

# DISCERNING BENEATH THE TIPS OF MANAGEMENT ICEBERG

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## Abstract

Working from an approach that helps people think about organizations through the medium of specific images, the article focuses on the image of the organization as a group of people. The analysis is carried forward by use of the T.I.P.S. (Tasks to do/Things to work with, Ideas/Issues to deal with, People relations and Processes, and Systems/ Structures to work with in and beyond) model.

*organization* as an entity? A structure of a pyramid? A machine that works with electricity or an engine that runs with gasoline in it? A tree with its root system, trunk, branches, leaves and fruit that symbolize many elements of what an organization is like? There are many images anyone can use to visualize organizations. Gareth Morgan (c1986) wrote extensively on eight images of organization as keys to unlocking the theories and assumptions that influence the dynamics of managing organizations.

## INTRODUCTION

What picture or image comes to your mind, when you think of an

In many of my sessions, the images participants often use to symbolize an organization include pyramid, a wheel with spokes around it, machine, a tree, a

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garden, and a group of people. For every choice of an image that represents an organization, a participant comes up with an explanation that reflects his/her perspective or world view of what an organization is like. Let me explore with you the image of organization as a “group of people” and further explore what it means to manage organizations as human social systems and discover beneath the “T.I.P.S. of the iceberg” in managing organizations. (T.I.P.S. in an acronym for Tasks to do/ Things to work with, Ideas/Issues to deal with, People relations and Processes, and System/Structures to work with in and beyond)

### **Organizations as Human Social Systems and Corporate Roles**

Organizations are *people*. It is *the people* in organizations that make things happen, get things done, and move the organizations to achieve greater and higher levels of performance. Without the human potential as major capital for organizational performance, investment in facilities, equipment, buildings and other infrastructures may be a drain on the budget in the long run unless capable and committed people are there to utilize and take care of them.

However, there are times when people think on money talks and money walks. To them, without money, nothing happens and nothing moves. From the pragmatic world view of a

manager, money can become the main consideration out of the five things that matter in organizations – mission, market, money, manpower and machines. Many managers tend to take money as the main bottom line of any activity or business operations, for without it, work does not get done or because of it work must be done. This view is rather limited and it reflects a mechanistic perspective of what makes an organization work.

In essence, an organization is a “*living corporate person*”. The people factor of the organization is central to making things work in it. As a core factor, it is important to understand the dynamics of a “living corporate person”. Like an individual human person, an organization as human social system, experience growing, maturing and aging through the dynamic interactions of life forces as “wants” (visions, dreams, aspirations), “cans” (energies, capabilities, powers) and “musts” (values, norms, taboos) shared and experienced by people in the organization (Roldan & Tayko, 1991). To Ichak Adizes, this process of growing and aging comes in what he calls “corporate life cycles.” (Adizes, 1989). However, unlike human beings where the lifecycle is inevitable over time, in organizations the life cycle can be sustained. The concept of “sustainability” can prolong the “mature state” and prevent the decline with age” in organizations. (Jones, 2002)

To manage the “mature state” of the corporate life cycle in an organization, it is important to recognize the balancing process in the performance of corporate roles and functions. Roldan and Tayko further explain their concept of a “living corporate person” in that out of the dynamics interplay of forces, four distinct but complementary corporate roles emerge that influence the corporate performance of the organization namely:

- Entrepreneur – the visionary, creative risk-taker, strategic thinker
- Administrator – the standardizer, rule maker, systematizer, conservator
- Performer – task/result-oriented, achiever, doer; and
- Integrator – people-oriented unifier, harmonizer, culture-builder.

Each of these roles is distinctively different in its function and orientation, but is definitely complementary to the rest of the other roles. When one role is given more attention at any given time, it may influence or affect the pace and direction of growing, maturing and aging process. One role cannot be overemphasized at the expense of the other, although at every stage of development of the organization, one role can take a lead. When analyzed deeply, each of these roles correspond to the four quadrants of human information processing sets of skills based on the four-brain model of Dudley Lynch. (Brain Map Model, Brain Technologies Corporation, c1993)

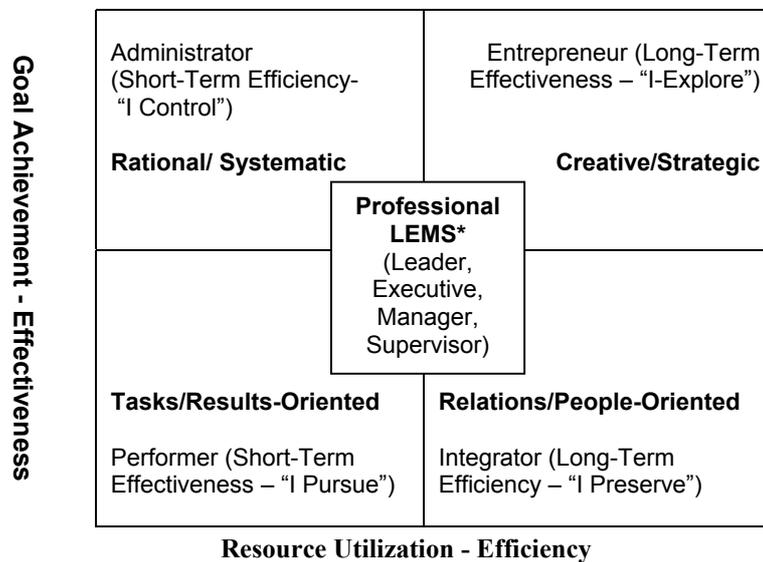


Figure 1. Adapted from the Roldan-Tayko Model of Professional Management (c1991) and the Corresponding Four-Brain Model on Human Information Processing (Lynch, 1986)

A person or groups of persons in positions of leadership and management (leader, executive, manager, supervisor or LEMS) may perform all four of these corporate roles in the organization. At times, a person holding a position title (President, Vice-President, Dean, General Manager, Division Head, etc.) may emphasize more of one or two of these corporate roles, than the other, depending on his/her orientation, preference, and priority in managing the organization.

For a growing organization, the dominant roles are usually the entrepreneur (“I-Explore”) and performance (“I Pursue) roles. For a maturing organization, the efforts are directed towards all the four corporate roles functioning at work but for aging organizations, it may be just the administrator (“I Control) and integrator (“I Preserve”) roles are dominant at the expense of the visionary and performing roles.

A professional leader/manager aims to get the whole organization to perform all four roles to excel and achieve organizational goals and objectives. He must be able to carry on the four roles as rationally, creatively, productively, harmoniously and purposively as possible. He makes every effort to engage people in the organization to carry out the requirements of each of these corporate roles. The consciousness of these basic, distinct but complementary roles of the “corporate living person - the

organization” will enable a professional manager to keep the organization at prime or mature stage of growth. A visual representation of the complementarity of these roles is shown on Figure 1. (See Figure 1. Adapted from the Roldan & Tayko Model of Management with the Brian Technologies Corporation Four Brain Model Dudley Lynch c.1986)

### **Management ICEBERG**

Managing organizations as human social systems in fast changing times is a tremendous challenge. Given the current complexity and speed of changes in the task environment of any organization, the demands for survival are greater and the challenges are more complex for sustainability. It is like navigating an ocean liner across the high seas where anything can happen at anytime and the manager as the captain of the ship must decode, discern, discover, determine and decide on any emerging issues and concerns affection the sail and its task environment. The captain must ascertain that everything in the ship is operating and functioning to keep the ship afloat (survival). At the same time, he must sense and anticipate any conditions in the environment that may affect the sail especially in high waters. Changing weather conditions, strong undercurrent and other unforeseen factors may suddenly put the ship at risk. To sustain the sail in high waters, management must be able to discern

beneath the TIPS of the management iceberg.

Any issue and concern that management must pay attention to maybe clustered around four areas which I call the TIPS of Management ICEBERG namely: (Tayko: Management in and for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. SJIT Journal, V.2 SY 1997-98.)

- T – asks to do and things to work with
- I – deas and information to think about
- P – urpose of tasks
  - People relations and
  - Process to undertake
- S – tructures and systems to deal with in the task environment.

These management **TIPS** can be compared to an iceberg which can be seen at two levels namely “Above SEA/SEE Level” and “Below SEA/SEE Level” Figuratively, only the **tip** of the iceberg can be seen objectively and visibly “above sea/see level”. The captain of the ship seeing the TIPS from the horizon, cannot take that sight of its size for granted. The substantive part of the management **TIPS** of the iceberg is submerged “below sea/see level” as shown in Figure 2 below:

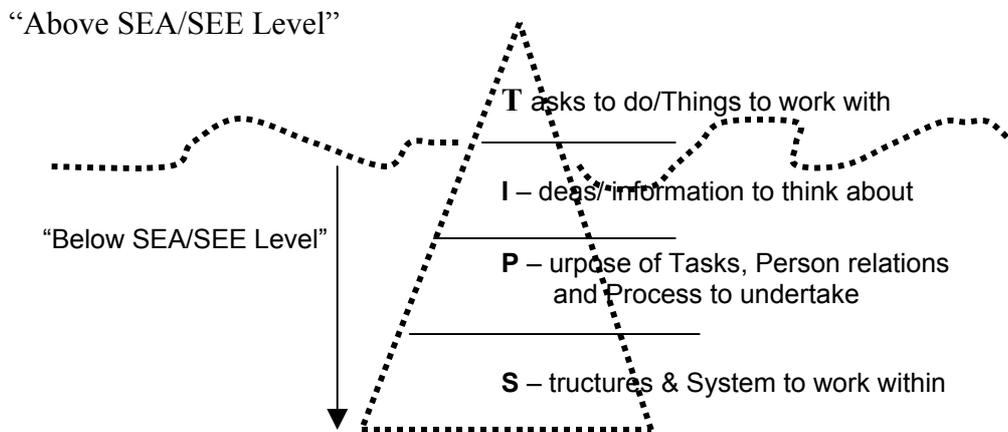


Figure 2. The Management Iceberg (Tayko Model, 1995)

At the “above sea/see level”, it is easy for a manager to take an empirical assessment or inventory to document events faculty as things happen record the tasks carried out and the things to deal in events and/or generate results. But the part of those **TIPS** which is submerged “below sea/see level” must be **sensed** and **decoded** in order to use the information to anticipate and strategize the moves the captain must take to steer the ship out of danger. How does one sense the magnitude of the submerged **TIPS**? Specifically, how does one surface the management iceberg to address it objectively? How does one manage the issues, ideas, information and insights beneath the **TIPS** of the iceberg?

People at work in any organization come from various backgrounds, orientation, persuasion, experience and expertise. Their motivation to work in organizations varies from different priorities and preferences. The diversity and multiplicity of issues of these people at work can present a major dilemma for management in aligning them to organizational goals and expectations.

To deal with this challenge effectively, management needs to obtain the critical competence of “human information processing”. This competence is most important at a time when information implodes in the task environment of the people in the organization. Figuratively, management must learn how “to read below sea/see

level”. This means management must learn how to decode and discern information beneath the **TIPS** of the management iceberg and use the information, ideas and insight to understand and manage organizations differently.

### **Discerning the Processes beneath the TIPS of the Management Iceberg**

Living, loving and learning are fundamental processes to survive, thrive and sustain all human social systems. To promote and sustain these processes especially in organizations require certain competencies to enable human social systems (individual, family/group, and organization, community) to obtain and enjoy quality of life. These processes are experienced both at the individual level and in collective (group, organization, community) types of activities.

In this discourse, the focus of attention is on the learning process. The challenge here is for those in position of leadership and management (leader, executive, manager, and supervisor roles) to learn or become aware of new information, new perspectives, new configuration of ideas and relationships and use the information and insights on issues to manage effectively. There are five key processes relevant to develop the competences in “human information processing” which are as follows: (Tayko, P.R.M. In the Community Mobilization a Training Package

written for SMEC/SRI in the GPEPII for the Ministry of Education, Pakistan, August 2001.)

### 1. “THE GOLD MIND TO MINE” –

*This is the process of exploring the human potentials or creating awareness for learning, change and development. The most important “resource or capital” in organization is the “human intellectual capital”. To some it is called the “human mind – the brain” as the gold mine to tap and develop. Creative, imaginative, innovative, alternative, relevant ideas are invaluable mental resources to be generated in ways where the priming and mining are facilitative of the unfolding than managing. Leaders, executives, managers and supervisors sometimes take this process of “unfolding” in a most rigid, controlling and manipulative way that the essence of the matter is lost. Exploring the most humane way of mining this “gold mind” is the challenge of organizational leadership and management.*

### 2. “THE LINK FOR BREAKTHROUGH” -

*This is the process of consensus building and dialoguing meanings. – While people always share some things in common, the diversity of needs, interests and levels of development create a challenge for collective*

*learning. What is meaningful to one person may not be meaningful to another. When enabling individuals in a team or an organization to share common values, visions and aspirations, it is important to engage them in dialoguing meanings and consensus building. The key process for breakthrough in team, organizational and community learning is how to link “meanings” or that which matter to one and to the other without losing one’s touch of their own meaning with the other. Shared values and vision among people in organizations and communities can only be attained when there is provision of an experience to link and connect meanings for breakthrough in understanding and action.*

### 3. “THE PULL TO POOL FOR CONNECTION”

*Sensing dynamics, active listening and identifying common needs and concerns is another process of decoding information “below sea/see level”. Relating and working with people and for people requires a “big” heart to sense the pull of human feelings, emotions and dispositions. At times these feelings or emotions are expressed openly, at other times quietly in non-verbal ways. This sensing also requires an attentive “ear” to detect nuances from the words and sounds audible in varying tones and pitches. Then it also requires a “head” to decode and read those message and*

*processes carefully, intuitively, objectively, logically and wisely to “make sense” of the information. This means taking a “trip” or iterative flow of thought process using the whole brain faculties in thinking, learning and creating.*

#### **4. “THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE”**

*Communicating message i.e. saying what you mean and meaning what you say is a process of alignment for congruence in thought and action. There is nothing more disconcerting in dealing with people when intention is lost in the garble of conflicting communication signals. For example when a manager says “I’m not angry” but the words and tones of his voice carry the weight of anger, the subordinate would receive double messages. More often than not, the non-verbal message carries more weight than the verbal. People can see through the sincerity of LEMS whenever they mean what they say and say what they mean. Integrity and credibility can only be maintained when LEMS consistently adhere to the principle of the “medium is the message”. Clarity of purpose and objectives, sincerity of intention and compassion with people are qualities consistent with the value of transparent leadership and management. Discerning beneath the TIP of the management iceberg can be readily done when LEMS practice being and*

*seeing themselves as “the medium as the message.”*

#### **5. “THE LEAP AND LEVERAGE TO THE FUTURE”**

*Strategizing and networking for results and relations are part of the complex sets of management thinking processes. The process of leaping and leveraging to the future is a functioning of strategic thinking and strategic planning. To think beyond the present by utilizing the pull of the future and the insights from the past requires a frame of mind that enables the LEMS to connect and transcend things beyond the boundaries. The experiences of the past usually present a lot of boundaries loaded with feelings usually painful and sometimes pleasurable. Breaking out of the traps of the past can cloud the objectivity of thought to see the present as well as the future. Therefore, it is important for LEMS to think strategic by leaping and leveraging one’s thought beyond the boundaries of the past and risking thinking differently. “Leaping” means asking the questions “what if”, “what else” and “why not” to enable the mind to think beyond the boundaries. “Leveraging” means using small but strategic action as a springboard for long term efforts. Breakthroughs in life are usually the results of a leap of faith to act and leverage on small steps in one’s work for the future.*

## **Conclusion**

The “TIPS” of an iceberg are signs of the underlying dangers and challenges ahead. In the same light, they are indicators of great resources for development and change. In the distant horizon these can be visibly lost by clouds hovering cross the heavens that join in view as you gaze beyond at sunrise or sunrise. But a keen, skillful, perceptive, alert and authentic LEMS knows what these TIPS are to TAP for effective leadership and management. The following are helpful steps TO TAP THE TIPS of the “iceberg”:

- **ANCHOR** all your tasks, efforts, and relations on purpose, vision and values – those that matter most in your life. Know and live by the principles of “first things first”, “focus on the critical few than the trivial many”, and “discern and distinguish between the important and the urgent” and many others. These are among the seven habits of highly effective people. (Covey, 1988)
- **ASK** - ask, **seek, and know** before you **DARE** – your thoughts with the people you deal or work with in your interaction. Draw out from the people their needs and interests and learn from them instead of imposing your own. Priming from the well generates more wisdom to tap than depending on your own “water”. Ideas and issues can surface fast

when LEMS ask, seek and know before making a statement.

- **Anticipate – better “ante” and “later”**. To be forearmed is to be forewarned. Think in advance what tasks to do, what people need, what materials to use and all details you can think of. Never let others do this for you or else you would lose touch of the sense of what are needed.
- **Appreciate** – what unfolds or the unexpected. It generates more creative energy than you can muster. Reacting and being cross or negative on anything that comes unexpected will not help. In fact, negative reactions can do more harm to the very disposition you need to start a good day. Take a “what if” stance to think differently on whatever comes. Be positive of the potential of any event than be sorry for the spilled milk when it happens.
- **Accept** – the limits of the best effort of yourself and those around you without losing the standards of excellence you have set for yourself and others to achieve. Remember that the process of becoming is always unfolding, a never ending process of learning. As LEMS, you can be persistent in your drive for excellence but at the same time you can be magnanimous in accepting certain limits without losing faith

and hope on the creative potential of the human person.

The five “As” as steps to TAP the TIPS of the iceberg can serve as a constant reminder to LEMS that to discern beneath the surface of a vast ocean of potentials in human social systems requires no single approach to understand and engage people at work in organization effectively, efficiently, ethically and excellently.

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