Indicator Confirms Existence of Organizational Type, Explains Complexities of Type Within the Workplace

by Karen Grawe

Organizations have their own separate personality types, a growing body of evidence indicates. This type is often different from the personality types of the team, the founder or the current CEO.

The evidence stems from results from the Companies Are People, Too[tm](CAP2) organizational type indicator, developed by Fekete + Company, a Columbus, Ohio, firm.

It's possible to determine a psychological type for an organization because it has all the necessary components: preferences for focusing energy, gathering information, making decisions and implementing action. Type clarifies the characteristics...the values, strengths <u>and</u> challenges...of the organization.

This new component helps to explain the complexities of team building, long-term planning, and corporate identity development within any organization. In short, using knowledge of team and individual types alone in troublesome situations does not always work because the organizational type also affects the results.

Organizational Type Different from Team Type

Results from using the indicator with 57 organizations from three countries show the organizational type was different from the team type 81 percent of the time. The CEO's personality type differed from the organizational type 85 percent of the time.

The organizations taking the profile so far range from start-up companies to organizations more than 100 years old, from manufacturers to retailers to not-for-profit museums. Leaders from all 57 organizations concurred with their organization's type in workshops with senior management and other selected staff members.

CEOs See Organizations Differently Than Does Staff

The 74-question indicator also detected differences between the perceptions of CEOs and their key management staff. In 78 percent of the cases, the CEO selected a different organizational personality type than did the staff. During the group discussions, all of these CEOs obtained additional information about the realities within the organization, changed their minds and reached consensus with their staff.

The confirmation of organizational type adds a new dimension to working with type within organizations that increases the opportunity for honest discussion of working styles and decision making. It also presents an opportunity for senior executives and others to erase the barrier between themselves and the CEO, offering significant information that a CEO may not otherwise hear.

Deliberate Changes in Organizational Type

Thus far, the 57 organizations have recorded 12 of the 16 personality types. ENFP and ESTJ organizations are the most common profiled by CAP2.

Some evidence suggests that an organization can deliberately change its type over time. Three organizations have taken the indicator two or more times over a multi-year period. One stayed true to original type with little change. The other two became more F over time. One believed that it changed because it lost a partner; the other consciously tried to change to become more creative and people-focused.

Both also decided to make more decisions based on their newly defined core values, so it0146s logical that they became more F over time.

Organizations Exhibit Inferior Function Under Stress

Preference, whole-type characteristics and type dynamics appear to translate to organizations in a fairly straightforward manner. This matches the ideas set forth in "The Character of Organizations" by William Bridges.

Organizations who take the indicator typically self-report some form of serious dysfunction or are in the midst of major transition, such as repositioning, branding or merger. Anecdotal evidence emerging from discussions supports predictions for exhibiting the organizational inferior during this stress.

For example, ENTJ and ESTJ organizations tend to exhibit oversensitivity and unexpected outbursts when they are under stress and acting through their inferior, introverted feeling. Organizational coaches may find themselves called by ESFJ and ENFJ organizations to search for answers when they are acting in their inferior function, introverted thinking.

Further, understanding organizational type as a new element in the type equation allows coaches and others to understand workplace conflicts and complexities not apparent when dealing only with team and individual type.

For example, one respected Chicago institution found itself in a position in which its heavily ESFJ/ESTJ management group could get little done. The organizational profile, confirmed by the group, was ENTP. It was as if Felix Unger was trying to manage Indiana Jones without understanding how he worked best.

Further, indicator results from two key people - the CEO and the Chief of Staff - produced polar opposite organizational profiles. One thought the organization was an ENFP; the other, an ISTJ. This alone indicated clear problems that needed resolution. Discussing the implications for this situation turned skeptics about type and the organizational indicator into avid advocates of both.

Development of the Organizational Indicator

Fekete + Company itself is a good example of what happens when a company understands that its organizational type is different from its team type.

When it was first profiled, everyone who had worked at the company more than three months agreed it was an ENTJ. No one in the organization was an ENTJ. The CEO was an ISTJ; the team type, ISFJ. But an ENTJ profile, translated into an expression of organization, fit the company well. The company has continued to test ENTJ over the past four years, even with multiple changes in staff and team type.

Translating ENTJ into an organization resulted in a new view of the company's strengths as The Architect of Ideas and the development of its core ideology: Smart Marketing. Dealing with the challenges of an ENTJ organization - primarily a lack of sensitivity to people's needs - resulted in deliberate efforts to make the working environment more playful and people-focused through creative meetings, unique office décor and field trips.

The first proprietary software version of the instrument was introduced in Spring 1996. Because the process originally required visualizing an organization as a person, some found it difficult. The next revision eliminated much of this problem by using word-pairs and organizational behavior questions developed from a list of 224 organizational behaviors classified into E/I, S/N, T/F and J/P.

At this point, Fekete + Company discovered William Bridges. Pleased to find agreement with him on a number of points, the indicator was slightly revised to ensure no duplications between his questions to evaluate type and CAP2, with tie-breaker questions added. The current software, Version 4, allows the collection of data for each individual question to assist in the validation process.

The Center for the Applications of Psychological Type, Inc., is reviewing the gathered data. Preliminary results of the validation of the CAP2 indicator are encouraging, with further study anticipated as more results are completed.

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