

## 4

# Rooms with a View: Aligning your business behind the vision

We have now defined the objectives of our organisation, and in general terms we have defined an organisational structure to support those objectives.

So what is next? Allocate the objectives to the various parts of the organisation?

This is quite often the solution that is taken. In many business-

es, responsibilities are clearly defined in that way. Desired business results are broken up and allocated to the departments that seem most appropriate to observe them: Sales becomes responsible for customer satisfaction; Finance for credit control; Manufacturing for volume; Inspection for quality etcetera. And the department personnel are then driven (by bonuses, appraisals, monthly meetings and the like) to 'make their numbers'. Fairly obvious really!

That is, until customers become dissatisfied about aggressive credit control, orders are lost due to long production lead times, output falls as large amounts of product are rejected at final inspection, and quality criteria can't be met on increasing levels of special orders.

Many readers will be very familiar with these issues. Others may be less so, primarily because of the quality of relationships within their business - but it is very likely that the people within your business will at least feel the undercurrents of these tensions; usually when there is potential conflict between their official objectives and their responsibilities to their colleagues in other parts of the business.

The problem is that in the vast majority of organisations there is a far higher degree of interdependence between the various parts of the business than is recognised by the traditional apportioning of objectives to departments and individuals. It is rare for any department to be able to deliver any objective single-handedly, and if they were to try to do so they would almost certainly compromise the ability of other departments to deliver their objectives.

To compensate for this, organisations sometimes overlay their objectives with corporate initiatives such as 'Customer First',

cost saving programmes, 'Investors in People', etcetera. While these are good at ensuring a shared responsibility for customer satisfaction, cost reduction or people development, they are often seen as secondary, and therefore lack the full commitment of management. Furthermore, because they are seen as additional, only one or two can be effectively emphasised at any point in time, and as this emphasis shifts around it creates a perception of 'flavour of the month' and 'pinball management' amongst staff.

What is needed is a more integrated set of responsibilities.

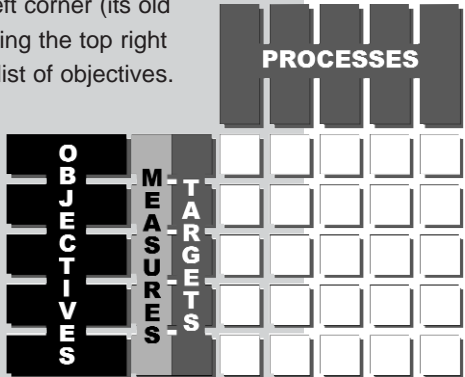
In product design, unless the interaction of the various subsystems is fully understood, and each system is designed to maximise its impact on each of the user needs, the product tends to prove more cumbersome and inefficient than its competitors. The design tool QFD (the 'house') overcomes this by looking at the interaction of each of the subsystems with each of the user needs, thereby ensuring that the design of each subsystem takes full account of its potential to influence all the objectives. The end result is a more powerful and efficient solution.

This same principle that has revolutionised product design, also holds true for business design. To explore this within our building analogy, we have the floors (objectives) and the pillars that support them (processes), we now need to examine the interaction between each pillar and each floor to ensure that the potential for support is fully realised. Each room of our building will provide us with a unique perspective on how our design holds together, it will enable us to see the as-yet unrealised potential to make the structure even stronger. These perspectives can then be used to better align each pillar to ensure that the whole structure is fully efficient and effective.

The process to achieve this is as follows:

1. List out on a sheet of flipchart paper your objectives, together with their associated measures, targets and priorities. Draw horizontal lines on the sheet to clearly distinguish each objective from the others. Do the same for your organisational structure, separating each process (or department) name with a horizontal line. Stick the list of objectives on a wall, and then hold up the list of processes, turn it through 90 degrees anti-clockwise, and stick it up with its new bottom left corner (its old top left) touching the top right corner of the list of objectives.

2. The space to the right of the objectives list and below the processes list should be covered in further sheets of flipchart paper, and the 'horizontal' lines from both the objectives and the process sheet extended over these new

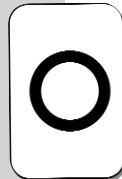


sheets of paper to form a grid. The grid should have a separate cell for each combination of objective and process.

3. Seat your team in a semi-circle around the flipchart grid. Ensure each member of your team has access to all the background information on the objectives and processes, and equip each of them with a pack of four symbols drawn on sticky-note sized cards:

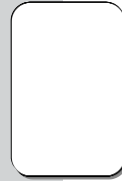


- a. A bullseye symbol, to represent a critical contribution where the process is fundamental to progressing the objective; where problems in the process could not only thwart progress against the objective, but could even send it in reverse.
- b. A circle symbol, to represent a major contribution where the process is vital to achieving the target (both on a 1 year, and on a 3-5 year timescale); in other words, progress could be made against the objective (by means of the other processes) even if there were serious problems in this par-



ticular process, but it would be unlikely that targets would be met over both the short and long term.

- c. A triangle symbol, to represent a situation where other processes will ensure that the objective will be delivered and the targets achieved, but where this process could make things significantly easier if it was working well.
- d. A blank card, to represent a relationship that is insufficiently strong to fall in any of the three preceding categories.



Ensure each team member has a complete understanding of what the symbols mean.

- 4. Have somebody available to make notes on the key points that will arise in the discussions that are about to take place.
- 5. Start with the cell in the top left hand corner of the chart, and ask for an initial show of cards (without debate) to reflect each individual team members view of the importance of the

*Remembering the extremes of perspective while asking people to 'lower' their cards enables you to draw out the range of perceptions while freeing people to easily change their stance, as they learn*

process to the objective.

Remember who indicated the strongest relationships, and who indicated the weakest, and ask everybody to lower their cards.

6. Ask one of the people who indicated the strongest relationship to explain how they see the process contribution, and then ask one who indicated the weakest to respond. Ensure that points are made calmly and objectively, without a sense of 'argument' - this is vital to encouraging the listening and open-mindedness required for consensus.

Ask for other perspectives, not yet represented, but ensure no point is repeated.

7. When all perspectives have been listened to and fully understood, ask the team if they are confident that all the important knowledge regarding that relationship has been shared. If the answer is yes, ask if we can now trust the majority viewpoint on this relation-

*This debate provides new insights and understandings to many of the team - insight that will open new creative possibilities for them and also build a greater sense of shared responsibility.*

*Ensure also that the perspectives represented properly justify the symbol that was displayed; if they do not, push the contributor for further explanation.*

ship. Address any concerns if they arise; this is normally a matter of confirming that 'resident experts' have fully laid out their understanding. When such debate has subsided, check that the team is now willing to abide by a majority vote on this cell, and ask for a final show of cards. Mark the symbol in the grid.

*The symbol is a means to an end. It is the pivot that drives the debate and unearths different perspectives. It is also a useful summary of the debate. But it is the debate that is important, not the symbol.*

8. Move onto the next cell in the row (same objective, next process) and repeat steps 5 to 7. Continue until the row has been completed. Ensure that the debate remains focused and efficient all through the row. Try to contain the debate to between five and ten minutes per cell, and take a ten minute break at the end of each row.
9. Repeat step 8 for each row of the grid until the grid is completed.
10. On completion of the grid, check for any rows where the objective appears insufficiently supported, or any columns where the process appears insufficiently utilised.



Where these situations do occur, discuss their practical implications (the objective won't be met; the process is redundant) and resolve with the group what needs to be done to address this. Adjust the objectives, processes and grid accordingly.

*Insufficiently supported rows are ones without sufficient good strong relationships to ensure their delivery of the objective. Insufficiently utilised columns are ones without sufficient good strong relationships to justify their development.*

11. Ask the team how they feel about the exercise, and for key learning points that have stuck with them. Draw the discussion round to establish their confidence that the objectives can be met, and to emphasise a collective responsibility to achieve the potential that has emerged in the discussions. Ensure that the notes of the discussions will be typed up and circulated.
12. If appropriate, discuss the priorities that have emerged for each process, and the implications for where it is best to focus resources. (This

*The QFD will have provided many learning points for each open minded person in the room, but individually. A discussion at the end provides an opportunity to see that learning as a common experience for the team as a whole, and that will help unify the team and further build their collective commitment.*

can be aided by a tool available free of charge from the tesseract's website, which suggests a mathematical weighting for each process based on the strength of the relationships and the relative importance of the objectives.)

	Wt.	Customer support and order management	Develop new business	Producing and distributing product	Maintaining the platform
Address new market areas	3	○	●	△	●
Provide excellent customer service	5	●	△	●	●
Build leadership in platform technology	4	□	△	●	○
Reduce production and delivery lead times	2	●	□	○	●

The grid in the 'house' provides us with the ability to optimise our entire design to best address the needs that are placed upon it. But furthermore, and perhaps more importantly in these times of change, because these relationships are explicit, the 'house' also provides us with a mechanism to rapidly assimilate changing circumstances or expectations, to accommodate these within the structures of the organisation, and to rapidly adjust focus and direction to make best use of the changing wind.

Organisations which use traditional methods of planning and management, can only guess at the real impact of change, and they depend on inspiration for the best stance to take on it. Organisations which use the house of quality can postulate, simulate, orchestrate, innovate and evaluate, quickly and with confidence that the result is the optimum solution to the situa-

tion.

This is a very important point, and it flies in the face of traditional ideas on change management, even to the extent of challenging the concept implied by the phrase itself – the idea that the management of change is in any way a separate and specialised subset of normal management.

When we see managers as the designers of the organisation: change **is** management and management **is** change.

