

Lights On!

The light needs to be switched on where people issues and attitudes are causing organisations to stumble in the dark. DR MAX SCHUPBACH of the USA says Worldwork interventions can throw the switch.

IN THE middle of the night, a policeman runs into the village fool, who is looking for his keys on the sidewalk under the streetlight. After searching together for a while, the cop asks: "Are you sure you have lost your keys here?" "No," says the fool, "I dropped them on the opposite sidewalk, but there is no streetlight over there, as you can see."

When encountering difficulties in our organisations, we sometimes feel as if we are looking on the wrong side of the street for answers to our problems. On the lit side of the street are the things that are visible and measurable, the everyday reality that we all agree upon. In this consensus reality, we know the steps an organisation must take to achieve greater results. We need:

- ▶ to have a clear vision, with leaders to inspire others to follow.
- ▶ to push power downwards.
- ▶ to improve the flow of information.
- ▶ to align the organisational culture (habits) with requirements of the times.

To achieve this, we create structures and policies, develop and implement best practices, analyse problem areas, and find solutions and new best practices. However, in spite of all the progress made, we are often frustrated, and feel that there are invisible forces working against us. We get slowed down by inertia and resistances. The unlit side of the street seems to sabotage our work. On this unlit side are the unspoken resentments, the secret fears and jealousies, past hurts and simmering conflicts, stress and boredom, which form a background noise of gossip.

Some cultures have witchdoctors who can 'see' this invisible world, seemingly populated by ghosts and demons. They use their insights for the well-being and prosperity of the community, to bring hunting luck or resolve tribal conflicts. The images and models of the cosmos that such cultures developed resemble conclusions from Quantum Mechanics and other modern sciences about the nature of the Universe. In the subatomic realm, modern physics discovered a paradoxical world of interconnectedness and uncertainties, a world in which light can take the form of particles or energy waves, depending on the observer, and a world in which we can prove that seemingly distant events are inexplicably connected.

Worldwork, developed by Arnold Mindell, draws on Quantum Mechanics and



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indigenous shamanism and links them with psychology to create a theoretical framework to work with organisations, groups and individuals. It distinguishes between three levels:

- ▶ The **consensus reality level** of everyday causal thinking.
- ▶ The **self-organising (dreaming) level**, following the aboriginal concept of dreamtime as the organising principle behind a complex world.
- ▶ The **one-world (sentient) level**, based on spiritual traditions that acknowledge an unbroken whole as the foundation of everything that exists.

DURING INTERVENTIONS IN ORGANISATIONS, WORLDWORK FACILITATORS FOCUS ON:

1 Worldwork Perspective: Facilitators understand diversity as an equal acknowledgement of the importance of all three levels. From this perspective, its 'Deep Democracy' goes beyond affirmative action, and values all voices, present or past, real or imagined, agreeing or conflicting, to allow interactions beyond political correctness. Having expressed themselves, the group finds common ground, the unity and timeless interconnectedness of all people.

2 Worldwork Methodology: Interventions shine light on the invisible, and show the meaningfulness of 'unseen' tensions and difficulties. This allows the group to work with figures and ideas from the past that still 'haunt' the present in a ghostlike fashion.

3 Worldwork Attitudes: The personal development of facilitators allows them to work from the core of their being, thus gaining credibility within the groups they facilitate.

How does this work in practice? During a group process with a national management team of an international service provider, participants criticised their headquarters, located on another continent. In their view, the centre continually disregarded the value of their contributions, and the CEO appeared to be motivated mainly by his own gains. The centre and the CEO, not present in person, acted as 'ghosts' in the group. Only when the group members were asked to give this 'ghost role' a voice in a role play, did they discover the complexity of this relationship. Then, in a sudden outburst in the midst of the role play, one member accused another of acting like the CEO. In the ensuing heated discussion, the group found that they, too, lacked appreciation for one another's work and ideas. The CEO, who initially appeared troublesome, was now understood to be a non-local 'presence' in the team, expressing itself in everyone's behaviour.

In a very personal session, the group found their authentic mutual appreciation for one another and for the team as a whole, and subsequently used this to develop new plans and strategies. With this changed self-perception, the group was invited to identify with being a leading force in the organisation, or to 'pick up the CEO consciously' and to reconsider its original relationship with the centre. The head of the group surprisingly stated that she thought that the CEO needed more support for the things he tried. She spoke

of how they as a team at times subtly stalled or resisted the centre's initiatives, because of their own feelings of inferiority. In their newly found eldership, they believed that as part of their own empowerment they actually needed to support the CEO in his work, and express appreciation for his efforts.

In the following year, the group reported increased productivity and sales, a greatly improved relationship to the centre, and various personal promotions, crediting all this to the new team spirit and attitudes. For Worldwork, these were outer measurable signs of a deeper change that had occurred, which left the participants with a new awareness of community, more access to creativity, improved relationships among themselves, and increased job satisfaction. Worldwork felt rewarded by this, as these changes were aligned with its own vision and the world that it hoped to co-create. □

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Dr Max Schubach

Dr Max Schubach, with Drs Arnold and Amy Mindell, founded the Process Work Centre in Portland, USA. He specialises in the application of Worldwork in organisations, including corporations, NGOs, political parties, and Australian and American indigenous communities. He founded Citywork which creates alliances between businesses, administrations and disenfranchised groups to create a common future. Born in the Swiss mountains, Max is now based in Oregon. Visit www.maxfacilitation.net