

# Effective organisations need effective people



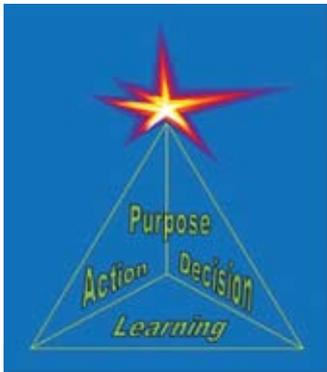
Written for *export & import SA* by Jonathan Sims  
CA(SA), Core Freight Systems (Pty) Limited

## The prism revisited – a model for organisation effectiveness

In a previous article the attributes of an effective organisation were considered, and the model of a prism introduced as a mechanism to communicate the ideas discussed. In summary it was asserted that the effective organisation would be a function of the following four aspects:

- Clarity of purpose
- Quality of decisions
- Action
- Ability to learn

The concept may be illustrated using the graphic below.



Given the above leadership within the organisational context should intentionally address and refine each of the four issues identified – ensuring balance and congruency between them in order to optimise the overall performance of the business.

Extending our use of the prism as an illustrative object, clearly the higher

the quality of the constituent material the more effectively a prism fulfils its purpose of refracting light, providing transformed output through its operation. Likewise a business should seek to transform external inputs through the application of its internal qualities to add value to its stakeholders. It thus may be worth considering the impact of the material used in the construction of such a business.

## Organisational performance is a function of people performance

It is not a new idea to propose that, irrespective of the advance of technology, the primary determinant of the ongoing success of an organisation is the people who are responsible for the execution of the activities required for the business to function. This raises the question of what qualities, or attributes, of the individuals are necessary to support this? Unfortunately I do not have the answer to this! Notwithstanding I do not believe that this should provide an excuse to ignore the subject and, at risk of proving my own ignorance, offer the following personal suggestions for consideration by the reader. In keeping with the simplicity inherent in the model used to provide focus for this article the list is restricted to the following four items, which could be associated with the internal facets of the prism.

### • Intellect

While there are many studies which show that raw intellect alone (perhaps measured by IQ) is not sufficient for job success I understand that equally there is a

minimum intellectual requirement in order to fulfil most of the higher level functions required in the maintenance of any business of consequence. Leadership should therefore ensure that they have the appropriate level of intellectual competence available within their organisation.

### • Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EQ) has become a popular subject over the past 15 to 20 years. Basically it highlights the requirement for an individual to demonstrate both intra- and inter-personal skills in order to perform most effectively at higher levels. Generally this would manifest itself through competencies including high levels of self-awareness and control, empathy with others, and optimism tempered by an objective assessment of the reality of a situation.

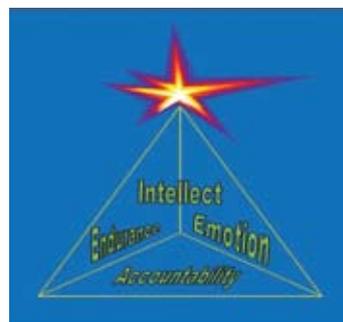
### • Endurance

The ability to endure in the face of the threats and weaknesses which every business is exposed to as important as capitalising on the strengths and opportunities which will present themselves. The individuals themselves within the organisation should therefore exhibit fortitude and perseverance, although this should obviously not be at the expense of adapting to changing circumstances.

### • Accountability

Accountability should not be a consequence of title within an organisation and implies the acceptance of responsibility to act in terms of a standard. As a minimum this requires acting in terms of personal integrity but is extended to provide for evaluation at the organisational level, necessitating not only avoiding doing things that are inappropriate but actively pursuing issues that which will benefit the organisation.

The internal facets of the prism may thus be labelled per the illustration below:



## Passengers on the Organisational Express

It has been observed, perhaps somewhat facetiously, that people may be placed in one of three categories: those that make things happen; those that watch things happen; and those that ask, "What happened?!"

While organisational achievements are generally the result of a collective effort as individuals we need to consider which category we belong to. Are we passengers on the organisational train or do we actively work to make the right things happen? ♦