



LEADING AN ORGANIZATION



AN INTEGRAL FRAMEWORK

In *Strategic Alignment*, Norman Chorn and Ivan Nurick write, “The key to success is to ensure that your strategies, capabilities and approach to leadership are internally consistent and aligned with the requirements of the operating environment. ... This is accomplished by focusing upon the dominant logic within each of these elements and aligning each element to achieve balance (equilibrium) within the whole business system.”

Integral leaders recognize that organizations also have interiors and exteriors, as well as individual and collective dimensions. In other words, organizations can be viewed using the four quadrants as a scanning device.

In simple terms, the function of a leader is to steer her self, her relationships with others, and the organization in which she serves. While we emphasize “steering of the organization,” we remain mindful of the fact that integral leaders are in fact continually steering in all four quadrants, in other words, steering the “I”, the “We”, the “It”, and the “Its.” (See illustration.)

Quadrants

In their #1 New York Times Bestseller, *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done*, Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan describe execution as “a systematic process of rigorously discussing how’s and what’s, questioning, tenaciously following through, and ensuring accountability. It includes making assumptions about the business environment, assessing the organization’s capabilities, linking strategy to operations and the people who are going to implement the strategy, synchronizing

those people and their various disciplines, and linking rewards to outcomes. It also includes mechanisms for changing assumptions as the environment changes and upgrading of the company’s capabilities to meet the challenges of an ambitious strategy. In its most fundamental sense, execution is a systematic way of exposing reality and acting on it.”

Leaders can “execute” on plans and take actions that address behaviors, inten-

tions and capacities, social systems, or cultural dynamics—in other words, all four quadrants. When thinking of execution, many experienced business people initially think of operations, and that leads them to think of the Lower-Right quadrant where we see processes, policies, procedures, financial and technology systems and so on. Yet operations are only one component of execution. Execution is concerned with effectively linking people with approach (strategy) and operations. To paraphrase Bossidy and Charan, it involves meshing of strategy with reality, aligning people with goals, and delivering results that have been promised. All in all, it’s a rather complex affair. Leaders who have a comprehensive understanding of organizational dynamics combined with an insightful view of their people may have the best chance at successful action that delivers desired results. This might

UL		UR
Individual Interior (Subjective) Capacities Awareness Intention Worldview	'I' 'It' "We" "Its"	Individual Exterior (Objective) Applied Skill Performance Accountability
Collective Interior (Subjective) Culture Shared Expectations Shared Values Collective Morale		Collective Exterior (Objective) Systems Infrastructure Policies Environment
LL		LR

Using this integral framework, most of the insights reflected in management theory during the past four decades can be put to good use. At the same time, integral leaders can avoid putting a given approach to use in a context in which it will either fail to produce desired results, or worse, produce unanticipated negative consequences.¹

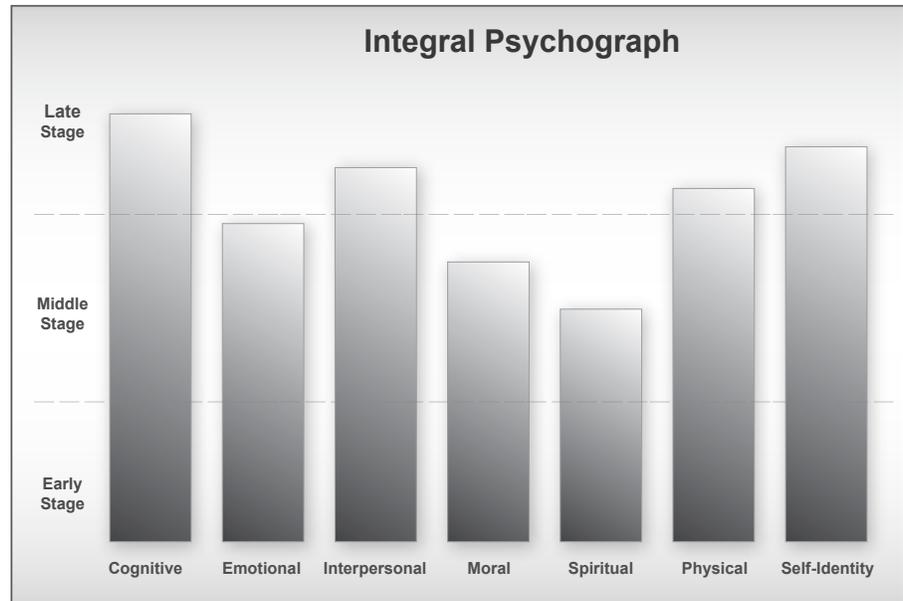
represent the CEO’s individual interior, the capacities or “center of gravity” of the individuals that make up the management team, or could even represent the “typical individual” in an organization. What about the worldview of the leaders and employees of the organization? Different approaches to management and strategy work well with certain mindsets and may fail with others.³ Finally, the Upper-Right quadrant represents the behavior and applied skills/competencies (seen objectively) of individuals. This, again, could represent individual members of the leadership team, or typical individuals at any level of the organization.

Different quadrants suggest different strategies the organization can pursue. Leaders, organizational development consultants, and management consultants informed by integral theory can quickly determine if a situation calls for better

systems, policies or procedures (Lower-Right quadrant), a more robust employee accountability and behavioral control approach (Upper-Right quadrant), the education and development of individual employee (or leadership) competencies (Upper Left), or corporate culture work such as strategic alignment to organizational purpose, values, mission, or vision (Lower Left).

Lines and Levels

The structure (Lower-Right quadrant) of an organization is often at the center of change efforts. In an article published in Forbes entitled “Management’s New Paradigm,” Peter Drucker wrote, “Organization is not absolute. As such, a given organizational structure fits certain tasks in certain conditions and at certain times.” While the significance of matrix organizations, meritocracies, or traditional hierarchical structures seems obvious to many or most leaders, the “specific conditions and times” that call for each respective structure is often less obvious. Integral theory provides quite a bit of clarity here. Pluralistic (Green values) cultures do well with egalitarian matrix organizations, Achiever (Orange values) cultures do well with competitive, excellence-driven meritocracies, and traditional, conformist (Blue values) cultures thrive in rigid hierarchical organizations with clear chains of command that reward loyalty and seniority.⁴ As these distinctions become more well known, in the future, organizations may consciously choose to utilize the most appropriate elements of hierarchical, performance-based, and inclusion structures (among



all the choices possible) based upon the circumstance and people involved.

Leaders do well to be aware of the fundamental dimensions of the organization represented by the quadrants. This includes the organizational infrastructure, processes, and systems seen in the Lower-Right quadrant, and the organizational culture (shared beliefs, values, expectations, mores) seen in the Lower-Left. Leaders should also consider the individual capacities, intelligences, and values of individual people in the organization illustrated by the Upper-Left quadrant.

Lines and levels can be found in all four quadrants; however, depending on the situation, it may not be necessary to conduct a detailed investigation of lines and levels in all of them. Leaders should be informed by the context of each unique situation. Leaders are advised to be aware of lines and levels of themselves, their leadership team, and the employees of the organization. The leaders’ lines and levels (capacities, multiple intelligences) should

be taken into consideration before deciding on a specific organizational strategy. Other questions include: who will be executing the plan once it has been decided upon? Do these individuals have the requisite capabilities to succeed in their efforts to implement the select approach? Does the team have an adequate balance of IQ and EQ? Does developing or implementing this approach require a high (or minimal) level of moral development?²

Lines and levels also play a role in the cultural dimension of the organization (Lower-Left quadrant). The shared beliefs, values, and worldview represent a mix of the levels of development of a group’s members. Leaders can also consider “levels” in terms of “levels of complexity” of the environment in which the organization exists. This can include the level of the organization itself, the level of the industry and marketplace, and the macro economic (global) environment in which it resides.

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States

A fundamental element of organizational leadership involves the awareness of the “current state” and “desired future state.” Organizations are in different states at different times. For example, companies in a “start up” state will benefit from specific approaches (these are well documented in the management literature) while mature firms must engage different approaches to spur growth. Organizational cultures can be in a variety of states as well. A state of low morale may prevail in given group’s collective awareness (culture) and may suggest a specific strategy (e.g. organizational alignment work). Other examples include states of growth, profitability, stability, instability, and various states of change. Organizations can be seen to possess a collective state of low or high morale while key individuals involved may be influenced positively or negatively by states of conflict, fear, hubris, or excitement. Leaders may be productively informed by any and all of these various “states” that may be impacting either the organizational direction or the leadership process itself.

Types

Most managers and leaders are familiar with “personality types” and “types of leadership” (leadership styles); these are further discussed in other handouts.

Through the lens of types, we can discern other relevant elements of the organizational dynamics. According to management theorists Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn, corporate cultures fall into four types: clan, hierarchical, market, and adhocracy.³ John Kotter offers a more simplified conception using two types and highlights the significant bottom line influence of his “strong” or “weak” culture types.⁴

Further, There are a variety of *types* of organizational strategies. Many of these approaches can be put to better use if applied more intentionally based upon a more accurate picture of what is actually happening. Upon analysis, one can see that various types of strategic planning approaches emphasize specific quadrants and are, in fact, best used by and for individuals and groups at specific altitudes of consciousness (self-stages, worldviews, levels, and/or values). The “Planning School,” for example, is a reflection of the culture of the 1950’s and 1960’s. In this type of planning, a team creates the plan for others to implement based upon “forecast and control” methodologies. This type of planning uses a very bureaucratic, top down orientation best suited for “traditional” (Blue values) organizational cultures and may not be suited for “modern” (Orange values) or “post-modern” (Green

values) cultures. While this type of planning seems to work best when working with people at a particular stage of development (complexity of consciousness), the “Culture School” of strategic planning seems to emphasize primarily one quadrant: the Lower Left (Culture). An integral leader could take the best of what each of these types of strategic planning approaches offers and put it to good use where, when, and with whom each is most likely to be effective.

TEAMWORK

Teamwork itself serves as an excellent illustration of how the AQAL Matrix arises in the organization.

When teams are being formed in the first place, leaders with an awareness of integral theory can select members based on cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and ethical capacities, as well as values, worldview, and “self-stage.”

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For some approaches to be executed, it requires a team of people with achievement-oriented (Orange) styles while other situations may call for diversity-seeking, sensitive, pluralistic (Green) styles. Many scenarios involve groups of people with traditional, conformist (Blue) styles and the person(s) that is selected to lead those folks better be able to—at



a minimum—speak the traditional values “dialect.” Integral leaders, of course, not only are fluent in the imperial, traditional, modern, and postmodern worldview dialects, they are also versatile in the corresponding leadership styles: autocratic, authoritarian, strategic, and collaborative (respectively).

“High performance teamwork” has become somewhat of a holy grail in popular management literature. Yet a survey of the literature shows that most of the “experts” on teamwork disagree. Richard Hackman outlines five phases: establishing a “real team,” setting a compelling direction, creating an enabling structure, and providing a supportive context and expert coaching⁴ Pat MacMillan posits six traits of high performance teams: common purpose, crystal clear roles, accepted leadership, effective processes, solid relationships, and excellent communication.⁵ LaFasto and Larson’s research uncovered, six dimensions of team leadership: focus on the goal, ensure a collaborative climate, build confidence, demonstrate technical know-how, set priorities, and manage performance.⁶ And Patrick Lencioni’s model found in his popular book *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, suggests five “steps” to effective teamwork: trust, healthy conflict, commitment, accountability, and focus on results.⁷

There are two problems with these and many of the other models we’ve studied. First, they lack sufficiently comprehensive theoretical frameworks to take the other models into account, therefore, they contradict one another in important ways. Second, they are not integral in that they

Any of these teamwork models can be highly effective in the right circumstance, and with the right people (based on their worldviews, styles, abilities, and so on). But how can leaders know which approach to use, with whom, and under what circumstances?

fail to take into account different levels of development in crucial lines (e.g. cognitive, emotional, relational and ethical capacities) that are pre-requisites for many of the practices they recommend, and they are either unaware of or ignore the unavoidable reality of widely differing which help, constrain or even preclude individual group members from employing the very approaches the authors insist are necessary for effective teamwork.

An “integrally informed” approach to teamwork would seek to put the practice into a sufficiently comprehensive framework that would allow leaders and team members to view it in a logical organizational context. Building on this framework, the most important teamwork theories would be incorporated (integrated), while resolving the egregious contradictions of the most popular models. By offering integrally informed team types, core competencies, and developmental phases, the leading thinking represented by dozens of researchers, authors, and books could be more intelligently employed in the service of organizational success – with lower cost and significantly more leverage.

Teamwork is largely concerned with the interpersonal relationships and activities of its members—also known in integral theory as the “We” dimension (Lower-

Left quadrant). Naturally, the individual mindset and capabilities of the members of the team (Upper-Left quadrant) play a crucial role in results. Team effectiveness can be largely correlated to the level of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management skills each member of the team brings to the collective. These four skill sets are the building blocks for what is widely known as emotional intelligence (EQ).⁸ Integral theory integrates EQ as *developmental lines* with *levels* of proficiency represented along those lines—the higher the development among the members of the team, the more likely the team will perform successfully.

In addition to different levels of development, each team member brings a different worldview, value set, or perspective. Team members and leaders that can learn to recognize, appreciate, and work with diverse perspectives can be an extremely valuable asset to a group that wishes to become a high performance team. Leaders must also tend to the organizational structure, communication protocols, and compensation systems (Lower-Right quadrant). Teams can sustain high performance and superior results through the informed investigation and application of all four dimensions.

The “I,” “We,” and “It” of Teamwork

Teamwork can be seen to occur in three simultaneously existing dimensions, or perspectives of *I*, *We*, and *It*.⁹ Each dimension influences the others, therefore, a team’s success largely depends upon how well these perspectives are recognized, engaged, and attended to. The *I* perspective refers to the individual, subjective dimension, and includes personal realities such as one’s values, goals, needs, drives, moods, perceptions, preferences, and worldview. As it relates to teamwork, the *I* dimension is the primary source from which ideas and innovations are generated and understood and from which motivation and commitment arise. Being the individual subjective dimension, it is also the area from which many personal problems, dilemmas, and conflicts originate. The *I* of teamwork is important to recognize in understanding and skillfully utilizing the varying perspectives, expectations, and interior competencies that each team member brings to the table. By recognizing the *I* of teamwork, the *We* can be more fully maximized.

We refers to the collective, relational dimension, and includes the interpersonal realities that can be experienced, but not *seen*, such as team morale, the group’s sense of accountability, jargon and shorthand language, the felt sense of cohesion, trust, and integrity. Teams must understand and attend to their own interpersonal dynamics and collective skill sets, offering mutual support while striving for synergistic solutions to conflict. As teams recognize and cultivate an increasing *We* sense of mutual respect, trust, and a shared commitment

to a common purpose, it can function as a high performance unit in executing and delivering the team’s outcome-based goal(s) met within the concrete business system.

The *It* perspective refers to the observable, concrete aspects of teamwork. The *It* dimension is critical. For many organizations, and under most circumstances, these are the primary reasons for building a team. Understood this way, it is easy to recognize why teams form, function, and succeed more often when they share a common commitment and are able to focus toward observable, measurable

goals. Because team members’ attention will generally be prioritized from *I* perceptions and issues to *We* issues and only then to *It* issues, the inter-relationship of these dimensions is critical.

Leaders should attend to the teamwork *I* by recognizing and responding to personal issues such as discouragement, distraction, lack of direction, and similar snags. Many individuals cannot focus on the *We* dimension until their primary, subjective concerns and conflicts are addressed and satisfied. As the *I* teamwork dimension is addressed, the teamwork *We* can unfold. Leaders must also attend to this aspect, recognizing and responding to interpersonal conflicts, collective confusion about how to proceed, lack of coordination, or unhealthy competition. As the *We* team-

work dimension is attended to, the team will begin achieving the cohesion, coordination, and commitment that will enable it to work together effectively to meet the *It* of the team’s objective performance goals.

To achieve high performance, integral leaders need to distinguish “teamwork” from “teams.” “Team” refers to a type of organizational structure. Not all groups are teams; however, most groups can benefit from a more cooperative and skillful approach commonly referred to as “teamwork.” Regarding the organizational structure loosely referred to as “teams,”

In their zeal to focus on results (“It”), many leaders mistakenly overlook relevant issues in the “I” and “We” dimensions, increasing the team’s difficulty in meeting their original performance objective.

it is important to delineate just what is meant when using this word. There are three fundamental types of group structures relevant to organizational leaders. These are: 1) A basic group (that is not a team); 2) Single leader teams; 3) Self-managed teams.¹⁰

Types of Teams

In *single leader* team structures, a manager or leader supervises team members who only have authority for executing specific tasks. But (unlike the “group” structure) in a single leader “team,” the members do in fact collaborate with one-another and produce work products that are created jointly. Although members coordinate and cooperate to complete the work, each member is primarily accountable for their own individual goals and actions. The



leader sets the purpose and/or overall direction and often the objectives of the team. She also monitors team performance and holds individual members accountable. This is the preferred team structure for many leaders and employees.

Using the *self-managed* teams approach, the members share leadership and hold themselves accountable. While a higher authority may establish the overall direction (or purpose) of the team at the outset, the team members themselves usually set the specific objectives, goals and strategies. The members establish the requirements for individual and collective contributions and communication methods. The members may also set the requirements for success, and how and when to evaluate progress. Self-managed teams are typically comprised of a small number of people with complementary talents and the requisite interpersonal and collaborative skills necessary for this unique approach.

Despite the pluralistic pronouncements by some of the “world’s leading experts” on teamwork, self-managed teams are not the only real teams.

There is some serious confusion in the corporate world today as to what comprises a “real team.” In our views Harvard’s Richard Hackman provides the most useful criteria for a “real team”: *a team task, clear boundaries, team authority, and membership stability*.¹¹ The vast majority of “teams” seen in today’s workplace are single leader teams. This fact is widely acknowledged by team experts, including those who have a strong bias towards

self-managed teams. Two of the most prominent experts on self-managed teams are Jon Katzenbach and Doug Smith, the authors of books *The Wisdom of Teams* and *The Discipline of Teams*, and the widely read Harvard Business Review article by the same name. Their work in the area of self-managed teams is unparalleled, and leaders who are utilizing this approach are encouraged to leverage their insights and recommendations. Katzenbach and Smith call single leader teams “work groups” and refer to self-managed teams as “real teams.” Integral leaders would want to note that this strong bias for self-managed teams is a reflection of Katzenbach and Smith’s pluralistic (Green) mindset and is potentially problematic for two reasons.

First, the vast majority of people working with teams do not use the self-managed approach, and in many cases, never will. Insisting that the majority of teams in today’s workplace (which are single leader teams) are not teams at all causes more

confusion than benefit. Secondly, proclaiming that only self-managed teams are “real teams” suggests that companies should employ the self-managed approach if they really want the benefits of teamwork. This is not prudent advice.

Self-managed teams are only effective when comprised of members with complementary skills and high interpersonal development. This approach is well suited for organizations with a high percentage of

people with pluralistic) values, and groups with highly developed interpersonal and collaborative skills.¹² However, where the above criteria are not met, a self-managed team approach will be ineffective at best, and disastrous at worst. Since many groups are unable to meet the above criteria, the single leader team structure often remains the most appropriate approach. However, if an integral analysis shows that a self-managed team structure is the best approach, Katzenbach and Smith’s *Wisdom of Teams* is a valuable guide.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

While the primary author of this paper is Integral Institute Business and Leadership Center (BLC) Managing Director Brett Thomas, this presentation reflects many large and small contributions from the collective team of integral thinkers and practitioners associated with the BLC. The author would like to especially thank BLC core team members Soren Eilertsen PhD, Johannah Jones, PhD, and Chris Soderquist, along with Integral Institute faculty members Clint Fuhs, Barrett Brown, Bert Parlee, and of course Ken Wilber, the creator of the (AQAL) Integral Operating System.

ENDNOTES

- 1 See the article *An AQAL Perspective on Leadership*.
- 2 The Enron growth strategy comes to mind given the recent high profile court case of former C-suite executives Jeff Skilling and the late Ken Lay.
- 3 The “Learning School” of strategic planning, for example, tends to be resonant with pluralistic (Green altitude) leaders and organizations yet may very well be “over the heads” of managers and leaders in traditional (or even achiever) organizations. “The Power School” of strategic planning is best employed by leaders who have a high level of cognitive development in order to recognize the potential impact and use of the surrounding industry and environmental structures—in fact, leaders with a low or average level of cognitive complexity are unlikely to be able to grasp the nuanced, systemic nature of this school of planning.
- 4 These colors refer to Wilber’s “altitudes.” See “Introduction to Leadership Capacity.”
- 4 *Leading Teams: Setting the Stage for Great Performance* by Richard Hackman. Harvard Business School Press.
- 3 Cameron, Kim S. and Robert E. Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture: Based on the Competing Values Framework*.
- 4 John P. Kotter, and James L. Heskett, *Corporate Culture and Performance*.
- 5 *The Performance Factor: Unlocking the Secrets of Teamwork* by Pat MacMillan
- 6 *Teamwork: What Must Go Right/What Can Go Wrong* by Frank LaFasto and Carl Larson.
- 7 See *The Five Dysfunctions of Teams* and *Overcoming the Five Dysfunctions of Team: A Field Guide for Leaders, Managers and Facilitators*.
- 8 See *Primal Leadership: the Hidden Driver of Great Performance* by Daniel Goleman (available as a Harvard Business Review article, book and audio book format).
- 9 This convention is a comprehensive frame that contains the major perspectives humans use to make meaning. These major pronouns mirror how people view the world. In this case, the convention *We* is assumed to include “you” and “me.” Similarly, *It* is assumed to include “its.” As such, *I*, *We* and *It* collectively cover all four quadrants of the integral four-quadrant model.
- 10 A committee is an example of a group that is not usually a team. Another example of a group might be a telemarketing sales force where each member works independently under a supervisor. Group members often work in the same physical space and share a designated leader. Both group and team structures are effective in the right circumstances. However, leaders should take care to design the work either for a group or a team, and do so intentionally. Leaders who confuse these two structures often use the rhetoric of teams where it does not rightfully apply. These mixed signals can confuse and frustrate group members. While the cooperative *approach* loosely referred to as “teamwork” has some relevance to groups, the maximum benefits of teamwork are achieved when the work is given to an actual team. Harvard’s Richard Hackman lists the four qualities of a real team (and not simply a group) as follows: *Team Task* – The task actually is appropriate for teamwork and requires members to work together interdependently. *Clear Boundaries* – Clear, yet flexible membership boundaries help distinguish team members from non-team members. *Authority* – Real teams have clear and specified authority to manage some portion of their own work processes. A team requires a certain amount of autonomy to fulfill its purpose, while simultaneously receiving any necessary outside direction or guidance. *Membership Stability* – Teams must have reasonably stable membership over time so that the work can be completed.



- 11 *Leading Teams: Setting the Stage for Great Performance* by Richard Hackman. Harvard Business School Press.
12. The self-managed team approach was pioneered and is strongly advocated by people with a pluralistic (Green) mindset. Self-managed teams are wildly popular with people who have a postmodern worldview / pluralistic (Green) mindset. However, importantly, workers with an imperial worldview / power-centric (Red) mindset or a traditional worldview / conformist (Blue) mindset will usually (consistently) fail in a self-managed team environment. Workers with a modern worldview / Achiever (Orange) mindset can succeed on a self-managed team if and only if they are at later stages of development in the emotional intelligence capacity (self-awareness, self management) and the interpersonal intelligence dimension (social awareness and relationship management). Of course, people with a postmodern worldview / pluralistic (Green) mindset (almost) always prefer the self-managed teams approach. In fact, they may, like postmodern / pluralistic teamwork experts Katzenbach and Smith, insist that only self-managed teams are “real” teams and all other types styles of teamwork and leadership—autocratic (Red), authoritarian (blue), and strategic (orange)—are not valid or worthy team approaches!