to apply these principles in a practical way, it was recognised that the harder operational improvement approaches such as Lean and Six Sigma needed to be connected with the softer culture change approach, and then transferred onto a single Balanced Scorecard of measures that focus on creating lasting change based on both "the way we work" and "the way we behave".

1. E.H Schein (0000) MIT

2. Allied Consultants Europe ([www.alliedconsultantseurope.com](http://www.alliedconsultantseurope.com))

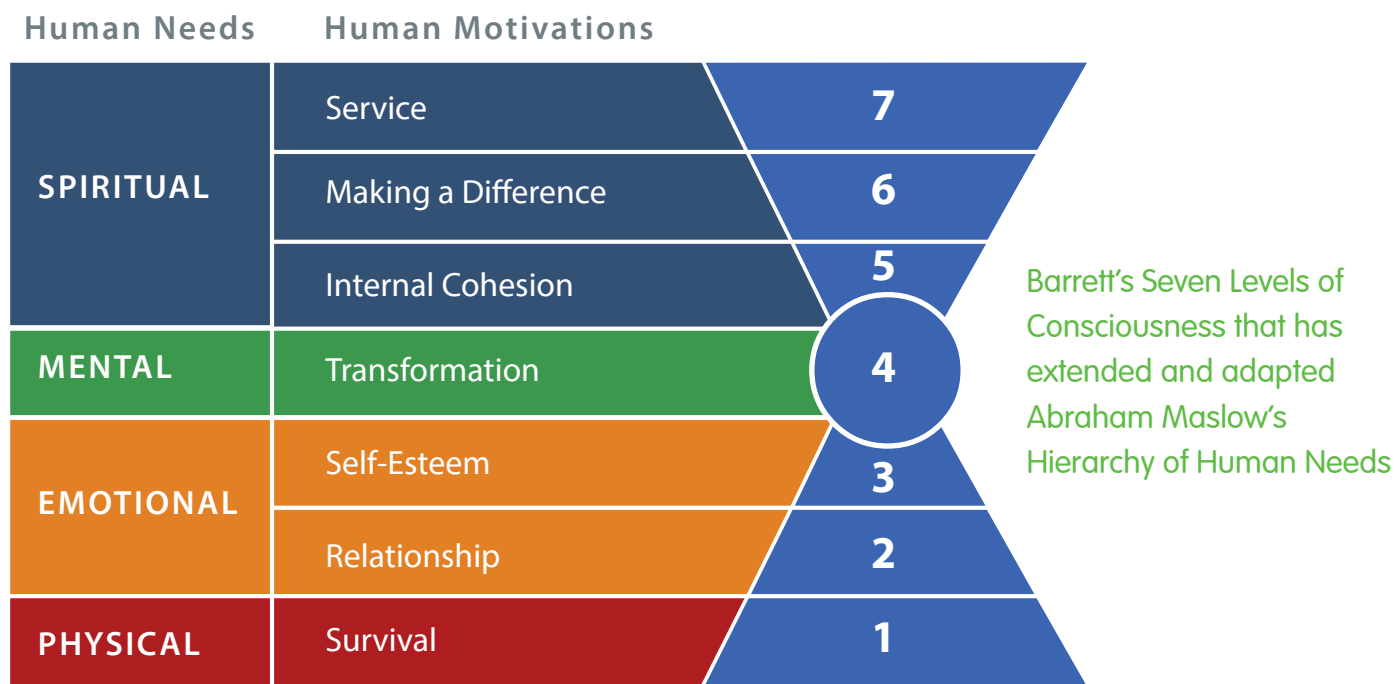


DIAGRAM 1: Barrett's Values Centre and Seven Levels of Consciousness

To provide the cultural measures and targets it was found that using **Barrett's Values Centre** and their Seven Levels of Consciousness model was the most effective. This model, as described in Diagram 1 helps make culture tangible and measurable, and can be aligned to the operational excellence targets, and ultimately measurable performance impact.

Using this model over the past decade, assessing clients' employees' personal values, the leadership's values, and the corporate values – both actual and desired - has shown big differences between the individual and corporate values, and also between the actual and desired culture.

Then, to connect these values and behaviours to operational excellence and the overall strategic direction of an organisation, the scores are built into an adapted version of the Balanced Scorecard.

## Cultural Entropy – What's Eating Away at Your Profit?

But more powerfully it also has given a clear picture of how healthy a company is by assessing the level of potentially limiting values that exist in an organisation – known as the level of "cultural entropy". This is the amount of energy in an organisation that is consumed in unproductive work. It is a measure of the conflict, friction and frustration that exists within an organisation.

Typically even in well-performing organisations there can be up to 30% of cultural entropy, which indicates that there are significant cultural issues that need addressing before performance can be improved. Just think if you could make a 10-15% improvement and what that could do to your profitability! This measure opens a new world of opportunities for clients – with a measurable bottom-line impact that they might not have seen as possible before.

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Cultural impact on Profitability: Combining Hard Data With Soft

But the measurable impact does not come by assessing the Cultural Values in itself. To achieve an increase in performance, the company also needs to define the company’s aspired values, starting with the leaders of the company all the way through the organisation – and connecting these values with operational excellence.

Turning Behaviour Change into Profit - a Case Study

One example of changing values and behaviours that then positively impacted on profitability is with a company in the food production sector. This company is recognised as the best in their industry. However they called ValueCoaching in when they had recognised that the behaviour in the company was not right, with tensions starting to rise amongst their employees.

“We undertook a Cultural Values Assessment, with more than half of the employees participating. And the key finding was that the company had a cultural entropy score of 38%, with the ‘potentially limiting values’ being described as Control - Hard talking – Blame – Silo Mentality – and Job Insecurity”.

Our client initially found these results hard to believe, but decided to explore further. So the next exercise was to look at the cultural entropy from a financial point of view by asking the senior managers to decide how much this 38% of cultural entropy actually cost them.

For each of the potentially limiting values we asked the top managers two questions:

- 1. How much of your PRODUCTIVITY is lost due to this limiting value in percentages terms?
- 2. How much OPPORTUNITY is lost to this limiting value in percentages terms?

The overall results were as follows:

Limiting Value	How much of your PRODUCTIVITY is lost due to this limiting value in percentages terms?	How much OPPORTUNITY is lost to this limiting value in percentages terms?
Control	11%	10%
Hard Talking	8%	15%
Blame	11%	20%
Silo Mentality	5%	80%
Job Insecurity	5%	25%
Lost Productivity	40%	
Lost Opportunities		150%



“ But more powerfully it also has given a clear picture of how healthy a company is by assessing the level of potentially limiting values that exist in an organisation – known as the level of “cultural entropy”. This is the amount of energy in an organisation that is consumed in unproductive work. It is a measure of the conflict, friction and frustration that exists within an organisation. ”

Converting these percentages into money, based on the previous year's financial performance, the company was potentially losing over a million euros.

So our focus then turned to understanding the *cause* of these limiting behaviours and make changes that subsequently would positively impact on their profitability. This was delivered through a development programme in which we developed the strategic initiatives for the following two years, including an initiative for implementing a new core set of values.

After only six months the cultural entropy dropped by 10% and then a further 9% during the following year to the present level of 19%, which is within a healthy scale for this kind of business. And these changed behaviours subsequently connected to an increased productivity of around 22% and a profitability increase of 25%.

## Conclusion

So your smart cultural data-set is one that combines the qualitative, which directs you to the significant cultural issues in your business, with the quantitative, which provides hard monetary value on the limiting values that exist within your organisation's “set of shared, taken for granted assumptions”.

This *combined* data-set enables you to tackle the hidden resistors of productivity and profitability improvement and can be a most valuable addition to your management information portfolio.

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What does 38% cultural entropy look like?



Energy available for productive work



Non-productive or destructive energy



# Fast & Slow Decision Making:

## Clever Leaders and Foolish Mistakes

by **STEPHANIE GARFORTH**

Getting decisions right is crucial; it can make the difference between being one step ahead and being buried by competition. Just take Kodak as an example – they did not plummet to their downfall by missing the digital age. In fact, they invented the first digital camera. Rather their failure perhaps came from the instinctive decision to cling onto their core lucrative film business. Seemingly 'rational' judgments based purely on instincts or affirmed by biased data could lead to foolishness and precipitate large-scale stupidity unless the irrationality of such rationality and its impact and consequences are recognised and understood. This article looks at how we can get caught out by the hard wiring of our thinking and begins to explore the necessities for better decisions.

### Intuitive Demands

When we first meet someone, we are very quick to form an impression. We intuitively think and make a judgment (without intending to), based purely on a small amount of information we have at that point in time. For example, let's consider Anthony, the CEO of a potential new business acquisition. It may not be deliberate, but we will instantaneously decide that Anthony is a confident person from his body language and anticipate gravitas in the subsequent dialogue. In that split second, we may create a positive impression of him as potential business partner. We are not conscious of this 'fast thinking', but our minds were prepared to make this judgment instantly. This is because our brain is hard-wired to think fast and efficiently jump to conclusions to minimise wastage of cognitive effort.





...leaders who only notice the strong signals about things going wrong will be surpassed by great leaders able to also pick up on the weak signals and act quickly based on intuitive feelings ”

When we do jump to the *right* conclusions, for example if Anthony does indeed prove to demonstrate boldness and tenacity necessary for a successful partnership, intuition can be an effective method for saving ourselves time and resource.

Moreover, considering the fast changing landscapes of the market that requires organisational agility and even faster decisions to keep up with competitors, it would almost seem there is a demand for such speedy intuitive sense making and deduction. In running the radar sweep that detects emerging trends and situations in the environment for corrective courses of action, leaders who only notice the strong signals about things going wrong will be surpassed by great leaders able to also pick up on the weak signals and act quickly based on intuitive feelings. Thus the more able leaders are in honing their instincts, the greater likelihood of continued organisational success. Steve Jobs, for example, advocated his use of intuition saying, “You have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future”. His approach arguably never did let him down and there is no doubt he was greatly admired by many and considered to be one of the most successful CEO’s in history.

It is therefore no surprise we are now seeing changes in the competencies of ‘talent’ required for success within our work with clients. Partnering with the board of a leading food and drink company recently to understand the future talent required for success, it was revealed adaptability, intuition and robustness in decision-making as amongst the perceived top key features necessary for the future. As one leader said, “*We’re too driven by process and focused on making safe decisions – there’s less intuition involved*”. In keeping up with the market, the development of agile organisations necessitates fast intuitive decision-making.

## The Conflicting Perils

However, in his book, “*Thinking, Fast and Slow*”, Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman highlights the problematic nature of fast thinking by explaining that fast thinking, the first of two systems, is based on a simplistic model of the world that utilises irrational mental short cuts to make judgments. In Susan Carroll’s article, she talks about these short cuts as ‘heuristics’; rules of thumb that every one of us unintentionally use to reach solutions not guaranteed to be optimal. In effect, we are all primed to make biases and often can jump to irrational conclusions when we do follow our intuition. One feature of fast thinking, for example, is the halo effect whereby our judgment is influenced by a single trait or first impression. For example, on sensing Anthony has confidence, we may also decide that Anthony is fearless, influential and resilient. It may be true.... but it may not be! In reality, the judgment is the result of an illogical and irrational conclusion you have instinctively jumped to.

A lack of recognition that we are all victims of biases and irrational judgment could be a leader’s downfall. Unfortunately, added to this is the fact that while we display a lot of wisdom about the general dynamics of human nature, we have rather less self-enlightenment when it comes to predicting our own behaviour. Individuals have a tendency to think their own actions are more a product of their intentions and free will, and believe they are generally immune to the constraints that dictate other people’s actions in a phenomenon known as ‘misguided exceptionalism’. They exempt themselves from the psychological understanding they have about others, thinking that the rules that control others don’t apply to them. As a result, even the cleverest of leaders make foolish mistakes as intelligence is largely independent of rationality and does not make bright individuals more logical or immune to poor decisions. Take Steve Russell, former Chief Executive of Boots, for example, his decision to pursue a health care strategy to grow new care services such as dentistry despite the facts that managers did not have the skills and these markets offered little profit was partly the cause of his demise and early departure from the role. Further to this, the increased reliance on collective and interdependent

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decision-making means groups of individuals' concurrent exemptions of themselves as victims of biases can contribute to very damaging large-scale stupidity. In fact, we have all observed this - just consider the impacts of the multitude of irrational decisions that led to the economic crash. So how can we overcome this?

### Differentiating Rationalisation from Rationality

One solution often advocated for this problem is for us to pay attention and restrain ourselves to spend time on the second of the two mental processes Kahneman talks of, slow thinking. Slow thinking is the conscious and effortful construction of thoughts in an orderly series of steps. When thinking slowly, attention and memory are called upon for deliberate choices such that the governing impulses and associations of fast thinking are overruled. For example, if we were to slow down our thinking and properly consider all the available data when meeting Anthony, we would be more able to construct a thoughtful response as to whether the instinctive response we had to him was skilled or a heuristic biased response and prevent us from making potentially foolish thoughts overt. The power of information would give us the opportunity to recognise that in fact, Anthony's behaviour that projects confidence is merely learnt and unreflective of his hesitancy and lack of decisiveness in decision making and his drive to follow through, which would undoubtedly prove fatal for delivering the expected benefits of the acquisition.

While the fast thinking system runs automatically though, the slow thinking system typically runs in a low-effort mode where only a fraction of its capacity is used – its main characteristic is in fact laziness; a reluctance to invest more effort than is absolutely necessary! Kahneman describes the two mental processes of slow and fast thinking as being analogous to agents of a newspaper room. In this newspaper room exists reporters who continuously write stories (fast thinking) and a badly worked editor who checks the stories being sent to the printer (slow thinking). The fast thinking reporters are constantly interpreting the world based on impressions, intuitions, intentions and feelings and sending stories to the printer while the slow thinking overworked editor mostly endorses the stories without really thinking about it, only occasionally stopping to make the effort to think more slowly and check whether they need modification. The problem is that the editor's role as an endorser rather than enforcer thus on realising some stories should not have been endorsed, the slow thinking overworked editor rationalises to find reasons for why the story was endorsed.

Instead of examining the information and arguments, it searches for what is consistent with the existing beliefs. In this way, slow thinking can only counteract but not override the decisions that fast thinking has already arrived at based on the heuristics and short cuts, rationalising the decision already made rather than finding a truly rational alternative. In fact, the decision can be far from rational - what we are simply doing is using data to selectively reinforce our stories, the impressions, instincts and intuitive prejudices already sent to the printer by the editor. Thus while slowing down thinking can help to avoid the heuristic biases of fast thinking, slow thinking is only less prone and not free from error.

“ A lack of recognition that we are all victims of biases and irrational judgment could be a leader's downfall. Unfortunately, added to this is the fact that while we display a lot of wisdom about the general dynamics of human nature, we have rather less self-enlightenment when it comes to predicting our own behaviour. ”



## Moving Beyond Irrationality – how OE Cam Can Help

So on one hand, quick instinctive thinking not only saves time and effort but is demanded for the organisational agility needed to keep up with the speed of the market and with competitors. However such fast thinking can lead to costly mistakes because we are hard-wired to jump to conclusions.

On the other hand, while deliberation and slow thinking may prevent us jumping to biased conclusions, the rationalisations of the lazy inclination cannot amount to true rationality of quality decisions. With this conundrum, how can we manage our fast and slow thinking systems to ensure they work effectively for us rather than to our own detriment?

The first challenge is in recognising and applying the increasing amount of data available to us in this digital age (but which we are primed to ignore). This requires leadership qualities greater than that of traditional competencies. Humility, for example, a leadership trait considered a weakness by some, can help overcome foolishness of misguided exceptionalism. Humble leaders look within themselves to understand and acknowledge their imperfections, recognise their instincts are not always correct and ask for help when it is needed without allowing the power of their position to cloud truly rational judgment. Courage, another leadership trait not often tested for, can aid in the recognition and pursuit of the right intuitive instincts and those weak market signals on which efforts should be converged. Reflecting this, our recent work has therefore involved the development of leaders and of assessment methodologies for such leadership characteristics within top teams and leadership to support organisations in getting the right people for the future.

The second challenge is in recognising that *both* types of thinking have a place in our decision making and knowing which to apply when. This requires leaders to understand and work with their own natural thinking patterns – for them to be able to better hone their fast thinking instincts to recognise the right instincts and to harness slow thinking without its lazy inclination to rationalise rather than to be rational. Developing self awareness of decision making will help leaders to pay

attention to data that is important so it is less likely these systems will make biased assumptions or jump to wrong conclusions and let them down. Building on this, OE Cam's leadership development programmes help leaders to recognise the impact of their personality preferences and thinking styles on the decisions they make. Through coaching OE Cam helps leaders broaden their thinking to consider alternative perspectives and improve consultative and collaborative engagement to produce better quality decisions based on all the data available.

Continuing to trust intuition and simply slowing down thinking will produce hit and miss results and is undoubtedly a risk to take. Only by identifying and developing leaders with attuned consciousness and character strengths can businesses have greater confidence in making the right decisions for future market competitiveness.

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## About Us

OE Cam

DELIVERING ORGANISATION EFFECTIVENESS

**Organisation Effectiveness Cambridge is a boutique firm of business psychologists who help maximise the effectiveness of individuals, teams and organisations.**

We believe that organisational effectiveness can only be improved through tackling the 'hard' with the 'soft'. We view your organisation from multiple perspectives - the behavioural, the structural, the cultural and the economic so that we get to the essence of your challenge and deliver bespoke, feasible and creative solutions.

Our clients span industry sectors and international boundaries and include: Associated British Foods; AB Agri; AB Mauri; BBC; Carbon Trust; Centro; Chemring Group; City & Guilds; The Coal Authority; Collier Capital; Costain; Daiichi Sankyo; E.ON; GE; Home Retail Group; Internet Watch Foundation; Jordans Ryvita; Natural Environment Research Council; University of Newcastle; Pitney Bowes; Primark; PRS for Music; Rentokil Initial; Ryder; Simmons & Simmons; Smiths News Group; SuperGroup Travis Perkins; Yorkshire Water and Vodafone.

## What we do

**Our services are clustered into five areas of expertise:**

- **Organisation Development** - we analyse situations to identify which interventions will develop greater business effectiveness and growth; and build your capability to plan and implement any required change
- **Executive Assessment** - we deliver individual and team assessments to give you confidence to make strategic people investments, including succession planning, recruitment and pre/post M&A due diligence
- **Leadership Development** - we define and build leadership capability to deliver your strategy. We coach and facilitate executive teams for performance improvement and business growth
- **Organisation Design** - we create aligned, accountable and agile organisations by assessing how coherent your organisation is now and developing options for where and how it can be improved. We develop innovative reward solutions aligned to effective performance management mechanisms
- **Board Development** - we review and develop board effectiveness and work with executive teams on governance and organisational impact.

And because we are a boutique consultancy, your experience with us will be a personal one. We will invest the effort to get to know you and your organisation to jointly deliver the outcome you are seeking.

For more information please visit [www.oecam.com](http://www.oecam.com) or call us on +44 (0)1223 269009.

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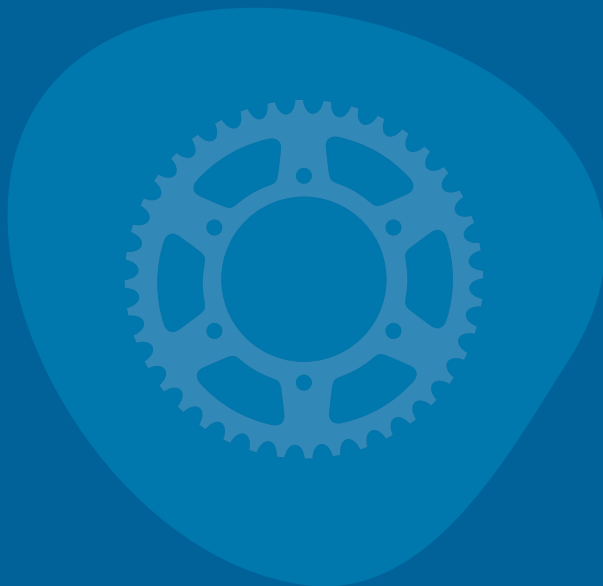
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