



## The Evolutionary Spirit of a Self-Organizing System



Inspiration, Change, Renewal and Stability.

To live in an evolutionary spirit means to engage with full ambition and without any reserve in the structure of the present, and yet to let go and flow into a new structure when the right time has come.

— Erich Jantsch

### Introduction: The Self-Organizing System

This report is intended to offer a reflection of the ongoing process within the Executive Team, and to begin to highlight some of the salient features that have emerged

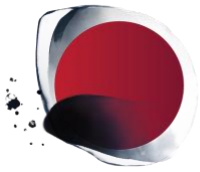


within the team's discussions. The primary feature is that the Executive Team and indeed the entire organization are evolving as a Self-Organizing System. The primary dynamics of a self-organizing system are simply Opening and Closing. To perceive the complex dynamics of corporate functioning in the relatively simple terms of "opening" and "closing" offers the reader the opportunity to re-imagine experience in such a way as to bring about not only a change in thinking but also a change in behavior. As one continues to read there is an opportunity to open the mind to the possibility of embracing experience in a new way.) Opening and closing can both inspire and challenge the overall organization of the company.

- Opening allows for inspiration and can offer insight, clarity, information, chaos, and possibility.
- While closing can offer organization and suggests, order, control, structure, participation, planning, prediction, and production.

To develop an understanding of a self-organizing system one must first trust his or her own experience. There is an old alchemical dictum that says, "Dissolve the matter in its own water." What this tells us is that;

- Unless we are going to attempt to understand who, what, and whys of the Executive Team and how its decisions inform and transform the overall corporate structure, through a bed of a preconceived theory, we must seek understanding through our own experience.
- To accomplish this, each individual and the group, must continue to attempt to trust their experience and to give voice to that experience.



## Structure of this Report

This report is structured to comment both on the organizational functioning as a whole and on the structure of the manager-client relationship. This report suggests that it is possible to view the over-all structure of the company, the dynamics of the core functioning of the Executive Team, and the dynamics of this relationship as mirror images of one another. . . “As above, so below.”

### **The Evolution of a Self-Organizing System: Inspiration, Change, Renewal and Stability**

## Inspiration

### Organizational View

As has been discussed recently, there is no shortage of inspiration and the energy that it brings. Inspiration, when well-managed, will inspire the core of the company, the Executive Team, to open to new possibility. This new possibility then has the potential to both create and destroy. The creative opening is vital to life and renewal while the destructive energy of closing off to what once was is necessary to allow for the letting go of and the separation from “the old.”

### Client/Customer View

The manager needs to be able to open to inspiration whether it is perceived as coming from “above” down through the corporation or up from “below,” via his or her client/customer base. Opening to inspiration, as generated from above, necessitates closing to personal doubt, fear or any consideration which disconnects one from this energy and possibility. To open to inspiration from a prospect or client necessitates the advisor closing off anything that distracts their attention from embracing the individual as the client. (Note: This image of allowing for inspiration to inform the body of the relationship



with the client, re-imagines the “close” from being an event to a “process” of holding and facilitating the client at all times while the client is within the conscious experience of the communicator.)

## Change

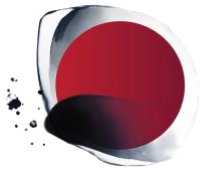
### Organizational View

To understand change, we must first understand the contrary drive to establish and maintain equilibrium. Margaret Wheatley (1994) explains.

“One day when [I was] a child, I stood beneath a swing frame that towered above me. Another child, older than me, told me of the time a girl had swung and swung until, finally, she looped over the top. I listened in silent awe. She had done what we only dreamed of doing, swung so uncontrollably high that finally not even gravity could hold her.

I think of this apocryphal story as I sit now in a small playground, watching my youngest son run from one activity to another. He has climbed, swung, and jumped, whirled around on a spinning platform, and wobbled along a rolling log until, laughing, he loses his balance. Now he is perched on a teeter-totter, waiting to be bumped high in the air when his partner crashes to the ground. Everywhere I look there are bodies in motion, energies in search of adventure.

It seems that the very experiences these children seek out are ones we avoid: disequilibrium, novelty, loss of control, surprise. These make for a good playground, but for a dangerous life. We avoid these things so much that if an organization were to take the form of a teeter-totter, we’d brace it up at both ends, turning it into a straight plank. But why has equilibrium become such a prized part of adult life? Why are we afraid of what



happens if our boat gets rocked? Is it that we prefer balance to change? Does equilibrium feel more secure?

Sometimes, to clear up a confusing concept, it helps me to return to the accepted definition of the word. So I open the American Heritage Dictionary to learn about equilibrium: “Equilibrium. 1. A condition in which all acting influences are canceled by others resulting in a stable, balanced, or unchanging system. 2. Physics. The condition of a system in which the resultant of all acting forces is zero. . . . 4. Mental or emotional balance. . . . poise.”

I am surprised by the negativity of the first two definitions. A condition in which the result of all activity is zero? Why, then, do we desire equilibrium so much, or use the same word to describe mental and emotional well-being? In my own life, I don’t experience equilibrium as an always desirable state. And I don’t believe it is a desirable state for an organization. Quite the contrary. I’ve observed the search for organizational equilibrium as a sure path to institutional death, a road to zero trafficked by fearful people. Having noticed the negative effects of equilibrium so often, I’ve been puzzled why it has earned such high status.” (Wheatley, 1994, pp. 75-76)

A closed system wears down and eventually will approach entropy, or the giving off of all of its energy, wearing down, and unable to do its work or to allow for change. As a company allows for change through an open system, it will do so “by referring to itself; whatever future form it takes will be consistent with its already established identity. Changes do not occur randomly, in any direction. They always are consistent with what has gone on before, with the history and identity of the system.” (Wheatley, 1994, p. 91)





## Summary

Can we maintain an open system with our clients/customers and allow for disequilibrium, novelty, and loss of control and surprise? While allowing for this “change” can we also maintain an organizational system that is stable, secure and productive? Can we allow the system that holds the client close enough so that it allows for productive outcome while remaining open enough to be human and life giving?

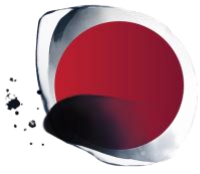
## Renewal

### Organizational View

The exception to entropy is life. It is an open system that engages its environment and allows for growth and evolution. An open system dissipates structure and energy that is restrictive and opens to new forms of organization that continue to serve the life of the organization. Renewal relies on the capacity of the organization’s resiliency as it allows for interplay between stability and in-stability. Renewal is a process of maintaining the corporate identity while allowing for an ongoing change of form.

### Client/Customer View

This renewal, as experienced within the manager-client relationship allows for energy to build and blossom as it approaches stability. Renewal is the in-breath of possibility and sustains the client’s expectations, needs, wants in a relational environment that is fresh and outside the norm of their previous experience. This relationship is fluid and influenced by new information while at the same time it offers spontaneous emerging structures that are inclusive of the client’s expectations and needs. The relationship is capable of organizing information in the structure that best suits the client’s needs. When the need changes the identity of the relationship can remain the same while the organizational structure changes to service the change.



## Stability

### Organizational View

Stability is achieved as the system sustains a process of self-organization that allows for all the dynamic elements discussed above. A system that tends toward stability both has to foster life while allowing for the next cycle of change of structure. Stability is sustained while balancing the rhythm of open and closing in a third position of mindful consideration. This fluid response is possible because information is processed with high levels of self-awareness and a strong capacity for self-reflection. Mindfulness sustains openness to information from the external environment while spawning a firmer sense of identity, one which is less vulnerable to externally induced change.

### Feedback Loop

Mindfulness also allows for awareness of a high quality of information received through a loop of feedback from the internal organizational environment. Through awareness, responses from the organizational environment are amplified. This amplification of feedback carries the possibility of disturbance and disequilibrium, but it functions to move the system forward and accomplishes the next phase of growth through this adaptation.

### Advisor-Client View

Mindfulness in the context of the advisor-client relationship is the stabilizing third position that allows for the rhythm of opening and closing, birthing and dying. This is the breath of organizational life that opens and closes, importing energy and exporting entropy one client at a time.

### Feedback Loop

The advisor needs to sustain a loop of feedback with virtually every client. This loop functions as a closed system of connection that informs the advisor of the pulse of the



relational body. Phone calls, emails, review of pertinent services, even thoughts of the client and a feeling for the relationship and services opens the system and sustain the client in view and allow for the energy of the relationship to move productively.

## Goals of this Report

The intention of developing an understanding of the over-all energetic flow of organizational structure is to formulate an understanding of a sustainable process for encouraging and enacting the brilliance and innovation that is so ever present within the organization.

- Create and sustain a dynamic process for encouraging creative impulse and transforming them into realizable, productive outcome.
- Impede unbridled impulses from playing out into the corporation unproductively.
- Pre-digest creative impulse so that it informs the life of the company and does not work against it.
- Continue the building of and the maintaining of a strong core for the company evolution.
- Emphasize free and unbridled creative space.

## Summary

Stasis, balance, equilibrium are temporary states that focus on the content and the structure of an organization. What endures is process that is adaptive and dynamic, and which allows for creative solution. The core functioning of the Executive Team and by extension the Advisory Teams can sustain identity and form while embracing the possibility offered through change and growth. The challenge ahead will be to continue to define the “core competencies” active within the company and to enhance and utilize them effectively.





“Companies organized around core competencies provide a good example of how an organization can obtain internal stability that leads both to well-defined boundaries and to openness over time. A business that focuses on its core competencies identifies itself as a portfolio of skills rather than as a portfolio of business units. It can respond quickly to new opportunities because it is not locked into the rigid boundaries of pre-established end products or businesses. Such an organization is both sensitive to its environment, and resilient from it. In deciding on products and markets, it is guided internally by its competencies, not just the attractiveness or difficulty of a particular market. The presence of a strong competency identity makes the company less vulnerable to environmental fluctuations; it develops an autonomy that makes it unnecessary to be always reactive” (Wheatley, 1994, p. 93).

### References:

- Edinger, Edward F. (1985). *Anatomy of the psyche: Alchemical symbolism in psychotherapy*. La Salle, IL: Open Court.
- Wheatley, Margaret. (1994). *Leadership and the new science: Learning about organizations from an orderly Universe*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

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*The Tim Dukes Method provides an opportunity for self-reflective individuals to cultivate the capacity to receive into consciousness hidden aspects of the self, claiming your unique gifts – ensuring that today’s brilliance successfully transitions into tomorrow’s wisdom. The Tim Dukes Method is designed and implemented by Dr. Timothy Dukes for determined creatives to ensure long-term viability — as a continuing investment in the well-being of yourself, family, organizations, culture, society, and the Earth itself.*