

[EPILOGUE]

Mapping your Organization's DNA

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This is a totally unscientific, observation-based classification of people, coming from my own organizational consulting practice. I don't claim to have done the research: no 500 CEO interviews, no 2000 manager questionnaires. The categories that follow have more to do with people's mental programmes than with personalities. They are non-

judgmental, neither good nor bad. Good people and difficult people are present throughout. IQ does not correlate with any of them either. It is a polarized variation on the classification that tends to read: you are either one or the other. This is inevitably artificial. Many people may fall in between the extremes or may mix traits, but the dominance of a particular mental programme is what matters. And the compound dominance in your organization is a good snap shot of its behavioural DNA.

We all have been programmed in a particular way by our genes, education and experiences. We carry those mental programmes with us when we get together in 'the organization'. Understanding the diversity in this programming is the first step to functioning socially and, for us, to doing business. The business plot of everyday life needs to be understood through the mental programmes of the characters (people in the organization) and the mental and behavioural framework of the organization (culture).

(Here's the deal: next time you are frustrated and angry because of the incomprehensible behaviour of teammates or your boss, take a deep breath and try to think how the perpetrator may have been programmed. It may perhaps help you to understand or perhaps give you an alternative way to respond, attack, change direction or adapt!)

I'd like you to read this epilogue and use it in a slightly light-hearted way. Allow yourself some time to mentally wander around your organization (like looking

down from a helicopter) to try and make a judgement about what is dominant from these categories. Your organization (the one you lead, work in and belong to) or any other organization you want to 'test', is bound to host a variety of people, i.e. a variety of behaviours and mental programming. It is important to have a sense of this behavioural DNA and, in particular, to see which traits are dominant and which are missing.

I am asking you to *make a judgement* whilst you read and wander, so that you know a bit better 'how much' of those '12 kinds of people' you need to seek. Think about the principal language in the organization, the predominant people, the patterns that tend to appear in hiring practices... It is not mathematics, but your judgement that counts. The categories are bimodal by nature and therefore a caricature. But you must have a sense of where in the spectrum of each of the twelve dimensions your organization is better represented. Use the charts at the end of this chapter to rank your assessment.

Incidentally, these twelve dimensions do not correlate one by one with the 12 kinds of people. I have mixed up the categories on purpose, so that you are not tempted to follow the order of the chapters of the book.

1. Sequence:

There are 'parallel people' and 'sequential people'. Parallel people are able to work (mentally and physically) on several tracks at the same time. They are jumpers. They

navigate very well from one thing to another, by switching between ideas and tasks. They have no problem with 'unfinished' issues to be finished later on. Sequential people, however, need to go from A to B first, and from B to C afterwards. Don't interrupt them in their sequence, or dare to ask what's going to happen with D. In their minds, this is a stupid question - they are still solving B. Their view of the parallel people is that they are messy and unmethodical, prone to sloppiness. Parallel people think that the sequential ones are rigid and 'one-ball jugglers', often at the expense of everybody else. Which one is dominant in your organization? Use the chart to mark your thoughts.

2. Uncertainty:

There are 'data (facts)-driven' people and 'strategy (goal)-driven' people. Data-driven people dislike uncertainty. For them, decisions need to be based on solid research or facts. Guessing, 'what if' or speculating is considered a waste of time. Goal-driven people 'see' the future and work backwards. They have no problem with the lack of current data; they love scenarios and possibilities. Whilst they agree that facts and data are needed, they often 'can't wait'. They need to imagine the future and play with choices. They think that data-driven people lack imagination. Beware: it may be fashionable or even politically correct to declare that the entire organization is strategy-driven. After all, you have a strategy and people follow. The distinction here is whether the focus of attention is first strategy/goals or data. I know you are going to say that you need both, but look

around and decide where your people spend most of the time. Then use the chart to note your findings.

3. Channels:

People have preferred sensors and channels to see, understand and communicate with the world. There are verbal people, visual people and/or people who like things written down. Entire corporate cultures are shaped by sensor and channel preferences. There are voice mail, email, fax and telephone cultures. You need to understand those preferences and adjust your channels; otherwise you'll need to be prepared for surprises. A one-slide bubble chart won't do it for the boss expecting a full report. For other people, nothing less than a face-to-face or a personal call is expected – don't send them 'the slides'. Think of your organization from that helicopter view and make a judgement as to what the dominance is. I know you have all of them, but, again, where are your colleagues spending their time now? Have a go and use the chart to mark your thoughts.

4. Units:

'Atomic people' dissect the elephant (the problem) into pieces and deal with legs, tails and ears separately. 'Molecular people' see an elephant when all they see is a combination of body parts. Atomic people thrive in an analytical environment (and should have no problems answering job ads – as we said before, everybody seems to ask for analytic skills!), whilst molecular people are synthetic

by programming, the kind of people usually referred to as having a 'helicopter view' of things. Molecular people often refer to the others as 'lost in the detail'. Atomic people see the others as 'not detailed enough', meaning not to be trusted if you need a job done well! I know these are caricatures, but what do you think of your organization? Use the chart.

5. Decisions:

'Open-decision people' are happy to park issues and postpone or defer an outcome; literally leaving the decision open. 'Closed-decision people' are always desperate to reach a resolution and close the topic, sometimes at any cost. They think open-decision people are always paralyzed and have poor leadership qualities (making decisions and leadership are synonymous to them). If you are a closed-decision person and want to force a resolution in an environment (team, customer group) that needs more time to reflect, you may get frustrated unnecessarily. Or, if you are about to make a deal with a 'closed-decision' person (or organization), and you function with the opposite mental programme, you may misread them as too eager or desperate. They just may not have the concept of 'reviewing it again tomorrow' in their mental programming. Again, use the chart to note down how this fits within your organization.

6. Propositions:

Some people focus on a question, proposal or statement first and then develop the idea and the arguments further. I call them 'the journalists'. Others do exactly the opposite. I call them 'the lawyers'. Consider these two memos:

- A. *"This is to request the hiring of a new manager. The situation in the office has become unbearable; we have such and such project and these deadlines, etc..."*
(Then development of the ideas and reasons follow over one or two pages).
- B. *"We have become inundated by projects and are under a lot of pressure to meet deadlines. (Then, two or three pages of more details, reasons and explanations follow) That is why I am requesting a new manager."*

In A the request is upfront; in B it comes three pages later. A is journalistic. The theory in journalism about the human attention span says that 'the message' must be in the first paragraph. However, many legal documents - from petitions to court rulings - follow the style of B: *"considering such and such (one page), having heard N and N (one page), and taking into account X and Y, we declare that (the statement, at the end)"*. Many people think that the sharpness of the 'journalistic' model A means a well-organized mind, while model B indicates verbose and disorganized people. This is not how the B-stylists see themselves! They think they are more logical in their flow of

thought! What's the predominant style in your organization? Have a go and mark the chart.

7. Simplicity:

This has to do with the ability of people to create and convey simple messages, whether they come from a simple or complex topic. Some scientific writers have this ability, explaining complex science in ways that even lay people can understand. Other people simply can't do that. In some business cultures, the norm and expectations are '1,2,3', 'one-page summary', 'in three bullet points' and 'the net-net'. Don't go to them with an intricate elaboration based on chaos and complexity theory. Paul Valéry said: "*Everything that is simple is false; everything that is not simple is useless*". That dilemma is still looking for a solution in business life today. What's representative of your organization? Have a go and rate it in the chart.

8. Inclusiveness:

Some people ask for opinions and go around the table (or the company) for recommendations, before (perhaps) finally making a decision. They are 'constituency people' - sensitive to the inclusion of as many players as possible. Others are 'ad hoc people' - they will ask you for an opinion or a recommendation only if you are key to the topic; otherwise, they would genuinely consider it a waste of time. At one end of the spectrum, entire organizations suffer from Over-inclusiveness Syndrome: everybody must be (or wants to be) involved in everything. At the other end

sit organizations with no collective soul and a pretty good organization chart to make sure that one knows whom not to ask in the chain of command. If you are a newly appointed 'ad hoc' boss in a 'constituency' organization, you will soon earn (most likely unfairly) the label of autocrat. Now, what do you think is predominantly going on in your organization? Make a judgement and mark the chart.

9. Authority:

Cultures have been classified according to their attitudes towards authority. What applies to cultures applies to individuals as well. 'Status people' will follow hierarchy-based authority. 'Wisdom people' regard authority as something that somebody earns (moral, knowledge, etc.). Always check this out before embarking on any new partnership! For clues, watch the body language around the negotiating table. Ten pairs of eyes looking in one direction? He's the man. I know that you may be prone to respond that you have both wisdom and status. That is probably true and I am not saying that they are mutually exclusive. But once again I'd like you to make a judgement as if you were looking down from a helicopter!

10. Project:

There are 'doing what people' (task oriented) and 'doing how people' (process oriented). The former have an eye on the destination; they love milestones, distinct tasks with clear desirable outcomes and they are often simply referred to as 'doers'. For them, *how* to get there is less

relevant. Indeed, they may get there at any cost. The 'doing how' people focus on the journey and the way things are done matters a lot. I know you probably have both, but again, what is the predominant language and where do your people spend most of their time? Make a judgment and rate the scale.

11. Time:

There are 'past', 'present' and 'future' people. They differ in their reference to the world. To anchor everything in the past with somebody working in next-century time, leads to a dialogue that falls on deaf ears. Those better equipped with 'past-time' mental programmes choose professions accordingly: archaeologists, historians or psychoanalysts. They may not be the best to invent the third-generation Internet, but you don't want Bill Gates as psychotherapist either. Short-termism in current business life has led to a new breed of 'present time' managers who count time in 'quarters'. Where is your organization in this dimension? When in doubt, think about where you spend most of your time.

12. Options:

There are people who tend to follow one single, logical, linear thinking path, probably the one that makes more sense to them, and they are happy with the outcome. In chapter four, I called them 'therefore people'. They sound like this: *"we have done A, have taken into consideration all the risks and listened to all, therefore we*

must choose X". It is solid and reassuring. Other people can't stick to one linear track, even if that track is very reasonable. I call them 'however people'. They sound like this: "*We have done A, explored B, and we think we should do X; however, we could also do Y and Z*". Each of them has a tremendous ability to irritate the other. The former are seen as rigid or, more benevolently, 'determined' by the latter, who in turn are seen as 'unclear' and indecisive by the 'therefore people'. What's the predominant side in your organization? What would I see most if I spent some time with you and your people? Make a judgement and rate the scale.