Left-Right-Centre

By Peter Fox

An introduction to two connected 'obvious when you think about it' observations which inform the design of organisations and ensure people fit in the right place

People

I have observed there are three types of personality:

Left   Explore, design and build. Technical.

Centre Administration and housekeeping. Controlled environment.

Right Outward looking. Customer service etc.

This is very much about where people are most comfortable and feel they do their best work.

- There are some people (R) who get a buzz from phoning up customers and making sales while others would run away from that sort of thing.
- We all know people (C) who are excellent with the tedious detail of administration but run away and hide if there is decision-making to be done or 'all hands to the pump panic stations'.
- Scientists, engineers and writers (for example) (L) know how to get to deeply involved in their subject but tend to put-off or despise housekeeping and easily give up when it comes to shady and soul-destroying selling.

It is easy to see how the left and right personalities fail to mix with an example: The marketing mob (R) demand some samples of the new product they can show customers but the engineers(L) refuse to let them have anything until they've got all the bugs out.   They're both right!

Organisations

Hey! Did you notice that? The functional classification of any organisation will have three wings that **exactly** match the 'people personalities'. How brilliant!

- Every organisation has a Left, Right and Centre …
  … production, marketing and administration respectively.
- That is (or should be) the top-level division for every organisation. Anything else is inviting dysfunction.

Now it should be obvious that you want suitable personalities in each wing. Now you know why the (C) bureaucracy attracts the people who won't make decisions, take risks or relate to the overall mission.

Discussion

Some people are adaptable hybrids, but possibly from necessity rather than choice. It may be possible to educate one type about the way the others work but they are unlikely to feel comfortable or satisfied if they have to actually do it.

Where an organisations comprises sub-units, each sub-unit will typically have the same tripartite functions internally which can lead to peculiarities if the sub-unit is mono-functional. For example if the 'the computer programming team'(L) is expected to produce documentation(C) and user tutorials(R) those activities are likely to be marginalised.

Exercises

1   In the last example:
   a   Do you bring in 'hand-maidens' for the C and R jobs or force reluctant prima-donna programmers to do them?
   b   In both cases what management involvement would be required?

2   In a formal interview situation how a recruiter discover a candidate's LCR personality? Are youthful activities a good indicator?

3   How would you audit the match of LCR activities to LCR personalities in an existing situation? Can you devise a checklist of potential hotspots or signs to look for?

4   Discuss: "People with a narrow view tend to be easy to manage once they are on course. People with a broad mix of LCR viewpoints are erratic and can lack confidence."

More information: vulpeculox.net/treems

Other subjects in this series :
• The Grumblee
• Champions and chiefs
• Moots

Copyright

Peter Fox is the sole originator of Treems and associated concepts as described in this series. He lives in Essex, England is pleased to correspond with people working in the same field.