



Manchester Heart Centre

Comparing the plan and the reality of organisational development

How do you judge the success of an organisational development process? Consultants and managers will have one view; staff members may have their own ideas. If a lot of information has been gathered but nothing much happens then the response is often *So what?*. If things have genuinely changed for the better, how do you know?

Manchester Heart Centre offered us the opportunity to compare their plan for organisational development using the Team Management Profile with the reality as experienced by people who work in the Centre.

The manager's tactics

"I had two reasons for starting the process," says Anthony Nally, Directorate Manager of Manchester Heart Centre. "The first is specific to the Centre. When I joined four months ago, an existing plan proposed a 56% rise in staff over 3 years, a 45% increase in open heart surgery and a 122% increase in interventional cardiology procedures. Growth and increased activity is exciting but if it happens too fast organisations risk spinning out of control. I wanted to strengthen the team to stop that happening."

"The second reason springs from my own beliefs. I've worked in the NHS, as an independent consultant, and in private health care. In my experience people development, team working and cultural enhancement are critical success factors in any sort of organisation. But problems are more pronounced in professional organisations where you tend to get barriers between departments and job levels. Hospitals are slightly more authoritarian than contemporary private sector organisations and this doesn't help when you're facing change."

In addition to growth in staff and clinical activity, the centre has to meet challenging government targets in clinical governance, patient customer care, service development and public involvement in the Centre's working.



The Manchester Heart Centre team and Anthony Nally take part in a team development session using the Team Management Profile

The Team Management Profile is central to the whole programme.

"I trained to use the instrument in the early '90s so I knew it would deliver," says Anthony. "It gives people a common language to talk about difficulties that might arise. For me, the bottom line was not helping people understand themselves, though that's an extra benefit, I used it so that people could begin to understand and value other people who do things differently. Without that we couldn't move any further."

Anthony also feels that using the Team Management Profile helped to explain his own management style to his staff. "Managers should never leave themselves out of the process. I came in and introduced some new ideas. As soon as the staff learnt I was an Explorer-Promoter and understood how that preference expressed itself, a lot of things became clear to them and easier for me."

He adds: "I don't think you should be too solemn about these things. Humour's an essential element in what makes a successful organisation. Our Team Management Profile sessions created a great, fun atmosphere and you can still see their effects now."

“If things have genuinely changed for the better, how do you know?”

Extra time?

The message is quite clear: the participants found the process - although unfinished - intriguing and valuable. Some of them had started applying insights in their daily work. Most were eager to start implementing it more formally but it had made a difference.

And the way ahead? “I don’t believe you do this sort of work as a one-off project with an end point,” Anthony Nally comments. “It’s a continual process. The problem is to keep it going when there are pressing work priorities and targets. My present aims for the Centre can be summed up as follows:

1. Understand Yourself
2. Understand Each Other
3. Understand What is Good About Working Here
4. Emphasise What We Do Well, Not What We’ve Done Wrong.

Anthony is convinced that any issue must be attacked with a variety of approaches so other elements in the programme include development work by The Findhorn Consultancy Service and training in appreciative inquiry. “Appreciative Inquiry is changing the language we use to talk about the Centre. We’re beginning to understand that we are very good at a lot of things and we can now link that to the people who work here – their diversity and individual skills.”

So, does the Team Management Profile have more to contribute to the process? Does it map on to the working environment?

“Definitely. We now need to follow up the sessions more formally and, in particular, develop the pacing notes to really impact management.

But we’re already using the preferences to put together teams to address particular issues. We have a team that’s looking at efficiency and cost savings: they are taking into account their preferences in their work.”

It’s what happens on the field that counts

Everybody in the Centre was offered a half-day session with a consultant. For some staff this was mandatory; for

others voluntary. They weren’t given an intensive briefing but understood they were involved in personal development. Four Manchester Heart Centre staff talk about their experiences...

“Anthony joined us in September and it was plain he does things in a different way than we were used to. There was a feeling that he valued people and the fact that we were involved in the process seemed to confirm that.”

The attendees were given tasks to dramatise the importance of team make up and individual preference. These ranged from an exercise planning the set up of a restaurant to writing with the “wrong” hand. “We enjoyed that a lot. It really made us think how difficult certain things are for you.”

The Team Management Profile reports were then given out. As Anthony had hoped, they worked in establishing a basic trust that the participants were going to find out interesting and valuable information. “Most people nodded when they saw their report. No-one completely disagreed with it. Where there were disagreements it led to really interesting discussions.”

They pulled out key issues on slides and flip charts; reading each others reports then discussing them. What did they get out of the process? “We came back with some very specific suggestions for improving relationships in the centre including regular clerical administration meetings. The next stage is to implement them.”

Returning to the basic aims, did the Team Management Profile help people understand each other better, as much as understand themselves? “I was particularly struck by the discussion of introvert and extrovert behaviours. It’s explained a lot about how people work.”

“It helped me understand how some of the misunderstandings at work are down to people’s preferences.”

“I actually found it gave me insights into specific working relationships as well as private problems.”

“I think about things before I do them a lot more nowadays.”