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Working with Top Management Teams: Conversations
Contributing to Board Development

Richard D Field OBE MPhil

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University
for the Doctor of Business Administration

April 2005
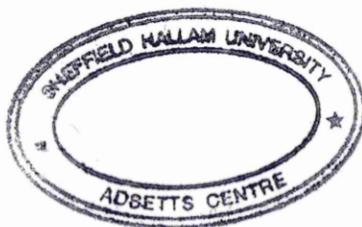
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Abstract

There has been much written about top teams, that is, existing teams that have the executive responsibility for leading their organisations each day, not specifically focused on one project or one change programme. However, little research has been carried out on meetings processes within ongoing top management teams and almost no research has been carried out over an extended period which has involved top management team members in their own Action Research. This research covers the period from early-2000 until mid-2004, and includes fieldwork with three organisations: Yorkshire Water, Loop Customer Management and A4e Work. An 'Iterative Meetings Model' has been developed that identifies what areas emerge when addressing team meetings; and within this model there has been developed a 'Dialogue Process for Top Management Team Meetings' which identifies how to communicate in meetings, if team members wish to be more effective. The dialogue process entails initially setting guidelines to be followed, which are replaced as team members gain confidence and awareness of themselves and what their own specific process and relationship principles need to be if they are to be even more effective. Their perceived progress, or lack of it, is also measured by using the four-stage group development model which, together with a specific review model, provide material for team discussion and a deeper understanding of the process, of relationship principles, of other team members, and of themselves. During the research, further insights were gained, amongst these were: that the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) plays a key role; the importance in having a top team purpose, as distinct from that of the organisation; the quality of conflict within the team changes as members progress through their stages of development; and there is an ongoing need for team relationship building.

Declaration:

This thesis is all my own work, and has not been submitted for any other academic award.

Richard D Field OBE MPhil

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Exhibits

All figures, tables, diagrams and photographs are labelled Exhibits.

Working with Top Management Teams: Conversations Contributing to Board Development

By

Richard D Field OBE MPhil

Chapter 1 Introduction
The Journey Begins

1.1 Overview of the chapter

After a brief introduction into the importance of this research and my case for making a contribution to this field, stories of key pre-learning experiences are shared. This then leads on to the questions that will be addressed in the research process.

1.2 Purpose and process of thesis

Some top management teams are effective and others are not. What if there was a process of conversing together that would enhance the chances of teams being effective?

This thesis discovers and develops:
- an overall process for identifying what meetings need to take account of to enhance the likelihood of their success,
- a process of communicating which has a role in enhancing the effectiveness of top management teams,
- guidelines and principles underpinning effective team communication,
- a process for monitoring the progress of top management teams,
- a process for reflecting upon and learning from the journey,
- the key role that CEOs play in developing their teams,
- the need for a top management team purpose,
- the need for these teams to continue to develop themselves.

The process includes: using pre-learnings to identify some beliefs of the researcher; a literature survey to reflect upon and learn from the writings and research of others; through this, to identify an initial theory and produce a model for use with three selected companies. A methodology and methods are then identified, and are employed within the companies and in the records of the researcher, and summarised within this thesis; and findings from the practical applications of the theoretical model are then analysed and evaluated; and finally both findings and conclusions are drawn with lessons learned and further areas for research identified.

1.3 Outline of this thesis

Chapter 1 covers why communication within top management teams is worthy of study, and why the researcher believes that he can add value to this area of knowledge. This is backed up by some pre-learnings and concludes by setting out questions to be addressed in the research being undertaken.

Chapter 2 focuses on these research questions by surveying relevant literature and concentrates upon communication within top management teams, dialogue and conversations, development of teams over time, feedback and reflection. It then brings together the learnings by positing a theoretical model on how top management teams can communicate more effectively together.

Chapter 3 identifies a methodology and methods used after looking at a number of approaches, to find one that will be appropriate to the questions to be addressed and the approach being taken with the fieldwork. The chapter also covers all of the methods used and how the information obtained was stored for effective recovery and further application. The strengths and weaknesses of each have also been identified and are set out in the appendices.

Chapter 4 uses the methodology and methods in Chapter 3 and the theoretical model set out in Chapter 2 with the three companies, including

analysis and findings; also included are interviews with CEOs and comments from the participants/fellow-researchers on these case studies, after sharing the researcher's write-ups with them.

Chapter 5 consolidates the progress to date. This chapter brings together the findings from both the literature survey and fieldwork, and sets out twenty-eight of the implications of this research: what needs to be taken into account when considering meetings, how to communicate within a meeting, identifying a means of measuring progress, or lack of it, and learning from reviews and reflections – for top management teams, facilitators and researchers.

Chapter 6 ends the thesis by focusing upon just three conclusions and further contributions to knowledge, each of which will affect the performance of the top management teams during their meetings together. It also suggests further research needed in this area, and limitations of this study.

1.4 Justification for the research

Since 1973, I have been a member of over two dozen boards, as chairman, CEO, and as an executive and a non-executive director (Appendix 1); and have also worked with a number of other boards and project teams. During this time I have been searching for a more enjoyable, productive and consistent way of participating, communicating and working with colleagues; some way that would also enhance the effectiveness of top management teams. Or put another way, I have sought to reduce the pain and increase the pleasure of the journey.

As the world of business is becoming more complex, competitive and legislated, the stresses on the people running organisations are growing (Bridge 2004:2; Harvey-Jones 1988:33; McCrone 2004:3.1; Moore 2004:35; Stone 2003:3), and attention to performance and transparency of main boards is growing (Dudley 2003:17). Many customers are becoming more and more exacting, needing constantly improving quality, service and value for money.

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Shareholders exert a growing influence through not only the Stock Exchange but also through, in an increasing number of cases, confrontational annual general meetings (Durman 2003:3.5). Employees look to their boards to provide security, stability of employment, and an increasing standard of living. Legislation on what directors must do and must not do is increasing (Becket 2003:A3; Pierce 2001:9); communities look to their local employers to 'get involved' in providing money, time and expertise for their good causes and to look after the environment (Cadbury 2002:156; Smith 2004:S14; Taylor 2004:2). The boards are also expected to lead their organisations with clear and inspirational purpose and direction; plus create cultures of 'success and happiness', have achievable strategies – which they believe to be true (Moore 2004:27) – and find time to report back regularly to all their stakeholders in line with Stock Exchange regulations. And, as if that is not enough, board members have lives outside of work that need to be lived to the full and enjoyed as well! The nature of the lives of directors is often likely to be frenetic, stressful, action-orientated and performance-related, in fact "life has probably never been harder for board directors" (Wyman 2004:10).

1.5 Methodology

Research addresses ethnography, case study, action research, action science, action inquiry, consultancy, and 'basic research', before settling on an action research ontology and epistemology, and within that, an action inquiry methodology. After designing a model of Action Inquiry using the Hermeneutic Cycle (incorporating the 4MAT system) the chapter goes on to identify each method used, setting out why it was used, what it entailed and, in Appendix 26, the strengths and weaknesses of each, and finally setting down the effects the methods had on the outcome. Methods used were: interviews, ethnography, qualitative measuring including the EFQM RapidScore process, secondary data, assembling and retrieving data – A4 books, Microsoft Word, and lever-arch files – data analysis – NVivo (NUDIST), publicly available articles, and photographs – reflecting and giving feedback. All this was underpinned by the four-stage group development model, reviews, validity, reliability, and triangulation.

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1.6 What a Top Management Team is

For the purposes of this thesis, a top management team is an executive team in which the CEO and his/her executive members work together to lead their organisation, with the intention of focusing on the long-term sustainability and enhancement of their business. I have served, or am serving, as an executive chairman/director on eight such teams (Appendix 1).

1.7 What a Top Management Team is not

A top management team, for the purposes of this thesis, is not one that consists of *any non-executive members*. A top management team, for the purposes of this thesis, is also not one that consists of *any project teams*, that is, teams set up for the purpose of completing a project. The reason for their exclusion is that, in my experience, one has a different mindset when pursuing a single objective, which might well be short-term in duration. Again, in my experience, it is easier to sustain a passion and enthusiasm for a one-off, often short-term, objective, than for an on-going long-term commitment.

1.8 Pre-learnings

The importance of this section is that all that follows was the researcher/facilitator's view of the world having had these understandings, prior to commencing this research: "Researcher/consultants approach a project with a certain pre-understanding" (Gummesson 1991:61); and my many years of attending courses, reading, listening to speakers, fellow businesspeople, and others, learning from experience, reflecting and gaining new understandings for there is "no understanding without pre-understanding" (Gummesson 1991:61) has given a feeling of flow which is illustrated by the Hermeneutic Cycle (Gummesson 1991:62) – see sections 3.3.5 + 3.3.6 below. So the whole thesis is underpinned by these pre-understandings, and of course many more not presently in the consciousness of the researcher.

Set out below are experiences during a journey of some twenty-eight years from first becoming a member of a top management team to starting this research. The incidents share a number of learnings that constitute a springboard, a theory, from which this research has commenced; also set down are the questions that the research has focused upon answering. In 1980 I started writing journals of my key business experiences; there are now 167 completed A4 journals setting down meetings, conferences, workshops, phone calls, reflections, planning schedules and action notes (Megginson 2003:85+88). It is whilst reading through and reflecting upon these journals that the following stories have emerged as relevant to this research. To make this section clearer and easier to follow, the selected stories are set out in chronological order by date and include context, incident, thoughts, feelings, actions, and learnings.

1.8.1 1973 - 1980 (aged 28 to 35)

In 1973, seven years before the A4 journals were started, I joined my first top management team, at:

1.8.1.1 Bridon Wire Limited

The Bridon Group (now Bridon plc) reorganised into three major subsidiaries in 1973, and I became chief accountant of one of them, Bridon Wire Ltd, and two and a half years later, Finance Director. There were two thousand employees in the company, with sixty in my team responsible for the company's finances, group administration, group transport and group IT. Our monthly board meetings covered the progress and strategic direction of the company; however we were never really close to each other, each focusing on our own functions (de Geus 2000:92). For example, at one meeting a director presented a plan which had major implications for the company and others within the team, but none of us had been consulted upon his recommendations. My thoughts were: Why don't we work together in the same direction instead of 'doing our own thing'? And feelings: A sense of inadequacy; first, because I had had no time to read through the proposals

and to prepare; and second, because the director hadn't let me know of his intentions. Probably there was also a feeling of guilt, because I was just as guilty as this director of not consulting with team members on other issues. So the actions taken were to field the inevitable financial questions as best as I could; rather poorly, as I recall. My learnings were that a team cannot function effectively without involving each other in activities that affect them.

1.8.1.2 Manchester Business School

In 1980, as the three major subsidiaries of the Bridon Group consolidated back into one, I was made redundant. This gave me the opportunity to attend the General Management Programme at Manchester Business School to find out more about how to manage. Forty of us spent ten weeks under the watchful eyes of Tom Lupton, Enid Mumford, Tudor Rickards and others; reading, learning, participating in exercises, and sharing theories and experiences on general management and leadership. My thoughts were that this is not what I expected or wanted at all! We are being given theories and case studies, and told to be flexible and creative; I'm a trained accountant – I need rules and facts – it's frightening; a great many people seem to know what to do, and how to do it, and I'm very confused. Even the factory that some of us visited (BICC) felt 'uncontrolled' and vulnerable; there must be other ways and places from where to learn, to give me more confidence in the ways of management and in myself. So after this experience, I joined a small team of business consultants at Bamford Business Services Ltd, rather than return to another large organisation, in order to apply the theories learned at Manchester Business School (MBS) and to gain some experience in how to work as a 'company doctor'. My learnings from MBS were that managing is not like working on a set of accounts: there seem to be no 'once and for all' answers when working with people.

1.8.1.3 Bamford Business Services

Hugh Sykes (now Sir Hugh Sykes) and David Frith had recently left the Steetley Group to set up a small furnace manufacturing business, Carbolite,

and also to run a business consultancy, Bamford Business Services, which I joined. For me, and interestingly for my wife Pippa – who felt that she was part of this 'family' - these were two of the happiest years of my working life. Incident (1): 'Richard, we have a company that needs immediate attention: I need you there first thing in the morning - for as long as it takes.' 'But Hugh I've got these five other projects on the go; how on earth can I fit this one in as well?' 'You're right, I had forgotten; you've got quite enough on your plate, there's only one thing for it, I'll do it myself.' Now, however hard I was working, my perception was that Hugh was working far harder than I was. 'No, it's OK Hugh - I'll do it.' Incident (2): 'Richard, you've been working over in Wales for some weeks now, I need a meeting with you at The Rising Sun in Bamford; can you leave early and be with me at 7.30pm?' 'Yes, of course, Hugh.' When I arrived, Hugh and Ruby, his wife, had organised a surprise party for all of the team - partners, including Pippa, had been secretly invited; it was a wonderful and unique experience. Incident (3): I was winding up a project in London, so completed and submitted my timesheet as usual; the week had been long, ninety-nine chargeable hours. Back came a note from David Frith, 'Slacking again, Richard, you can't even manage 100 hours!' Hugh asked me to pop in on the following Monday and said, 'Now that you have finished the project, go home and see something of your daughters and Pippa, take a week's holiday.' This is the only time I can remember ever being given such a caring and precious gift, upon reflection, I have never given such a gift either.

My thoughts on the incidents are that here are two people, Hugh Sykes and David Frith, who are very different from each other and yet are both role-models to me. What they have in common is that they are very hard-working with exacting standards, have absolute integrity - they do what they say they will do whatever it takes - and my perception is that they have total trust in and care for - love - their team, as we do for them. Whenever I feel incompetent and need help, they will always be there for me. Also, my belief is that if I do what they are doing, I too can become successful and understand how to manage more effectively, and lead like them. Thus, I worked harder than ever before to ensure that they wouldn't be let down, and to ensure that their expectations were met. And by doing that, a whole new vista of opportunities

became possible, for few others, in my experience, work to such high standards. My learnings were to find and work with role-models - and hang on to their shirt-tails! Be prepared to be like a child and constantly ask questions and learn from them.

1.8.1.4 Lessons learned (1973 - 1980)

1. A team cannot function effectively without respect for each other.
2. There are no hard and fast rules when working with people.
3. Effective top management team members need to be role-models for those around them.

1.8.2 1980 - 1994 (aged 35 to 49)

1.8.2.1 The Dyson Group plc

After two years with Bamford Business Services, I joined J & J Dyson plc (now Dyson Group plc). Having been a non-executive director for a year, I was told by the group chairman, 'Richard, stop banging the table and get in and do some work!' I became chairman of the group's two major subsidiaries, Dyson Refractories Ltd and Pickford Holland Ltd. These two companies were making combined losses of £300,000-£400,000 a month, and the overdraft and stocks were each increasing at the rate of £3 million a year. Incident (1): After speaking with all the top management team members – there were 12 – and calculating the expected financial results, I produced figures that showed that we had about four months before the group would become insolvent; and, what was extraordinary was that most of the directors were aware of this and seemed unable or unwilling to take any action. The urgent questions that kept repeating themselves inside my head were: 'What on earth should be done? The figures are appalling and getting worse fast. Who do I turn to? Why did I ever agree to become chairman?' I felt fear and disbelief; fear, because I had probably accepted the job out of bravado rather than a belief that I could do it; and disbelief because my perception was that some directors had accepted the 'inevitable' collapse of the Group. Over time, I turned to the Finance

Director (now Group CEO) Mike O'Brien, who knew what needed to be done. He soon became a role-model for me for what a top management team member needs to be and do. Example: Initially we reduced our workforce by 500 to 1,500 in early 1981, to assist in stemming the mounting losses; however, the situation worsened as the coal strike cut UK output of steel again: between 1970 and 1980 UK steel production reduced from 28.3 to 11.3 million tonnes (ISSB Crude Steel Production figures – Temple 2004:1) and 85% of Dyson's output was being sold to the British Steel Corporation (now Corus Group plc). In 1982, I found myself in exactly the same position as some of the directors were a year before: unable to make a decision upon what further actions to take, for now the 1,500 employees had become friends. It was Mike O'Brien who clarified what needed to be done which, in my opinion, saved the group from extinction or, at least, from a great deal more pain and trauma. My learnings were twofold: that I was very lucky that Mike was there; and when addressing a problem, feelings can have a major impact upon one's decision-making capacity.

Incident (2): Turning to an old friend David Frith, Managing Director of Bamford Business Services: 'Other than agreeing and implementing a strategy within the company, what should I be doing as CEO?' 'Only two things,' said David, 'first, be there when your people need you and, second, listen.' My thoughts were that this sounded too simple a solution; yet I tried it and it worked. Example: As the company began to stabilise, we needed to build a new factory on one of our sites; the factory manager at our Totley site in Sheffield, John Gray, invited me to his managers' meeting, where they gave a presentation upon why theirs was the best site to locate the factory. Later, as we were walking around the site, I said, 'John, thanks for the presentation but I can't promise you'll get the factory.' He replied, 'I understand that and wherever you decide to build it we'll support you 100%.' 'Why?' 'Because you came and listened to us, Richard.' (Thank you, David Frith!) My learning was to be there when needed and listen. Upon reflection, this advice is just as true for life in general as it is for top management teams. Incidentally, we did eventually build the factory at our Totley site.

1.8.2.2 Annual Objectives

There were many things that needed enhancing in my life, and there still are. At that time they were: being a better chairman, becoming healthier, being a more attentive husband and father, etc. Incident (1): For five years, I clarified my objectives over the Christmas holidays, and then budgeted time to achieve them by breaking the budget down by month, by week, by day, and then into quarter of an hour slots; these were then monitored every two hours or so, and then analysed and evaluated weekly. Thus, I knew exactly what I needed to do and how much time it would take me to get where I had decided to go, it also gave a sense of being grounded and focused that I had never felt before. This rigid schedule, every day for five years, helped achieve all of my objectives, and the journey was written up in the Yorkshire Post (Wilford 1992). My learnings were that focus brings achievement, and it's a discipline that needs persistence. Incident (2): After five years, I couldn't muster any enthusiasm for identifying a further set of objectives, another five-year plan, so walking in the park with a friend, Paul Thompson, I shared my concerns. He said, 'Who is your role-model?' 'Well, ultimately, Jesus Christ.' 'Did he have a five year plan?' 'Not him!' From this revelation we decided that what was a more appropriate way forward was to spend more time preparing for the future, whatever that might bring, rather than planning in so much detail. My thoughts were that this is more empowering, more flexible and less rigid; feelings of a sense of release, and also sadness and unease at no longer having a disciplined and structured process to follow. As a result I became more relaxed and open, but not so 'achieving' or focused. The learning was that a solution at one stage of one's life may be inappropriate at another (Megginson 1999:64).

1.8.2.3 Top Management Programme

After participating in numerous courses, I attended the Cabinet Office's Top Management Programme with twelve civil servants and twelve businesspeople; it lasted four weeks and its purpose was to bring participants up to date with latest government and business thinking. On the first day, we

were split into groups and given the challenge of solving Britain's housing problem: We were given dozens of books and parliamentary papers to refer to, and we had one day to complete the task. My thoughts were: 'Why on earth am I on this programme? In business we solve problems, this is insoluble! Perhaps it's time to pack up and go home, for I feel out of my depth, helpless, and angry with the organisers for giving us such a complex problem'. Well, I didn't go home, I participated and struggled. My learnings were that in business we develop ourselves to become problem-solvers; yet some problems cannot be solved so need to be managed – if only I had known about Casey's model then (Critchley + Casey 1996:340), see Exhibit 2.2. Incidentally, the course also taught me that, in general, civil servants are more competent than they believe they are!

1.8.2.4 Queen Margaret's School

In 1986, I became chairman of Queen Margaret's School, in Escrick, York, having been involved with looking at the financial viability and buying it on behalf of the pupils' parents. Before the first term began, I said to the head teacher (the CEO), Colin McGarrigle, 'We need to do something special to show parents that this is the start of a new era'. 'Come to the window, Richard' he said, 'my family and I have built a nine-hole golf course for the pupils in the school grounds during the holidays'. My learning was that however good the financial figures look, it still takes a CEO with initiative and energy to make a dream become reality.

1.8.2.5 Lessons learned to date (1973 - 1994)

1. A team cannot function effectively without respect for each other.
2. There are no hard and fast rules when working with people.
3. Effective top management team members need to be role-models for those around them.
4. Feelings can have a major impact upon one's decision-making capacity.
5. The solution at one stage of one's life may be inappropriate at another.

6. Be there when needed, and listen.

7. Focus brings achievement; and it's a discipline that needs persistence.

8. Some problems cannot be solved so need to be managed.

9. However good the financial figures look, it still takes a CEO with initiative and energy to make a dream become reality.

1.8.3 1994 - 2001 (aged 49 to 56)

1.8.3.1 Hong Kong

In 1997, Sheffield Chamber of Commerce sent a business delegation to visit Hong Kong, there a colleague and I met two Chinese professors from the City of Hong Kong University who gave us advice upon what to do and what not to do when dealing with the Chinese. This advice seems appropriate just as much to the West as to the East, and certainly to top management teams:

1. 'Relationships are everything in business in China. Always give leeway, even when you are in a winning position, and help the other person to 'save face'. One day it might be the other way around; it may be you who needs to save face.

2. Reciprocity is a way of life. We do favours and we return favours - the West sometimes sees this as corruption, we do not see it in that way.

3. We spend much time in 'guanxi' (Graham + Lam 2003:86); you would call this 'networking'.

This is how we cultivate long-term relationships, although the young Chinese now tend to be more selfish and think short-term.'

These attitudes of building long-term relationships and networking are both behaviours that top management teams could benefit from. I remember feeling gratitude for the openness and sharing of these two academics' wisdom; and it was this meeting that started me thinking about the importance of relationships between top management team members; my learning was to focus on building mutually beneficial long-term relationships.

1.8.3.2 Kaku – President of Canon

During 1997, a body called the 'Caux Round Table' met in Caux, Switzerland; it was chaired by Ryuzaburo Kaku, then President of Canon – one of the largest companies in the world at that time. The purpose of the Round Table was to bring leaders together from Japan, the USA and Europe – forty members attended - to set down recommendations for ethical standards of behaviour for International Companies. The group had already produced and published 'The Principles of Business Practice' (Skelly 1995) which (I was informed) was one of the, if not the, most widely published set of guidelines on business ethics in the world. The Americans were very keen to set up action teams throughout the USA to obtain 'buy-in' from fellow business leaders; the Japanese, on the other hand, were reticent to do anything other than keeping the dialogue between us all alive. As the second day of discussion became heated, Kaku raised his hand and said the only words I remember him speaking throughout the three-day meeting, 'We have a saying in my country: when you are in a hurry, take the long road.' At the time, I didn't know what he was talking about; upon reflection, I believe that he meant that we needed just to keep talking to understand more deeply each others' thinking processes before taking any further steps, and understanding each other takes time. I felt admiration for this great man who had survived the Hiroshima bombing, and saved the lives of his team too; frustration as well, for we were not going to take any positive action, in fact so frustrated was I that I resigned from the group because there seemed to be so little progress. Looking back, my learning is that it takes time to understand others' thinking processes; although the dialogue process that was being advocated is not for everybody; including this researcher at that stage in his life.

1.8.3.3 Discipline

Ten years after commencing Jujitsu, my instructor Joe Mappin allowed me to train to gain my next grade; this involved my joining him for training at six o'clock every morning for twelve months, when I was not away from home. The experience taught me that the more one practises a skill the more that

skill becomes second nature. Further, I have commented to both my T'ai Chi Ch'uan instructor, Reza Hezaveh, and my friend Andy Thrasyvoulou who practises meditation, that they must have such extraordinary discipline; their replies were the same: 'It's not discipline, it's just who I am. As John Garnett, who headed the Industrial Society for many years, used to say: 'By doing you become.' (See also Gallwey 1986:53; and de Bono 1990:7)

1.8.3.4 Lessons learned to date (1973 - 2001)

1. A team cannot function effectively without respect for each other.
2. There are no hard and fast rules when working with people.
3. Effective top management team members need to be role-models for those around them.
4. Feelings can have a major impact upon one's decision-making capacity.
5. The right solution at one stage of one's life may be inappropriate at another.
6. Be there when needed, and listen.
7. Focus brings achievement; and it's a discipline that needs persistence.
8. Some problems cannot be solved so need to be managed.
9. However good the financial figures look, it still takes a CEO with initiative and energy to make a dream become reality.
10. Focus on building mutually beneficial long-term relationships.
11. It takes time to understand others' thinking processes.
12. The more one practises a skill the more that skill becomes second nature.
13. By doing you become.

1.9 Research question(s)

My belief at the commencement of this research was that, based upon the above pre-learnings and upon a belief in the innate goodness of people, by using a communication process for enhancing awareness and understanding of oneself and other top management team members, and using a model of monitoring, feedback and learnings of where the team is on that development

journey, both effectiveness and relationships can be enhanced within these teams. One other key point is that this research is specifically focusing on existing teams; thus it is not a matter of deciding who should be and not be included in a team (Belbin 1981:48); it is the enhancement of an existing top management team which is being researched here.

So the research question based upon these pre-learnings is:

Is there a replicable process by which existing top management team members can build mutually beneficial long-term relationships with each other, whilst enhancing their team's effectiveness?

To answer this question the following specific questions, which link with the pre-learnings, also need answering:

In top management teams, is there a:
1. Process that encourages communication?
2. Model that enhances understanding of the teams' progress, or lack of it?
3. Way of measuring that progress?

1.10 Summary of chapter and link forward

This chapter has: set out why research into top management teams is worth exploring; defined what a top team is and what it is not; identified why the researcher is well placed to carry out this research; set down some pre-learnings from twenty-eight years of working in and with top management teams before starting this project; and, finally, focused down on the questions needing to be addressed through this research. This next chapter surveys the literature relevant to the subject being addressed, specifically: top management teams, communication within those teams, stages of team development, and reflections upon their development journeys.

Chapter 2 Literature Survey

Climbing upon the shoulders of others

"We have much to do together.
Let us do it in wisdom love and joy.
Let us make this the human experience." – Zukav (1993:15).

2.1 Overview of the chapter

First, top management teams are reviewed to identify what they do now and what communication processes, if any, they already use. Critchley + Casey's model (1996:340) is found useful in situating where conversations involving problems and uncertainty lie. An investigation follows into different kinds of communication commencing with dialogue. 'Mainstream' dialogue was found to be inappropriate for top management teams; however the principles of 'limited' dialogue work well with all types of effective conversations researched. Stages of team development are then researched and linked with other readings, including linking back to dialogue; this is followed by an investigation into reflection which culminates in clarifying a monitoring process using feedback of thinking, feelings and actions needed to continue to improve the teams' process of conversations.

As identified in the first chapter, the specific research questions to be addressed are:

In top management teams, is there a:
1. Process that could encourage communication?
2. Model that enhances understanding of the teams' progress, or lack of it?
3. Way of measuring that progress?

2.2 Structure of the chapter

This chapter addresses the literature as follows:

2.3 First research question: In top management teams, is there a process that could encourage communication?

2.3.1 How do effective top management teams spend their time?

2.3.2 How do top management team members presently communicate within their teams?

2.3.3 Back to the first research question: In top management teams, is there a process that could encourage communication?

2.3.4 What is dialogue?

2.3.5 More on conversations

2.3.6 Other processes of communicating within the team

2.4 Second research question: Is there a model that enhances understanding of the teams' progress, or lack of it?

2.5 Third research question: Is there a way of measuring that progress?

2.6 So what was the initial theoretical model used with the three client organisations?

2.3 First research question: In top management teams, is there a process that could encourage communication?

Before answering the above, the following questions need to be addressed:

1. How do effective top management teams spend their time?
2. How do top management team members presently communicate within their teams?

2.3.1 How do effective top management teams spend their time?

Brief overview of this section: Critchley + Casey's (1996:340) and Katzenbach + Smith's (1993:84) models are found to be useful in understanding better the behaviours needed for effective top management teams. As they deal with 'problems' that have no right or wrong answer, they need to share their values and feelings with other members of the team. Such teams are hard to form and need a great deal of shared energy.

'How do effective top management teams spend their time' is not as straightforward a question as at first it might appear, for although Watson (1995:10) says, "managing an organisation is a simple process but that is not to say it is easy!" Gosling + Mintzberg (2003:55) disagree, saying, "The problem...is that plain old management is complicated and confusing." Katzenbach + Smith (1993:173) concur with this last comment: "Building team performance at the top...is more difficult than anywhere else...team performance at the top of any organisation is more the exception than the rule...teams at the top are tougher to form (1993:217)." And Casey (1985:7) adds: "The barriers are truly daunting; only fools would try to break through (to where real teamwork takes place), unless the rewards were perceived by them as exceptionally high."
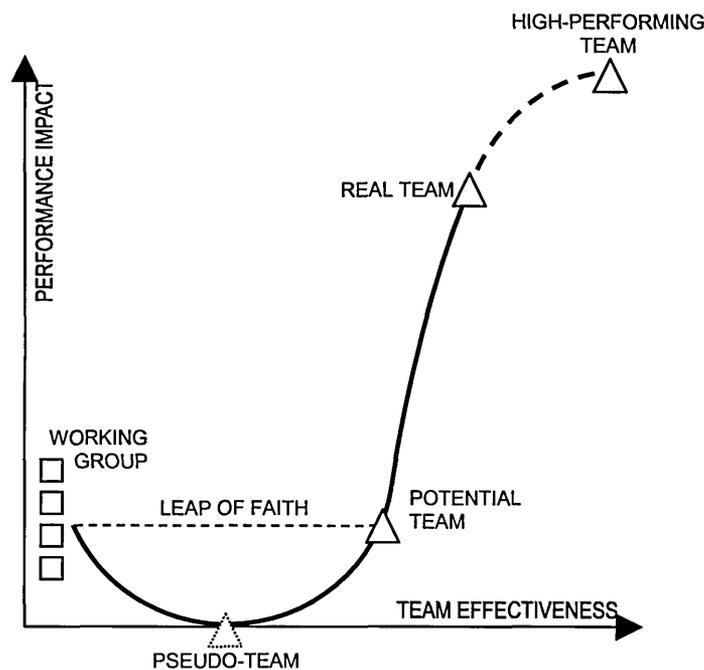
Exhibit 2.1: *Team Performance Curve (Katzenbach + Smith 1993:84)*

So why are teams at the top tougher to form? The team performance curve above helps to clarify this: A 'working group' (a group of individuals working together) can, with a leap of faith, become a 'potential team'; although if they are not committed to this new form of working they will reduce their team effectiveness to become a 'pseudo team' (a group of individuals in disarray). However, those teams that are committed to the journey can eventually

become a 'real team' (a team that works together well) and, perhaps in time, a 'high-performing team'. What is interesting about this model is that although most of the hard work and time need to be put in for the team to rise from 'potential' to 'real team' status, to ascend from being a 'real team' to the highest accolade, that of a 'high-performing team', what is required is for team members to work towards making their colleagues successful too (Crockett 2004:72; Katzenbach + Smith 1993:84), such as where there is a "willingness to defer judgement...and support another's ideas" (Rickards + Moger 2000:280). What is not said by Katzenbach and Smith is that this last journey – of team members working for the success of their colleagues – is far from easy, for there needs to be considerable time and hard work invested, plus very strong feelings and clear focus on this key issue (Vaill 2000:70-73). Is it any wonder that teams at the top are tougher to form? There are many examples of high-performing teams in Katzenbach's books but many are not top management teams, by my definition in Chapter 1: they are transitory and shine brightly in their quest towards a single objective, working upon just one project (examples: Katzenbach 1998:171; Katzenbach + Smith 1993:32+69 + 2001:27).

ESSENTIAL
TO SHARE

SHARED UNCERTAINTY

SHARING BARRIER

THE NEED TO SHARE

SOME
NEED TO
SHARE

COOPERATION

UNCERTAINTY BARRIER

NO NEED
TO SHARE

UNSHARED CERTAINTY

SIMPLE
PUZZLES

COMPLEX
PUZZLES

PROBLEMS

MODES OF WORKING

LEVELS OF UNCERTAINTY
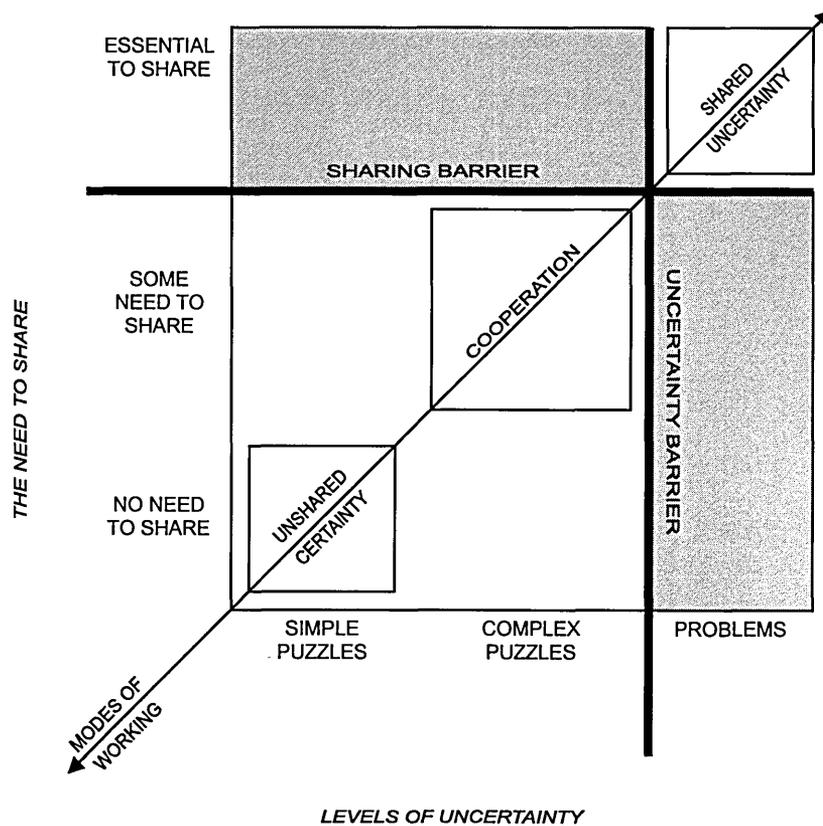
Exhibit 2.2: *The more uncertainty in its task, the more any group has to share*
(Critchley + Casey 1996:340)

Casey (1985:5 +1996:37; Critchley + Casey 1984 +1996:340 + 345) also helps to clarify what effective teams actually do. He says that, when working with issues that have a high degree of certainty, which he calls problems, work should be delegated to an individual within the team, using basic social processes, that is, polite social skills (1985:6), leaving the more complex puzzles and problems for the team as a whole to address. "The more uncertainty – the more need to share...any uncertainty, emotional, physical or intellectual, can best be coped with by sharing" (Critchley + Casey 1996:339). The distinction that Critchley and Casey make between 'complex puzzles' and 'problems' is that, for a 'complex puzzle' an answer is known to exist somewhere, it's just a matter of finding it (1985:6; see also Revans 1998); however for 'problems' it is perceived that there is no known answer, so the highest interpersonal skills involving task processes and feelings processes are needed equally (see also Johnson + Johnson 2003:28). They cite the example of capital punishment, which is a 'problem' for society, whereas the catching of the murderer is a 'puzzle' for the police (Critchley + Casey

1996:339). Gosling and Mintzberg (2003:58) call these 'simple', 'complicated' and 'complex' tasks; and to make complex decisions "you have to take into account soft data, including the values underlying such choices".

'Puzzles', Critchley and Casey add, can be solved by "a solid raft of straightforward interpersonal skills...needed by all managers – empathy, cooperation, communication, listening, negotiating and many more" (1996:344), for puzzles are predominantly task-focused challenges. I have to say that I'm pretty impressed by this list, as they are not in the armoury of most managers in my experience. 'Problems', on the other hand, are in the domains of both task and feelings – not a frequently visited area for top management teams: "in Britain, we have the...difficulty of our cultural resistance to working with feelings" (1996:345-346) and this is not restricted to Britain (Kuttab 1998:25), and also require "the highest possible level of interpersonal skills in the rarefied atmosphere of highest uncertainty and real teamwork" (Critchley and Casey 1996:344). Strategic thinking can fall into this 'problem' area – an area of both uncertainty and possibility; Casey and Critchley identify that many teams avoid issues which contain considerable uncertainty – the complex problems – and 'fall back' into the relative safety of 'being cooperative' (1996:36; see also Schwarz 1994:32). The challenge with not confronting the complexity and depth of issues is that they tend not to be bottomed and issues return as 'festering sores' some time in the future. Perhaps this is because, as Casey puts it (1985:6): "in the bewildering, uncertain, frightening world of real problems literally nobody knows what to do; nobody round the table has the appropriate expertise because nobody knows what expertise is appropriate...all management groups face problems, very few management groups face up to them."

A 'simple' or Newtonian (Stacey 2003:228) view of top management teams is that they are preoccupied with order, aligning businesses through having a clear purpose, vision, values, and control through performance targets, stability, accountability, processes and systems (de Geus 2000:92; Drucker 1979:9 + 1989:106). This view is sometimes known as the 'classical' approach (McAuley 2001:252), or 'clockwork' organisation (Schwartz 1990:7),

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and philosophically is closely aligned to Utilitarianism (McAuley 1996:252) and Managerialism (McAuley 2001:253). The approach is essential in excellent companies (Peters + Waterman 2000:15), however there needs to be a balance (Ibarra 2004:11): at the other end of the scale, there are the highly autocratic organisations, where complex problems are not shared or discussed, but rather decided upon by the top executive(s). These can be seen as 'snake pit' organisations (Schwartz 1990:7), run autocratically, usually without teams; and rife with fear, grapevines, quick fixes and multiple interpretations of the mixed messages fed down from the top. Both of these approaches have their place (Gapper 2004:15): for example, 'classical' when order is required and 'snake pit' when a business is on the verge of collapse, and needs rapid decisions, and absolute focus. However there is a middle way, what McAuley (2001:254) calls the 'romantic' approach: giving individuals and teams the freedom to be creative, original, 'thinking outside of the box' – "quality comes from the heart" (note the inclusion of feelings here) "rather than getting it right first time…(there) may (be a) need to do it differently each time" (2001:254). Darwin (2001:3) calls this middle way: 'rainforest' organisations, and Pascale et al use the metaphors of swarms, jungles, and a mad scientist's lab (2000:68) to describe the world in which we find ourselves; living on the 'edge of chaos'…"working with considerable uncertainty" (Casey 1985:5 + 1996:37); life is not either 'this or that' but rather 'this and that' (Collins + Porras 1998:44; Stacey 2003:11). For in this era of living on the edge of chaos, the minds of top management teams need to be open to any and every possibility available to them, for just because something is new or hasn't worked before does not mean that in this context, at this moment, it might just be the answer that we have been seeking! This 'romantic' or 'rainforest' scenario is located at the top right of Casey's model.

THE NEED TO SHARE

ESSENTIAL TO SHARE   CLOCKWORK

Rainforest

Edge of chaos

SOME NEED TO SHARE

NO NEED TO SHARE

SNAKEPIT

SIMPLE PUZZLES   COMPLEX PUZZLES   PROBLEMS

LEVELS OF UNCERTAINTY
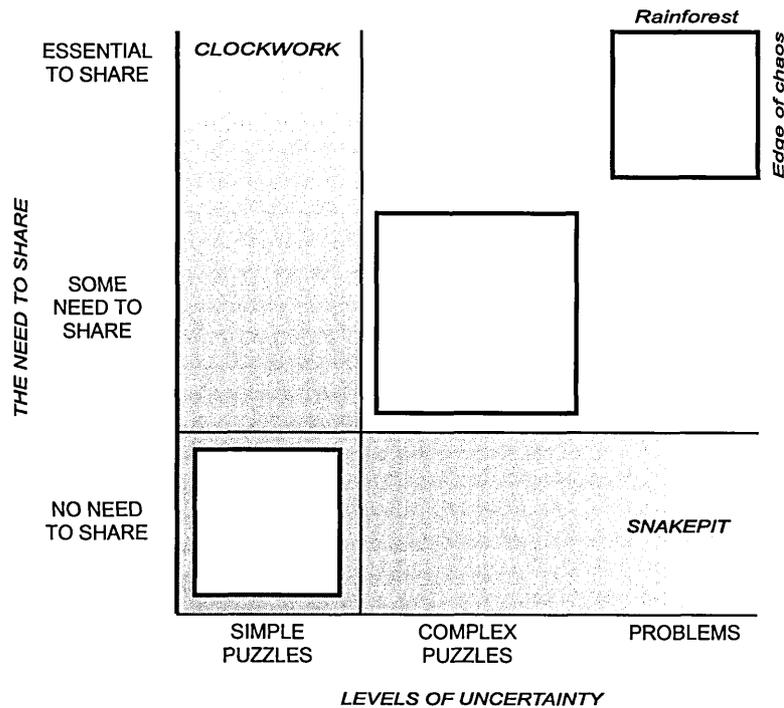
Exhibit 2.3: *Casey Model, linked by the researcher, with clockwork, snake pit & rainforest organisations*

Herb et al (2001:32) agree that it is essential to share, to work as a team; they say that, "In reality, long-term success depends on the whole leadership team, for it has a broader and deeper reach into the organisation than the CEO does, and its performance has a multiplier effect: a poorly performing team breeds competing agendas and turf politics; a high performing one, organisational coherence and focus" (2001:34). Although Bennis (2001:4) says, "many leaders of great groups are abrasive, if not downright arrogant" (Bennis 2001:4), Herb et al (2001:32) confirm that "increasingly, the top team is essential to the success of the enterprise". And as Isaacs remarks, (1999a:11) "the problems we face today are too complex to be managed by one person". Although if the business is to be managed by more people then communication and feedback systems must be effective and embracing; Crossan et al's model (1999:532) adapted by Vera + Crossan (2004:225) mirrors that of Casey (Critchley + Casey 1996:340), and adds all-important flows: from the individual to the group and organisation feeding in individual learnings; and from the organisation back to the individual, feeding back learning to the individual.

Building on Casey's model, if one accepts, as I do, that by moving up the levels one encounters increasing complexity, Csikszentmihalyi (1998:41) says that the self might be said to grow too, as complexity is the result of two psychological processes, and a complex self is one that succeeds in combining these opposite tendencies: differentiation, "moving towards uniqueness, towards separating oneself from other", and integration, "a union with other people, with ideas and entities beyond the self", or as Lee Nichol (Bohm 2000:xvi) puts it: "a process of perpetual 'enfolding' and 'unfolding'". Only when a person invests equal amounts of psychic energy in these two processes and avoids both selfishness and conformity is the self likely to reflect complexity (Csikszentmihalyi 1998:42). Thus, if one turns around the axes on Csikszentmihalyi's model (1998:74), it follows Casey, for as the complexity of the problems grow so can anxiety, and as the skills grow so can the boredom; so the 'middle path' – the 'flow channel' – follows that of Casey. Incidentally, a contribution from the researcher is that Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow (1998) can be captured by four 'C's: clarity of goals, concentration (focus), competence (or skill level), and consistency of immediate feedback; with all these in the 'middle path', flow will be present.
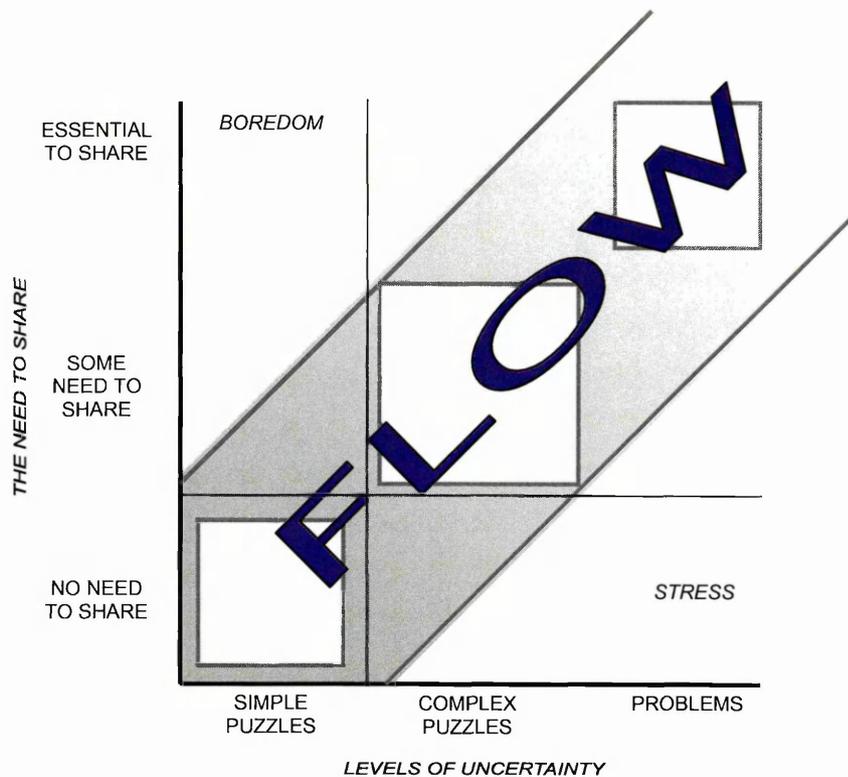
Exhibit 2.4: *Casey Model & Flow of Csikszentmihalyi, linked by the researcher*

To summarise and build on the findings so far

Top management teams are responsible for the strategic direction of their
organisations (Pierce 2001:79; Garratt 1997:47 + 2001:81) which are
"characterised by a high level of choice and by the condition of maximum
uncertainty" (Critchley + Casey 1996:337). These 'problems' require top
management team members to work at the highest level of interpersonal skills,
which includes sharing feelings as well as their thinking processes. Also
effective team members need to spend considerable time and energy focusing
on assisting each others' development; and, incidentally, meet together
regularly and often (Eisenhardt 1997:84; Collins 2001:164), in fact "the entire
top team should spend one day each month together" (Herb et al 2001:1).

From the above research, the criteria listed below were used later, see
sections 2.3.2 and 2.6 below, when identifying principles to use when
communicating within effective top management teams. To:

1. Have high levels of interpersonal skills, including being prepared to share
   their feelings with their colleagues;

2. Help each other in succeeding, through spending considerable time, energy and focus on assisting colleagues with their issues.

2.3.2 How do top management team members presently communicate within their teams?

> Brief overview of this section: Effective top management teams spend much of their time together asking non-threatening but pressing questions and communicating with the intent to understand others' meanings. Lack of confrontation can lead to issues not being properly resolved and thus being liable to re-emerge.

Collins (2001:7) identifies eleven highly effective companies who spend much of their time in "dialogue and debate" (2001:114); he talks of "love and respect for each other" (2001:62), of "a long-standing tradition of forums" (2001:72) "where truth is heard" (2001:73), and has written a whole section on a council where members can "argue and debate in search of understanding" (2001:115). Questions like "Why did you mess this up?" are not asked, rather they seek to understand each other with questions like: "So, what's on your mind?" "Can you tell me about that?" "Can you help me understand?" And "What should we be worried about?" (2001:75), searching for meaning. His research uncovers that, potentially, the more often teams meet together, the more effective they are likely to become as teams (2001:164) – a theme echoed by Katzenbach and Smith (1993:68); and by Drucker (1980:24) who says people need to be constantly challenged, and questioned (1980:44) to improve what they are already doing; Jones (1989:110) echoes this when he writes "we need companions who will struggle with us (and sometimes against us) for the sake of value and meaning".

This relationship-building, including incidentally raging debates... and the "company's strategy 'evolved through many agonising arguments and fights'" (Collins 2001:76) – which links back to Casey's model in Exhibit 2.2 – seems to be integral to these companies' success, for Collins goes on: "the process

was more like a heated scientific debate, with people engaged in a search for the best answers" (2001:77) – I'm presuming these are the 'best' answers for the organisations and not for the individuals themselves!..."every group must go through some growing pains while members work on...issues and find their place" (Schein 1988:47). Joe Jaworski (1996:10) also believes that the world "is primarily made up of relationships (for) we live in a world of possibilities"; Jaworski (1996:10) also asserts that "when we actually begin to accept one another as legitimate human beings, it's truly amazing". "Perhaps this is what love means" (Collins 2001:11)... "relationship (is) the organising principle of the universe" (2001:45). There is a word of caution from Shaw (2002:161) who finds disturbing the missionary zeal of writers presumably like Collins (2001) and Jaworski (1996), for she says they talk of "communities of love" and "the soul at work"; she does not aspire to dealing with these "endless ethical dilemmas". Shaw presumably agrees with Pascale et al (2000:238) who say that "making straight talk a 'discipline' requires objective data". However, Axelrod believes that cooperation based upon reciprocity comes from durability not friendship (1990:188).

Relationship-building is also a fundamental principal of organisational design within effective Japanese companies studied by Ikujiro Nonaka (2000:26): "the conscious overlapping of company information, business activities, and managerial responsibilities...because it encourages frequent dialogue and communication...helps to create 'a common cognitive ground'...and thus facilitates the transfer of tacit knowledge". Senior managers ask questions including: "What are we trying to learn?" "What do we need to know?" "Where should we be going?" (2000:29; see also Ibarra 2004:11)... "Teams play a central part in the knowledge-creating company because they provide a shared context where individuals can interact with each other and engage in constant dialogue and discussion...this dialogue can – indeed, should – involve considerable conflict and disagreement" (2000:31; see also Schwarz 1994:24). Jack Welch, CEO of General Electric said, "We've developed an incredibly talented team of people running our major businesses, and, perhaps more important there's a healthy sense of collegiality, mutual trust, and respect for performance that pervades this organization" (Herb et al 2001:1).

Mutual trust and a sense of group identity are also prerequisites for team effectiveness and building emotional intelligence according to Druskat + Wolff (2001:83). Drucker (1989:249+250) explains the importance of language as follows:

> "For communication to be effective there has to be both 'information' and 'meaning'. And 'meaning' requires communication. If somebody whose language I do not speak calls me on the telephone, it doesn't help me at all that the connection is crystal clear. There is no meaning unless I understand the language...I 'know' is the catalyst that converts 'information' into 'communication'."

To summarise and build on the findings so far

Effective top management teams spend considerable time conversing together. Dixon (1998:7) says that seventy-five per cent of a manager's day can be spent working on issues, using dialogues and debates, in which arguments can, and sometimes need to, develop. Handy says that senior managers can spend eighty percent of their time in meetings of some sort or another (Warner 1996:43). Through these conversations team members not only confront key issues but also can come to know, understand and respect colleagues more deeply, as Axelrod says co-operation comes from being nice, provocable, forgiving, and clear (1990:176). However, there is often an individual (Garner 1997:89) or institutionalised defensiveness against confronting crucial issues (Argyris 1990:21). This leads to a team losing its effectiveness, for "the alternative to conflict is not usually agreement but rather apathy and disengagement" (Eisenhardt et al 1999:172).

This list continues the building from the above research, and the criteria below were used later, see section 2.6 below, when identifying principles to use when communicating within effective top management teams. To:

1. Have high levels of interpersonal skills, including being prepared to share their feelings with their colleagues;
2. Help each other in succeeding, through spending considerable time, energy and focus on assisting colleagues with their issues;
3. Build relationships with each other through deep questioning and dialogue;

4. Confront and 'follow through' issues until they are bottomed.

(These criteria assisted in the decision of the researcher to use guidelines adapted from Adams in Dixon 1998:117; Flick 2000:36. See appendix 5: 'Initial guidelines given to top management teams).

What this reading is missing for me is a process, or what Johnson + Johnson (2003:28) refer to as task and feelings processes; what the literature keeps referring to is what communication is effective and what is not effective, there is no sense that here we have a continuum from, at one end, not being effective in communicating; to, at the other end of the spectrum, being highly effective. If communication is a skill then it should be able to be learned during a process of growing awareness, for learning is a process (Kolb et al 1995:48; Kolb 1996: 270): a voyage of discovery, a journey, and a process of evolution.

2.3.3 Back to the first research question: In top management teams, is there a process that could encourage communication?

Brief overview of this section: A number of different words have been used to talk of communication in effective teams: here those words are clarified and focused down initially to the word dialogue. 'Mainstream' dialogue is found to be inappropriate for top management teams whereas 'limited' dialogue, and the principles that underpin this concept, work well with all researched effective conversations.

In the above section, Collins (2001:114) talks of dialogue and debate, and Nonaka (2000:31) and Senge (1990:238) write of dialogue and discussion; so what do these words mean, and do these the words – dialogue, debate and discussion – have the same meaning or are they different?

The roots of the word discussion are 'to break apart' (Isaacs 1999b:2) or 'to shake apart' (Isaacs 1999a:42), and discussion is described as people taking positions and holding on to them (Levine 1994:61; Isaacs 1999b:2). Bohm

(2000:6) says that the word discussion has the same roots as percussion and concussion, and he compares discussion with a game of ping-pong where the object of the game is to win or to get points for you, for you to win and the other person to lose; Argyris (1991:103) believes this to be a "universal human tendency".

Bohm's World of Discussion
Concept: Discussion – 'analysing and breaking things up' (2000:7) **Principle:** Win/Lose – impose my 'truth' as an authority **Process:** **Thinking:** Content – assumptions, opinions, 'necessities'… **Feelings:** Hate, anger, frustration… **Behaviours:** Judging, defending (usually not on purpose), problem-solving, 'blocking' communication especially areas which are "non-negotiable and not touchable" (2000:7). **Outcome:** Struggle of opinions where the strongest wins although it may not be right. In fact, none of the opinions may be right (2000:12).

Flick's (2000:36) distinctions relate closely to Bohm's 'world of discussion' above, except that she uses the word 'debate' rather than 'discussion'; and Isaacs identifies the roots of debate to mean 'to beat down' (1999a:42). "People do not simply raise different views, they try to overcome others with their views" (1999a:42). Now compare this with Bohm's theory of dialogue (Senge 1990:239) where "nobody is trying to win. Everybody wins if anybody wins (2000:7)…We do not play against each other; rather we play with each other, where everybody wins."

Bohm's World of Discussion	Bohm's World of Dialogue
Concept:	**Concept:**

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Discussion – 'analysing and breaking things up'	Dialogue – is aimed at the understanding of consciousness per se, as well as exploring the problematic nature of day-to-day relationship and communication (2000: xi); creating shared meaning
Principle: Win/Lose – impose my 'truth' as an authority	**Principle:** Win/Win – "Nobody is trying to win. Everybody wins if anybody wins" (2000:7).
Process: **Thinking:** Content – Assumptions, opinions, 'necessities'.	**Process:** **Thinking:** Process – Seeking to understand self + others' assumptions and opinions, and process of thinking that arrived at those assumptions + opinions.
Feelings: Hate, anger, frustration.	**Feelings:** Trust, impersonal fellowship (2000:32)
Behaviours: Judging, defending (usually not on purpose), problem-solving, 'blocking' communication.	**Behaviours:** Suspending judgement, observing self and others including emotions felt. Creating something new together.
Procedure:	**Procedure:** 1. Listen to understand meaning, whilst suspending judgement of own and others' opinions (Senge 1990:243). 2. Observe and examine own thinking process and emotions. 3. Seek to understand difference between problems and paradox. 4. Seek to suspend own needs.
Outcome: Struggle of opinions where the	**Outcome:**

strongest wins although it may not be right. In fact, none of the opinions may be right.	A pool of common meaning that might have created something new together.

Dialogue might be useful to top management teams, so to find out more about this the following questions have been addressed:

1. What is dialogue?
2. What other processes of communication are there which might be equally or more appropriate?
3. What are the underlying similarities and differences between dialogue and these other communication processes?
4. What theoretical process and procedures could be used to underpin communication within top management teams?

2.3.4 What is dialogue?

Brief overview of this section: There are many definitions of dialogue, and what almost all the writers agree upon is that dialogue is 'a good thing', although 'mainstream' dialogue is not appropriate for use in top management team meetings.

Whilst attending the First World Dialogue and Deliberation Conference in Washington in 2002 to present a paper upon these research findings to date, the researcher found that woven throughout the conference were workshops relating to the works of one person, David Bohm; the fullest analysis of Bohm's thinking about dialogue is captured in 'On Dialogue' (Bohm 2000) which is edited by Lee Nichol. Dialogue has not just been invented: "the exercise of dialogue is as old as civilisation itself" (Bohm 2000: vii). It is only now being rediscovered (Senge 1990:239; Bohm et al 1991:3); however, as can be seen from the use of different words to describe positive conversations there is looseness around the term: "in recent times a profusion of practices, techniques, and definitions has arisen around the term 'dialogue'" (Bohm 2000: vii). Although there may be this profusion of practices, techniques, and

definitions, there may be some key principles which are common to all or most of these; so whilst visiting the literature the researcher identified some definitions of dialogue, these are listed below to show how they contrast, are differentiated from each other, these are then followed by my own definition and a set of 'mainstream' principles:

- "Dialogue is people talking together. The important thing is that the people agree to do that and nothing else...all who gather should clearly realise that very little is guaranteed" (Blake 2004:1).
- "Dialogue is a way of observing, collectively, how hidden values and intentions can control our behaviour, and how unnoticed cultural differences can clash without our realising what is occurring" (Bohm et al 1991:1).
- "Dialogue is aimed at the understanding of consciousness per se, as well as exploring the problematic nature of day-to-day relationship and communication" (Bohm 2000: xi).
- "...we suspend our opinions and judgements in order to be able to listen to each other" – Bohm (Briggs et al 1999:1).
- "The flow of meaning between and among us" – Bohm (van den Heuvel 1997:1)
- Dialogue marks a different way of thinking and communicating – tangential and analogic – as distinct from the binary digital logic of the one-to-one dyad. It is articulate, circular, lateralized as distinct from linear, meaningful as distinct from causal (de Maré et al 1991:17).
- "The language of listening" – Chawla (Ellinor + Gerard 1998: xix). This is later emphasised by Gerard (1998: xlvii) when she writes "and above all LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN".
- "A way of thinking and reflecting together...a living experience of inquiry within and between people" (Isaacs 1999a:9).
- "Dialogue is the more creative, open-ended activity of a group thinking together" (Levine 1994:61).

- "Dialogue is a process of co-creation. Groups of people allow their thoughts and feelings to become more meaningful together than they ever could apart" (Ross et al 1998:3).

- "Dialogue is a communication process that focuses attention on collective thinking and learning. Practised routinely over time, it helps groups integrate certain skills and mental sets which ultimately transform their culture and ways of working together" (Ross et al 1998:60).

- "Dialogue aims to build a group that can think generatively, creatively, and, most important, together" (Schein 1993:9).

- "In dialogue people become observers of their own thinking" (Senge 1990:242).

- "To be in dialogue, participants in communication remain in the tension between standing their own ground and being fundamentally open to the other" (Pearce + Walters 1998 from Ray-Chaudhuri 1998:15).

- "An open process of making forms" – Shainberg (Briggs et al 1999:1).

- Webster's dictionary defines the purpose of dialogue as, "seeking mutual understanding and harmony" (Yankelovich 1999:14).

- "No consensus of all views was reached, and participants felt that any attempt to express one would mask the rich variety of opinion and points of view that had emerged during our continuing conversation" – Zohar + Marshall (1994:145).

Incidentally, the first modern reference I can find to dialogue is that of Buber in 1914 (Smith 1998:119).

This is the researcher's own definition of dialogue:

A process of communicating that works towards enhancing understanding of the meaning of one's own and others' thinking processes, values and beliefs.

This definition sits well with Casey's model (Critchley + Casey 1996:340) for it is in the right-hand top corner where not only the facts are discussed but also feelings are uncovered, and as Isaacs says, "through dialogue we learn how to engage our hearts" (1999a:47). Also when addressing what Casey calls

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problems (1985:5 + 1996:37) and Bohm (2000: xiv) calls paradoxes: as long as it is a problem and is treated as such it will never be dissolved (2000:63). Bohm says (2000: xiv) "as a paradox has no discernable solution, a new approach is required, namely, sustained attention to the paradox itself, rather than a determined attempt to eradicate the 'problem'", this reminds me of my experience at the Top Management Programme in section 1.8.2.3 above. So dialogue might be used in the top right-hand box of Casey's model above, where facts and feelings can be shared with openness in the understanding that there are some problems where we just do not know whether there are any answers or not.

| **Principles of 'mainstream' Dialogue** |
| (As opposed to Bohm's 'limited' dialogue (2000:42)) |
| 1. Creating a safe environment with chairs in a circle (Bohm 2000:16; Charan 2001:78; de Maré et al 1991:15; Ellinor + Gerard 1998:62; Smith 1998:119) |
| 2. Equality and the absence of coercive influences (Yankelovich 1999:41; Bohm 2000:15) |
| 3. Numbers of between fifteen upwards (Bohm 2000:viii+13 defines fifteen to forty; de Maré et al 1991:15 talk of upwards to at least one hundred; although Drucker (1989:250) says that "communication...does not work well if the group is very large)" |
| 4. Listening with respect and empathy (Cranwell-Ward et al 2004:199; Rogers 1960:22 from Levine 1994:63; Smith 1998:121+ 122; Yankelovich 1999:41) |
| 5. Listen without judging, to learn and gain shared meaning (Bohm 2000:xi+26; Levine 1994:61; Gerard + Teurfs 1997:16; Dixon 1998:117; Flick 2000:36; Rosenberg 2001:31) |
| 6. Not be 'precious' about one's own position and suspend own assumptions (van den Heuvel 1997:1; Johnson + Johnson 2003:297; Senge 1990:243) |
| 7. No preconceived, or only temporary, purposes that can evaporate as |

the conversations unfold (van den Heuvel 1990:1; Bohm 2000:viii+15)

8. Bringing assumptions into the open (Yankelovich 1999:41; Gerard + Teurfs 1997:16; Johnson + Johnson 2003:297)

9. Inquiring and reflecting (Gerard + Teurfs 1997:16; Flick 2000:36; Smith 1998:120). "Do not be afraid to admit ignorance, ask for help in understanding, and expect to get it" (Schön 2000:301).

Appendix 6 lists still further conditions for dialogue.

All but one writer that I have read on this subject agree that dialogue is 'a good thing'. The one dissenting voice comes from Lacan (1977) who is quoted by de Maré et al (1991:60):

> "In itself dialogue seems to involve a renunciation of aggressivity; from Socrates onwards, philosophy has always placed its hope in the triumph of reason. And yet ever since Thrasymachus made his stormy exit in the beginning of the 'Republic', verbal dialect has all too often proved a failure."

My feeling is that it all depends upon whether Lacan interprets 'verbal dialect' as the same as dialogue. Or does he mean 'dialect' as defined by Isaacs (1999a:41) as "tension and synthesis of opposites"? This is not dialogue as it is defined in this thesis.

So how is dialogue presently used in business? According to Bohm dialogue is rarely used here (Bohm 2000: 45) although there seem to be some recent applications (Charan 2001; Isaacs 1999a:98; Varney 1996:30) but few specifically in top management teams (Charan 2001:79). The challenge for Bohm is that organisations can never participate in his understanding of 'real' dialogue, for 'real' dialogue has no purpose – or only fleeting ones (van den Heuvel 1990:1) – no goals and no agendas. And dialogue certainly doesn't work where there are hierarchies operating (Bohm 2000:42), so no CEO either (Bohm 2000:15). The reason why this cannot be 'real' dialogue, in the eyes of

Bohm, is because by having a goal one is imposing a set of assumptions that will not be addressed during the dialogue, and thus the dialogue cannot be totally open and unrestricted: therefore, for example, the dialogue case studies in Isaacs' book (1999a) are not 'real' dialogues by Bohm's definition or de Maré et al's (1991:16). Another area where top management teams cannot comply with Bohm (2000:viii) or de Maré et al (1991:15) is in the area of number of participants; true dialogue should consist certainly of fifteen to forty people, and de Maré increases this figure to over one hundred; this number is almost always more than the number in top management teams. However, Bohm does concede that "most companies are not working coherently…I think that if you can get this notion across in whatever situation – the germ of the notion of dialogue – if you can get people to look at it, it's a step" (Bohm 2000:45). So although in Bohm's eyes what is being looked at in this research project is 'a step towards limited dialogue' (Bohm 2000:42), Lee Nichol would probably see this as just another method of dialogue in the profusion of practices presently being exercised under the banner of 'dialogue' (Bohm 2000:vii); especially if the process was "a free flow of meaning among all the participants" (Bohm 2002:175). As Mezirow (1991:3) writes:

> "It has become crucial that the individual learn to negotiate meanings, purposes, and values critically, reflectively, and rationally instead of passively accepting the social realities defined by others."

Doug Ross (1998:50) suggests that dialogue should be ongoing and continuous, but top management teams have neither the time nor the inclination to spend long hours in 'experimental' meetings, in my experience. However there needs to be enough space to have limited dialogue within the time that board meetings take, and there should be enough time (de Geus 2000:97); so the process and procedures that were initially adopted by the researcher were designed to be an integral part of top management team meetings.

My understanding of Bohm (2000) follows several themes: Ontologically, he sees an objective world, in which humans are made up in layers, similar to the layers of an onion. The three dominant layers are: our essence in the centre; surrounded by our memories and experiences; which is in turn is surrounded

by our opinions and assumptions. Our essence is who we are; our opinions and assumptions make up who we think we are: "we have an unshakeable faith... in our belief that our beliefs are true" (van den Heuvel 1997:1). Epistemologically, he sees a subjective world, in which he shares two views of the world: one is a world of discussion, the deteriorating world as it is now; the second is the world of dialogue, the world as it could and needs to be. If we believe that we are our assumptions and opinions, then we defend them as 'the truth'; whereas, if we believe that these are only our opinions and assumptions made up from our experiences and our memories, and that we are something more than this, then we free ourselves to question the thinking processes behind them in ourselves and in others – our assumptions might be right and they may be wrong, and so with dialogue, we need to be prepared to have conversations going into our process of thinking behind our assumptions without having to defend our position as being the only 'truth'. "To maintain the feeling of friendship in the group was much more important than to maintain any position...a new kind of mind thus begins to come into being which is based on the development of a common meaning that is constantly transforming" (Bohm 2000:x). We can never know exactly what another person is saying (2000:2) because we each have differing models of the world from our different experiences; however through dialogue and suspending our judgement of whether the person is right or wrong, often new meanings will emerge for the parties involved. "To communicate is to make something common" (Bohm 2000:2) – in the context of dialogue this means "creating something new together" (2000:2); so dialogue is about creating something new together, not conveying something from one person to another as an authority to be accepted passively by the other (Freire 1972: 61; Huczynski 1996:11; Kennedy 1998:131).

2.3.5 More on conversations

"The conversation is not about the relationship; the conversation is the relationship" (Scott 2002:xvi).

"A conversation always arises when what has already been said stimulates me to make a contribution of my own" (Zimmermann 1996:24).

"Conversation...relates to social intercourse which infers a kind of mutual inner fructification, a bringing to birth something more or higher than merely exchanging views" (van den Brink 1996:vii).

Brief overview of this section: There is a continuum of types of conversation: from Bohm's dialogue at the one end, to a more limited dialogue at the other, that of Charan's conversations, where leaders set the direction and content of conversation. In between is a multitude of types of conversations including Shaw's more chaordic paradoxical approach where meetings include a facilitator asking well-placed questions.

Although Bohm (2000: 45) says that there is little dialogue going on in business, and this research has identified some (Charan 2001; Isaacs 1999a:98; Varney 1996:30), there are also other successful conversations taking place whatever the label given to them by those who write about them. For example, conversations, which may be not be dialogue according to Bohm's own theories (Senge 1990:239), in practice they usually fall into his 'limited dialogue' category (Bohm 2000:42), however what the researcher now believes matters is not the name given to them – dialogue or conversations – but, rather, whether or not the communication being used helps to enhance the effectiveness of top management teams. So what follows are descriptions of a number of types of conversation which are seen to be successful by their authors. If Bohm is seen at one end of a spectrum of enjoying more effective conversations, then Charan (2001:75) is well down at the other end. He too believes in the importance of dialogue, saying, "dialogue is the basic unit of work in an organisation...it is the single most important factor underlying the productivity and growth of the knowledge worker" (2001:76). However his approach is very different to that of Bohm's dialogue, Charan's understanding of dialogue is clear-cut and business-like, and consists of four characteristics: openness, candour, informality and closure; and this style of dialogue, Charan

writes, is used by the top management teams of companies including EDS, Pharmacia, and General Electric; where an atmosphere of 'openness' and safety is achieved that "permits spirited discussion, group learning and trust" (2001:78); 'candour' enables participants to express their real opinions; 'informality' "reduces defensiveness"; and 'closure' ensures that at the end of the meeting everyone knows specifically what it is that they have to do. By doing this he believes that the organisations gain speed as a competitive advantage (Charan 2001:80; de Geus 2000:99) and this 'social operating mechanism' is linked to incentive schemes to ensure that all players are focusing on the organisation's common purpose. Meetings are regular and are safe environments for disagreement, for "leaders get the behaviour they tolerate and behaviour is changed through repetition" (Charan 2001:79); in this type of dialogue, the leaders control the direction and content of the dialogue (Gratton + Ghoshal 2002:219).

This is a very different approach to that of Patricia Shaw (2002) whose work lies somewhere between Bohm and Charan on the spectrum, for she believes that organisational controls should be relaxed, so much so that meetings would have no guidelines, no pre-set agendas, and therefore unlikely to have any predominating management discourse (2002:44); this in turn would lead to new and unexpected meanings emerging from the conversations. She discards traditional interventions as simplistic and too structured, for example, Schein talking of the client being helped to "perceive, understand, and act upon...process events" (Schein 1988:11); and Shaw also discards Kolb's model of learning (1984), saying, "it is becoming increasingly clear that simple control over the outcome of complex interaction is indeed illusory" (Shaw 2002:30). Shaw's approach is to take part in team conversations rather than facilitating from outside of the group (2002:21), and she accepts the infinite variety of directions that such conversations could and do take, for with this unstructured approach come paradoxes of order and disorder, of stability and instability, and of being organised and disorganised all at the same time (2002:20; see also Chopra 1995:85). "Rely less on pre-set agendas and ready made presentations and to engage one another in exploratory conversation that generates stability and potential shifts in what we are holding

one another to and how we are doing that. Rather than inculcating a special discipline of dialogue, I am encouraging a perception of ensemble improvisation as an organising craft of communicative action" (Shaw 2002:164). However, acting without clear outcomes in mind does not mean acting randomly without intention (2002:70), nor without some well-placed questions from the participating facilitator(s); nor does it mean that everything runs smoothly, it certainly does not, for it "is a charged emotional process" (2002:43) involving strong emotional feelings: "as we converse we 'give form to feelings'". Behind this process is a belief that people already know what they want to do (Shaw 2003:450), it's just a matter of identifying the individuals who have the energy around the specific issue, and forming random groups letting the conversations flow, with "no expectation...to define any goals or outcomes for our meeting (rather it is an) exploration" (Shaw 2003:448).

De Geus (2000:98) concurs with this approach as a process of accelerating learning, believing that "teams that have to cope with rigid procedures and information systems...learn more slowly than those with open, flexible communication channels". Collins and Porras (1998: xv+220) also agree with Shaw's approach which needs both continuity and change (Shaw 2002:67) where organisations need to live in a world on the edge of chaos (Shaw 2003:446; Pascale et al 2000:61) which understands the need for both stability and flexibility; which are the "time-tested fundamentals" of great companies say Collins and Porras (1998: xv+220). This paradox of having a stability and a flexibility, to change and adapt in this uncertain world, is described by Hock (2000:20) as 'chaordic' where chaos and order co-exist: a chaordic system is a "complex and dynamical arrangement of connections between elements forming a unified whole the behaviour of which is both unpredictable (chaotic) and patterned (orderly)...simultaneously" (Fitzgerald 1997:1). Kakabadse + Kakabadse (2000:5) state that this is what leadership is about, namely, contrasts, contradictions and paradoxes (Shaw 2002:120); "many truths lie in paradoxes" (van den Brink 1996:xv); and yet Elliott (1987:19) states "the mind will never apprehend the truth of paradox. Only the heart can do that", to we need to listen to our hearts.

2.3.6 Other processes of communicating within a top management team

> Brief overview of this section: A team's performance can be improved through relationship-building and enhancing creativity. This can be assisted by the use of sharing personal stories, empowering questions, and using what is remembered as good from the past and present to visualise better futures.

Now with a 'purist' dialogue at one end of the spectrum, and 'decisive' dialogue (Charan 2001:76) at the other and effective ways of conversing in between; are there ways, other than these dialogues and conversations, of making the conversations within top management teams more effective? Rickards and Moger (2000:278; 2001:248), although researching the theories of project team development, suggest that there are two barriers through which teams need to pass for them to become exceptional or creative performers (Rickards + Moger 2000:278); further they also say that the use of relationship-building and creativity exercises might help in overcoming these barriers, for "studies have assumed that creativity is a valued, perhaps necessary, characteristic of teams engaged in generating new and valued outputs" (Rickards + Moger 2000:274).

If top management team meetings were interwoven with a process of relationship-building conversations, with the objective of peeling Bohm's metaphoric onion (Bohm 2000) and getting beneath the opinions and assumptions held by colleagues and into their memories and experiences, this might be a step forward. One way of achieving this is by asking questions about the person's life experiences (Carnegie 1975: 96) and listening to their stories (Johnson G + Scholes 2002:231), and understanding their maps of the world from their perspective (Covey 1990:252; Watkins + Mohr 2001:75); another way is to ask them to relate an incident in their life, then talk of their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours around that incident, and ask them about their learnings (Field et al 2004a:5). "It is through our stories, our narrative that this construction of our world takes place" (Gergen 1994 taken from Ray-Chaudhuri 1998:14).

Further, a process called appreciative inquiry brings together individual memories and experiences, through story-telling, and can be focused upon the business; it is also directed at positive aspects of the organisation's history: this resonates with the researcher's own beliefs in focusing on the positive. Cooperrider (Watkins + Mohr 2001: xxviii) writes that "people see the best in one another, when they share their dreams and ultimate concerns without filters or censorship, and when they are connected in full voice to create not just new futures, but better ones".

There is a subtle sameness and difference between appreciative inquiry and dialogue: both have an objective of sharing each others' dreams and concerns without filters or censorship; yet whereas Bohm (2000:17) posits that dialogue does not have a purpose, and as it unfolds so it takes one wherever the group may go, Cooperrider asserts that appreciative inquiry's aim is to 'create not just new futures, but better ones'. Watkins + Mohr (2001: 32) go on to say that change should not be seen in its traditional way as an event with a beginning, middle and end (for example, Kurt Lewin's model of Unfreezing-Changing-Refreezing (Argyris et al 1985:8; who also quotes Lewin 1964, Schein 1979, and Hackman + Suttle 1977); rather change should be seen as a continuous process, ongoing in every conversation we have, in every inquiry we make and in every action we take, to 'know' or understand something about our organisation and/or about the world. This links with Gratton + Ghoshal (2002:219) who believe that the most important job of a manager is to set the conversations within the organisation; also just as appreciative inquiry focuses upon one's greatest opportunities this is where Collins (2001:63) found that excellent companies put their best people.

When McDonalds used appreciative inquiry (Watkins + Mohr 2001: 70) as the process to assist in achieving its goal to 'be the best employer in each community around the world', its Midwest Division used three core appreciative questions in interviewing their key stakeholders. First, "What makes us successful when we are at our best as a strategic business partner?" This is where they look back into the past of the organisation.

Second, "Imagine McDonald's three years from now as the best employer in each community around the world in the quick food service industry. What does it look like? What are we doing more of…less of…completely new (image of the future)?" This is where they look forward into the future and visualise the best that they can be. And third, "If you could develop or transform the HR function in any way to advance fully the… agenda, what three wishes, in order of priority, would you make to contribute to its excellence (growth opportunities)?" So here we 'slingshot' from the past into the future. Incidentally, the learnings of McDonald's from this process were two-fold: one, that it "boosted positive energy" from people being consciously involved; and two, that it "spurred innovation because it brought all the key stakeholders together in one room to envision, design, and implement the change" – note the need for creativity as an integral part of this transformation process (Rickards + Moger 2000:278; 2001:248).

The process of appreciative inquiry does have specific guidelines: Watkins + Mohr (2001:37) state that there are five generic processes to this conversation: first, "choose the positive as the focus of inquiry"; second, "inquire into stories of life-giving forces"; third, "locate themes that appear in the stories and select topics for further inquiry"; fourth, "create shared images for a preferred future"; and fifth, "find innovative ways to create that future".

Three learning points arise from appreciative inquiry for the researcher: the power of looking back at the past, the power of stories, and the power of appropriate questions. "What we ask determines what we find. What we find determines how we talk. How we talk determines how we imagine together. How we imagine together determines what we achieve" (Watkins + Mohr 2001:91).

Another way of communicating is through creative games using the power of questions – "any one question can be more explosive than a thousand answers" (Gaarder 1995:54) – which is also used in Shell for, according to de Geus (2000:99), the key competitive advantage in the future will be the managers' ability to learn faster than their competitors, and "lack of speed

becomes a competitive disadvantage" (Charan 2001:79); and "the only relevant learning in a company is the learning done by those who have the power to act" (de Geus 2000:94) and competitive advantage involves "getting to the future first" (Hamel + Prahalad 1994 from Shaw 2002:140). A Shell case study is put forward – no, not the exposure about inflating their oil reserves (Moore 2004:27; Durman 2004:3.4) – by de Geus (2000:96) giving a scenario of what might happen in the future: In 1984 when a barrel of oil was priced at $28, a case study was written around it falling to $15 a barrel. This was a game for the management teams to play with and answer the questions: what do you think your government will do? What do you think your competition will do? And what, if anything, will you do? In early 1986 the price fell from $27 in January, to $17 in February, and to $10 in April; "the fact that Shell had already visited the world of $15 oil helped a great deal in that panicky spring of 1986" (de Geus 2000:96).

Other game-playing examples – "a human being is only fully human when at play" (Zimmermann 1996:20) – are given by Nonaka (2000:24) of: Honda in producing its Honda City; and Canon producing its mini-copier using the analogy of a beer can to manufacture an inexpensive disposable photosensitive copier drum (1996:27). These transitional objects of play can speed learning as the Tavistock Institute has found, and as Shell has found, and can be done within board meetings however full the agenda (de Geus 2000:97), and "it encourages frequent dialogue and communication" (Nonaka 2000:26), and creativity incidentally. Nonaka (2000) found the use of creativity in Japanese companies also effective; he gives an example of the benefits (1996:20) in Matsushita Electric Company, where the organisation's personnel were adding a new bread-making machine to its range of products but the machine wouldn't knead correctly – the crust was over-baked and the inside underdone. All efforts to overcome this challenge failed until a company software developer, Ikuko Tanaka, proposed a creative solution which was to solve the impasse: she suggested going to the place where the best bread was reputedly baked – The Osaka International Hotel. This she did, and trained with the hotel's head baker; after a year of trial and error, working closely with her engineer colleagues, she came up with product specifications,

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including modifications to the kneading machine. In its first year of production and sales, the new bread-making machine set a company record for sales of a new kitchen appliance; Tanaka, knowing that she was explicitly 'consciously incompetent', worked with the head baker who was tacitly 'unconsciously competent' – he had the wisdom but not the consciousness to express his knowledge of how to make bread. By translating his tacit secrets into explicit knowledge Tanaka was able to communicate to her colleagues, and then together they defined product specifications and produced the product. Through this process Tanaka and her colleagues enhanced their own tacit knowledge base, and in turn the tacit knowledge and wisdom informally passed on to other colleagues (Nonaka 2000:22; see also Bohm 2000:14+53).

This story gives the researcher a number of learnings: the power of involving and conversing with the team and listening unconditionally to colleagues reminding the researcher of pre-learnings in 1.8.2.1; how much potential lies in those around us if only we stop and reflect; also an obvious learning really but one that hadn't occurred to me, how being 'unconscious' also means being unable to articulate, being tacit; and, conversely, being 'conscious' also means being able to articulate, being explicit, see also 2.4 below. Utilising these examples to develop creative processes with top management teams, the researcher, from a suggestion by David Megginson, developed two questions to focus team members on enhancing other team members' performance through personal development, which is a requisite of a 'high-performing team' (Katzenbach and Smith 1993:84; Vaill 2000:70-73). The two questions are: How am I performing? And, what do you feel I need to do next to develop myself? Harrison (1995:49), in the same vein, lists three areas to open up team members to how others can enhance their performance; they are: what do I need to do more or do better; what do I need to do less or stop doing; and what do I need to keep on doing, maintain unchanged.

In summary so far, we now have a range of ways in which top management teams can converse with each other, these are: dialogue, as defined by Bohm, being at one end of the spectrum, with no predetermined agendas where the direction and content evolves over time (Bohm 2000); and strung out along

this spectrum is an assortment of dialogues, conversations, games, relationship-building and creativity processes that all have their place in top management team conversations, all under the banner of Bohm's 'limited dialogue' (Bohm 2000:42).

Although much of the dialogue literature talks about what is and what is not dialogue (Bohm 2000; de Maré et al 1991:44; Charan 2001:76), the researcher has come to the conclusion that dialogue is not digital – being either dialogue or not dialogue – instead, it is a journey of discovery and is analogue in nature; it is a process of growing awareness, an unfolding journey – a never-ending process at that. Isaacs (1999a:41) has set out a process for dialogue, as he says "the intention in dialogue is motion, movement", however a clearer process, and easier for top management teams to follow, is that of Scharmer (Isaacs 1999a:261) who shares an evolving dialogue with four distinct stages see Exhibit 2.5: 'politeness', (shared) monologues; 'breakdown', controlled discussion or skilful conversation; 'inquiry', reflective dialogue; and 'flow', generative dialogue. As one moves from an environment of politeness – where individuals are focused upon themselves and on their own needs and stories – to one of breakdown, one passes over a threshold – the crisis of emptiness (Isaacs 1999a:262); this crisis occurs as team members become increasingly frustrated with the lack of progress, with superficial stories and with not addressing issues; the weight of their frustration eventually carries them over the threshold into 'breakdown' where participants openly share their frustrations and anger. A crisis, as Scharmer (Isaacs 1999a:263) defines it, is "a turning point, distinguishing all that has come before from all that comes after"; another word, rather than crisis, would be threshold (Campbell 1993:245). By spending time with each other the beginnings of understanding and appreciation for others' positions begin to emerge, and the weight of these more positive feelings carries them across the next threshold – the crisis of suspension (Isaacs 1999a:269) – into the quadrant of inquiry where team members begin to suspend their personal judgements to listen to the stories of others. This does not mean that they agree with their colleagues, just that they respect their colleagues' models of the world; with this goodwill and suspension of judgement, the team is carried

over the crisis of fragmentation into 'flow' where new possibilities are to be found. A contribution to knowledge is that this links back to Csikszentmihalyi's ideas (1998:41) on integration and differentiation being present at every stage of the journey.

Primacy
of the Parts

2. 3.

Crisis of Suspension
I am not my point of view

Breakdown   Inquiry
Controlled Discussion   Reflective Dialogue
or Skilful Conversation

Blaming &   Crisis of Emptiness   Crisis of Fragmentation
Nonreflective   There must be more   We are not our point of view   Self-Reflective

1.   4.

Crisis of re-entry
Return to the real World

Politeness   Flow
(Shared) Monologues   Generative Dialogue

Primacy
of the
Whole

Exhibit 2.5: *Adapted from Scharmer's dialogue process (Isaacs 1999a:261)*

As will be seen, this leads us naturally to the next research question in section 2.4, but before leaving this section, here is a list of theoretical implicit principles of dialogue which was used by top management teams:

'Mainstream' Dialogue	'Limited' Dialogue	Implicit principles used with top management teams
Safe environment	Safe environment	Safe environment
Equality	Often unequal	Always unequal
Numbers of 15 upwards	Groups of any size	Size of team
Empathic listening	Empathic listening	Empathic listening
Gain shared meaning	Gain shared meaning	Gain shared meaning

Suspend assumptions	Suspend assumptions	Suspend assumptions
No agendas	Always a purpose	Always a purpose
Assumptions into open	Assumptions into open	Assumptions into open
Inquire and reflect	Inquire and reflect	Inquire and reflect
Unlikely to action plan	Usually an action plan	Always an action plan

This places the current research firmly in the area of 'limited' dialogue:

Implicit principles used with top management teams	Comments
Safe environment	Away from operational distractions, and sitting in a circle
Always unequal	Consisting of the top management team
Size of team	The full top management team
Empathic listening	Listening for understanding
Gain shared meaning	Understanding of each other's stories
Suspend assumptions	Put aside one's own story to listen to others
Always a purpose	Focus on a question/an issue
Assumptions into open	Share one's own understandings and beliefs
Inquire and reflect	Question to understand and consider the answer
Always an action plan	Take the issue forward

These principles so closely follow the work of both Deborah Flick (2000:36) and Doris Adams (Dixon 1998:117) that their guidelines, set out in Appendix 6, were initially used as a touchstone with each of the teams. The full theoretical dialogue process used is set out at the end of this chapter.

2.4 Second research question: Is there a model that enhances understanding of the teams' progress, or lack of it?

Brief overview of this section: Although there are many variations, the four-stage group development model of Tuckman is the most memorable; and it is

this format that was used as the theoretical model for measuring where teams were in their development journey.

Johnson + Johnson (2003:28) state that there are well over one hundred theories describing developmental changes of groups, they go on to say that most of these theories fall into two approaches (Hill & Gruner 1973; Shambaugh 1978), namely, 'recurring-phase theories' and 'sequential-stage theories'. Recurring-phase theories incorporate processes where the dominating issues occur again and again, and they cite Robert Freed Bales (1965) whose theory suggests that there needs to be an equilibrium between task-orientated work and emotional expressions to build better relations among group members; he was not the first with this theory for Mueller et al (2000:1387) write: "fifty years ago, Tavistock researchers famously discovered that technological choices need to be considered simultaneously with social choices". They also cite Bion (1961) who wrote that groups focus on three basic themes: dependence on the leader, pairing among members for emotional support, and fight-flight reactions to a threat to the group (Bion 1961:188); John Adair's Action-Centred Leadership model of task, team and individual (1984:146; Walters et al 2003: 180) would also fit under this definition - developed at Sandhurst Military Academy, it was, for so many years, used to underpin the management and supervisory skills training carried out by the Industrial Society (Garnett 1985:27) now called The Work Foundation. 'Sequential-stage theories', on the other hand, go through predictable stages of group development: Johnson + Johnson (2003:28) quote a number of examples, and conclude that "probably the most famous sequential-stage theory was formulated by Bruce W Tuckman". Tuckman's four-stage sequence of small team development (1965:384) evolved from researching some fifty articles on the subject of the developmental sequence of small groups. The weakness of his original paper, as pointed out in his subsequent article written with Jenson (Tuckman + Jenson 1977:420), is that "there was an overrepresentation of therapy and T-group settings and an under representation of natural or laboratory-group settings". However, in 1975, a critical review of fourteen models of developmental stages of groups

was carried out (Braaten 1975) which concluded, as Tuckman had already done, "that there appeared to be substantial agreement among authors on the aspects of a developmental phase model but that systematic research was needed to verify the theoretical concepts. Braaten's review of the literature suggests that the empirical research in stages of small group development is sparse and inconclusive" (Tuckman + Jenson 1977:424), so this research adds to that pool of knowledge. Tuckman (1965:384) initially named the developmental stages: 'orientation', 'emotionality', 'relevant opinion exchange', and 'the emergence of solutions'; twelve years later (Tuckman + Jenson 1977:419) the names changed to the now familiar: 'forming', 'storming', 'norming', and 'performing', and a fifth stage was added (1977:419), namely, 'adjourning'. Three years later Lacoursiere (1980:98) published his research comparing twenty-eight group development stages studies with his own which are: orientation; dissatisfaction; resolution; production; and termination. He found that either most of the other studies were in general agreement with his own, including Tuckman, "or can be made to agree without doing injustice to them" (1980:97).

The four stages of group development link well with Scharmer (Isaacs 1999a:261) as follows: politeness is equivalent to forming; breakdown is equivalent to storming; inquiry is equivalent to norming; and flow is equivalent to performing. Also, a further contribution to knowledge is that during the researcher's work in jointly designing a leadership programme, Integral Leadership, for senior and chief executives, four of us (Field et al 2001:3) came to a realisation that there is a sixth stage, or rather an initial stage, which is that of 'pre-forming'. Abraham Maslow (1987:15) talks of the starting point for his motivation theory being physiological drives, those of hunger, sex and thirst; these biological requirements – with the exception of sex – are usually catered for, by the facilitators, in the provision of teas and coffees, the comfort of the room, fire exits, lavatories etc before a meeting even starts, and are prior to the 'forming' stage of a meeting, so is outside of the remit of this research. So Tuckman's list was extended to six stages, for the purposes of our Integral Leadership programme, as follows: 'pre-forming', 'forming', 'storming', 'norming', 'performing' and 'adjourning' (Field et al 2001).

Tuckman + Jenson (1977)	Lacoursiere (1980:98)	Adaptation of Tuckman + Jenson (1977) by Field et al (2001)	Scharmer (Isaacs 1999a:261)
		Pre-forming	
Forming	Orientation	Forming	Politeness
Storming	Dissatisfaction	Storming	Breakdown
Norming	Resolution	Norming	Inquiry
Performing	Production	Performing	Flow
Adjourning	Termination	Adjourning	

Maslow's work was also researched by Professor Clare W Graves (Graves 2002:52); two of his students continued this work and after some forty years of joint research published a book on their findings (Beck + Cowan 1996:3). In it they set out levels of existence (values) which fit with Tuckman's stages (Beck + Cowan 1996:65; Wilber 2000:8+48) adapted by Field et al (2001), namely:

- Pre-forming – Beige: basic instinct
- Forming – Purple: safety
- Storming – Red: dominance + power
- Norming – Blue: meaning + order
- Performing – Orange: autonomy + manipulation
- Adjourning – Green: equality + community.

(I am grateful to Dr Máire Shelly and Peter McNab for making me aware of this link.)

Tuckman + Jenson (1977)	Field et al (2001)	Beck + Cowan (1996:65)
	Pre-forming	Beige
Forming	Forming	Purple
Storming	Storming	Red
Norming	Norming	Blue
Performing	Performing	Orange

Adjourning	Adjourning	Green

Rickards and Moger (2000:276; 2001:244) acknowledge that "the stages are today regarded as idealized" and this simple stage sequence does not take account of complexities that studies have uncovered, "nevertheless, the model retains its value as a simple means of discussing and exploring team dynamics" (2000:277). Peck (1990:86) takes a more scathing approach: he believes that Tuckman's stages are a "simple formula, while not useless…at best incomplete". But then he sets out four stages himself, namely: 'pseudocommunity', 'chaos', 'emptiness', and 'community', which closely mirror the four stages of group development. First, 'pseudocommunity' represents members being very pleasant to each other, and avoiding disagreement at all costs: "Pseudocommunity is conflict-avoiding; true community is conflict-resolving" (Peck 1990:88); it is also dull as no-one does or says anything for fear of offending someone else (1990:89). Second, 'Chaos' which "always centres around well-intentioned but misguided attempts to heal and convert" (1990:90); "by and large people resist change, so healers and converters try harder to heal or convert" (1990:91); in this stage, attacks will be aimed at each other and also at the leader, but as they have little effect, this can be boring and unpleasant too, though as Peck says, "fighting is far better than pretending you are not divided" (1990:94). To get out of 'Chaos', Peck says that there are only two ways: One, is into organisation, where the chairperson and committee find a solution; however, "committees and chair people do not a community make" (1990:93) so there is no way that an organisation can find community unless there is a willingness to risk a certain lack of structure. The other way out of 'Chaos' is into and through 'Emptiness'; "it is the bridge between chaos and community" (1990:95); the challenge is that there are barriers on this 'bridge', the five most common are: First, 'Expectations and preconceptions', when we go into the unknown we try to "make the experience conform to our expectations". Second, 'Prejudice', where we make judgements yet community-building requires time and space to get to know each other; the third is 'Ideology, theology, and solutions', which is a belief that we hold "the one and only right answer" (1990:96); and fourth,

'The need to heal, convert, fix, or solve', solving differences is self-centred, appreciating the differences is the way forward, for "the most loving thing we can do when a friend is in pain is to share that pain – to be there even when we have nothing to offer except our presence" (1990:97), this links back to pre-learnings 1.8.2.1; and the fifth is 'a need to control', controlling is not the way forward for "life is not a problem to be solved but a mystery to be lived" (1990:99). Having overcome or avoided these barriers, the way forward is through the third stage, 'Emptiness', which is to reflect in silence what we most need to empty ourselves of, it is a time of sacrifice: "I need to give up...'Do I need to give up everything?...No...just everything that stands in your way'"; and so, finally, into 'Community' where true community is conflict-resolving, "creat(ing) common meaning in a community" (Smith 1998:119).

Peck adds understanding for the researcher in as much as although the first two stages adhere closely with those of the four stages of group development, he then gives two ways forward out of 'Chaos': 'Emptiness' and 'Organisation', where organisation takes the tension away and resolves that tension for the group eliminating the opportunity for the group to progress towards real community through emptiness. This is a valuable addition for when working with top management teams if the CEO were to take an unresolved decision away from the team, the team might well stagnate in Chaos/Storming.

Tuckman + Jenson (1977)	Field et al (2001)	Beck + Cowan (1996:65)	Peck (1990:88)	Scharmer (Isaacs 1999a:261)
	Pre-forming	Beige		
Forming	Forming	Purple	Pseudocommunity	Politeness
Storming	Storming	Red	Chaos	Breakdown
Norming	Norming	Blue	Emptiness	Inquiry
Performing	Performing	Orange	Community	Flow
Adjourning	Adjourning	Green		

Another four-stage model which links well is the unconscious competence model of learning (after extensive searches the researcher has been unable to find the original reference for this) where stage one, forming, equates to unconscious incompetence; stage two, storming, to conscious incompetence; stage three, norming, to conscious competence; and stage four, performing, to unconscious competence. Putting Tuckman's stages and the dialogue stages of Scharmer together into quadrants, the model so far looks like this:

High

Storming	Norming
Breakdown	Inquiry
Conscious incompetence	Conscious competence
Forming	Performing
Politeness	Flow
Unconscious incompetence	Unconscious competence

Consciousness

Low Competence ⟶ High
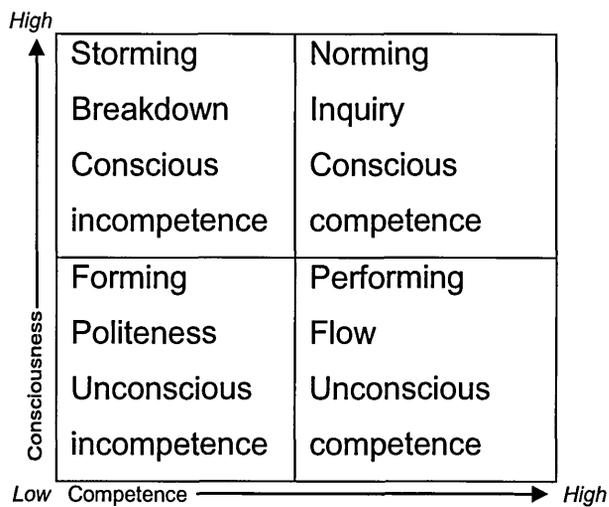
Although Shaw says that she avoids the "widely favoured use of 2 by 2 matrices" (2002: introductory page) the process she follows does fall into a two by two matrix. Examples she shares in her book show meetings in organisations following the classic four-stage group development model: she sets the scene at the outset of meetings (forming), team members challenge who is included and excluded in the meetings (storming), members talk of their need for trust and confidence between managers (norming) (2002:17), and outcomes are sometimes above and beyond expectations (performing).

Lacoursiere (1980:150) clarified for similar stages: orientation, dissatisfaction, resolution, and production; and found that although morale dipped during the second stage – dissatisfaction and storming – before recovering in the third stage, resolution, productivity continued to rise throughout every stage; Blanchard et al (1996:107) took Lacoursiere's findings and adapted it into the following model:

57
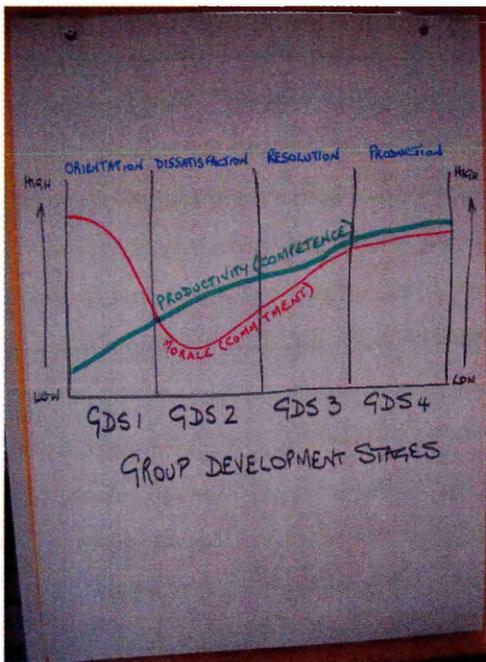
Low and high development levels
of a group: Productivity and morale

Exhibit 2.6: *Lacoursiere's (1980:151) group development stages (GDS) model adapted by Blanchard et al (1996:107)*

It is this model that has again been adapted, this time by the researcher, to include Tuckman and Jenson's words:
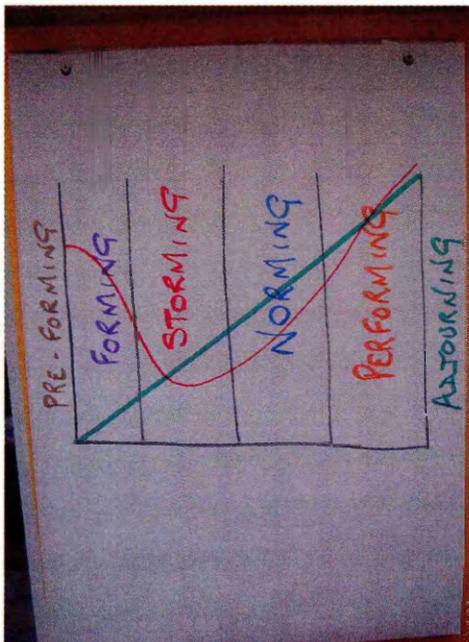
Exhibit 2.7: *Photo of the adapted model of Tuckman's stages*

Both the words 'pre-forming' (Field et al 2001:3) and 'adjourning' (Tuckman + Jenson 1977:419) were omitted when carrying out the fieldwork with the three teams, for they had already preformed before the research was started and were not being adjourned.

So the summary of progress so far in answering the research question: Is there a model that enhances understanding of the teams' progress, or lack of it?; is that we now have a four-stage group development model, where top management teams can recognize their developmental process in stages. What we now need is a means of identifying where on that model the teams are on their journey. This is addressed by the next research question.

2.5 Third research question: Is there a way of measuring that progress?

Brief overview of this section: Progress can only be measured by the team itself, for only they know their inner thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

"What managers desperately need is to stop and think, to step back and reflect thoughtfully on their experiences" (Gosling + Mintzberg 2003: 57). But how does one know what the team members' reflections are without asking them? Wilber (1996:71; 2000:71) helps to clarify this in his four-quadrant model of a theory of everything, which he has developed in a number of his books.

Interior   Exterior

Individual

Intentional
(Thinking / Feelings)   Behavioural

Upper Left   *Upper Right*
Lower Left   *Lower Right*

Cultural
(Thinking / Feelings)   Social
(System)

Communal or
Collective

Left Hand   Right Hand
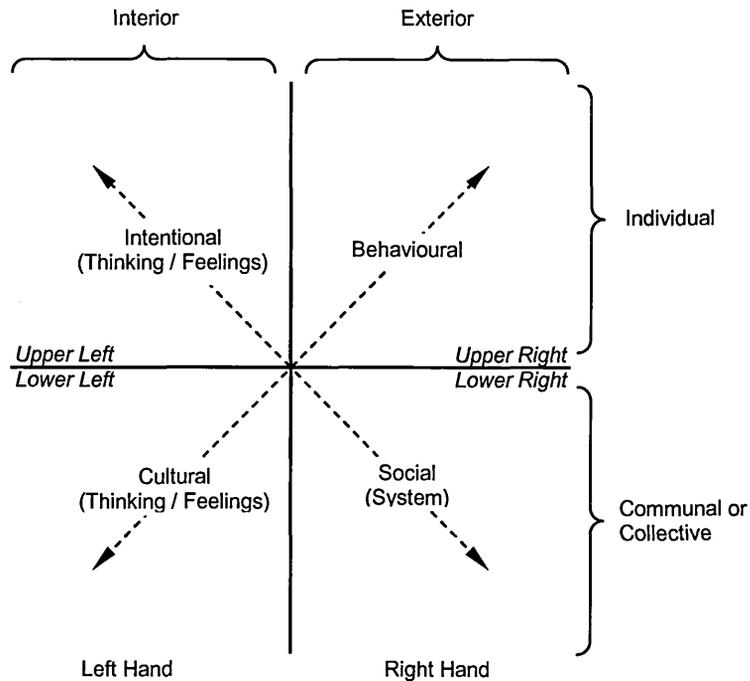
Exhibit 2.8: *Wilbur's Four Quadrants (1996:71; 2000:71), adapted by the researcher*

His right hand quadrants represent the 'doing' or outward manifestations of individuals and communities, what we can know through our senses, for example, the team's individual and collective behaviours; individual and collective thinking and feelings are to be found in the left hand side of Wilber's model. Why is this important? Because the left hand quadrants affect the right hand quadrants, and vice versa, actions and behaviours are a reflection of, and affect, people's thinking and feelings; and it is through action, for example, conversation, that one can better understand people's thinking and feelings. Bohm (2000) believed that we fragment our thinking as if things are separate rather than treating thought as a process – "thoughts, emotions, bodily reactions – are in fact an unbroken whole" (2000:xv). Memory mixes our thoughts, feelings – 'felts' as Bohm called past recorded feelings – and muscular functions, and cannot separate them "they are all there" (Bohm 2000:53); Bohm (2000:74) says that we usually take feelings and bodily reactions as one thing and thoughts as something else; they are not independent, they are all one. Flick (2000:17) says that we can gain a deeper understanding of ourselves – and what is important to us and what isn't – by being aware of how we think and feel and what we say, believe and do.

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"Happenings become experiences when they are digested, when they are reflected on, related to general patterns, and synthesized. Unless the meaning is understood, managing is mindless. Hence we take reflection to be that space suspended between experience and explanation, where the mind makes connections" (Gosling + Mintzberg 2003: 57).

So this thinking, feeling and willing (Smit 1989:7; see also Rosenberg 2001:31) was used to reflect, after each conversation, upon how the process had progressed – thinking and feelings – and what action was needed to improve the next conversation; "more than 80 percent of the executives we surveyed said that they didn't set aside enough time for analysing the root causes of problems" (Herb et al 2001:4). The table below has been adapted from the writings of a number of authors (Huczynski + Buchanan 2001: 298; Mullins 1994:178; Lacoursiere 1980: Blanchard et al 1996:107) and divides the four stages into thoughts, feelings and behaviours (Field et al 2001), as follows:

	Task (Thoughts)	Leader (Behaviours)	Team (Feelings)
Forming	Clarity Purpose Roles & Goals	Directing Style Autocratic Task focused	Dependent Anxious & cautious Excited & eager
Storming	Getting to know, Comprehend and Understand	Coaching style Directing & supporting Task & Process focused	Dependent/Independent Dissatisfied & frustrated Competing & confused
Norming	Identify & resolving Issues	Facilitating style Supporting Process focused	Independent/Interdependent Reducing frustration Growing confidence & Respect More open & sharing Developing skills

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Performing	'Living it!'	Delegating Style Participating	Interdependent Collaborative & effective Sharing leadership Confident and exciting Aligning

Before setting out a theoretical process for conversing about issues, here is a summary of what has been found during the literature survey. Effective team members support each other in becoming successful, and this takes considerable energy. Further, top management teams need to spend much of their time on areas such as strategy where there are no known answers; in fact, team members need to address their own and others' values, as well as the facts, to resolve these problems or dilemmas. Such resolution takes time in probing and understanding fellow-members' thinking processes and feelings as well as their own. Because of the nature of top management teams, with all the issues of control, short timescales and the need to address issues, 'mainstream' dialogue processes need to be adapted to be suitable. In fact rather than adopting any particular dialogue process, it was found that the principles that underpin both dialogue and other conversations researched were, by customising them, appropriate for top management teams. Further, the four-stage group development model fitted well as a means of monitoring progress of the teams, where individuals could mark where they believed the team were situated on the continuum. To this model was added a process of reflection, using thinking feelings and actions, which would give a rich area for learning within the teams as they conversed upon their own personal perceptions.

2.6 So what was the initial theoretical conversation process used with the three client organisations?

Brief overview of this section: This is the theoretical model that was used initially with each of the three teams.

From the research carried out, the following theoretical process was designed to be used with the three companies:

1. Start with a relationship-building conversation to gain a better understanding of each others' thinking processes. For example, tell a story using the ITEAL model – each member shares an 'I'ncident, then their 'T'hinking, 'E'motions, and 'A'ctions during the incident, and then what 'L'earnings the individual gained from the experience (Field 2004a:5; see also Gold 1996); "the individual feels younger as he grows into the imaginative world" (Meyer 1995:13).

2. Share an understanding of the four-stage group development model with the team so that participants are pre-framed about what they might experience at each stage of their team's development. Sit in a circle of chairs so that all team members can see each other (Bohm 2000:16; Charan 2001:78; de Maré et al 1991:15; Ellinor + Gerard 1998:62; Smith 1998:119) this circle can either include the facilitator or not, whichever the team prefers.

3. Agree to work with a set of guidelines, see Appendix 5 (Dixon 1998:117; Flick 2000:36), and place these on flipcharts in a prominent position for all to be able to see and refer to. Note that these guidelines were selected because they encapsulated the criteria identified as needed by effective top management teams in sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.6 above.

4. Unless the most urgent and important issue has already been identified, brainstorm the issues needing to be explored, and then the team choose just one to be explored during this conversation.

5. Converse around the issue remembering to use the set of guidelines provided.

6. After a set amount of time, say forty-five minutes, conclude the conversation and review the meeting in the following way: ask all participants 'what went well during the meeting?'; 'what could have gone even better?'; and 'what actions or behaviours are needed for the next meeting to go even better?'

7. At the start of the next conversation, which might still be on the same issue if not yet resolved; begin by reviewing what actions or behaviours will be needed for this next meeting to go even better, and adopt those actions or behaviours.

8. Now repeat items 4 – 7 above.

The next stage in this research was to decide upon the methodology and methods to be used before using this theoretical model with the three clients.

Chapter 3 Methodology and Methods

Finding a pragmatic approach

'"Would you tell, please, which way I ought to walk from here?" "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the (Cheshire) Cat.' (Carroll 1953:80)

3.1 Overview of the chapter

The chapter covers the methodological approach, methods and measurements used throughout this research project. Action Inquiry using the Hermeneutic Cycle is the chosen methodology; the methods include interviews, workshops, reviews, reflection, and giving and receiving feedback. Measures were taken over the time of the research project and are in part qualitative and in part quantitative in nature, and were obtained from every interview and workshop. The methodology and methods are described in detail; identifying why they were chosen, what the methodology or method is, how it has been used, and what consequences there were in using it; there are also tables in Appendix 25 showing the strengths and weaknesses of each.

3.2 Context

Between late 2000 and mid 2004, three top management teams agreed to participate with the author in this research. The three organisations – Yorkshire Water, Loop Management Services and A4e Work – each employed between six hundred and two thousand people within Great Britain. Two of the businesses were wholly-owned subsidiaries of a public company, The Kelda Group plc, and one was the major company within the Action For Employment Limited group. In all three cases the researcher was employed, with his co-facilitator Peter Field, to facilitate the development of the boards and unless otherwise stated, the researcher carried out all interviews and collected data for this research personally.

3.3 Methodology

The following pages identify the methodology and methods employed during this research, and the justification for their use (Crotty 1998: 2; Silverman 2000: 235).

As Harding (1987:9) points out "the beliefs and the behaviours of the researcher are part of the empirical evidence for (or against) the claims advanced in the results of the research...(which)...must be open to critical scrutiny no less than what is traditionally defined as relevant evidence." So first the beliefs and behaviours of the researcher: ontologically, I have a belief in the legitimacy of top management teams; see also section 1.4 above – that a leadership team is needed to guide an organisation, just as a captain is required to guide his/her ship; in this regard I believe that these teams need professional development and training for their responsibilities just as salespeople and machine operators need training and development in their jobs; I also believe that the world can be changed by the actions of individuals, teams, and organisations; for example in section 1.8.3.2 where Ryuzaburo Kaku, having survived the bombing of Hiroshima was devoting his life to enhancing ethics used in business throughout the world. Finally, on ontology relevant to this research, I believe in the innate goodness of people and their willingness and ability to improve their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of those around them; see for example in section 1.8.2.1 where David Frith gives some wise advice to a friend in need: the researcher.

Epistemologically, perhaps in part because my father was in the army, spending two years away in Malaya when I was between six and eight years old, and when he returned I was sent to boarding school at the age of eight; I found safety and solace adopting a strict positivist outlook; becoming a chartered accountant was an outward manifestation of this; see also section 1.8.1.2 for experiences at Manchester Business School that altered my thinking – a real threshold (Campbell 1993:245; and Scharmer in Isaacs 1999a:263). However, since the age of twenty-eight, management positions that I have held gave me two needs – which are to a certain extent dealt with in Chapter 1 – firstly, that I needed to understand much more about people around me, so developing myself became essential; and secondly, that there

was a need to have thought-through processes, or ways of working, to touchstone back to, thus the criteria listed below.

The following are the criteria used for the methodology and methods which gave both consistency and rigour to the research process.

1. A process, or processes, for understanding the needs of the teams and their organisations and their perceptions themselves and others.
2. An iterative process for better understanding individual team members' thinking processes, feelings, and behaviours, and those of the facilitator(s).
3. A learning process that challenges the status quo and enables changes to be made – where thought necessary – by the participants, to our thinking, feelings and behaviours.
4. Measures being regularly taken to identify changes during the process, if any have been made.
5. A system of iterative checks, whereby the researcher can feed back and share his understandings with the team; and team members can input their own perceptions of the researcher's interpretations of their journey, so that each can learn from each other (Gummesson 1991:103).
6. A built-in process of research: testing, assessing and adjusting the theoretical process posited, including periods of reflection by both the team members and the researcher.
7. A process of data collection, analysis and evaluation that will enable the research to be systematically recorded, and be able to be readily accessed and shared.

3.3.1 Ethnography and case study

The first methodology explored was Ethnography; it felt appropriate because the researcher would be working regularly with the teams, and needed to understand them and their organisations better. Watson (1995) uses this methodology and writes,

> "(Ethnographic) research is done through listening, reading, speaking and writing as well as observing. As it is through language, formal and

informal, official and unofficial, that the bulk of the business of management is conducted. It is through speaking to each other that all of us make sense of the worlds we move in, whether we are trying to make sense of things as managers, as researchers or as part of our ordinary daily lives."

Weir (1993:22) identified a gap which this research may well help to fill when he wrote "there is not enough 'simple ethnography' in management research, so we do not know (in) enough useful detail what management is, what it is like to manage". He goes on to say that "simple ethnography of course, is not simple at all but relies on an ability to use language, to observe, and to empathise, above all to listen quietly, and to reflect over a long period". This fits well with the research approach being adopted in this thesis. My concern about Ethnography was that not enough time would be spent, during this specific research project, with the top management teams and client organisations as Watson (1995) did when he wrote his book. Michael Rosen (1989:5) says that "the ethnographer lives among the 'subjects' and tries to learn the subjects' rules for organisational life, to interact with them for a frequency and duration of time 'sufficient' to understand how and why they construct their social world as it is and to explain it to others". The researcher felt that meeting the team members only once every six weeks during workshops was not 'sufficient' enough to understand their social worlds; however, he has adopted an ethnographic approach in capturing the contents of those workshops – see methods: ethnography below.

Case study research was also a possibility, for it is an exploratory research method; it is "a pilot study that can be used as a basis for formulating more precise questions or testable hypotheses" (Yin 1984:13). The fieldwork chapters will have a case study feel to them as they are set out in a 'story form' (Stake 1995:1), and the content becomes 'progressively focused' (ie the organising concepts change somewhat as the case moves along) (Stake 1995: 133). However, the story form is a convenience rather than my 'mainstream' research methodology.

3.3.2 Action Research, Action Science and Action Inquiry

The next path of investigation followed was that of Action Research and Action Science, these as you will see, eventually led on to Action Inquiry. Rapoport (1970: 499) helps in his definition of Action Research when he says, "Action Research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework". Clark (1972) adds that "Action Research must possess an aspect of direct involvement in organisational change, and simultaneously Action Research must provide an increase in knowledge". These definitions are helpful but still miss the importance of bringing together both the 'doing' – changing what is going on within the business, if and when thought necessary – with the academic research rigour and knowledge enhancement of all of the parties involved. Warmington helps when he writes:

> "The term Action Research was not used by people from Tavistock Institute until at least the late '60s, but nevertheless, almost all their work has the characteristics of being problem-centred, based on a long term involvement with clients and centred on the needs of those clients, involved with following through and monitoring changes in the organisations in which they were working." (1980:24)

Argyris et al (1985:x) pick this point up and introduce the term Action Science as their perspective on this subject; for they felt, as Gummesson (1991:102) puts it: "First, projects that have been labelled 'action research' have often not properly fulfilled the requirements of scientific research but have been closer to consultancy or journalism. Second, action researchers often limit themselves to the use of traditional methodology that stems from the positivist paradigm." Lewin, whom Argyris et al (1985: 7) and Warmington (1980: 23) consider to have been an action scientist, sought to integrate science and practice (scholar-practitioners); his early concepts of action research, an activity that involves studying social systems by changing them, were "the seeds of action science" (Argyris et al 1985: 8) - Lewin was expounding these theories back in the 1930s to 1950s. Argyris et al (1985: xii) go on to say, "In

action science we agree that it is important to understand the world if we are to change it. But we also believe, as Kurt Lewin said, that the opposite is true: one of the best ways to understand the world is to try to change it"; this links well with the research process undertaken. More recently McKernan (2000: 5) captures the essence of Lewin's five points, in the following definition:

> "Action research is the reflective process whereby in a given problem area, where one wishes to improve practice or personal understanding, inquiry is carried out by the practitioner – first, to clearly define the problem; secondly, to specify a plan of action – including the testing of hypotheses by application of action to the problem. Evaluation is then undertaken to monitor and establish the effectiveness of the action taken. Finally, participants reflect upon, explain developments, and communicate these results to the community of action researchers. Action research is systematic self-reflective scientific inquiry by practitioners to improve practice." (Argyris et al 1985: 8)

The great advantage of action science, as Gummesson points out is that "it provides the researcher with substantially improved access" (1991:108); certainly this was not a problem during this research project. Gummesson (1991:106) quotes Herman Schmid (1982) who says that "action science claims to unite research practice with the actions of practitioners and that this occurs without either form or practice predominating over the other. Hence the action scientist professes a loyalty to both knowledge and to the objectives of the practitioner". He goes on to say that this does not usually happen in practice and one tends to predominate over the other. Sandberg (1982: 11+12) goes so far as to substitute Action Science with Praxis Research to distinguish when the roles of researcher and consultant are separated, "where the researcher reflects and the change agent has dialogue and takes action with the client. Dialogue and action involve the use of previously acquired scientific knowledge as well as experience gained from dialogue and action in an ongoing research process" (1982:84); this may well be replaying Argyris et al's point above (1985:x).

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There are some concerns expressed around the use of the Action Research label, for example, research that is carried out in exchange for money – management consultancy, both by academics and consultants, and research work for research grants – so the Action Research label has often been used as a way of excusing sloppy research, focused on giving value for money rather than attaining 'high-quality research outcomes'. Eden + Huxham (1996) set out to address this issue by identifying twelve contentions 'which are intended to suggest some of the standards to which action research might aspire... to inform the management of organizations' (Eden + Huxham 1996:76). The first six are concerned with outcomes and the second six with processes which, they argue, justify an action research project as quality research. As can be seen below, the researcher has looked into each of these, although as Eden + Huxham (1996:84) say 'it is probably an unachievable challenge' to cover them all, and Lewin (Sandford 1981; Eden 1994) argued that 'it will usually be difficult – even logically impossible – to design experimental situations in which we could be clear about confirmation or disconfirmation' (of action research). Argyris + Schon (1991:85) state that there is 'a fundamental choice that hinges on a dilemma of rigour and relevance'. It is the researcher's belief that the contentions of Eden + Huxham (1996:84) would cover these concerns, in the context of top management teams, but only if two more process contentions were added: these are numbers thirteen and fourteen below and cover the need for what Aguinis (1993) calls 'participatory action research', and although Eden + Huxham (1996:78) cover this point in their writings it is not covered explicitly in these contentions.

	Characteristics of Action Research (Eden + Huxham 1996:84)	Used in this research
1.	Action research must have implications beyond those required	As can be seen from the findings and conclusions chapters, as well as

	for action or generation of knowledge in the domain of the project. It must be possible to envisage talking about the theories developed in relation to other situations. Thus it must be clear that the results could inform other contexts, at least in the sense of suggesting areas for consideration.	from the fieldwork, the developing theories were used in each subsequent top management team researched. Work has also been done with another team, and work is recommended to develop these theories further (See chapter 6.6).
2.	As well as being usable in everyday life, action research demands an explicit concern with theory. This theory will be formed from the characterisation or conceptualisation of the particular experience in ways which are intended to be meaningful to others.	The findings and conclusions chapters have been written to address this contention; so although theoretical, each area identified is set down in a way which is intended to be meaningful, and preferably useful, to the readers.
3.	If the generality drawn out of action research is to be expressed through the design of tools, techniques, models and method then this, alone, is not enough – the basis of their design must be explicit and shown to be related to the theory.	The model used for action research, exhibit 3.4, is explicit and relates directly to the theory of action research, action inquiry, the Hermeneutic cycle, and the 4MAT system that are all set out in this chapter.
4.	Action research will generate emergent theory, in which the theory develops from the synthesis of that which emerges from the data and that which emerges from	An example of where this standard is apparent in the research is that as the teams develop, so they take ownership of their processes and principles and regularly enhance

	the use in practice of the body of theory which informed the intervention and research intent.	their content. The original theories came from the work of both Deborah Flick (2000:36) and Doris Adams (Dixon 1998:117); see chapter 2.3.
5.	Theory building, as a result of action research, will be incremental, moving from the particular to the general in small steps.	The example given to the previous standard fits well here too.
6.	What is important for action research is not a (false) dichotomy between prescription and description, but a recognition that description will be prescription (even if implicitly so). Thus the presenters of action research should be clear about what they expect the consumer to take from it and present with a form and style appropriate to this aim.	This contention is addressed in the research questions and also in the way that the findings and conclusions have been set out, so that they may be understood and used where appropriate.
7.	A high degree of method and orderliness is required in reflecting about, and holding on to, the emerging research content of each episode of involvement in the organisation.	This has been done by utilising the action inquiry model using the Hermeneutic cycle incorporating the 4MAT system throughout the research, and also the review model of each dialogue; see item seven of the dialogue process set out in findings chapter 5.4.1.
8.	For action research, the process of exploration (rather than collection) of the data, in the detecting of	The dialogue process was seen to be replicable within both Loop and A4e Work teams. A second

	emergent theories, must be either, replicable, or demonstrable through argument or analysis.	example was that the four stage group development model processes were also replicable for all three companies.
9.	Adhering to the eight contentions above is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the validity of action research.	Noted.
10.	In order to justify the use of action research rather than other approaches, the reflection and data collection process – and hence the emergent theories – should be focused on the aspects that cannot be captured easily by other approaches. This, in turn, suggests that having the knowledge about, and skills to apply, method and analysis procedures for collecting and exploring rich data is essential.	Backing up the Action Inquiry model using the Hermeneutic cycle (incorporating the 4MAT) are other approaches which have focused on areas not captured easily by other approaches, for example: reflection and data collection through interviews, and feedback and comments before, during, and after workshops.
11.	In action research the opportunities for triangulation that do not offer themselves with other methods should be exploited fully and reported, but used as a dialectical device which powerfully facilitates the incremental development of theory.	This process has been used throughout the research as team members have participated fully in the research in a number of triangulating methods, see chapter 3.4, for example, sharing their thoughts and ideas on their 'case studies' submitted to them by the researcher.
12.	The history and context for the	This can be seen to be used in both

	intervention must be taken as critical to the interpretation of the likely range of validity and applicability of the results.	the findings and conclusions chapters as each is referenced back in detail to the team case studies.
13.	Top management team members need to be fellow researchers on the journey, incorporating and testing their learnings in their ongoing work.	Regular reviews after each dialogue session gave the team continuing opportunities to input, reflect, learn and change practices with the intent of improving performance.
14.	The researcher needs to share his account of the journey with fellow-researchers, so that they can review and comment, so that the researcher gains their perspectives upon his own reflections.	This was done with all fellow-researchers in each top management team at least twice during the duration of the research.

3.3.3 Why Action Research rather than consultancy or 'basic' research?

Gill's comparison of action research, consultancy and 'basic research' (1986: 103) clarifies a point which has excluded both consultancy and 'basic research' from this research's methodologies. In the cases of both consultancy and 'basic research' he suggests that the client becomes dependent upon the 'outsider' whereas in the case of action research the client becomes self-supporting. It was certainly not intended that the clients become dependent upon the facilitators; in fact, at the start of this project the researcher thought that twelve to eighteen months engagement felt appropriate. This was an arbitrary and ill-founded guess (Deming 1986:66) for only one of the three clients suspended its relationship with the researcher and his co-facilitator within two years. So one of the objectives of the facilitators was for the clients to become increasingly self-supporting and thus not require their ongoing assistance, though, in practice, the results of this intent were mixed.

3.3.4 Periods of deep reflection

Still there is something missing; where is the emphasis upon participation with the team members? Where is a mention of them becoming, as they did, co-researchers? Reason (1994:49) begins to open up this dimension: Action Science focuses on the way practitioners construe their behaviour, their implicit cognitive models, and their actual behaviour; Reason goes on to say, "Action Inquiry, while addressing these, in addition addresses outcomes (measured empirically), and the quality of one's own attention (monitored by meditative exercises as one acts). Further, Action Inquiry addresses the question of how to transform organisations and communities into collaborative, self-reflective communities of enquiry". Fisher et al (2000:iii) add that "it is a total approach to being and doing for those who care to make it so!...there is no end to the journey. It is endless because there is always scope for improving and refining one's own way of operating and it is unending because to inquire, 'what did I do, how did I do it, why did I do it and (so) what impact did I have?' is likely to lead to thinking and acting differently in the future. Action Inquiry has to happen from the inside out... (it needs) moment-to-moment awareness and experimental actions in the midst of ongoing situations" (Fisher et al 2000: 7).

Building upon the views of both Reason (1994) and Fisher et al (2000):

1. The iterative inquiry journey in Fisher et al (2000:20) ensures that the research process is 'never-ending'; this also links well with McCarthy's 4MAT system (1987 + 2000) which was used as part of this research project's 'touchstone' – see Exhibit 3.1.
2. Fisher et al (2000: v) state that it takes at least five years to develop such an iterative learning approach within an organisation; so it is not surprising that none of the organisations has adopted Action Inquiry internally during the period of this project, as far as the researcher could ascertain.
3. Fisher et al (2000:23) put forward a way of improving the quality and effectiveness of our use of language, (for) "talk is the essence of action".

Their four parts of speech are called framing, advocating, illustrating and inquiring; what the researcher is not in agreement with is the sequence of this language: First, one 'frames' the purpose, assumptions, etc. Second, one 'advocates' one's own perceptions, feelings, and perhaps proposals for action in the vaguest of terms. Then, one 'illustrates' with an example and, finally, one 'inquires' by asking the other person their opinion. Fisher et al (2000:25) state an inquiry is much less likely to be effective if it is not preceded by framing, advocating and illustrating. I do not agree, for before advocating, it is important to 'seek first to understand before being understood' (Covey 1990:235), otherwise one is closing down the other person's options, and may well be imposing one's own will upon those of others.

Notwithstanding this difference of opinion, the researcher feels confident of Action Inquiry's robustness and utility; it is also part of Action Research and Action Science, and through its use it has been found to have value in the context of this research project.

3.3.5 So how does Action Inquiry work in practice?

Set out below is Exhibit 3.2, listing comparative iterative research methodologies; the researcher's preferred choice is Bernice McCarthy's 4MAT system (McCarthy 1987 + 2000), based upon the work of David Kolb's Learning Style Inventory (Kolb et al 1995: 65), for it captures four key Action Inquiry questions (Fisher et al 2000: iv; McCarthy 1987 + 2000): Diverger - Why?; Assimilator - What?; Converger - How?; and Accumulator - What If or So What? These link with the 'Four Territories of Experience' (Fisher et al 2000: 18) and with the four key areas of Action Inquiry (Reason 1994: 50), namely:
Purpose: why am I doing this?; Strategy: what do I need to do?; Behaviour: how do I need to behave?; and Outside world: so what will the effects be?

So using the Hermeneutic Learning Spiral – see under section 3.3.6 and Exhibit 3.4 below – these same four questions are addressed; for with each

revolution of the cycle (Gummesson 1991:62) both pre-understanding and understanding is gained, this understanding being dependent upon the conscious and unconscious intentions of the researcher and participants (Gummesson 1991:61):
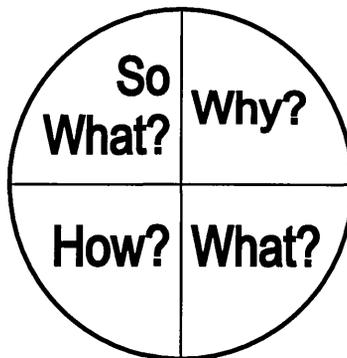
Exhibit 3.1: *Model adapted by Woodsmall (1999:15) from McCarthy (1987)*

What is important to emphasise is that this is not just a framework within which to participate, take action, measure, analyse and reflect, and keep enhancing the project's theoretical process, for it is also a framework that has clarity and gives clear touchstones to keep checking back to, and is also useful to touchstone against Wilber's four quadrants (1996: 86), see also Exhibit 2.8 above; to ensure holistic questions concerning individual and collective, internal and external perspectives are taken into account; this was done during workshop review sessions.

Exhibit 3.2: *Table of comparative iterative research methodologies (1)*

Shewhart Cycle (Shewhart 1939)	Action Science originally Lewin (Argyris et al 1985)	Action Science in Management (Gummesson 1991:102)	Curriculum Action Research (McKernan 2000)	Action Research (Gill 1986:103)	Action Learning (Pedler et al – taken from Darwin 1999)
Plan	Identifying problem. Planning.	Understanding + planning (5). Single out one or a few factors.	Identifying problem. Specify plan of action.	Client or researcher presents problem + mutually agrees goals.	Experience – Observing and reflecting on the consequences of action. Understanding – Forming understanding of situation. Planning actions to influence the situation.
Do	Acting.	Study these in detail...focus on totality of the problem (3).	Testing of hypotheses by application of action to problem.	Joint diagnosis by client and researcher.	Action – Acting or trying out the plan.
Study	Evaluating.	Feedback.	Evaluation.	Feedback. Dissonance.	Understanding.

Adjust	Continuous adjustment to new information (4). Analysis leads to conclusions that in turn lead to action (4).	Reflect, explain + communicate.	Joint action planning.	Evaluation. New problems.	Reforming understanding of situation as a result of experience.

Exhibit 3.3: *Table of comparative iterative research methodologies (2)*

Deming cycle (Deming 1986:88)	*Action Enquiry (Reason 1994:50)*	*Action Inquiry (Fisher et al 2000:18)*	*Action Inquiry (Fisher et al 2000:20)*	*The 4MAT System (McCarthy 1987)*	*Tasks of the board of directors (Pierce 2001:3)*
Plan	Purpose	Intentionality: purpose, aims, intuitions, attention, vision.	Visioning	Why?	Foresight – Determining purpose, vision + values.

Do	Strategy	Planning: tactics, strategies, schemes, ploys, game-plans.	Strategizing	What?	Setting strategy + structure.
Study	Behaviour	Action: behaviour, skills, patterns of activity, deeds, performance.	Performing	How?	Oversight – Delegating to management.
Adjust	Outside World	Outcomes: results, events, occurrences, observed behavioural consequences, environmental effects, assessments.	Assessing	So what?	Exercising accountability to shareholders + responsibility to other interested parties.

3.3.6 Developing the theoretical research model

Being primarily 'visual' (O'Connor 2001:49) the researcher found it useful to have a picture of the process to refer to during this journey of discovery showing action inquiry linking with the Hermeneutic Cycle.
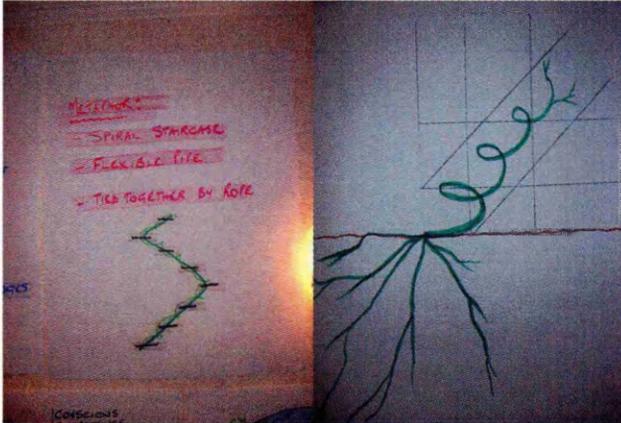
This metaphor of a spiral staircase was initially used to represent the Hermeneutic Cycle incorporating the 4MAT system, when the researcher presented at the world-first National Dialogue and Deliberation Conference in Washington in 2002. This picture was enhanced by replacing it with a vine, at the suggestion of a participant, ever-spiralling upwards from the earth; and the more nourishment the vine is given (pre-learnings and learnings) the stronger the roots of the vine (the wisdom of the organisation) becomes, as does its body, its leaves, flowers and fruits. Exhibit 3.4, representing a full picture of the methodology, followed and is an expansion of the Hermeneutic Cycle (Gummesson 1991:62). In fact there are two spirals: one spiral for the team and one for the researcher. Both spirals start with pre-understanding (Gummesson 1991:58), for example, previous experience, pre-reading, beliefs, values, basic assumptions (Schein 1989:14), mechanisms (Blaikie 1993:59) and patterns of events (Bhaskar 1975:56). The spirals meet during team workshops and then part again, each party returning to their own environment where they gain new understandings (Gummesson 1991: 61), for example, through further experiences, reading, reflection, and meditation. "The reader grasps each part through an appreciation of the whole; there is thus a constant process of moving from part to whole and back again, whereby an enriched understanding of the whole illuminates each part and vice versa." (Giddens 1979:174)

Exhibit 3.4: *Action Inquiry using the Hermeneutic Cycle (incorporating the 4MAT system)*

Scholar - Practitioner   **Team Workshops**   **Team in Organisation**

| Experience through |

| Understanding |

Reflection

| Feedback |

| Understanding |

| Understanding |

Reflection

| Feedback |

| Experience through |

| Understanding |

SO WHAT? | WHY?

HOW? | WHAT?
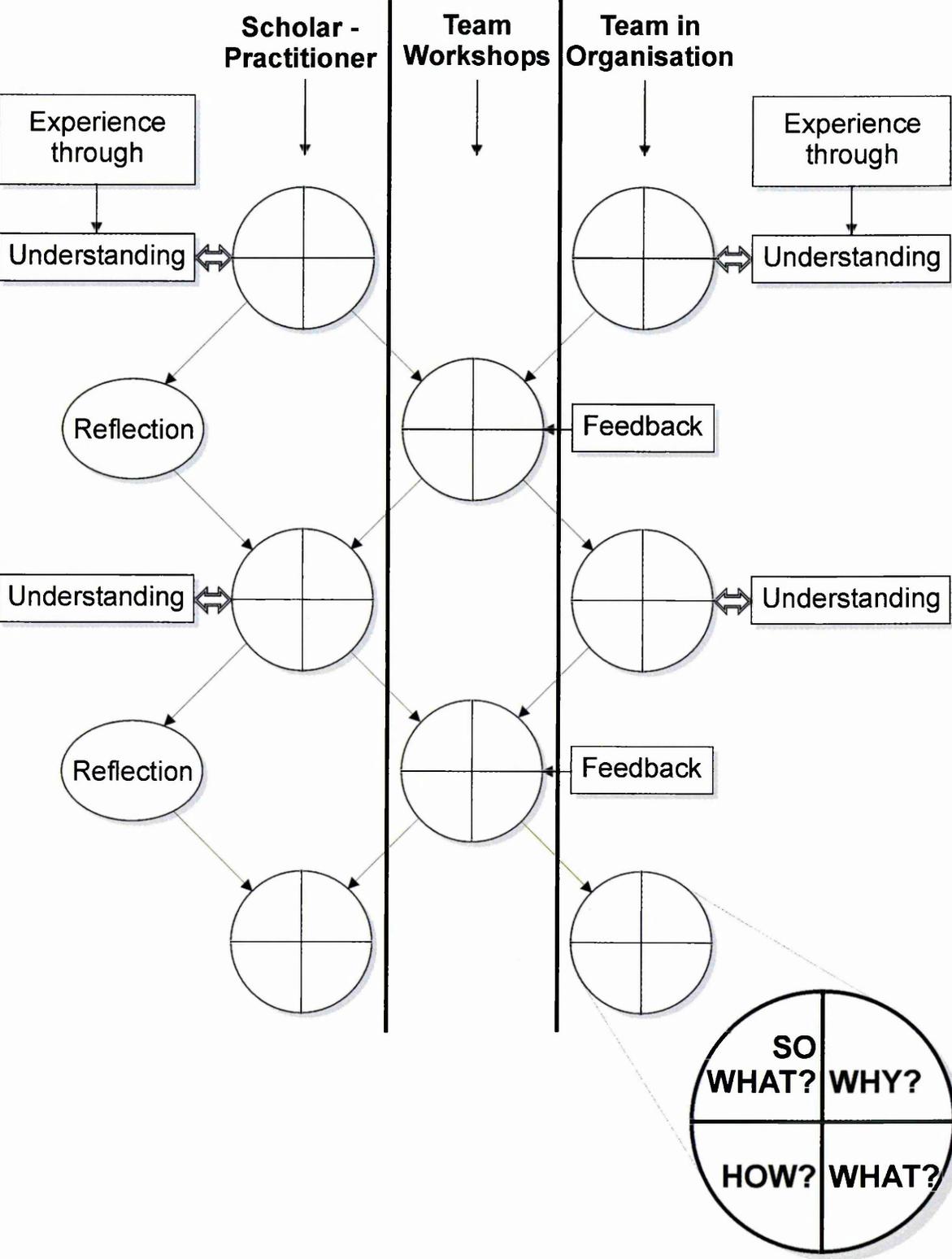
There were two further meta-positions that were taken by the researcher during this process: First, the researcher reflected upon each workshop and interview to gain learnings after their completion; and second, the researcher needed to take more of a bird's-eye view to look at all of the organisations' activities in which he had been engaged and reflect upon them to identify generic learnings. There are both advantages and disadvantages to the research approach in this thesis, as indicated below.

Strengths and weaknesses of methodology chosen

Strengths	Weaknesses
Clear robust process.	Lots of qualitative but no quantitative data. (Note: This has been addressed by using outside bodies, for example, RapidScore and City Analysts' reports.)
Easy to follow.	A great deal of data to be captured. (Note: To help compensate for this weakness, a number of processes of data capture have been used – see Methods below.)
Answers the research questions.	Themes will evolve during the process, thus may not be identified in advance of the fieldwork. (Note: These have been captured in the conclusions chapter.)
Iterative learning cycle.	Sample size is small – only three clients.
'Learners' cycles are intertwined.	Limited number of feedback sources.
Participative learning and action for both the top management team members, co-facilitator and the researcher.	Shortage of time to interview all team members, managers and staff personally.
Early involvement by the team,	Interviewees' comments interpreted

researcher and senior managers.	by interviewer, and recordings not used. (Note: Where the interviewer was concerned about the meaning of comments, he/she would discuss with the interviewees what they had said to them.)
Non-threatening interviews, fed back non-attributably.	Interviewers' written notes can miss words, emphases, subtle meanings, and body language. (Note: To limit this weakness, comments made were fed back to clarify and understand meanings, both at interviews and at workshops).
Bringing out the issues upon which to focus.	Summaries were made through the eyes of the interviewers. (Note: To limit this weakness, comments made were fed back to clarify and understand meanings, both at interviews and at workshops).
Constant reviews used to enhance the process.	The reviews consisted of capturing one or two words from each team member; there would be so much more that each probably had to share had they been interviewed individually. (Dealt with in conclusions chapter, and commented upon in Loop feedback).
Facilitators and team members get to know each other.	Not enough time to carry out ongoing interviews throughout the process. (Note: this changed in late 2003 when every A4e Work team member received ongoing one-to-one coaching.

Although summaries are through the eyes of the interviewers, the team have the opportunity to comment upon the feedback when given at the workshop.	It has been time-consuming collecting, analysing, evaluating and interpreting data collected; and little time has been spent discussing the findings with team members. (Note: these findings were sent to every team member for feedback).

So Action Inquiry using the Hermeneutic Cycle is the chosen methodology for this research. What is needed now is to show the methods that will be used, but first the Action Inquiry Process that has been followed throughout the research period is described.

The Action Inquiry Process adopted was as follows: at our first meetings with the CEOs, and then later with all of the top management teams, we agreed to take time away from the businesses together on a regular basis, and preferably for two-day periods. In order to understand the teams' needs we also obtained agreement from the CEOs to interview all members of the top management teams in advance of our first workshops. So here is the process that we settled upon for all three companies:

1. The researcher and co-facilitator met with the CEO – in two cases he was accompanied by colleagues – and agreed an outline timetable for the year ahead and drafted a win/win agreement.
2. Between them, the researcher and co-facilitator then interviewed each member of the top management team.
3. Colleagues of the researcher and co-facilitator then interviewed managers and other employees within the organisations, to gain their perspectives on the performance of both the companies and top management teams. Detailed interview summaries were filed in NVivo – a qualitative research software package (Fraser 2000:v; Richards 2000:preface) described in section 3.8 – and used for analysis.
4. The researcher and co-facilitator then facilitated an initial workshop with all of the top management team members present to feed back interview

findings, gain buy-in to the process to be followed and its timetable; and to craft a final win/win agreement from the one already drafted with the CEO. At this workshop it was agreed that the facilitators' 'client' would be the whole of the top management team and not just the CEO.

5. The intent was then to facilitate one- or two-day workshops every four to six weeks. These workshops consisted of a combination of personal and team development and, on average, at least half of each day was used discussing key issues using a process of conversation.

    In each iteration:

    Before the workshops: the researcher/facilitator agreed the programme with his co-facilitator, and then wrote an outline plan of the forthcoming event. Although the planning was specific and detailed, what actually took place in the workshops was often very different from this, depending upon the perceived needs of the team 'in the moment' throughout the one to two days. During the workshops: the researcher jointly facilitated, and personally recorded the processes being used; every three to four workshops, the researcher then interviewed the CEO for his (the CEOs were male in every case) perspective upon the journey being undertaken. Also, latterly with A4e Work, each member of the team was individually coached and mentored by both the researcher and co-facilitator during the workshops. After the workshops: the researcher recorded all the visual aids – by photographing and filing them – and questionnaires used; reflected upon what had taken place; and wrote up the process. This was sent, at intervals of a few months, to all top management team members for them to comment upon, verify, and/or make suggestions upon possible changes.

6. The researcher then analysed, evaluated and summarised data collected, and elicited learnings from both these workshops and the interviews undertaken.

7. Where applicable the researcher then identified generic learnings that emerged from the journey.

3.4 Methods

Each of the methods used is listed below and then analysed through the Action Inquiry 4MAT system: the process adopted is to take each method and clarify, in narrative form: why it was being used; what the method was: the concept, principle, process and procedure (adapted by Woodsmall (Woodsmall et al 1999:15) from Merrill (1983) and can be seen in Field et al (2004c)); how the method was used; and so what effect it might have. This is followed by an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of using the method in this context in Appendix 25. First, the matrix below shows both the processes used and an overview of the methods adopted during each process; each overview section then looks at the methods used.

Processes	Methods						
	1 Interviews	2 Ethnography	3 Qualitative Methods	4 Use of Secondary Data	5 Assembling and Retrieving Data	6 Data Analysis	7 Reflecting and Giving Feedback
Interviewing	Y	-	Y	Y	-	-	Y
Workshops	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
RapidScore	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Reflection	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Interviews

Initial interviews of the top management team members were carried out to understand better the needs of the individuals, the teams and their organisations. Interviews of other members of the company were undertaken to obtain feedback upon their perceptions of the performance of the top management team and their organisation during this development process. The purpose of CEO interviews was to gain their thoughts and feelings upon the value of the journey for them (Holstein + Gubrium 1997: 121). The intent was to obtain a greater understanding of the needs and aspirations of CEOs, top management team members and, in two of the three clients' cases, others within the businesses. The principle was that by interviewing of top management team members, not only were the needs of both individuals and teams identified, but also relationships were started between team members

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and facilitators that may have later assisted in the ongoing development process: 'there were layers in the relationship' (Traylen 1994: 59). All interviews gained more information about the organisations, their cultures and progress, or lack of progress, of the development processes adopted by the teams.

The process followed was to use a questionnaire of forty two questions which was developed by my co-facilitator, Peter Field, over a period of five years: 'a strong advance plan' (Stake 1995: 64). He and a number of associates – including the researcher – had used it to carry out interviews, analyse and consolidate the information, and feed back to nominated directors, managers, and staff in: Boots The Chemists; Welsh Water; Sainsbury's; and Angel Train Contracts (see Appendix 2 for the questionnaire). The data gained from the questionnaire was then discussed, reflecting upon its validity and value, and decisions were then taken upon what steps to take next in the light of this knowledge. 'Steps in administering a questionnaire' was also referred to (McNiff et al 1996: 100) as was information on conducting interviews (McNiff et al 1996: 101; Denscombe 2000: 126; Bailey et al 1996: 68; Watkins + Mohr 2001: 104).

The procedure followed these steps:
1. Every person – top management team members, managers and staff – was interviewed (Denscombe 2000:114) for between one and a half, and two hours each (Gill + Johnson 1997:100). This gave the interviewees' time, not only to answer the structured questions, (Gummesson 1991:108; McNiff et al 1996:19+101) but also to cover other areas that they felt were important. The interviewers could probe more deeply, in a semi-structured form for both facts and opinions (Yin 1994: 84; McLeod 1994: 89 taken from Silverman 2000:94+122; Gummesson 1991:109-111; Miller + Glassner 1997:105 taken from Silverman 2000:123; Crotty 1998:83; McNiff et al 1996:101; Hartley 1994:210; McKernan 2000:129; Gill + Johnson 1997:101).
2. The following 'rules of engagement' were specified at the beginning of each interview: Everything said will be kept confidential between yourself

and the interviewing team (Mason 1996: 57); and subject to your agreement – and all interviewees agreed – comments will be fed back to the top management team's initial workshop, non-attributably.

3. Records have been kept, by the interviewers, of all interviews; their consolidations have been filed with the researcher; feedback to team members, and subsequent comments upon the interviews by team members, where made, are all filed with the researcher.

4. Throughout this time, the interviewers kept in close touch to ensure a consistency of approach: the researcher also re-read the interview notes to gain insights and to confer between the interviewers any matter believed to be worthy of discussion (Gill + Johnson 1997: 111).

How was all this completed? After the CEO had agreed that interviews should be carried out, appointments were arranged with all interviewees; the interviews were written up during the sessions, with areas needing clarification being discussed during this time. "Perhaps the most important thing is to insist on ample time and space immediately following the interview to prepare the facsimile and interpretive commentary" (Stake 1995: 66), so that is why only four interviews a day were usually arranged upon each visit to the client. During the first year of research, these notes were consolidated and presented back to the top management teams at their initial workshops via flipcharts which were then photographed and filed for future reference; subsequently, each interview was also individually typed into Microsoft Word and then transferred into NVivo for further analysis

So what effect did these interviews have? The interviews produced the data from which the interviewees were able to understand better the issues being faced by themselves, the top management team and the organisation. The teams then decided upon their priorities, using the summarised versions of the interviews, as seen through the eyes of the researcher and his colleagues, and agreed by them at their initial workshop.

Ethnography

Photographs were taken from the beginning of the year 2002, of flipcharts produced during each workshop by team members and by the facilitators. They were taken of all the flipcharts: team members' personal records, team exercises, team reviews of both conversations and of the whole workshops, and of learnings shared by the facilitators; photographs were also taken of the top management team members themselves. The concept was that this would act as an effective way of keeping records on computer of work done throughout the workshops; the principle was that pictures of work done were easier for the teams to relate to than typed records of events, and photographing them was a fast and effective method of data capture. The process was that after each workshop flipcharts were photographed, sent to all the team, and at the next workshop used to review and learn from the process.

The procedure followed was:
1. Photograph all flipcharts immediately upon completing the workshops.
2. Transfer the photos onto the computer and file under the clients' workshop file.
3. Transfer the photos onto a PowerPoint presentation and then send on disk to the client for distribution to all team members.
4. When the workshop had been written up and transferred into NVivo, create a hyperlink to the photos.
5. Photos were also taken: of two the teams; of Visual Concept magnetic boards and shapes; and of exercises being carried out by team members.

How was all of this carried out? So that the workshop was not interrupted, photos of flipcharts were taken after team members had left; if a member remained behind, a disk was handed over containing all the photos to take back to the organisation, but usually these were sent by post within a couple of days, as emailing with so many attached photos proved impractical. The researcher usually wrote up the workshop process immediately so this was captured and sent out on the disk too.

So what effect did this have? Team members had the opportunity to revisit and reflect upon the workshop; sometimes there would also be homework so individuals could refer to those flipcharts too. The pictures were readily recognisable so starting the next workshop with the photographs assisted in reviewing and linking back to the previous work covered.

Qualitative Methods

"It (is) important to have measures…But they should not become anything more than indicators" (Watson 1995: 139). These have been built up, in conjunction with the clients, to give an awareness of their changing perceptions along the journey; subsequently, further questionnaires were designed and/or added, by the researcher in discussion with the teams, to enhance our awareness further. The concept has been to gain the perceptions of team members, and those around them, of performance in specific areas of the business chosen by and/or agreed upon by the teams. The principle measures plotted over time have given a picture of the progress, or lack of it, of the teams and their organisations. The process followed has been that at every meeting, workshop and interview, individuals have been requested to complete a numerical questionnaire which was then added to the database held on that client. The information was initially fed back on flipcharts to gain comments from the teams; this was superseded by databases held on computer and converted into graphs, for example, see Exhibits 4.4 to 4.6.

There have been a number of procedures used:

1. Top management team members: the researcher and co-facilitator, Peter Field, collected the top team members' measures during their interviews and during workshops. Managers and staff: Colin McGarrigle and Liz Harrison, both independent consultants retained for this task by the researcher and co-facilitator, interviewed and collected measures from almost one hundred managers and staff. RapidScore: Dean Fathers, Managing Director of idm, carried out the measuring process twice, with Yorkshire Water, both times with eight managers spending two days working on the EFQM Business Excellence Model RapidScore process.

2. Initially all measures were collected and retained in lever arch files; initially, the consolidated results were fed back immediately to the top team members for their reflections. Later in the process, a database was designed by Russell Harrison an IT specialist engaged by the researcher, from the specifications provided by the researcher.

3. With the use of these measures the company results were compared and contrasted and the findings are discussed later in this thesis – at the end of each client story in Chapter 4.

Business Measures used

Definition of measurements: "The techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis" (Crotty 1998:3).

Fifteen questions evolved from an initial six: in November 2000, at the initial meeting with the CEO of Yorkshire Water, he requested that three questions should be asked, during the interviews and at each workshop, to monitor the progress of his team: How do you rate our organisation's overall performance? How do you rate our organisation's performance in the area of Customer Service? How do you rate our organisation's performance in the area of Employee Relationships? To this the researcher and co-facilitator asked, and the CEO agreed, that two further questions be added to give more of a focus on the team: How do you rate your own individual performance? And, how do you rate your team's performance? At the start of the interviewing process, the managers – not members of the top team itself - asked that a further key question should be highlighted, so this was also added: How do you rate our organisation's performance in the area of Internal Communication? This six-item questionnaire was used for over two years, from late 2000 to the end of 2002, during the time that the researcher worked regularly with Yorkshire Water.

A4e Work used this same questionnaire from May 2001 until April 2002; the researcher then introduced the sixteen-item 'Role of the Board' questionnaire (see Appendix 3). It was subsequently found that this did not fulfil the need

for ongoing data about the teams, as it was too wide-ranging, so the original six-part questionnaire was re-introduced in November 2002, and extended by the further nine numerical questions which were being asked during all of the interviews (see questions 26 to 40 in Appendix 2). Loop used this fifteen-part questionnaire throughout the ten months of research with them. All three top teams also identified what behaviours were necessary for them to have to be seen as role-models; the Yorkshire Water team also, in confidence, marked themselves and their colleagues in the team against these behaviours, the marks were then given to the researcher who emailed the results to the team members individually. This process continued for eleven months before being discontinued through lack of added value being gained by the team as the numbers stabilised.

The effect has been that consistent questionnaires have been used so comparisons over time have been possible during the data analysis stages.

EFQM RapidScore

These are arm's-length assessments using a recognised international model, The Business Excellence Model, to help "organisation(s)… understand present strengths and…weaknesses, or areas for improvement" (EFQM 2000:4). Dean Fathers, Managing Director of idm, was engaged by the researcher and co-facilitator to carry out two two-day assessments with eight managers of Yorkshire Water to assess and measure the organisation's strengths and areas for improvement. The results were then presented back to the top management team; subsequently, a qualified independent assessor from idm visited Yorkshire Water and carried out an 'in-depth' investigation to verify the results. On both occasions, each of the eight managers involved was sent a questionnaire produced by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) to complete and return to idm, who consolidated the information. The managers then met with Dean Fathers and the researcher in early 2001, and Dean repeated the exercise in early 2003. Each time, for two full days, the managers addressed the consolidated results, under nine criteria headings, to come to a consensus on the organisation's strengths and areas

for improvement, and on scorings for each question. The outcome was a substantial report given to all top team members and the eight participating managers, which was discussed by the top management team in depth, and actions agreed after both assessments. The first presentation was by the researcher and his co-facilitator, the second was by Grahame Clark, who also carried out an in-depth check upon the accuracy of the report as a qualified independent assessor of the EFQM Business Excellence Model.

This is a measuring process that is well-known and is recognised as a 'quality measure'; it is the European equivalent to the Deming Award in Japan, and the Baldrige Award in the USA. The company now has the opportunity of using it for at least three purposes: one, to continue to work on areas for improvement; two, to monitor ongoing progress; three, to work with similar-standard organisations to share best practice. As a research tool this enables an arms-length assessment to be carried out and this can be compared and contrasted with the researcher's own findings.

The Use of Secondary Data

Although most of the research carried out and information gained was from within the clients' organisations and 'filtered' through the researcher's own values and beliefs; articles were collected of others' writings discovered during the research process; they were publicly available articles from newspapers, and the Government Utility watchdog.   The concept was that this gave more data on the clients' businesses, from others people's perspectives; the principle was that it gave another perspective on the organisations' journey during the research period and the process has been that any articles found when reading either local or national papers, or sent to me by either the company or colleagues, were used for research purposes. Local and national papers were read for any information on the organisations; also when an award was won or a report produced, sometimes it was forwarded on to the researcher by someone within the company.

These articles sometimes give different perspectives on the organisations, so comparing and contrasting with data gained from within the companies has occasionally proved useful; for example, although the Loop top management team was not coming together as a cohesive team, the awards being won by the organisation reflected a well run company.

3.5 Assembling and Retrieving Data

With so large a quantity of research data, a system of filing and retrieval was essential to avoid confusion and loss of information; thus, what was set up was a structured filing system which was infinitely expandable, where data could be filed, stored and retrieved in a multiplicity of differing ways depending upon the needs of clients and the researcher, at a moment's notice. The method of filing needed to have the facility to record all research data and be readily retrievable by the researcher so that team members, facilitators and the researcher could reflect upon and learn from the data gathered. A number of methods were adopted:

1. A4 Books, Microsoft Word and lever arch files
2. Visual Concept
3. NVivo (NUDIST)
4. Photographs
5. Publicly-available articles from newspapers, and the Government Utility watchdog

3.6 A4 Books, Microsoft Word and lever arch files

This ensured that all data was captured and was accessible, was available and easily found; the concept was to have a system of collection, filing and retrieval which was easy to follow, and fulfilled the requirements of this research programme. An audit trail – a linked system of filing – ensured that all data was readily at hand, so A4 books were initially used, and then transferred to Microsoft Word files; articles were filed in alphabetical order by

author and were linked to the Academic References document for easy retrieval. The procedure is:

1. All of the researcher's workshop observations and reflections were written and kept in A4 books; these were then written up in Microsoft Word and filed within a structure that reflects this thesis (see below). Some interviews were recorded in the A4 books although latterly these were completed on pre-prepared sheets with typed questions and space available for the answers to be added.

2. All newspaper and journal articles, mind maps and lecture notes, have been sorted and filed in lever arch files. Where applicable, these are linked to the Academic References files – in both Microsoft Word and NVivo – which lists every book and article read during this research project.

3. Microsoft Word was also used for writing summaries of books and articles, and writing specifications for work needing to be completed, for example, writing of the instructions for the database for measures. Microsoft Word was also the main method of writing this thesis.

4. All interviews, workshops, meetings, reports and summaries of books read, were also converted to 'rich text' and transferred to NVivo for ease of analysis – see NVivo below.

Books were initially summarised in depth; this was found to be counter-productive because it was often only during the fieldwork that key issues presented themselves which needed addressing, and often those were not the areas being summarised in the book reviews. So although book reviews continued to be carried out they were not written up in such detail, and often were summarised by capturing the main themes on flipcharts and photographing them, see Appendix 18. There is now a comprehensive filing system which, in theory, is infinitely expandable and easy to follow.

3.7 Visual Concept

This was selected to enable team members to formulate and cluster their ideas together and visually review their work; using shapes, team members brainstormed and clustered their thoughts together, for example, under common themes or in flowchart form. And by writing on magnetic shapes and clustering them where appropriate, team members could better understand the flow of company systems, and also thought processes, both their own and others'. The process was to clarify an issue and write down each thought on a separate magnetic hexagonal shape; when this was complete, to organise the shapes into an agreed order or cluster. And this is an example procedure:

1. Identify an issue that needs to be better understood and/or resolved.
2. Provide a magnetic board and shapes to the team.
3. The team then brainstorm the issue, capturing each thought on a shape.
4. The shapes are then organised into an agreed order that better illustrates the issue, for example, into a flowchart of actions needed to ensure a more effective process.
5. These shapes can then be captured as a permanent record in two ways: one, by photographing the results – see Ethnography section; and two, by transferring this information to a Visual Concept computer program, see below for an example page, Exhibit 3.5.
6. The computerised Visual Concept can also be used by the team to work interactively on a screen. This is not how the researcher used this tool; although he did use the screen to feed back to, and review work done with, the teams.

This process was often used in workshops to give both variety and focus; it also provided an activity which led to breakthroughs by the team who were 'stuck' when talking in a dialogue circle, the computer record was also a permanent record for the team to refer back to for it gave a clear visual map which had depth to it, as well as hyperlinks to Microsoft Word documents.
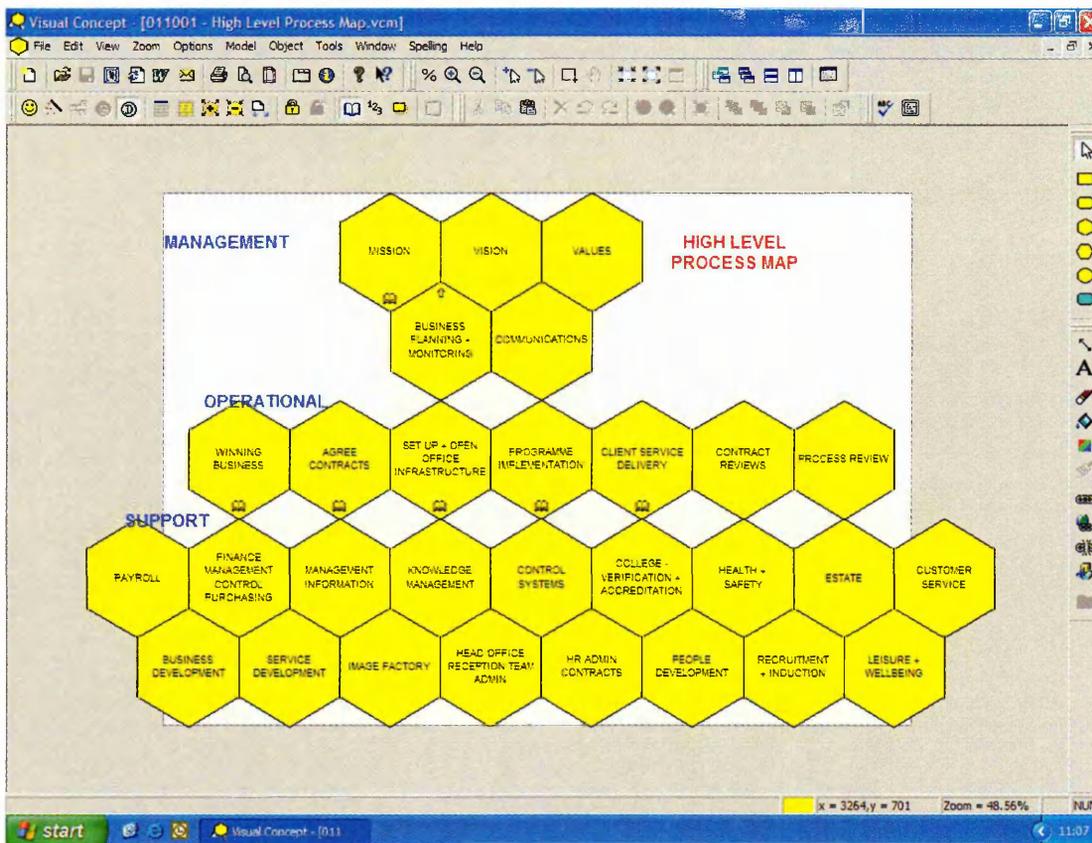
Exhibit 3.5: *Example of the use of Visual Concept constructed by A4e Work team*

DATA ANALYSIS
3.8 NVivo (NUDIST)

There was a need to analyse data captured, preferably in a clear and ordered way and NVivo was selected for this process; it is a qualitative research tool (Fraser 2000:v; Richards 2000:preface) which is well-established, and stores and retrieves data quickly and as accurately as it has been put in. It is a system of filing, analysis and retrieval which is easy to set up and use – well, 'fairly (user) friendly', it took two day-long sessions with a teacher to learn how to use the basics (Miles + Huberman 1994: 316). The process followed was to transfer from Microsoft Word, decide upon analysis required and use, then write up the data using the analysis files and then capturing summaries using 'Nodes' – which are files in which information can be transferred, for example, every answer to question one of the interview questionnaire, thus making searches and summaries more straightforward - and clearly showing audit trails for reference, if required. So the procedure is:

1. As each document is completed in Microsoft Word, change the type to 'rich text' and transfer into NVivo.

2. If the file has tables, photos or drawings the file will not transfer, so create a blank file within NVivo and then a hyperlink to the file in Microsoft Word; Excel; My Pictures; or wherever the file is located in the computer.

3. Cluster files into 'Sets' – for example, summaries of dialogue books can be assembled together – for ease of reference and searching, see Exhibit 3.6.

4. Create 'Nodes' – for example, 'CEO interviews' – then visit all relevant files and designate the passages to that node, or collect all answers to a specific interview question (Olesen et al 2001: 119).

5. When writing the thesis passages, turn to the appropriate files for reference, whether they are in the NVivo Files, Sets or Nodes.

6. If a search is required – for example, to ascertain how many times the interviewees have referred to a word like 'vision' or 'direction' – then the search engine has been used to find the information by checking every file in that 'Set'.

NVivo proved itself to be invaluable after the fieldwork and reading was completed. It was especially useful when reading through files and allocating passages for reference, and when comparing and contrasting with other passages. Once the information was within NVivo it did not transfer back to Microsoft Word easily – paragraphs were distorted – so the thesis was written in Word, referring to the files, sets and nodes within NVivo. This was a powerful qualitative research tool, where files were easy to access, analyse from, and retrieve information.
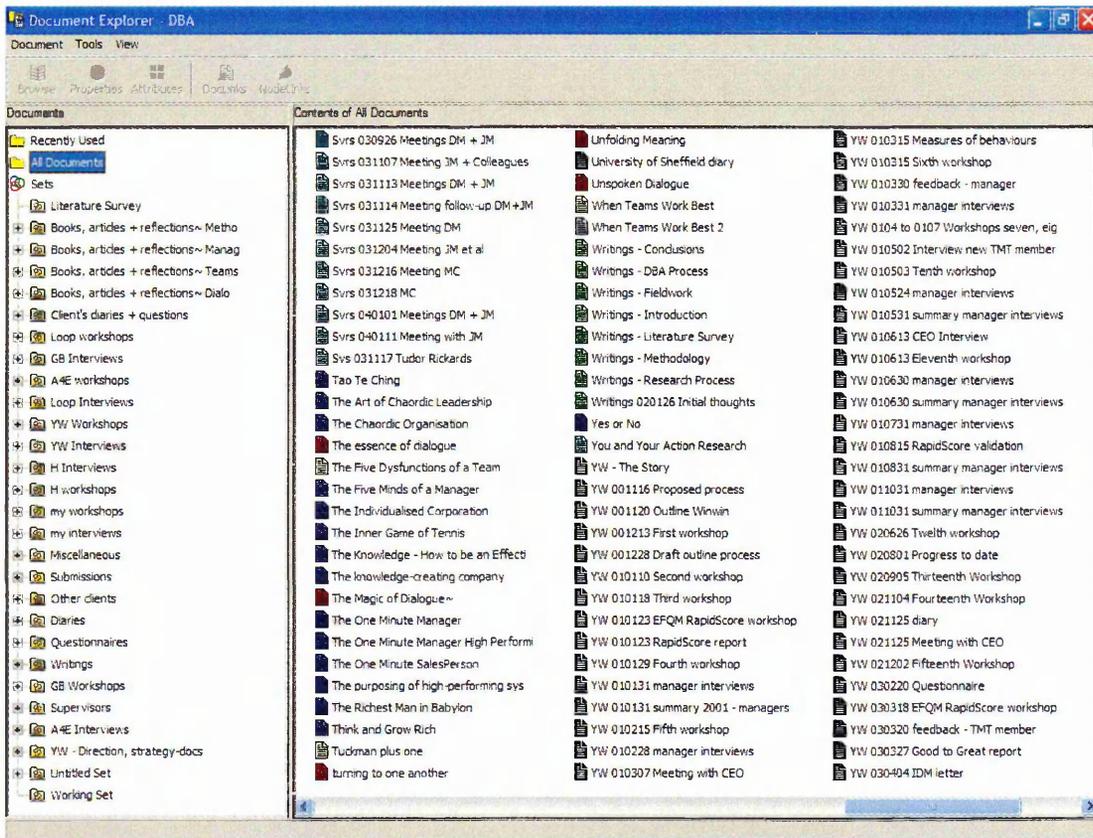
Exhibit 3.6: *Document Explorer in NVivo*

Photographs – see 3.3.1 Ethnography

Publicly available articles – see 3.4 Secondary data

3.9 Reflecting and Giving Feedback

The following methods have been used to capture team members' reflections during the workshops:

1. Marking the four-stage group development model then discussing those markings in the team.
2. Reviewing of previous workshops; reviewing each dialogue and conversation; and reviewing of each workshop.

Because the reviews take the same form, they have been taken together after the four-stage group development model (Tuckman 1965; Tuckman + Jensen 1977), see section 3.9.2 below.

3.9.1 Marking the four-stage group development model then discussing those marks in the team

Why use it? First, to capture individual perceptions for the stage at which the team has reached; second, to construct a picture that team members can reflect upon, and lastly to record 'moments in time' that members can look back to and reflect upon. The model identified the stages of a team's development or lack of it and during the workshops, each team member marked their perception of where they believed the position of the team was on their journey of development; the team then discussed those perceptions. So the procedure was:

1. 'On the flipchart, where the four-stage group development model has already been drawn, mark where you believe the team is now. And then please return to your seats.'
2. 'Now comment upon why you have marked the flipchart at that stage and at that place.'
3. Group discussion of markings followed by lessons learned.

Team members gain an understanding of why they are where they had marked themselves on the journey of development as a team; also better understand each others' thinking processes and feelings.

3.9.2 Reviewing of previous workshops; reviewing each dialogue and conversation; and reviewing of each workshop

'Through reason man observes himself; but he knows himself only through consciousness' (Tolstoy 1869/1978:1427).

By capturing members' reflections, participants could review their own and others' thoughts, feelings and behaviours during the process; this was an immediate review of the process just completed or a review at the end of the

workshop. After each process – for example, a dialogue – the team reviewed the content and process, and ways in which it could be improved:

So the questions asked were:

1. What went really well?
2. What could have gone even better?
3. What actions should be taken to ensure that next time is even better?
4. What are your feelings about the content and process that we have just completed? (This was only added in 2003 after the researcher found that these reviews did not include the third constituent of 'thinking, actions and emotions' which was becoming so common in the academic reading he was undertaking.) As McLeod (1994: 147 in Silverman 2000: 97) says, "interpersonal process recall...re-stimulate(s) the actual experience the person had during the session".

In one group, the team members reviewed their thoughts, feelings and behaviours, and reflected upon what improvements they could make. This was then referred to at the start of the next 'session', picking up the points made. In theory, each process should have been an enhancement of the last.

3.10 Validity, reliability, and its link with triangulation

3.10.1 Validity

"By validity, I mean truth: interpreted as to the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers" (Hammersley 1990:57).

3.10.2 Reliability

"Reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions." (Hammersley 1992: 67 taken from Silverman 2000: 175)

3.10.3 Triangulation

To enhance both the validity and reliability of this work, the researcher wrote up the process: before the workshops, then during and after every event and shared his writings with the full team every few months to obtain their comments upon the content. The researcher also used triangulation (Silverman 2000: 99, Gummesson 1991: 121 + McKernan 2000: 184-187) to increase the richness of the data collected; this can be seen from the number of methods used during the research process. Triangulation, as used here, is the combination of both the meanings set out by McKernan (2000: 184) where he brings together a number of authors who argue that triangulation "is the use of multiple methods in the study of the same object", and the view of contemporary action researchers 'who favour a sense of triangulation which combines the perspectives of various actors within a research setting'. For this research, the following interpretation has been used, namely, "Triangulation is a procedure for organising different types of evidence into a more coherent frame of reference or relationship so that they can be compared and contrasted" (Elliott + Adelman 1976; Elliott 1978 taken from McKernan 2000:184). This research is using 'triangulation within a single methodology' (McKernan 2000: 188); McKernan goes on to cite four levels of triangulation, the examples show that this project has used all four:

1. Conceptual/theoretical triangulation: seeing a project from different models or perspectives, for example, using Tuckman and Casey models.

2. Information/data: collected in various settings, for example, interviews and workshops.

3. Researcher or investigator triangulation can be conducted by using different inquirers, for example, writing up the workshops by the researcher, and feedbacks and reviews of team members.

4. Methodological triangulation: carried out through collecting data by multiple research methods, for example, EFQM workshops, newspaper articles, interviews, questionnaires, and top team workshops.

3.11 Summary and lessons learned

So in summary, an **Action Inquiry** methodology has been adopted that is borne out of Action Research and Action Science: 'the most advanced step...of participant observation' (Gummesson 1991: 30). This in turn manifests itself in a hermeneutic model that reflects an ongoing upward spiral of action, reflection and research.

The methods selected to support this methodology are: regular one- and/or two-day workshops and open-ended interviews (Silverman 2000:94) that include qualitative measures. These are supplemented by feedback to the team: from interviews, from their own comments upon their performance in workshops, and in written form by the researcher to share findings and check the accuracy of his perceptions. Around all of this is a great deal of research, and discussion before during and after workshops with my co-facilitator.

The strength of this approach is the clarity of the process, and its iterative nature: One of the weaknesses is that the findings can never be known to be the truth. As Popper would say, although the verification of a scientific law can never be conclusive, it is the best theory that we have until disproved (Magee 1985; Raphael 1998; Honderich 1995). The researcher agrees with Magee (1985:28) when he writes, "Popper's notion of 'the truth' is very like this: our concern in the pursuit of knowledge is to get closer and closer to the truth". By the use of the above methodology and methods, the researcher has endeavoured to get 'closer to the truth'.

So this next chapter pursues the answers to questions set out at the end of chapter 1, see section 1.9, by using a theoretical process constructed during the literary survey, see section 2.6. It is this process that was used and adapted during the three case studies set out in chapter 4.

Chapter 4 Fieldwork
A Journey with Fellow-Researchers and Friends

This chapter chronicles research carried out with the top management teams of three organisations: Yorkshire Water, Loop Customer Management, and A4e Work. During this fieldwork, the researcher's understanding about top management team development, dialogue and conversations changed; thus although each story follows the same overall pattern, emphases given depends upon the focus at the time of the research work being carried out with that company.

Yorkshire Water (November 2000 to June 2004) was the first of the three companies visited; the initial focus was on team development, reflection on that journey, performance measures and the four-stage group development model; the process was one of interviews with both the top management team and managers, and workshops with the top management team. It took a full year before dialogue and the use of dialogue guidelines were discovered by the researcher and introduced – and that was only discovered by the researcher because of being pushed by the team. During the initial two years that the researcher spent with the company it became increasingly clear to him that he was unaware of where 'conflict' fitted into the stages of a team's development, especially in a team that seemed to be performing so effectively. Note that as the team grew stronger, they stormed against both the facilitators and the researcher/facilitator's theoretical model. And as they gained confidence in themselves so they changed the balance: from one of accepting the processes that the facilitators provided, to challenging them; and through being challenged the researcher/facilitator himself performed at a higher level than he thought possible and by doing so discovered the theoretical model of dialogues for top management teams.

The same overall process of interviewing and workshops was adopted for Loop Management Services (October 2002 to September 2003) using all of the learnings so far gained from the Yorkshire Water experience; thus dialogue and guidelines were introduced at the earliest opportunity; the team

developed a dialogue process for meetings, and also adopted the four-stage group development model as a measuring tool to monitor their progress and discuss their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Note how often the team returned to the dialogue process to continue to enhance its effectiveness, and also the openness of team members and how dedicated they were to learn from the development process and others on the same journey. This can be seen from the considered feedback in response to the researcher's case study notes sent out to them all.

A4e Work (May 2001 to July 2004) continued the overall process of both the previous companies, this research deepened the understanding of the researcher in the use of dialogue and its guidelines; conversations, reflection, measures, and the four-stage group development model. Note that this team stormed against the researcher/facilitator's theoretical dialogue model, and it was this revolt that provided the realisation that teams could design their own communication processes and relationship principles, which have become integral to the model.

It is to the members of these top management teams that the researcher extends his heartfelt gratitude for their commitment, hard work, and patience; and for allowing him to work with them as his fellow-researchers and use the names of their companies in his research. Without their involvement this research would not have been possible.

Chapter 4.1 Yorkshire Water (November 2000 to June 2004)

Introduction

The published performance results for the calendar years 2001 and 2002 were perceived as successful both for Yorkshire Water (YW), and for its top management team, as will be seen from the EFQM RapidScore assessment; the interviews of twenty-nine top team members and senior managers in February and March 2003; and the CEO's final interview comments in January 2004.

The team members committed themselves to their own development process in December 2000; development consisted of interviews, feedback from both the team itself and from many of the company's managers, individual development and team workshops, and independent assessments. Parts of these workshops were allocated to personal development and parts to focusing upon business issues; and in early 2002 a theoretical process of dialogue was introduced and used. The conclusion of this chapter is that it has been the commitment of the CEO and team to the development process, to each other, and to the facilitators that has been a major factor for the company's and the team's success. Further, it has been the discipline of giving and receiving feedback; acting on that feedback; the customising of the content of each workshop to the stage at which the team had reached; and the continuous reflection upon lessons learned, that have assisted in keeping the team aware of their progress, where their areas for improvement lay, and thus where dialogue could be used.

In the first year two facilitators were present, namely Peter Field and the researcher/facilitator; in the second year the researcher/facilitator was on his own with the team; to ensure that the content of this chapter reflects the views of the team, papers were sent to each member every few months, and at the conclusion of the research, summarising the process and researcher's findings. On each occasion comments and suggestions for improvement were requested; a number of replies were received, and adjustments made

where the researcher felt that they added value; feedback from members on the completed case study, sent to them in March 2004, are printed in full and set out before the graphs at the end of this 'story'. Most replies were of a humorous nature; for example, the researcher sent a letter to the team asking them if he might use the team for his research, one director wrote back with copies to his colleagues saying that he believed that they should support the researcher because he needed all the help that he could get!

Company Background

YW is well established and is "one of the ten largest water and sewerage companies in the world" (Yorkshire Water 2004). In the region, although it does not employ the most people directly, its capital projects ensure that more people are employed and more materials used upon its work, than any other organisation in Yorkshire. Before this research, the company experienced a period of turmoil during which its relationships with both internal and external stakeholders were put under considerable strain; this viewpoint was confirmed, after the CEO had been appointed and this research had begun, by an independent EFQM RapidScore assessment, carried out in early 2001, which identified a strong basic organisation, but with weaknesses in the areas of people satisfaction, service to the customer and adverse perceptions of the organisation from outside stakeholders.

Overview of the journey

Date	Activity	Facilitators' Involvement	Researcher's Story
November 2000	Initial meeting with CEO	Peter Field and the researcher/facilitator met this potential client; heard their company story and his perceived needs of the top management team; together they drew up a draft win/win agreement; and agreed a provisional timetable for interviews and workshops.	Started obtaining data, including the specific business measures to be used to monitor the development journey.
December 2000	Interviews with the top management team	The researcher/facilitator interviewed the CEO, and Peter Field interviewed all other members of the team.	The researcher worked with Peter Field to consolidate their perceptions of the key issues and needs of company, team and individuals; their feedback to be presented at the first workshop.
December 2000 to October	Interviews with managers	After being briefed by the facilitators, Colin McGarrigle interviewed ten managers each month for three months. Then in January he interviewed twenty – in part, to ascertain the feelings of managers towards the team's	The researcher discussed the reports with Colin McGarrigle to understand better his interpretations of some of the

Date	Item		
2001		draft vision, he then interviewed another ten managers, every other month, until October. After the interviews he consolidated them into reports that the facilitators fed back to the team at each subsequent workshop.	words said by interviewees to him; then, with Peter Field, consolidated and fed back the findings to the team for them to discuss and, in every case, accept as a 'fair' record of those interviews.
December 2000	Initial workshop	Peter Field and the researcher/facilitator gave feedback from all of the interviews; and completed a win/win agreement with the team.	The team agreed the content of the feedback being presented and at the end of the workshop, on a flipchart, recorded their reflections upon the two days.
January 2001	EFQM RapidScore Assessment	Dean Fathers, Catherine Gibson and the researcher/facilitator spent two days with eight managers gaining consensus scores and comments to each of eighty-six questions; after the managers had already spent some time filling in a detailed questionnaire on the company. The questionnaire was	The researcher presented the findings back to the top management team, who took away the full report, and at the next workshop decided what steps they would take

		then submitted to Dean Father's company, idm, for consolidation and for Dean to feed back to the managers. This was later independently checked by a visit from another assessor from idm, Grahame Clark.	and by whom, to address areas of concern identified in the report. The thanks of the team were passed on by the CEO to all those managers who had participated.
January 2001 to December 2002	Fourteen subsequent workshops	Again Peter Field and the researcher/facilitator followed a process of self-development and team development over the two days of each workshop.	At each workshop, from late January 2001, the researcher obtained the scores of the team's perceived performance measures, and from May 2001 for their behaviour measures; in June 2002 the four-stage group development model was marked on a flipchart by the team, see Exhibit 4.7.
February/March 2003	Interviews with both top	Colin McGarrigle interviewed twenty nine directors and managers; he then consolidated the findings and fed	The researcher designed the questionnaire of thirty eight

Date			
	management team members and senior managers	them back to the top management team; the graph showing the perceived movements in performance of the team and organisation is to be found at the end of this story, see Exhibit 4.3.	questions based upon 'Good to Great' (Collins 2001); this book was felt to be the most relevant to their company, by team members, of all those that they had read between each workshop. The researcher also gained the approval for the questionnaire's use from the HR Director, see Appendix 16.
March 2003	EFQM RapidScore Assessment	Dean Fathers, Grahame Clark and Linda Barraclough spent two days with eight managers gaining consensus scores and comments to each of eighty six questions; after the managers had already spent some time filling in a detailed questionnaire on the company, which was then submitted to Dean Father's company, idm, for consolidation and for feedback to the managers. Grahame Clark presented the findings back to the top	The researcher has included findings and Dean Father's April 2003 letter to him in this thesis.

		management team, who again took the full report away to work upon. The CEO then sent the report, with the team's thanks, to all those managers who had participated.	
January 2004	Meeting with CEO		The researcher asked for reflections upon the journey, and on how the company was progressing, his comments have been included.
June 2004	'Weather check' workshop to identify where the team was on their journey of development	The researcher/facilitator interviewed all ten members of the team prior to this workshop; and used a mixture of processes, including: relationship-building; feedback from interviews; identifying the attributes of the old team that needed to be continued; celebrating the life of, and burying the old team; other attributes needed by the new team; and finally clarifying actions needed to ensure that the new team would equal if not surpass the performance of the old, including regular off-site workshops.	The team identified themselves on the four-stage group development model – as the old team, and then as the new team with two different members. Comments made on the movement of the markings were noted by the researcher and clarified with the team

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	when required, both during the workshop and also in written feedback later.

Context

In late 2000, the newly appointed CEO decided to take his team through a process of development. To contextualise the process used within YW, a conversation at the initial meeting with the CEO is set out below. This is then followed by discussions, mainly during workshops, from which progress through the four-stage group development model is identified and commented upon by the researcher. In early 2002 part of the theoretical process of dialogue was introduced, see section 2.6 above; its use is followed throughout that year, and measures during the two years of this research are also summarised. Reviews of each team meeting are recorded and set out in Appendix 22.

Before Dialogue (December 2000 to December 2001)

Initial meeting

At the initial meeting between the CEO and facilitators, the CEO gave a clear brief, 'I could do this (the process of developing his team) myself, however I have other issues I need to focus on now. Whether you are appointed or not will be the decision of the team not just mine, and if you are appointed you will become answerable to us all, this development is a priority for us and I understand that the development of my team will not be a 'quick fix' - it will take time.'

Question from the facilitators: 'What is your goal for the team?'

CEO: 'That within three months (the top management team) will feel like a team, know what it is doing and how it needs to do it, will be enjoying itself and have a real energy around what it is achieving.' (This draft goal statement was discussed by the team at the first workshop. The words 'and be communicating to its stakeholders' were added and stood as the goal statement for the first part of the work together).

Q: 'How will you know when you are achieving your goal?'

A: 'By instinct.'

Q: 'What outward signs will there be?'

A: 'Individual board members will be seen to be supportive to fellow members and to be implementing what needs to be done to ensure that 'Yorkshire Water will be known as the best water company in the United Kingdom'. And by 31st March 2003, feedback from outside the organisation will be that 'Yorkshire Water is seen as the best water company in the United Kingdom'.'

Q: 'How much time are you willing to commit to this?'

A: 'Whatever it takes. In practical terms that will mean about fifteen days of workshops over the next year; this is as well as our regular weekly half-day meeting. I would like the format to be: the morning set aside to work on self-development, and the afternoon used to work upon issues that are too big, or too complicated, to be dealt with during our weekly meetings.'

In answer to the question, 'And how will you monitor progress?' it was agreed that 'each team member would score, every month, the perceived performances of themselves, the team and the organisation, and also perceived performances of the company's customer service and employee relationships.'

First workshop

At the first workshop, in December 2000, the team endorsed the overall development process and also received collective non-attributable feedback from their individual interviews; the data was selected by the facilitators on the basis of either the same points being raised by different team members, or the wish of the interviewee to include that point in the feedback. The following are some of the quotes, which were endorsed by the team at their initial workshop:

'We need to 'be open and honest' – no hidden agendas.'

'Create an environment where it is pleasurable to work here.'

'Have 'explicit' company values.'

'We need to bottom issues.'

'Be less task-focused.'

'Realise that we have competent people who can run the business.'

'Realise that it will take time to change.'

'Believe that the company is as good as it is.'

'Change our behaviours and become role models.'

'Become more responsive to our customers.'

'Improve the public's perception of us.'

'Have a clear agreed direction.'

'Create the opportunity for growth.'

'Respond quicker to contract bids.'

'Be more risk-willing.'

'Listen better.'

'Create a better sense of team.'

'Become proactive.'

'Learn to let go.'

'Trust and like each other.'

'Be inclusive of others.'

'Create space for innovation.'

During the workshop the team also discussed the question, 'What needs to change within this team?' Here are the answers that the team gave:

'We need to raise our profile, both inside and outside of the company.'

'Most of our time is spent in our offices, people come to us – it's very different out there, where there is a culture of blame – we are lean, mean and miserable.'

'The public don't have a high opinion of us; we are great at operations not at customer care.'

'We need to find out how other companies are effectively running their businesses. And we need to be seen to lead.'

'The key is for us all to work together, rather than just being in the same room as was the case.'

'We now have the best chance for a long time to have a great team.'

At the end of the workshop this was the review:

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?

Lots of areas covered	Involvement of others – one member left early	Full team
Good interaction	No mobiles	All other items noted for future workshops
Impressed	Behaviours	
A few laughs	Could have started earlier	
Got a lot of things out	Would have liked to have spent time better understanding others' perceptions	
The time has gone quickly		
Enthusiasm		
Passion		

Researcher's comments

The predominant mood within the team was one of politeness with each other – the 'forming' stage see section 2.4 and Exhibit 2.7 for details of the four-stage group development model – and, as can be seen from the feedback, members were clear about changes that needed to be made.

The facilitators asked the team to decide upon their most urgent and important issue(s) to be discussed at each workshop; the CEO, in an interview before the second workshop, clarified the first issue, saying, 'We need to revisit our vision and values; we need to go through a process that involves the team and gives us a vision that we can believe in, our vision is fine but not inspiring; it's got no energy. I don't want most of the day to be spent wordsmithing; we need a common view of what we are going to achieve and a plan on how we will achieve it.'

Second workshop

So the first afternoon of the second workshop was spent creating a vision. By the evening, no agreed vision had been reached. Members of the team commented:

'I'm not comfortable with the process.'

'The team is not confronting enough.'

'Being in the team is not enjoyable.'

'We focused on the mechanics rather than our feelings.'

And learnings of team members, that the researcher wrote down and agreed with them, were as follows:

'Don't make assumptions.'

'We need to control our competitiveness.'

'We're a bit too arrogant.'

'We need to communicate more.'

'There's a balance between what is flippant and what is fun.'

'Our confidence is growing – we can do it.'

'Our team is full of powerful people; it's intimidating and exhilarating.'

One member also commented during a personal feedback session that, 'I can't get a word in, everyone else is talking.' And the CEO comforted the facilitators during this time of lack of progress by saying, 'what is important is the process of working together rather than the outcome'.

Researcher's comments

The team has moved from 'forming', where comments were on the whole supportive and polite, to 'storming', where comments were based mainly on what the team needs to do rather than what 'I' – the team member – am prepared to do to enhance team performance. Discussions lack questioning of each others' assumptions; there is a lack of listening for understanding and there is a low level of awareness of behaviours towards each other. For example, most were not open to each others' suggestions upon the vision; the facilitators noted that there was no building on each others' ideas at all.

Third workshop

By the middle of January 2001 all sense of dissatisfaction had apparently gone; the following was written down by the researcher and confirmed by the team members, after they were asked to describe how they were feeling about the journey:

'Excitement and confidence, and aware of the challenges we face.'

'Excited and stimulated.'

'Positive and respect.'

'Good.'

'Mixed; very happy and enjoying direction of travel, and unsure of final outcome.'

'Pleasantly surprised.'

'Very happy with the process.'

At this workshop the team decided to install the sharing of 'good news stories' at the start of every weekly meeting, this links with the theoretical process set out in section 2.6 above. They also completed their first draft of their vision, with comments such as:

'It's clearer and simpler.'

'I'm struggling with one word.'

'I'm worried; we've got to come up with something.'

'I hate this.'

'We're pretty close; I don't think we have to change it unless it is better.'

'I don't like what we have; I'm not overly excited about it.'

'It's important that we come up with something.'

To give team members space and time to reflect upon the vision, the facilitators were asked to interview twenty managers to seek their opinions; and team members also sought out opinions from within the company. The result of this communications exercise was that, by the following workshop it was agreed by all of the team that the draft vision was unsatisfactory, so they worked on it again and agreed a final version; the flipchart with the vision written out in full was signed by all of the team to show their commitment to it.
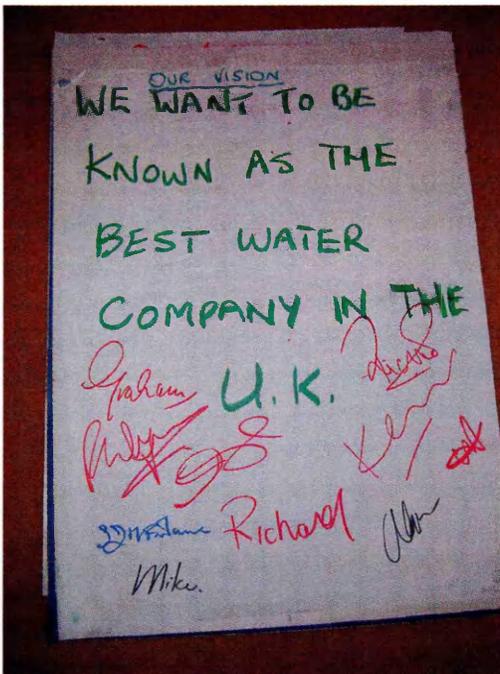
Exhibit 4.1: *Yorkshire Water team's vision*

After finalising the vision, clarifying the company's values followed the same painful process; an initial set of values was arrived at which was felt to be unsatisfactory, there were too many values and they didn't reflect the aspirations of all those who worked within the company. So the subject was left until later in the year, when the team again addressed the company's values; this time, it was agreed that the matter should be taken away from the workshop and worked on separately. The team returned to the next meeting where the new values were endorsed within minutes: Respect, Responsibility, Resourcefulness and Teamwork (Yorkshire Water 2004); see the eleventh workshop in June 2001 for behaviours that the team attached to each value.

EFQM RapidScore workshop

The team commissioned the facilitators to engage an assessor to run a two-day EFQM RapidScore workshop in January 2001 for eight senior managers (Goolian + Mersereau 2000): The team's purpose in asking for this work was to clarify the company's strengths and areas for improvement - the independent assessor engaged to carry out this work, and submit a final report to the team, was Dean Fathers, managing director of idm. Here are informal comments made by the managers whilst they discussed what their 'official' comments should be for inclusion within the report:

'Not one of us around this table knows if our customers are more satisfied with us now than they were a year ago.'

'Our vision is limp and our values shallow.'

'We still have a silo mentality.'

'We've even capped the silo and become a bunker!'

'There is a set of values that are not being openly practised, rewarded or supported.'

'The new (top management) team is being looked to with hope and some degree of relief.'

'I feel strongly about the need to break down demarcation, plus allow trust to be the bond between team and individual performance. There's not much win/win here.'

'We do umpteen employee surveys and do bugger all about them.'

'The company needs to decide what it wants to be.'

'We need to communicate internally and externally, get rid of remaining bureaucratic attitudes – we manage too well – and we are too risk averse, which has its upside of course.'

'We need more focus and clarity. (The top management team) needs to be seen more, walk the talk, show dynamism, and convince us that they are genuine and interested.'

'(The top management team) needs to reduce personality issues; blame culture and fear; set out clear directions for the future; improve further customer and contract management; and build on alignments with local groups, appeals, etc.'

'Let the company deliver the current product, there's plenty of talent on tap.'

'Raise our sights, prioritise the right focus and then communicate it.'

The overall EFQM RapidScore score arrived at by the managers was 422 which, according to the assessor, was in line with some of the best companies in the region, but was some way short of 'best in the UK'; following the report, the top management team commenced work inside and outside of the company to strengthen further the organisation.

EFQM RapidScore results in January 2001

	Actual scores	**% scores**
Leadership	55/100	55
Policy + Strategy	38/80	48
People	40/90	44
Partnerships + Resources	49/90	54
Processes	59/140	42
Customer Results	62/200	31
People Results	12/90	13
Society Results	13/60	22
Key Performance Results	94/150	63
Total Score	**422/1000**	

Fourth workshop

The fourth workshop, in January 2001, included an overnight exercise from which their learnings were:

'External pressure is important and a powerful spur.'

'Don't assume that rules exist.'

'We don't interface outside our ivory tower.'

And in answer to the question asked, 'How do you feel working in the top management team now?' members replied:

'I feel good, much more connected.'

'So, so. Four steps forwards and one backwards.'
'We've come a huge way; we have potential to lead this business.'
'We've done a lot yet not moved very far.'
'I feel good, fine. It's working well.'
'Mixed feelings. Not firing on all cylinders. I would like more.'
'We need personal and behavioural development for the team. And we
need to practise.'

Also, in one exercise, where the team needed to solve a problem together, the CEO said, 'I'm bored with this!' The reaction from team members was immediate; most stood back and looked to the CEO; the exercise then recommenced. This was the first of a number of expressions of exasperation from the CEO, he went on to comment, 'I can't stand it when things are slow'. However, within a couple more workshops, the team members had grown in confidence towards him and were pulling his leg, as colleagues and friends, as will be seen later.

Researcher's comments

Still in 'storming' although beginning to settle down, and still getting to understand their CEO. It took a further two years, and two further clients, before the researcher began to understand that there are different types of 'storming', or argument, that span the range of 'storming', 'norming' and performing', see section 5.5.1 in the findings chapter.

Fifth workshop

The workshop in February 2001 was spent practising presentations to be given by the team members to their senior managers. The facilitators asked that each person give feedback in this way: a positive comment, where the presenter could do even better, and then an overall supportive remark. This feedback process was followed by some and not by others, and the facilitators did not intervene to put the process back on track. During the workshop review, the CEO made his dissatisfaction with the facilitators' lack of action on this matter abundantly clear. During the workshop, the team also rejected the

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facilitators' recommendations to continue monthly interviews with managers: As the CEO informed the facilitators some days later, 'We (the team) discussed this issue and concluded that we didn't agree with your proposal for getting feedback (by interviewing more managers) because we felt we were being 'bounced' by you. You were pushy and we felt that you were looking after your own needs for more work rather than our needs; it was not a lack of trust in you, it was your attitude. Incidentally, we need to be challenged more; softly, softly is not the way forward.'

Researcher's comments

'Storming' here was aimed at the facilitators rather than each other. The question the researcher was asking of himself was, 'Does this mean that team members are beginning to work together, or is it that the facilitators need to tighten up their act, or is it both?'

Measures to date

At each workshop the measures of perceived performance, agreed with the CEO at the original meeting, were obtained from the team and, during the interviews each month, from managers and scored as follows. These are the average scores where a score of 1 is appalling and a score of 10 is perfect:

	Top Management Team		Senior Managers	
	Dec 2000	**Mar 2001**	**Jan 2001**	**Apr 2001**
How am I performing?	6	6.9	7.1	7.3
How is the Top Team performing?	4-5	6.9	6.2	6.8
How is the organisation performing?	7	6.7	6.1	6.8
How are employee relationships within the organisation?	3	5.9	6.2	6.1
How good is our	4-5	5.9	7.7	6.6

customer service?				

Sixth workshop

In March 2001, a review of the journey was held, discussing what had gone well and what could have gone better; by the end of the review a new win/win agreement was drawn up between the team and facilitators, and a commitment to developing together for one day a month was made for the following nine months. Here were the comments from the team and from the facilitators:

Team's feedback	Did well	Not so well
By team	Time commitment Positive spirit Have improved e.g. conference presentations	Passive approach Lack of preparation and follow through Don't start on time
By facilitators	Offered and managed Business Excellence Model Role models Asked us to do this exercise	Not hard enough on us No route map Feedback to CEO primarily

Facilitators' feedback	Did well	Not so well
By facilitators	Flexibility Commitment Resources	Feedback/letter Business Excellence Model Gentle on presentations + team
By team	Extraordinary commitment Trust Willingness to take risks	Process hijacked Responsibility not yet taken Team v company

It took a further meeting and feedback from individual members of the group before the facilitators began to give hard feedback to the group. For example, when feeding back performance measures, one of the facilitators was critical of the team's performance which, the figures showed, had dipped - team members attacked his interpretation of the measures produced. Their interpretation was quite different: the performance of the team had not dropped – even although the performance measures were lower – rather, the standards and awareness of the team had risen and that was why the figures were lower.

Researcher's comments

The team's interpretation was certainly one that the researcher hadn't considered. Later feedback during individual sessions with team members included, 'We appreciate you being harder on us'. The feedback session between the facilitators and team showed itself to be very powerful; in fact team members commented that it had increased their trust in the facilitators. The researcher believes that the increasing trust moved the team, which now included the facilitators, into 'norming'.

Workshops throughout second quarter of 2001

The next three day-long workshops in the second quarter of 2001 started on time, the team had prepared for them and, by the end of the third day, the team had taken back the control of outcomes from the facilitators. By agreement, each day was split: the morning was allocated to team learning and development, and the afternoon to a key business issue, selected by the team and prepared for in advance. This was similar to what had been asked for by the CEO at his original meeting with the facilitators.

An example of the support that was increasingly being given to each other was when a new top management team member was appointed to the team. The existing team spent an 'issue' session discussing how best to welcome

their new team member into both the company and the top management team. They allocated responsibilities around the team to:

'Welcome him – all of us.

Publicise his arrival.

Take him out and show him our responsibilities.

Draw up a programme of induction.

Have a process ready for him to recruit a secretary.

Agree a night for all of the team plus our partners, to dine out together'.

When questioned at his first top team meeting, the new member said how much he had appreciated the welcome and how much he already felt part of the team.

Eleventh workshop

By June 2001, six months after the start of this development process, the team had become much more willing to challenge the CEO, for example, in a discussion on what the strap line should be for customer service, the CEO was very keen on one suggestion and repeatedly stressed his belief that this was 'the answer'. His choice was not shared by most of his team; and as they broke for lunch, members pulled his leg saying whilst laughing, 'Well done, we think it's a jolly good idea!' Such was the level of trust and understanding within the team by this time that everyone, including the CEO, joined in the good humour. A different strap line, favoured by everyone present, was eventually agreed upon.

The team also started being more assertive and articulate: When the roll-out of the values was being discussed, a number of members expressed their concerns saying, 'We can't go out with the values until our strategy has been discussed, I suggest'. The CEO, after some argument, gained an understanding of their needs for a meeting on the strategy of the organisation and agreed to set aside a day to discuss the issue. In order to be seen as role-models of the newly-created company values the team spent some time discussing what their behaviours needed to be to become role-models. They eventually settled on just four that they should use throughout the company:

First: 'Celebrate and recognise success: every top management team meeting to start with an individual 'good news story' and what we've done about it.'

Second: 'Check that everyone has had an opportunity to say what they feel.'

Third: Commit to MBWA (management by walking about) at least once a week.'

And fourth: 'More builds and 'what ifs'.'

It was also agreed that before each workshop team members scored themselves and, anonymously, scored all of their colleagues, against each of these behaviours. These scores were then consolidated and fed back confidentially, by the researcher by email, so that each team member could compare their own perceptions with the perceptions that their colleagues had of them; those wishing to then had the opportunity to ask others why they had scored them at that level. This process was eventually stopped after eleven months when the team decided that it had fulfilled its use. Some hard discussions of the measures' validity had taken place, for example, 'I do management by walking about far more than you score me for. I'm going to have to stick my head around your doors to tell you I'm going out in future' (laughter from the team)!

Perceptions about each other and the team were also improving by the second half of 2001. There were comments such as:

'I like the direction. We are a more effective team and our individual behaviours are improving.'

'Happy but my main concern is that we haven't bottomed our relationships.'

'We need to sign up to our fundamental beliefs and behaviours.'

'As a new member, I feel that we've come a long way. It's healthy that we've raised a lot of issues; now we need actions.'

'I'm generally optimistic that we raise and deal with issues. The team feels good, but we mustn't get carried away.'

'We increasingly know what it's like to be a team. Feedback shows that we are perceived more as a team.'

'We must ensure that we follow through our actions.'

'We have energy and are enjoying ourselves.'
'I'm getting very positive reports from my direct reports. I think we've
made considerable progress.'
'I'm more enthused; the team is working reasonably well. We need
specific tasks to work on as a team; and we need to spend more time
reviewing and recognising people.'
'I'd like a better road map of where we are heading.'

Team members were also surprising the facilitators with the amount of work being done outside of the workshops. Examples include: Values were quickly arrived at, tested, and then agreed; the board members were given the challenge of identifying their team purpose, separate from that of the organisation: At the following meeting, to the facilitators' surprise and delight, a clear and comprehensive purpose was submitted and agreed by the team, see Appendix 9. The team asked the facilitators to recommend a business book to read between each workshop, although the books were not universally admired they did lead to some common language – some very humorous! For example, Joseph Jaworski's Synchronicity: The Inner Path of Leadership (1996) was not appreciated by everyone; however in the book Jaworski describes watching an ermine somersaulting in the air and for him it was a profound moment. Now when something unsavoury happens within YW, one of the team will pre-frame team colleagues by saying, 'I've had an ermine experience!' The final book chosen by the team, having taken this responsibility off the facilitators, was Truckers by Terry Pratchett (Pratchett 1990) because it is an amusing story and tells of individuals achieving extraordinary feats by working as a team.

	Top management team		Managers	
	Jan 2001	Dec 2001	Jan 2001	Dec 2001
My individual performance	6.0	7.3	n/a	n/a
Top management team performance	4.5	7.7	6.2	6.9
Company performance	7.0	7.6	6.1	7.2

Employee relationships	3.0	7.2	6.2	6.1
Customer services	4.5	6.7	7.6	6.5
Internal communications	Question not asked	6.2	5.6	6.2

In the above measures, the score for Customer services has been reduced by the managers from 7.6 in January 2001 to 6.5 in December 2001; when this was discussed by the team, the predominant feeling was one of approval that the managers now perceived Customer services more in line with how the top management team believed it was.

Researcher's comments

This first year focused on team members better understanding themselves and others within the team, this was done by concentrating on personal development and working together on key company issues, for example, the vision, values and team purpose. During the twelve months, the four-stage group development model could be clearly identified as the team went through 'forming', 'storming' with each other and with the facilitators, and into 'norming' as they began to have and give more respect to each other, and listen for understanding more intently. These workshops are treated as a priority, and other than one member missing one day, all members have been present and have worked with both determination and commitment. The facilitators have been pushed hard by the team who are intelligent, competent and highly experienced. The second year would prove even more challenging!

During Dialogue (Calendar year 2002)

By the end of 2001, the facilitators suggested that there was little more that they could contribute, as the team was progressing so well; after a 'behind the doors' discussion the facilitators were informed that, 'This is not acceptable to us. We know that you do have more that you can contribute, come back (researcher/facilitator on your own) in a couple of months and put forward your recommendations.' It was during the next two months of research and

reflection by the researcher that the potential added value of dialogue was uncovered.

Researcher's comments

Two events came together which precipitated the use of dialogue within Yorkshire Water: First, the researcher had been reading about top management teams of great companies where dialogue was referred to as being used (Collins 2001:114); and second, when discussing with the CEO what the next steps could be in developing the team, the researcher mentioned dialogue as a possible avenue. 'What is dialogue?' asked the CEO. The researcher had to admit that he had no idea; however, he committed himself to finding out before next they met, see section 2.3.3 onwards.

And during the next year, the researcher and the team used the dialogue process as a framework to discuss issues: Afternoons were typically spent in dialogue upon a key company issue; occasionally, most of the day would be spent in such meetings. Initially, the guidelines of Doris Adams of Trinity College (Dixon 1998:117) were used, see Appendix 5 – these were soon found to be too 'passive' so they were replaced by the researcher's adaptation of Deborah Flick's (2000:36) interpretation of the differences between debate and dialogue, see Appendix 5. As will be seen later, these too were found to be inadequate for the stage to which the team had reached, namely, 'norming' and then 'performing'.

Quotes such as, 'give me feedback on how I can be more effective then' and 'it was my fault, I should have done more preparation beforehand' were being heard within the workshops by June 2002; team members were becoming more open to others in the team and also admitting their own mistakes. Here is a series of dialogues, using the Flick (2000:36) model (see Appendix 5) held throughout a workshop in June 2002, some eighteen months into the development process. Each dialogue took forty five minutes, with the fifteen minutes allocated for feedback (see Appendix 22) reflection and learning.

These were the team learnings from the dialogues:

'We need to understand clearly our objective and process – and is
everyone signed up to them?'
'The differences between dialogue and debate.'
'We never give ourselves enough time to "bottom" issues – and what
does "bottoming" mean?' (This was later discussed in more depth.)
'We need to agree our priorities and timings – first thing.'
'We need to express what we think and feel – we don't at the moment.'
'It is difficult to focus on the process when one is 'involved'.'
'We need to focus on one issue at a time.'

Soon after this workshop, one member of the team had the opportunity to use dialogue in a major meeting with others from outside of the company. The team member commented that, 'The dialogue process is certainly helpful, and I gained a very clear understanding of where they were coming from. Although it has taken my understanding a lot further, I can't get my message through to them; they are not hearing what I am saying. The challenge is that when the others don't know about dialogue, and are at the meeting to win the best deal that they can for themselves, then you have limitations on its use. Still, I will continue to practise the process.'

Thirteenth workshop

By September 2002, members were assisting each other in identifying strengths and weaknesses in their own performances, and suggesting ways to improve their effectiveness (Megginson 1994:29-32 + 1996:411-428).

At the end of the day this was the review:

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
The feedback we gave each other –	We wandered a bit The discussion could	Go through what went well and what could have gone

helping each other to build our own personal development plan	have been crisper	even better before our next dialogue.
Good fun		
Good energy levels		
The day flowed		
A good afternoon discussion – we made progress		
All the team contributed		
We got through it all		

Researcher's comments

The range of emotions has disappeared, and there is a positive energy from assisting each other. All of the team rated the exercise ten out of ten, and two months later each team member reported back to the full top management team on what specific actions they were taking to put into practice what their colleagues had suggested. The researcher feels that the stage of 'performing' is appropriate for the team now, or certainly during this specific workshop.

In June 2002 the CEO commented that, 'the problem with dialogue is that it's boring; there needs to be argument to keep the energy high.' One of the team responded that, 'perhaps there is room for both: debate sometimes and sometimes dialogue?'

Researcher's comments

The 'guidelines' being used at the time were adapted from those of Deborah Flick (2000:36) – see Appendix 5 – which invite questions after relaxing and quietening the mind – not what this team needed at the time for they already had respect and trust for each other, and the guidelines were holding them back. In retrospect, the researcher believes they needed the opportunity to

communicate with passion and energy about their key issues and not be held back by some arbitrary guidelines. Although one of the team commented that perhaps there was room for both debate and dialogue, the researcher didn't 'hear' the comment until he reflected later on the workshop.

During the latter half of 2002 one of the team remarked of a process to capture the team's comments, introduced by the facilitator, 'That was an awful process!' However like many 'hard' comments made within the team, this was directed at the issue and not the individual, and the researcher felt that there were no negative feelings directed towards the person of the facilitator behind the comments.

In November 2002, the character of the workshops changed and the momentum slowed down; this may have been because the key urgent and important issues had been addressed, for example, succession planning; or that the facilitator was not stimulating the team enough to keep their energy levels high; or just because the CEO was tired. The team addressed this by commissioning feedback from managers and the team itself; and from internal focus groups, domestic customers, opinion formers and contractors. This information was then fed back, with strengths and gaps identified, and then analysed in more detail: what was already covered by current initiatives, what required further work, and what was not currently on the agenda. Each member then took responsibility for a key area and used a workshop to report back to the team as to what he/she was intending to do. These were modified during their dialogues together and action plans agreed upon.

Researcher's comments

As can be seen, the team members were sometimes ahead of the facilitator in their understanding of what was needed. 'Guidelines' or 'rules' were used to start the process of dialogue, and as the team acknowledged, it was interesting to understand what is seen to be the difference between dialogue and debate. However, although the guidelines might have been useful in 'forming' and 'storming', they were a hindrance in the 'norming' and

'performing' stages. One key sticking point was that of arguing together. Whereas both sets of guidelines precluded argument, see Appendix 5, by the time the team members began to trust each other, they needed some constructive disagreement, both to give their discussions energy, and to understand better the beliefs and assumptions being held. The researcher didn't become aware of the literature on 'constructive conflict' until 2003, see 2.3.2 above (for example Collins 2001:77+115; Drucker 1980:24; Jones 1989:110; and Schein 1988:47), so took no action to encourage it; in fact to the contrary, he felt that it should be discouraged as it was most uncomfortable for him, see section 5.5.1 in the findings chapter.

Interviews and EFQM RapidScore workshop

In February and March 2003 two in-depth assessments were carried out. One: interviews with twenty nine YW managers and top management team members to ascertain their perceptions of the top management team now and a year ago, Exhibit 4.3. And two: a second independent two-day EFQM Rapid Score assessment, again carried out by Dean Fathers, using the Business Excellence Model, involving eight senior managers from YW.

Interviews with top management team and managers

Here are the scores given by the interviewees. The usual questions were asked which exclude personal performance, plus a further six questions based upon Jim Collins' book Good to Great (2001), see Appendix 14. So the following picture emerges; see also Exhibit 4.3:

	Jan 2001	Dec 2001	Feb 2002	Feb 2003
TMT performance	6.2	6.9	7.0	7.8
Company performance	6.1	7.2	7.1	8.4
Employee relationships	6.2	6.1	6.3	7.2
Customer services	7.6	6.5	6.5	7.6
Internal communications	5.6	6.2	6.4	6.9
Level five leadership	-	-	6.6	7.6

First who...then what	-	-	6.1	6.8
Confront the brutal facts	-	-	5.8	6.9
The hedgehog concept	-	-	6.5	7.7
Culture of disciple	-	-	6.3	7.2
Technology accelerator	-	-	6.6	8.1

The following evenly represent comments made by interviewees:

'People are much better at saying thank you these days.'

'That silo culture is still holding things up.'

'We're no longer making excuses and on the defensive – now we do admit, put a hand up, accept the so-called brutal facts – it comes from greater sensitivity and confidence.'

'World class? Yes, we are now. The UK number one status will carry the world number one ranking.'

'The closeness between YW and the top contenders does mean that one fairly serious cock-up by YW will blow it all away for us.'

'We certainly have the passion - bags of it about - yes, even the van drivers in some places.'

'The mission is clear-cut. Everyone buys into it too.

EFQM RapidScore workshop

Here are the comments that the researcher overheard in the EFQM workshop:

'In today's Yorkshire Water credit is given where credit's due.'

'While Yorkshire Water is being looked at as a 'best practice' organisation in certain disciplines, there was some positive thinking about 'getting out there to see best practice elsewhere and bring it back to the company'.'

'Top management team initiatives in looking at other utility practices, evaluating management in the wider world, learning through external bodies – all this is seen as proactive leadership.'

'The brutal fact is that we don't learn enough from things that have gone wrong', said one interviewee. Conversely, others thought that the top management team and managers were getting much better at learning through experience. 'We've set up a process to see where things went wrong – it's honest and helpful', said another interviewee.

EFQM RapidScore results in March 2003 (breakdown of scores not calculated by idm and therefore not available)

	Actual scores	% scores
Leadership	62/100	62
Policy + Strategy	50/80	63
People	52/90	57
Partnerships + Resources	54/90	60
Processes	74/140	53
Customer Results	126/200	63
People Results	15/90	17
Society Results	12/60	20
Key Performance Results	110/150	74
Total Score	**555/1000**	

In April 2003 after the second EFQM Rapid Score Assessment, the independent assessor, Dean Fathers, wrote to the researcher saying, 'Firstly, the overall self-assessment score allocated to YW has increased from 422 (in January 2001) to 555 currently (in February 2003). During this period the organisation has also risen from 7th place in the OFWAT league table to 2nd. These are both significant achievements in a relatively short period of time and a major factor in their achievement has undoubtedly been the enhanced performance of the Board. There is significant evidence that the Board have been leading by example to deliver a change in the organisational culture. Criteria for 'role model' behaviour have been developed and the top management team has been consistently displaying the desired behaviours. This has started to cascade throughout the organisation and a greater openness and acceptance of the need for continuous improvement is evident.

The team of managers who undertook the recent EFQM assessment indicated that they see a real togetherness and cohesiveness at Board level. For instance, the directors are all personally involved in a range of community activities designed to promote the reputation of YW. There is also significant evidence of directors' personal involvement with stakeholders, including staff. This has led to an increase in the Board's understanding of stakeholder needs and expectations, together with improvements in the effectiveness of communication within the organisation. Some of the comments we captured during the assessment were:

'We have a vision and values and these are known throughout the organisation.'

'We have a set of values and behaviours that have been created by the Top Management Team and they role-model these behaviours consistently.'

'Personal involvement in … community activities are included in the personal objectives of the Top Management Team…'

'Our 'talk back' programme enables people at all levels within the organisation to have direct face to face contact with the Directors and to discuss issues of importance to them.'

Interviews with the CEO

In June 2001 the CEO was interviewed again to gain his perspective:

Q: 'Are there any challenges for you as CEO now that the team is developing?'

Answer from the CEO: 'There are always challenges.'

Q: 'Is it (this process) difficult?'

A: 'Yes'

Q: 'Is it annoying?'

A: 'Yes.'

Q: 'And is it essential?'

A: 'Yes, and most uncomfortable!'

Q: 'What are your feelings about the process, and how can it be improved?'

A: 'We could improve if we had more time to devote to this, but we haven't, so it's as good as it can be. We are dealing with difficult issues; and if you create an atmosphere where everyone feels they have a right to an opinion, it creates discomfort. It's a difficult line; democracy does create tensions.'

Q: 'Are you, personally, being stretched enough during the meetings? I see you doodle on the paper in front of you.'

A: 'Yes, I feel tired afterwards. I don't come in trepidation, but during the meetings I have to balance what is happening here with my other responsibilities, for example, knowing what my chairman would wish and think about our decisions.'

The CEO was interviewed again in November 2002, after two years of the process:

Q: 'How have these last two years been for you, regarding your team and the progress that has been made?'

A: 'It seems more than two years, is it only two years? It has almost been an unqualified success as a process. If I could have predicted the team and business benefits, I would have said, 'That'll do for me!' When the City asks me why we are performing so well, I tell them that one of the prime reasons is the togetherness, performance and drive of the team. The impact of the togetherness of the team is immeasurable and undisputable; if I were to be spiritual I'd say that there has been almost an 'ethereal' effect. There is no doubt that the organisation has never before had such a cohesive team and the effect has been enormous; for the performance of the business as a whole it has been staggering!'

Q: 'What did you think of the process that the team has been through?'

A: 'The process has sometimes been slightly chaotic or perhaps too subtle for me to understand – we lost our way a bit seven to eight months into the process. A big learning for the facilitators must be that they have to offer a route map of the journey, otherwise we spend time in a fog and we get pissed off. Also, at times we have been given too much information at a superficial level – glimpses – and then the curtain has been closed again.'

Researcher: 'Thank you for your time. I look forward to our next meeting.'

CEO: 'Hold on! You rush in and out of my office asking all of your questions. Before you leave, give me feedback on my performance'. As requested, the researcher returned to his seat and gave his perception of the CEO's performance, which was a reflection of the story set out in this chapter.

In a follow-up interview in January 2004, one year after the completion of the research, the CEO was interviewed again by the researcher.

Q: 'To what do you attribute your success and the success of the company?'

A: 'Firstly, luck...yes, lots of luck. And secondly, and a long way in front of anything else is the team: everyone in the organisation has been able to see the team working together and that has made the big difference. We have had very talented and strong individuals before, but never have we had the strength we have now as we work as a team.'

Q: 'How much do you tell your team about what is going on; because there must be a great deal of confidential stuff you have to deal with?'

A: 'If I'm in doubt, I tell them – and not once has anyone in the team ever broken a confidence.'

Q: 'How has your newly appointed director reacted to joining the team?'

A: 'He said that he had never been in a team that argued so much and yet got on so well!'

Researcher's comments

The facilitators learned a great deal from this top management team which was certainly a 'performing' team by the start of 2003. It still has improvements that it can make as the comments of managers above show. The researcher still needs to understand some issues: where conflict and argument fit into dialogue, whether there is a 'road map' of the journey that can be shared with the team, and whether the process followed with Yorkshire Water will work with other companies.

Feedback from team members on this story

(All of the above case study was sent to team members in March 2004; some fifteen months after the end of this research project at Yorkshire Water.)

'It's very interesting to read and is a true reflection of what I felt going through the process. Now I know what you jotted in the black book all the time.' 'I enjoyed the story – and recognised parts of it (many actually). I liked the 'research comments' and thought they added value. But felt you needed an overall analysis/summing up at the end. I guess your answer will be that this is in the rest of the report – but a YW section may help understanding. (Researcher's note: this has now been added at the end of this section, headed: 'Summary of the Yorkshire Water Story'). I would have found it useful if you had reminded the reader of the important aspects of the techniques as we read through the paper – but that is probably down to my bad memory and the folk you are writing the document for will understand the detail' (Researcher's note: Appendix 19 lists some of the techniques and why they were used). 'Enjoyed reading the chapter.' 'It brought back an enormous number of memories for the two years, some pleasant, some very frustrating but all valuable. It also helped me to see the whole process rather than just the selected highlights that my own unprompted memory tends to recall. I strongly agree that the value of constructive conflict was not recognised at the time and we continue to see the benefit of that and are mature enough to handle it and recognise it for what it is. Less mature teams would probably struggle to get beyond the conflict into the constructive. What I have also come to realise is that maintaining a high performing team is a task that needs continuous attention. (The team) all feel that over the last 12 months our performance has slipped because we have paid less attention to this and less attention to the behavioural issues which you, as facilitator, constantly drew our attention to. The positive aspect of this is that we have recognised it and we can probably address this ourselves although we have chosen to address it by asking you to come and help us with an intervention aimed at refreshing our behaviours…I suspect that there is a generic issue for teams here and a positive piece of guidance would be for all high performing teams to periodically spend time reviewing their performance and taking action to avoid drop off. I feel that you have underestimated the role (perhaps intentionally) that you and Peter played in our improved performance. We have worked with other facilitators both before and since and none has been such a positive

force for improved performance as yourselves...As with all feedback I am sure you will feel free to take account of it or not.'

Researcher's comments on the feedback

An overall analysis/summing up, the techniques or process used, and discussion about the role of conflict, are all dealt with in the conclusions chapter of this thesis. The researcher has not come to any conclusions upon why the facilitators worked so well with the team, perhaps in part it was because they had both run their own top management teams, and perhaps as each workshop focused upon relationship-building within the team, some of these exercises will have strengthened the bond between the team and facilitators. What has become apparent is the massive amount of reflection and sense-making that has been required by the researcher in preparing this account; and the value of spending considerable time working with the teams using action research.

Workshop in June 2004

One and a half years after completing this research with the Yorkshire Water top management team, the facilitator was invited back to interview the team, which still had ten members - two had left and two joined - and spend a day plus a night with them reviewing how they were now performing as a team. The photos and graphs below show the team's reflections; note that performance is perceived to have improved in June 2004, see Exhibit 4.6; comments made during the workshop expressed concern as to whether performance really had improved or whether 'the bar had been lowered' reflecting the team's expectations of themselves. As can be seen from the four-stage team development model photo of June 2004, see Exhibit 4.7, some of the team felt that there was now a split between the 'old' and 'new' members, it was agreed at the end of this workshop that the relationship-building exercises had assisted in narrowing this gap, and written feedback after the session included: 'I feel that the 'new team' is part way through storming but has not stormed very violently'; 'Moving from norming to

performing'; and 'I think we're moving between norming and performing – I can't say I've felt the 'new' team has stormed at all – perhaps after last week we'll go back to that phase'. The outcome of our time together was that it was agreed that focus over the past year had been on 'grinding out the issues' and now it was recognised to be time to get more balance into the team's time together, so regular 'away-days' learning and relationship-building together was agreed upon. And amongst the actions taken away by the team was one to find another facilitator to continue this work, for the team required a continuing input of knowledge and skills, and the present researcher/facilitator expressed his feeling of being 'sucked dry' by the team of the knowledge that he could share with them.

Researcher's comments on the workshop

Where the team is on the four-stage development model is dealt with in the findings chapter under section 5.4.2. It is interesting that this is the first time that the researcher, me, has gained comments from the team of their perceived position on the four-stage group development model.

Finally, this is what an internal document produced in October 2004 called 'From Good to Great – Vision 2010' had to say: "Over the last five years, our vision has been to be 'known as the best water company in the UK.' At the beginning of the last AMP period, we were known as the worst after the well-documented difficulties of the Nineties and at the time, we developed our vision to be 'known as the best' to change this perception of the company. Over the last five years we have changed dramatically and in many quarters, we are already known as the best. For example, we are known as the best for efficiency and financial performance; we are known as the best for customer service, both for business and domestic customers; and we are known as the best environmental performer in Business in the Environment's premier league of FTSE250 companies."

Exhibit 4.2: *Graphs*

Questions Asked	February 2002		February 2003	
	Avg.	Range	Avg.	Range
Level Five Leadership	6.6	5 - 9	7.6	6 - 9
First who... then what	6.1	4 - 8	6.8	5 - 9
Confront the brutal facts	5.8	3 - 8	6.9	4 - 9
The Hedgehog Concept	6.5	3 - 9	7.7	4 - 9
Culture of Discipline	6.3	3 - 8	7.2	5 - 9
Technology Accelerator	6.6	4 - 9	8.1	6 - 9
EMT performance	7.0	5 - 8	7.8	6 - 9
YW performance	7.1	6 - 8	8.4	7 - 9
Employee relationships	6.3	4 - 8	7.2	5 - 9
Customer care	6.5	4 - 9	7.6	6 - 9
Internal communications	6.4	4 - 9	6.9	4 - 9
Performance as a Manager	7.0	5 - 9	7.6	6 - 9
Team performance	6.8	4 - 8	7.7	6 - 9
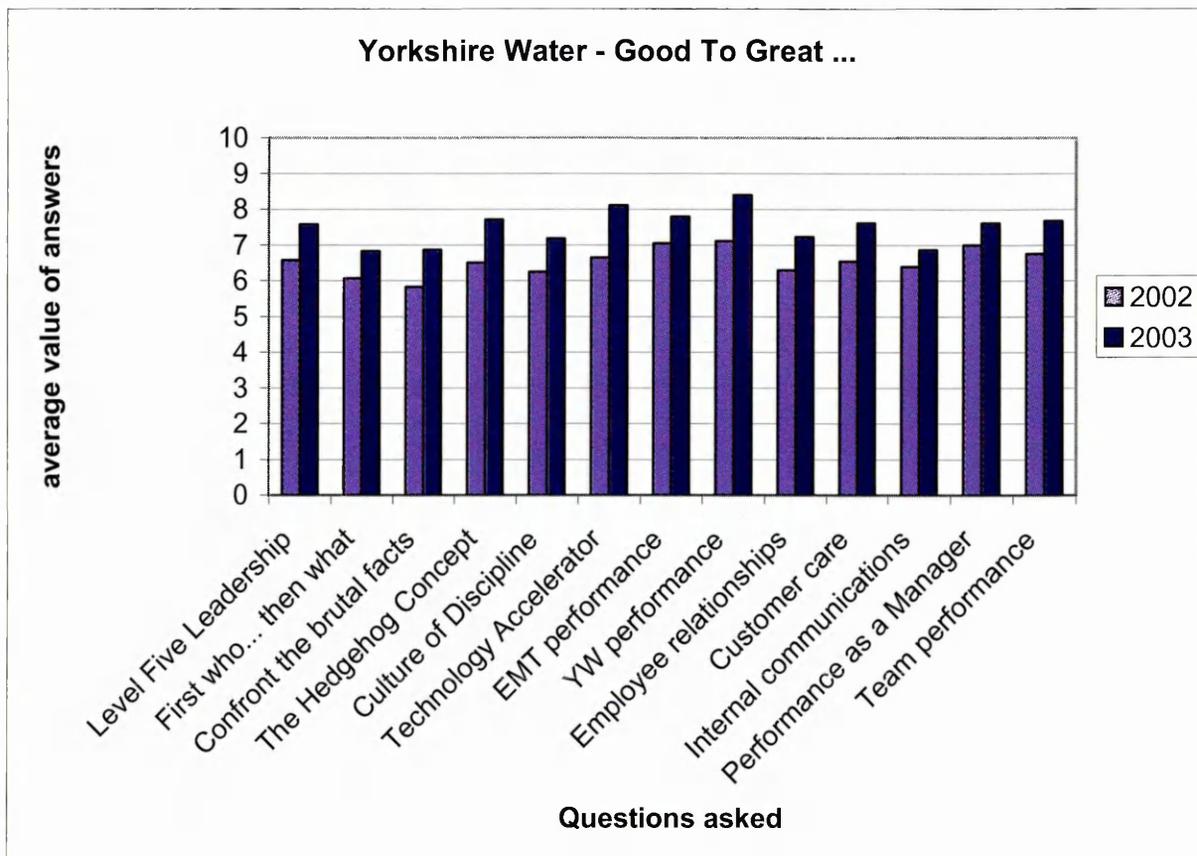
Yorkshire Water - Good To Great ...
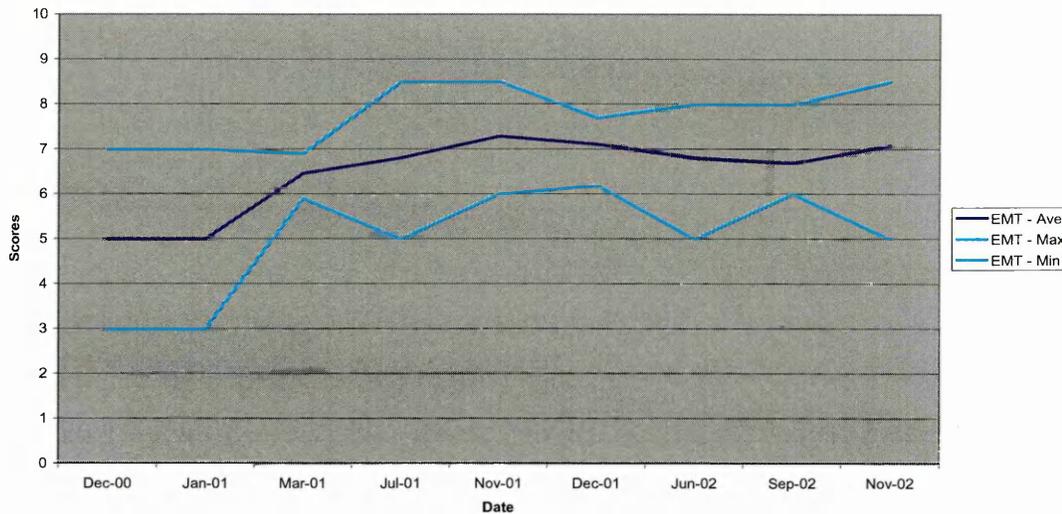
Exhibit 4.4: *Perceptions of Yorkshire Water's Top Management Team from December 2000 to November 2002, using the business measures set out in Appendix 7: By themselves*
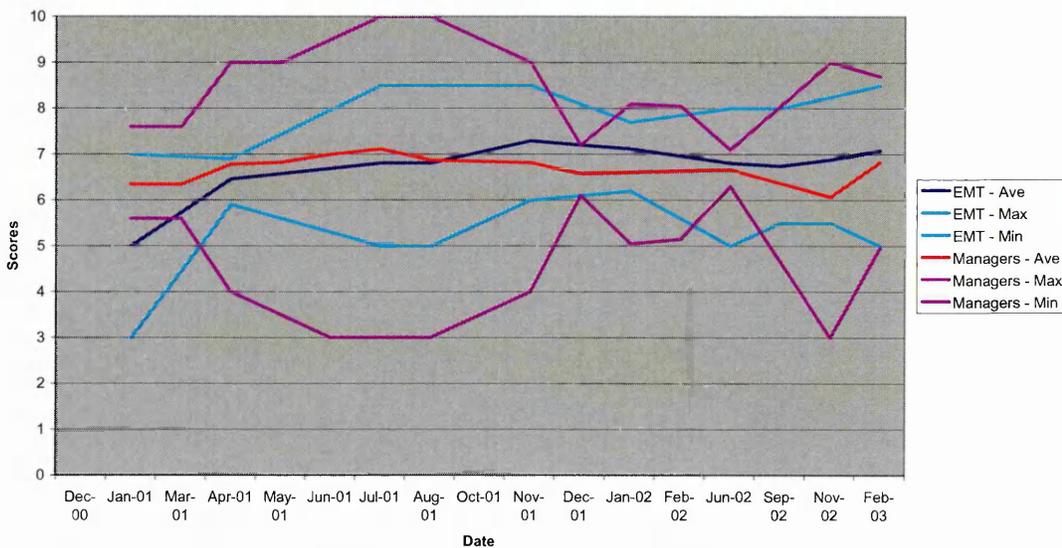
Exhibit 4.5: *Perceptions of Yorkshire Water's Top Management Team to February 2003, using the business measures set out in Appendix 7: By themselves and managers*
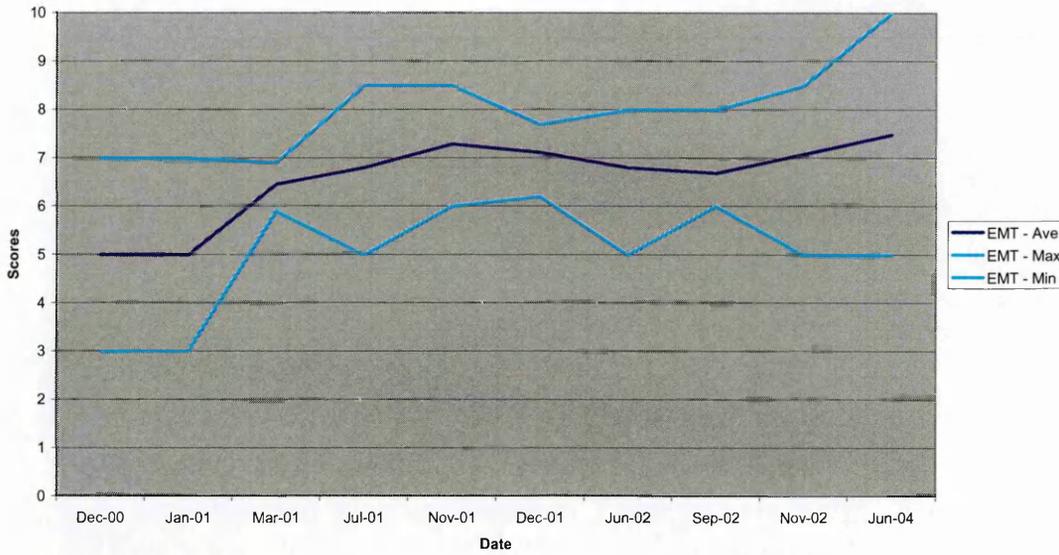
Exhibit 4.6: *Perceptions of Yorkshire Water's Top Management Team December 2000 to June 2004, using the business measures set out in Appendix 7: By themselves*
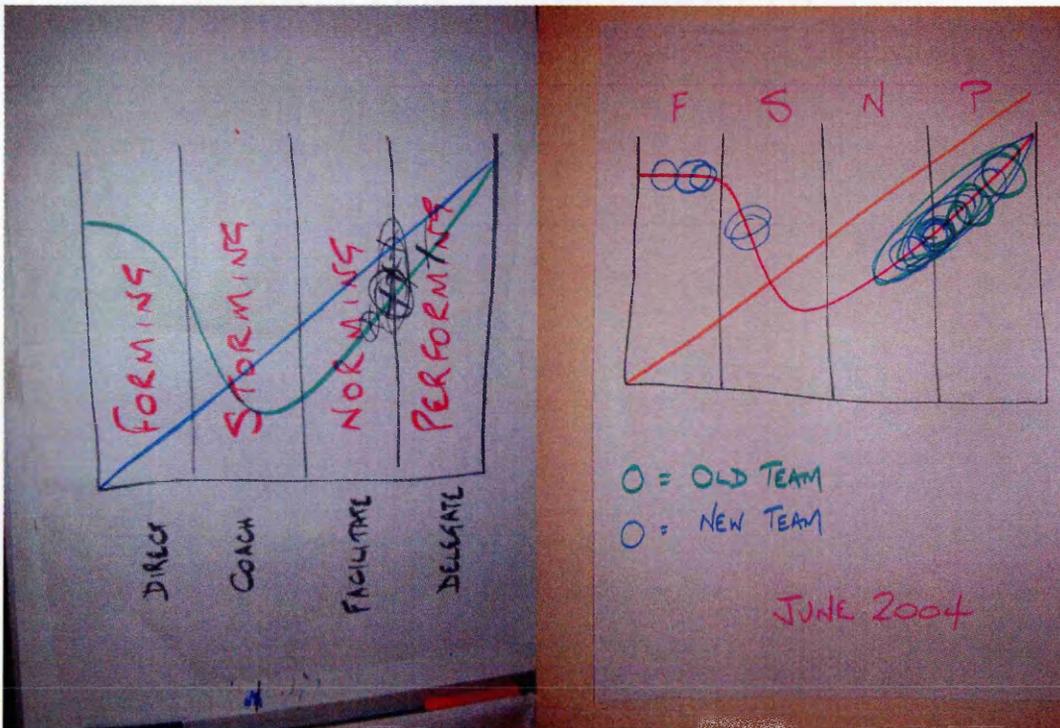
Exhibit 4.7: *Yorkshire Water's Four-Stage Development Models for June 2002 and June 2004*

Researcher's comments on the exhibits above

Exhibit 4.2 shows an improvement from 2002 to 2003 for every question, and although this research covers from November 2000, it was not until February 2002 that dialogue was used with the Yorkshire Water team. Exhibit 4.4 shows the team's perceptions of their performance at each workshop; then, Exhibit 4.5 superimposes managers' perceptions of performance over that same period and finally, Exhibit 4.6 has been extended to take into account the team's perceptions of their business performance in June 2004. It was only in June 2002, with Yorkshire Water, that the researcher recognised the importance of requesting the team to identify where they were on the four-stage development model; as can be seen the team all placed their marks around the norming/performing stages in June 2002. In June 2004, when two of the team members had changed, some of the team felt that they were norming/performing and others felt that there was a split within the team between forming/storming and norming/performing. This is discussed in the findings chapter in the 'The stages of top management teams', chapter 5.4.2 Finding 2 – suffice it to say, there was a great deal of discussion by the team once they had placed their perceptions on the flipcharts.

Summary of the Yorkshire Water Story

The recently appointed CEO formed his team during the year 2000; upon meeting the facilitators in November of that year, he set out some guidelines: about fifteen days a year would be allocated to development, part-personal and part-team development; he agreed measures; and emphasised that it would be the team's decision whether the facilitators would be engaged or not.

The first year was spent focusing upon revisiting the company vision and values; identifying and living the team's purpose and the behaviours needed for the team to mirror the company's values; and focusing on relationship-building within the team. It was only at the start of year two that dialogue was introduced as a process that might be beneficial to the team's effectiveness,

this was added to resolve identified issues; relationship-building was a key part of the second year's workshops too. This second year, like the first, continued to see an upward movement in the performance measures as perceived by both the team and their managers. The third year, the researcher was informed, focused on business process issues in which the researcher/facilitator was not involved. However, in June 2004, when the researcher/facilitator was invited back to interview the team and run a 'weather check' workshop to identify the present position of the team, he found that relationship-building was no longer a top priority, a number of behavioural processes had been discontinued – for example, starting each weekly meeting with good news stories, and monitoring of 'role-model' behaviours – and there was a perception amongst some members that there was a divide in the team between old and new members. At the time of the interviews, all the individuals recognised that although their focus had been directed towards business process issues, now was the time to return to relationship-building workshops being a top priority. There was a concern, after members marked their performance higher than in either 2001 or 2002, that perhaps they were not performing at a higher level, perhaps they had just lowered their standards. All agreed that there was further great potential for performance improvements within and by the new team; and their continuing extraordinary commitment to their team and to each other made it likely that that potential would be realised.

Chapter 4.2 Loop (October 2002 to September 2003)

Introduction

By the time work was started with this client, the facilitators had used the process of interviewing and workshops with two other top management teams and also since early 2002, the theoretical dialogue process, so the overall process agreed was: initial interviews with the top team, managers and staff; followed by two-day workshops every four to six weeks for an initial period of one year; this was the process initially agreed upon by the CEO and HR Director in October 2002, and then adopted by Loop's top management team at the following month's initial workshop. What had not yet been found were: an articulated process and alternative guidelines for enhancing team meetings; whether teams would plot their own progress of development; and whether this process of development would work with other top management teams besides that of Yorkshire Water.

The CEO and HR director made contact, initially, because of their concerns over the lack of effectiveness of the top management team; a year later when the research finished, that concern was still present, so much so that the CEO disbanded his original team and created a new one. The conclusions of this chapter are: that *the process followed by Yorkshire Water does not work unless all of the team members are committed to each others' and the team's success; this is so, however committed the individuals are to the success of the organisation and its people.* The issues of conflict and argument in dialogue, and whether there is a road map, were better understood but still unresolved; however, as will be seen, what did become clear was that there is a place for a dialogue process to be followed by the team for keeping them on track during their conversations.

Company Background

Loop Customer Management is a recent offspring of Yorkshire Water and a subsidiary of The Kelda Group plc, dealing with customer calls on behalf of a

number of household names. At the start of 2002, the company employed some four hundred and thirty four people, at two locations in the UK; it was estimated by the CEO that, by the end of 2004, the figure would have more than doubled to nine hundred employees; and turnover would also have increased from £15 million to £25 million annually, through gaining a number of substantial customers. This was in line with the brief given to the top team in late 2001: 'to rapidly grow the business over this next two years'. Looking at the CEO's 2003 forecast in July 2004; it seemed highly unlikely that the predictions would be achieved because redundancies had been made in the wake of losing a relatively new and substantial client.

Overview of the journey

Date	Activity	Facilitators' Involvement	Researcher's Story
October 2002	Initial Meeting with CEO + HR Director	Peter Field and the researcher/facilitator met this potential client, heard their company story and the perceived needs of the top management team; together they drew up a draft win/win agreement; and agreed a provisional timetable for interviews and workshops.	Commenced obtaining data including initial scores of the CEO and HR director's perceptions of the team's performance.
October/November 2002	Interviews of Managers and Staff	Colin McGarrigle and Liz Harrison interviewed twenty managers and staff, asking each of them forty two questions, see Appendix 2.	Read through and filed interviews identifying key issues which are recorded in this thesis. Consolidated the performance measures from each interviewee.
November 2002	Interviews with the top management team	The researcher/facilitator interviewed all members of the team, asking them the same forty two questions, see Appendix 2.	Carried out interviews, checking with the interviewees that what the researcher had written reflected their own

		perceptions of their answers; consolidated what the researcher felt were the key issues, to be fed back at the first workshop for discussion.	At this and each subsequent workshop the team recorded their perceived scores of performance measures and, on a flipchart, recorded their reflections upon each discussion.
November 2002	Initial workshop	Peter Field and the researcher/facilitator shared the proposed process that the team might follow; discussed whether members wished to be a team or a group (Casey 1985; Katzenbach + Smith 1993); gave feedback from all of the interviews; and completed a win/win agreement with the team.	
December 2002 to September 2003	Six Workshops	Again Peter Field and the researcher/facilitator followed a process of self-development and team development over the two days of each workshop. Behaviour analysis data was also taken whilst the facilitator and researcher/facilitator observed the team in their discussions. Where the facilitators felt it added value, these behaviours were fed back to the team during the	In addition to continuing the research started in the initial workshop, the four-stage group development model was shared and, at each workshop, the team identified at which stage they

workshops.	thought/felt they were at in the model. Comments made by team members were also recorded by the researcher. Workshop proceedings and behaviour analysis sheets have been analysed, recorded and filed; and lessons learned are included in this thesis.
January 2004	Meeting with CEO + HR Director	The researcher asked for reflections upon the journey, and comments on how the company was progressing. These reflections are included in the story set out below.

Initial Interviews in October and November 2002

Managers and staff interviews:

These managers' and staff observations were collected, consolidated, fed back to the top management team at their first workshop; and adopted by them as reflecting the perceptions of those within the business.

Comments	Questions	Positives	Could do better
Succession planning is a biggie!	Could the group board give more encouragement?	Loop is doing pretty well.	We are dependent on our group company.
Fun day that was organised was OK, but not very classy.	What is our financial model?	Extra resources have been put into the bidding process.	Our Vision - things have gone quiet.
We are listened to, but then no action is taken.	Is the 24-hour helpline really a top priority?	We have been awarded the Charter Mark.	The top management team are 'control freaks'.
Car parking is a problem for us.	Will our new office be a lamb or springboard?	Our CEO is becoming increasingly aware.	Is our staff survey manipulated?
It (the company) has a small distance to travel, but it's a very steep hill.	What lessons are we learning?	Our open plan office. This is a good place to work.	The top management team decisions are based on perceptions.
Loop needs to find a balance between that…risk-averse conservatism and 'being brave'.	Is there any team interaction? IT provider, is this a negotiable relationship?	Management development. The staff survey is a positive. Our Fun Day.	The top management team are not living out the company
What is the company 'style'?		The line managers are	

Why do we need to bring in consultants?	approachable.	values.
The top management team should be strategic.	We are a committed and loyal company.	Managers feel undervalued.
The top management team is intimidating.		There are too many initiatives.
The top management team must either embrace the senior management team or restructure it.		Managers do not walk the talk.
Loop needs to tackle 'lifers'.		Staff dealing with our new customer.
The canteen needs attention.		Internal communications.
Graduate recruitment programme.		Open plan office.
		Lack of trust.
		Pay structure.

Top management team interviews, which were fed back in the first and second workshops:

Comments	Questions	Positives	Could do better
We are much better than we were.	What is my role?	We are much better than we were.	Top management team and senior management team
	What is the top management		

	team's role?	Our professionalism is improving.	relationship.
We act as individuals.	What do clients love/hate about us?	We want to succeed.	Think more strategically.
We have our own agendas.	What do clients want of us?	Some clients rate us highly.	Live our values.
We need to be more strategic.	What direction are we going?	Company got off to a storming start.	Work as a team.
We must grow to trust the senior management team.	Could we handle increased business?	We are doing well.	Prioritise.
We could transform the organisation.	What is our vision?	Potentially we have a great future.	Keep focused.
The company needs more clients.	Will our parent company ever appreciate us?	The company are looking to us for a lead.	CEO needs to share his thinking.
We have a year to prove ourselves.	Do friendships get in the way?		Running meetings.
It is good to be in a growing company.			More demanding of each other.

First workshop

The first workshop, in November 2002, discussed the data above; when reflecting on that discussion, team members' initial comments were: 'Sometimes we are a bit too polite.' 'Sometimes I feel threatened by some of you.' 'If we don't trust each other, I would suggest that we haven't a cat in hell's chance of getting anyone else to trust us.'

Second workshop

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In the December 2002 workshop, dialogue was introduced and Flick's (2000:36) guidelines on 'doing dialogue', see Appendix 5, were shared with the team, as were Yankelovich's three features of dialogue (1999:41-45), see Appendix 6. This was followed by a dialogue answering the question: 'What is the top management team's purpose?'

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
We listened to each other.	The CEO contributed disproportionately.	Note these at our next dialogue.
(One of us) checked for understanding.	The discussion was too long.	
We looked after each other.	(One of us) should have been brought in earlier.	
Lots of questions asked.	We struggled to relax the mind.	
We were trying to understand each other.		
We challenged specifics.		
We had two early votes.		

Researcher's comments

There has been little sign of the concerns over 'not working together' in either of these first two workshops, and little emotion except an enthusiasm to get involved with the process. The team is possibly at the 'forming' stage with this new extended team that now includes the two facilitators.

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Third (January 2003) workshop: See Appendix 23 for reviews of the dialogues

The feelings comment of the final review of 'no pathway', see Appendix 23, led to the team producing its own 'process for dialogue'.

This was:

1. Relax and quiet the mind
2. Select a chair, scribe and timekeeper
3. Review lessons learned
4. Clarify and write down the question
5. Review the meeting.

As will be seen later this process was continuously returned to.

Researcher's comments

This workshop exuded energy and was more heated and participants found it hard to 'get in'. In none of the discussions was there any inclination to look back on previous learnings before moving on – that is why, when they realised this, they added 'review lessons learned' in their process. There is an increasing openness to share both thoughts and feelings; the 'forming' is becoming less apparent, and 'storming' more noticeable.

Fourth (February 2003) workshop: See Appendix 23 for reviews of the dialogues

The final review of the two days is summarised thus:

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make

	sure next time goes even better?
New learnings. Near the edge of something different. Different parts of jigsaw starting to come together. Using previous learnings. Less tiring.	Use more of the learnings. Decide upon levels of detail. We need less consciousness of process and more focus on what we are trying to do with it. Outcome v process.	Use more of the learnings. Decide upon levels of detail.

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Conscious incompetence sometimes; Frustrated with detail; Questioning myself, Same feelings keep coming up; Hopeful.

Researcher's comments

The team place themselves at the 'storming' stage of their development. The researcher's belief was that they still had this to come: they still had to confront the brutal facts between team members. For example, can one team member 'opt out' – as in the stepping stones exercise? They now have a meetings process, which is being used regularly; in time this should have an effect upon the process outcome and feelings. When reflecting upon the workshop, the researcher wrote in his review notes, 'If the team continue with their present level of commitment and love of learning, there is no reason to doubt that we will achieve the desired outcome, together.' It is interesting to note that this is the first time that the researcher asked the team to plot their position on the four-stage group development model.

Fifth workshop

At the start of the March 2003 workshop, the team worked on improving their 'process of dialogue'.

'Our process' for dialogue:

1.   Social 'catch-up'
2.   Relax and quieten the mind
3.   Select chair, scribe and timekeeper
4.   Review previous learnings
5.   Reflection time: consider, capture and prepare (one minute)
6.   Clarify the question
7.   Reflect on the question if not done before meeting
8.   Agree output
9.   Agree methodology and timeframe
10.   Do it and capture decisions and actions continuously summarising and checking understanding
11.   Check the output answers the question
12.   Review next agenda
13.   Review: what went well, what could have gone better, and what action needed
14.   Reds/Blues (sharing perceived good and bad behaviours between team members)

The team were then asked to compare their present conversations with those of two months ago. This is the result:

Then January 2003	Now March 2003
Hectic.	Considered.
Lots of detail.	Learning.
Unstructured.	Quieter.
(Parent company) focused.	Higher level.
No chance to get in.	Balanced.

Tiring.	Contributions.
Confused.	Focused.
Inconclusive.	More strategic.
Little outcome.	More business than client focused.
Poorly defined.	More future than now.
	Lots of 'trying' going on.

Then the team were asked: Where are you on the four-stage group development model? (Each member marked their perception with a cross on a flipchart.)
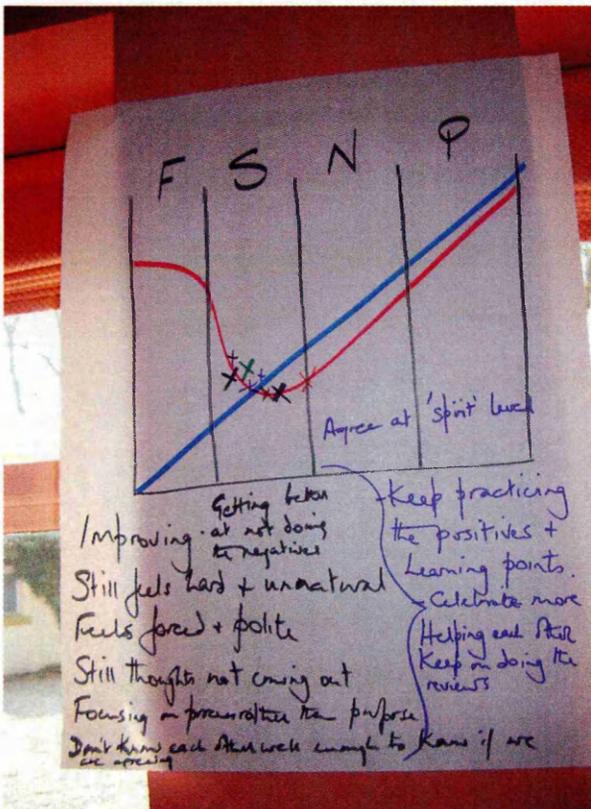
Exhibit 4.8: *Team's perceptions marked on a flipchart*

After being asked, what does it feel like, their responses were:

'Improving.'

'Still feels hard and unnatural.'

'We are getting better at not doing the negatives.'

'Feels forced and polite.'

'Still our thoughts are not coming out.'

'Focusing on our process rather than our purpose.'

'We don't know each other well enough to know if we are agreeing or not.'

So the team were asked: What do we need to do to enhance our meetings?

'Keep practising the positives and learning points.'

'Celebrate more.'

'Helping each other.'

'Keep on doing the reviews.'

'Agree at a 'spirit' level.'

The final review of the two-day workshop is summarised thus:

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
End of lots of things. Improving dialogue. Improved dialogue process. Learning styles. Presentation feedback. Update for (one of us). Commitment. Socialising differently.	Better control of emotions. Self-anchoring. Timekeeping. Commitment from all of us. Not sticking to the question. Needs all of us.	-

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: It was odd without (one of the team) for part of the time; Also odd without (another member of the team) for another part of the time; Drained; Choked; Starting to knit together.

Researcher's comments
Reflections immediately after the workshop were on homework, commitment, progress and dialogue: Homework: It was all done, in fact more than expected, for example, the team was very clear on what each conversation issue should be. The team now exude integrity and they only agree to do what they know they will achieve. Commitment: This is the first time that any members of the team have been missing, even for parts of sessions.

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Progress: The researcher was impressed with the immediate enthusiasm to enhance the team's own dialogue process, after being shown a fellow client's work – A4e Work – who had given permission for it to be shared.

Dialogue: A learning for the researcher was that, only the participants can identify at which stage they are, in the four-stage group development model. The first dialogue was slower, each giving the others space to share their opinions and answer the question; the team felt that although they were improving, they were still in 'storming'.

Sixth workshop

At the May 2003 workshop, it was agreed to focus on enhancing the effectiveness of the top management team, by addressing a number of issues.

Dialogue One: What would success look like for the top management team and each individual within their specific role?

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
Sorted out our question.	Took ages to decide the issue.	Keep trying. Vote?
More focus.	We need to work out how to operate when we are not all present.	We need to do more dialogue on our team's effectiveness.
Kept at essence not the detail.		
Good initial proposal.	Did we achieve our process outcome?	Keep the process going and practise.
Good follow up programme.		Be conscious of this and provide an answer.
Good chair.		

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Dealt with the issue not played the process, which was more unconscious this time. On time!	

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Impatient; Less dominated; None; Content; Not as tiring.

Dialogue Two: This was a continuation from Dialogue One.

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
Focussed. Faster. No 'whys'. Good outcome. Flushing out the question. Good style/manner. Light hearted. Key issue. Chair.	Time keeper – noted. Did not complete – finish in future. Did not review – do it! Review previous sheets – do it!	See previous column for actions.

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Light hearted; Warm; Not dominated; Tired

Dialogue Three

Question one: How has the way we have operated as a team in the last three to six months made you personally feel? Here are some selected comments which the researcher believes give the flavour of what each team member and the team said.

First, these are some of the CEO's comments:

'In the last six months not much has changed. Neither the team nor the company is radically different. I have felt that we have been swimming through treacle for the past four years. Two metaphors: the top team are all cooks and if everyone doesn't agree nothing happens. I'm awaiting a delivery and highwaymen keep getting in the way – we are just not delivering. Six months ago we went to a higher point, we have come back down, and now we are up again but not to where we should be. I have huge feelings of personal frustration. I believe one should lead, follow or get out of the way. During our restructuring I believe that we compromised on the best solutions by accommodating people who shouldn't have been accommodated. I must see added value from the team otherwise we don't need one.'

And these are comments from other team members:

'I feel that I'm swimming against the tide in this team. Restructuring didn't go well: I put a lot of effort into getting facts and wasn't given a try.'

'When we started the development process I felt that I was outside of the team. We reacted, we were not acting as a team, and some of us were being heard more than others. I felt frustrated amongst the chaos. After the first workshop, I came away with the hope that we can all work better as a team. Now, we understand each other better, although we don't always apply that learning; we are moving to being more strategic, and we've learned a lot, for example, where we are taking the business. I still feel that there are rival factions within the team. We are not a world class team yet. And we are still too polite to each other.'

'Huge peaks and troughs for me during these past months. Six months ago I felt like an outsider; it was horrible not being listened to or consulted. Since starting on the development process I've gained fantastic learning: I

understand more about individuals, myself and my values. Sometimes I feel more confident and sometimes not good at all. I used to feel isolated; now I feel much more supported by some of this team. I don't think we will get there – become a great team. Each of us is trying but when we are under pressure the old behaviours return. We are too polite to each other. We are being more strategic but I don't think we are dealing with our issues. We don't come out of our top management team meetings understanding what we have agreed.'

'Started the year with very high job and team satisfaction; morale of both has plummeted since April. It feels like the (function) team have been put out to pasture, and are not valued. Last year we could see that we were adding value, now 'great place to work' isn't happening. Last year there was a team within a team, I was on the inside; now I feel on the outside, and it's an awful place to be. In our meetings we talk about little things, the big things are being ignored. In the last six weeks I don't feel that I've added value, I clock-watch, and if we were not here I should be looking for another job.'

'There is a team within a team who pass things out to the rest of us. Are we being actively or passively excluded? It feels as if there are big people and little people, and the little people are undervalued by others in the team. We have an element of patronising in the team; we are not consulted, and decisions have already been made. Decisions are often not made on hard evidence. It feels that all the activity is going on upon what we have got already, and little on what we need.'

'We are better as a team. We don't spend enough time together. We don't talk about the correct things. Big issues are being addressed but mainly by sub-groups. I feel that I am being informed rather than being involved. There has been no increase in appreciation of my job. I feel isolated, undervalued, and outside of the sales team I feel I'm the only one who understands the need to sell.'

Question two: What actions are we going to take to make the top management team a great and effective team to be in?
(This was written up on a flipchart by one of the team as the discussion progressed.)

To be a great team we need, 'to deliver Loop's business objectives – the needs of Loop are greater than the needs of individuals.'

'Complete honesty amongst all members.'

'Clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and decision-making processes – knowing where you contribute and how you are informed.'

'Freedom to do your job.'

'Trust each other.'

'Actively supporting each other to be the best they can be

– especially when it's a hard message

– all need to accept help in non-judgemental way.'

Question three: How does it need to feel for me (to feel it's a great team)? (This was also written up on a flipchart by one of the team as the discussion progressed.)

'Clearly defined role for what Loop needs and the freedom to do it – if I don't meet the needs of the role I can get the development I need or I can leave.'

'That the big decisions (define what is a big decision) are made collectively but the authority for smaller decisions is well defined.'

'That I add value to the team and that I couldn't be better used elsewhere.'

'Work more collaboratively more often (and meet more often).'

'Everyone is honest with me.'

'Feel that I've always had the chance to express my views where appropriate and the group feels my views are worth listening to.'

'I need to know when you want to listen to my views and when not.'

'Don't give me your views when I don't want them.'

'We play to each others' strengths.'

'I don't want to fight with the team.'

'I need to feel we are better as a business if we do things through the team than if we don't - the team's adding value.'

'I am being supported by the team to achieve the business objectives.'

'I am clear in every item whether it is for action, discussion, information or decision.'

'If people say they're going to do something I know that they will do it.'

Question four: What actions are we going to take to make the top management team a great and effective team to be in?

(This was again captured by a team member on flipcharts.)

'Revisit the terms of reference of the top management team (big decision/little decision), filter the agenda and define the role of company secretary.'

'Complete work on roles and responsibilities.'

'Clarify difference between top management team roles of individuals and line roles of individuals.'

'People are on the top management team because they add value not just because of their role but there's diverse ways of adding value.'

'Responsibility for one to ones, out of which reds/blues emerge.'

'Raise issues in one to ones and not bitch!'

'We commit to deliver or revise action in advance.'

'We are realistic in our promise to deliver.'

'Stop the issue arising rather than make excuses after it.'

'Work in the future not the past.'

Review of dialogue three:

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
To time.	Team within team – more bringing in and taking responsibility for saying so in the meeting.	See previous column for actions.
Pacey.		
Honest.	Didn't look back on previous learnings – do it.	
Inclusive.		
Fundamental issues.	Skirting issues – take responsibility for saying so in the meeting.	

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Odd; Pressurised at CEO's frustration; Excluded; Time dominated; Healthy; Honest; Treacly.

This was the review of the two-day workshop:

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
First day.	All here for both days – team responsibility.	See previous column for actions.
Behaviour analysis.		
Honesty.	Chairing the sessions – play to our	

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Being less polite.	strengths.
Clarification.	
Progress.	
Interesting without full group.	

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Roller coaster; Excluded – on outer edge; Puzzled x 2; More included.

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The following behaviour analysis feedback was given by one of the facilitators to the team on behaviours during the dialogues.

'Day one: High on proposing (ideas) but low on building – one build to every seven proposals. Very little disagreeing – individuals 'danced around' disagreement; there is a need to challenge in the team.

'Day two: Not enough bringing in – this would have helped to overcome the feeling of two teams, especially as this is a team of low reactors. Challenge more – it's about effectiveness not politeness. Building is the most cooperative/team-like behaviour – it is a very difficult skill that can be learned. Building behaviour was in the ratio of one for every four proposals. Summarising increased from 7.1% on day one, to 9.8%.'

Researcher's comments

Reflections immediately after the workshop were on homework, commitment and progress:

Homework: Although the team confirmed that all the actions agreed at the last workshop had been carried out, there was much discussion about how actions were not being completed. To this end, one of the further behaviours added has been integrity: doing what the team member says that s/he will do.

Commitment: Two members of the team were missing on day one and two other members on day two. Two points arose out of this. First, does everyone have to be present for every discussion? And second, why was it that the dynamics were so different on days one and two? Neither of these questions was addressed again in the workshops either by the team or facilitators.

Progress: The team perceive themselves to have moved slightly, from last month where they marked themselves on a flipchart throughout 'storming' with one marking a cross on the line between 'storming' and 'norming', to this month where most were in the second half of 'storming' and a couple in the first half of 'norming'. This is a small shift and data from more workshops was needed before any trends could be ascertained. However, this meeting was full of emotion, and a great deal of 'storming' and openness. The team members were hurting as they shared their frustrations with each other, and

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their perceived lack of progress. Of the fifteen individual questions asked, see business measures, only one showed much movement, and that was a worsening in the team's perception of their communication between each other within the team – this supports the team's comments in the dialogues about how they are working together as a team.

One reflection was added when reading through the above data one year after the workshop: the researcher wasn't consciously aware at the time of how much of the workshop had been taken up by questions involving the team's workings and individuals within this team and how little on company issues.

Seventh workshop

The final workshop, in September 2003, was a courageous one for the CEO, in the researcher's opinion, as its purpose was to explain to the team why it was being broken up. One week before this final workshop, the CEO informed each member of the team that this team would be reorganised; some members would remain in the top management team, and others would join one of the other two teams being formed. These notes were taken by the researcher whilst the discussions progressed:

The CEO began the workshop by sharing his thinking process in arriving at his decision to change the structure of this team. His comments included, 'There have been two drivers to this decision: one, I've not met anyone in this group that believes it is working; and two, in twelve months time we'll be a much bigger business based on what we already have done. If this team doesn't deliver what is needed now, things are going to worsen. I need to deal with this problem before we get there. Also, as the business grows, I need to reduce my direct reports. I'm looking for a Customer Services Director. Customers say, 'You are doing a good job, but you never try to improve on that'.

The CEO then answered questions from the team:

Question from a team member: Why has it taken you several months to make these changes?

Answer from the CEO: I had hoped that we would pull together as a management team – I wanted to give the process time to work. The group is getting worse.

Q: If it doesn't work again, will it take another seven months to make the same decision?

A: We'll have to be faster on our feet in future. We have got to speed up our decision-making. We can expect timescales to be shorter, and us to be completely focused on getting things done. In the past, few timescales have ever been achieved.

Q: What do you feel about what has been said?

A: We need to keep faith in the future. I believe that we potentially can be a great place to work. Whether you agree or not with the decisions, you can understand my rationale.

Q: Have you an understanding of why the team has been underperforming, if not might the same thing not happen at a lower level within the organisation?

A: There is a danger that we will move the problem about, but I'm as confident as I can be that that won't happen; I won't let it, I'm confident that things need to be different.

Q: What are your views on why the team hasn't worked?

A: By far the biggest reason is that we don't deliver. I've lost count of the times we don't carry out actions we've agreed. If we delivered we might still have had to do something with the team. Secondly, supporting the objectives of the business, people sign up to the ones they want to. We need to get back on track. Why we don't deliver I don't know.

Q: How is the new board going to be better at delivering?

A: The present team has, perhaps, too wide a brief. With three separate teams we will have more focused groups. There will be fewer hiding places, if we haven't done what we said we would do. It may not be a perfect structure but I believe it will help.

Q: What will be the difference in you?

A: I will have less patience.

Q: How will that manifest itself?

A: If we agree to do something, you cannot come back with it not done. I will make that clear. I would hope that I will be supportive but we will need to get there.

Q: What are your aspirations for yourself as CEO, and for the company? And how long will you stay?

A: During this next three to five years the company will be a very exciting business; I want to be part of that and I'll be here as long as we deliver. If I don't deliver the group won't want me here.

Q: Looking back on our delivery, what would you have done differently?

A: You, individually, can be the judge of that - I haven't managed sometimes as well as I would have liked; but that's where we are I guess. I probably would have done this change sooner had we not been through this team development.

Q: What are your expectations of these two days?

A: Over these past few months I have had a variety of emotions, both good and bad. We now need to put the past to bed, understand the future and map out our own paths.

Q: Have you any sense of failure about what has happened?

A: Could we have done it differently? Yes, probably. In the round, we did the best that we could in the time we had.

Q: Is there any perception outside of our company that the team has failed?

A: I work very hard to give a positive outlook, therefore I expect not.

Q: Do you need to be trusted by the group?

A: Yes, I would prefer people did – things work better in an atmosphere of trust. It depends upon the person, some of the team I trust, others I don't.

Q: Who do you trust?

A: I'll be happy to talk about that later (although the subject wasn't addressed again by either the team or the facilitators).

There were other comments from the team:

'We've raised our own expectations above where our audience would expect of us.'

'I believe that we've achieved an awful lot; we need to celebrate our achievements.'

'We have not been 'performing', so how can we go into 'mourning'?'

'It's a change of direction, nobody has died.'

'I feel like I have.'

'I feel I'm wasting my time.'

'I keep being hauled back; the company is going upwards but it won't last. We don't deliver; I see disaster unless we take hold.'

'We miss a bit at the beginning; we don't coordinate as a team.'

'Our message is mixed; we are all on different paths.'

'I wonder if people really sign up to projects; we are not cohesively aligned, we are dysfunctional.'

'People have competing rather than complimentary deliverables.'

'I'm fed up with the two of you clashing.'

'Terms of reference for the (new) teams will help.'

'How do we need to act differently, and what can we learn from this? A level of honesty hasn't come out yet.'

'We don't challenge.'

'We are operating in silos, so we don't support each other.'

The following is a review of the past eight months in the team.

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
Getting to know each other. Starting to understand each other. Understanding ourselves better. Gaining perceptions from others. Opportunity to be something better as a team. New Learnings. Facilitators.	We could have delivered. We could have done more with the opportunity. We could have been more open. We were interested but not committed to the process.	-

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Frustration; Disappointment; Pain; Sadness; Failure; Ups and downs.

The following is a review of where the team is now.

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
Still learning.	The new changes are not radical enough.	-

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Is this a false horizon?	We have no understanding of why we
New start.	'failed'.
Change.	
Determination.	
Looking forward.	

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Relief; Failure; Disappointment.

The team were then asked: What are your learnings from the development process that we have been through? Their comments were as follows:

'The various techniques, for example, perceptual positions and the decision-making process.'

'The power of proposals.'

'How to chair and manage meetings through a process.'

'How to listen and understand what people have to say.'

'Forming the question.'

'Not to lose sight of what needs to be done (outcome rather than process).'

'How to notice/recognise when people return to type.'

'Fear of failure is greater when one has high expectations.'

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Reflections immediately after the workshop were on the progress that had been made. After the CEO submitted himself to the above detailed question and answer session, the team shared an adaptation of Roger Harrison's 'Role Negotiation' (1995:42), informing each other of what they perceive other members should 'continue, stop and start' doing to be more effective. It is the researcher's opinion that although there was much still left unsaid, there was a great deal of openness and honesty shared.

Also, during the sessions, the following matters arose that do need to be addressed by the CEO and his new team: a need to coordinate the work of each function; regular cross-function meetings of a specific length, and an agenda may assist; a conflict resolution process needs to be installed to ensure that disputes between functions do not remain unresolved and can be dealt with promptly; non-achievement of actions – this needs to be discussed at the team meetings and, if needed, an initial 'zero tolerance' criteria put on all actions agreed to be taken. There were also 'cries of help' from members of the team; offers of support would probably have been gratefully received.

The researcher's conclusion is that although each and every member of the team has great strengths, there was not a unanimous driving ambition by all members to succeed as a team and to support other team members' success. What could the facilitators have done to ensure that the team had been more effective? Should they have stayed longer in 'forming' and been harder on the team on achieving their outcomes? Should they have enabled the team to open up to each other earlier in the process? These questions were addressed in the conclusions chapter.

Update – first email

On 25th September 2003, the researcher received an email from one of the team. Here is the relevant extract:

'I sensed a small loose end around our dialogue process. Not knowing whether this is of interest in your research or to any other clients, I thought I would let you have our current version of it, just in case. It is contained in a brief aide memoir which I produced to assist my chairing of our management team meetings:

Process

1. Social catch-up
2. Relax and quieten – breathing or just sitting quietly
3. Review learnings
4. Clarify the question
5. One minute – reflect and prepare
6. Agree output
7. Agree methodology and timeframe
8. Dialogue – continuously summarising and checking understanding
9. Capture decisions and actions – identify action-owner and timescale for completion
10. Check the output answers the question
11. One minute – capture and reflect

Repeat from 4 for each item.

12. Review next Agenda – strategic issues – big decisions only
13. What went well/Could do better/Actions
14. Reds and Blues

Behaviours

Initiate   Propose   Build

React   Support   Disagreeing Defend/Attack

Clarify Seek Info   Give Info   Test Understanding Summarize

Bringing In

Shutting Out

(Chair can control meeting using shutting out, bringing in and summarizing)

Ask for builds – not counter proposals

Aim for better than one build to every fourth proposal (ie Amplifier style not Filter style)

Ask fewer simple questions and do more testing understanding – "by that do you mean?"

Group are low reactors therefore they talk too much and too long

Chair must not move on just because there is no reaction – must get support or disagreement

"Are you comfortable with that?"

"I feel" not "I think"

Ground Rules

There are many valid answers and perspectives – All contributions are equally valued

Be open and curious – Listen and understand with empathy and without criticising

Reflect not react – Absence of coercive influences –

Let the story emerge – Bring assumptions into the open

Update – second email

On 15th January 2004, the researcher received the following email from the same team member:

'On Monday of this week we had our new generation of Executive Team meetings – monthly and offsite. We also meet informally each Thursday lunchtime to update each other, make less strategic decisions and generally supplement our working as a team – still a work in progress and still a range of views about how good/bad we are as a team. As for progress – I started our first meeting by asking whether we wish to use the process that we developed last year and it was a unanimous 'yes'. At the very least a strong statement of intent as we move forward but no doubt the process will continue to evolve and improve in its practical application.'

Researcher's comments

These emails seem to reflect a real commitment of the sender to continue this journey. Only time will tell whether his colleagues join him on his quest.

Meeting with CEO and HR Director

On 28th January 2004, the researcher met with the CEO and HR Director. The following answers are from both of them, unless specifically stated, because they confirmed each others' answers as their own.

Q: Looking back, how was the development journey last year for you?

A: We were right to try it, nothing else had worked. We decided to do it together with you (the facilitators); we knew there was no alternative. We really enjoyed the process, and learned an enormous amount. Perhaps this made the outcome even worse, because it highlighted our awareness of our potential and the size of the gap to bridge. We have nothing but fond memories of the process itself. It was massively frustrating and disappointing: it felt like the core of the team wanted to do something together, but the rest were an immovable force – if we hadn't pushed so hard at the beginning, a number of the team would just have avoided the team effectiveness issue.

HR Director: When we abandoned the development process, I felt that we had failed and it has taken some time to come to terms with that failing.

Q: So what are the key learnings from the experience?

A: If we had addressed and dealt with the people issues two years ago, it would have caused considerable pain but, by being tougher on the people and having the right people in the team, the process would probably have worked (See Collins 2001:13; and Appendix 16).

CEO: Now we are putting in 150% effort, and we feel exhausted, but that extra 50% isn't additional effectiveness, it is used to manage everyone to get 100% out of the system. We still have the people issues; they haven't gone away.

Q: Why do customers come to you, instead of going to, for instance, India for a cheaper service?

A: We continue to be successful by 'delivering a great customer experience through great people' and the reason that we are winning orders is because of our ability to gain rapport with our customers. We are very experienced and our front line people have that culture deeply ingrained within them. And, incidentally, our managers have been taking an increasingly professional

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responsibility for their staff. At the end of the day, the company is successful and doing very well.

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Researcher's comments

The team worked hard during the workshops and there were seldom any personal attacks on each other, yet because of a lack of cohesion within the team, it never came together as one. What was achieved was a clear process of dialogue, and also the team were together in identifying that they remained in storming for much of the year – see the four-stage group development model flipcharts, see Exhibits 4.12 to 4.14. What was clear was that each member of the team had great attributes and had they all really wished to become an effective team they probably would have been able to.

It is interesting that during this research the company has continued to grow rapidly, and has won a number of awards including being identified by both The Sunday Times and The Financial Times as one of the best companies in Britain to work for. The three key issues that were identified as not having been resolved whilst working with Yorkshire Water were: Where do conflict and argument fit into dialogue? Is there a road map of the journey that can be shared with the team? And will the process followed by Yorkshire Water work with other companies? The first two questions are still being focused upon, and the last question has been answered in that the process certainly doesn't work in all other businesses. Then a further question still needing addressing is: Does the process work in any other top management team?

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Comments from team members on this story

(The above case study was sent to team members in March 2004, six months after the research project finished at Loop.)

'The thing which, like you, I hadn't appreciated at the time was how much of the group's dialogue exercises were very inward facing – ie all about us, our concerns, our feelings for one another, etc, etc. Perhaps there is some irony

in that our collective inability to lift our game beyond analysing our differences meant we could not in the long term achieve all the noble longer term objectives we all claimed to want. The group needed a big objective to pursue and unite behind, but it didn't want that enough to overcome some sort of analysis paralysis, which it would be true to say in what had been a data-driven historically-focussed organisation was always a comfortable place for too many people to be. There is a very valuable learning for me in this. Yes, we need to understand the present and make sense of it to put the past behind us to some extent. But pursuing that to the nth degree (which we did, I can see with 20:20 hindsight) not only postpones the future, it can also deepen the very divisions the process is trying to address…The point you made about the whole team having to be united is well made too.' 'I think you describe fairly accurately the events that happened on our days together…I had expected that you would offer some experienced and wise words about where we could have saved ourselves and how the various personalities both helped and hindered the process (Researcher's note: see Summary of the Loop story). As a collective group of people (and I hesitate to use the word team here) we all had a part to play in the success or otherwise of both the senior management group and also the Loop business for which we are accountable. I would have liked to have seen more observations and almost a review of what went well, what we could have done differently etc from your perspective as facilitator. Often, the views and comments of an independent observer can be incredibly insightful. I know I am still searching to help me understand where we went wrong so that we can learn from that and not make the same mistake twice…The story of Loop and the roller-coaster journey we are on is in itself fascinating and hugely developmental and rewarding. It is also incredibly tiring and exhausting but I guess that is the reality of developing a young, growing business.' (Researcher's note: see Summary of the Loop story)

'I was surprised about the clarity of my memories about that period. I can remember so much and I can actually hear some members of the team making the comments you recorded. And some of the emotions I felt at the time came flooding back. I was particularly interested in your conclusion that

one of the reasons we did not achieve our objective (to become an effective team) was that not all the team members were committed to it. I remember how difficult it seemed at times to make progress but whilst we were going through the process, it didn't occur to me that not all of the team members were committed to the success of the team. Hindsight is, of course, a wonderful thing and I can see it clearly now. Like you, I wonder whether interventions from yourself and Peter would have made a difference. As I recall, most of the 'what went well' etc came from the team and so our views informed decisions as to what we should be doing next to try to improve. I know we were doing it this way to stay true to the process but I wonder if your view and Peter's view about what was going well and what needed to improve would have given us more clarity at the time. I don't know but I wonder. (See Researcher's comments on the feedback). Whilst I respect (the CEO's) decision to bring our journey to an end when we did, I have always had a view that we stopped our work whilst we were still firmly in the 'storming' stage. And I wonder how healthy this was. With the new information (that not all the team members wanted the team to succeed) would it have been possible for the team to progress to norming and performing and if we had made that progress would it have made a difference to each individual's commitment to the success of the whole team? Perhaps we will never know. I was also interested in the range of feeling being felt by team members as we went through the process. I wonder if this has any significance in the outcome we achieved. And I wonder if the process could be enhanced to (try to) deal with the feelings as they emerge – particularly ones like 'confused' or 'frustrated'. If we asked 'about what?' maybe we could have helped each other more than we felt able to at the time? (See Researcher's comments on the feedback.) I found it fascinating that you could write with such clarity about our journey whilst concentrating totally on the process and allowing the story to be totally content free. Quite a skill I think!'

'…I was surprised by the balance between, on the one hand, the statement of facts, the raw outcomes from the dialogues and verbatim comments from team members, and on the other hand, the associated observation, analysis and conclusion. Rightly or wrongly, I expected there to be more of the latter. I

would have particularly welcomed analysis of the shift in your expectations after workshop four – '...there is no reason to doubt that we will achieve the desired outcome' to the final reality just three workshops later. Did we lose our love of learning? Did our commitment to succeed disappear in the meantime? I don't believe so. We completed 6 dialogues in the intervening sessions. They obviously did not serve to forge an effective team – could they have had a negative effect – what, more than dialogue was needed? I know your views on this are still emerging. They will be interesting....we voted unanimously to continue (using the evolving dialogue process). As you observed after the fourth workshop the formation of a great team was a real possibility. By the final workshop you identified 'the lack of a unanimous driving ambition by all members to succeed as a team' as the reason we did not. My conclusion would be that our ambition has never failed us but the size of the team and the personalities within it were undoubtedly an immediate barrier (as evidenced by it operating more effectively when some workshops were not fully attended). Most importantly, however, although we studied characteristics of great teams, we did not, at any point, come to any common understanding of the team we wanted to be. (See Researcher's comments on the feedback). The group had members who were prepared to shift their position to become part of an effective team, and others who wanted to be part of an effective team, but whose initial assumption was that it would match their own definition of one. Had we been able to agree, at the outset, the nature of the team we wanted to be, I believe that some or all of us could have become it – or at least recognised earlier that we could not – although it would, in any event , have taken much more than dialogue to forge that team. In the absence of that common understanding, some individuals could never come together in a single true team – as became clear. (See Researcher's comments on the feedback). From the opening abstract, I sense that Company A (the other companies names were removed) were more successful whilst respecting confidentiality, it would be interesting for us to understand how they achieved that - what roll did dialogue play? – what were the characteristics which enabled them to succeed and whether they have a more successful business than Loop as a result.'

Workshop in June 2004

The researcher/facilitator was invited back for a one-day workshop specifically to address the company's strategy, and time did not allow interviews, measures, or reflections to take place; however, the team had an energy about it, although it now consisted of two fewer members, three having left, including the CEO who had left the company, and one having joined – had an energy about it; the new member had been through a fast-track learning experience: 'the same induction process as every other Loop 'new starter' – a day being introduced to Loop and heavy concentration on the culture of the family ('two or more people who share goals and values, have long-term commitments to one another, and reside usually in the same dwelling place') they are joining. Second (the new member) had a lengthy programme of meetings with senior people. Obviously everyone in Loop (including the Board and all her reports) but also all of the (major customer) board members and senior managers and also individual members of the teams which Loop particularly interfaces with. (The new member) is repeating this sort of process with other clients too).'

there was a different feel about the team than there had been nine months earlier; they seemed more at ease with each other.
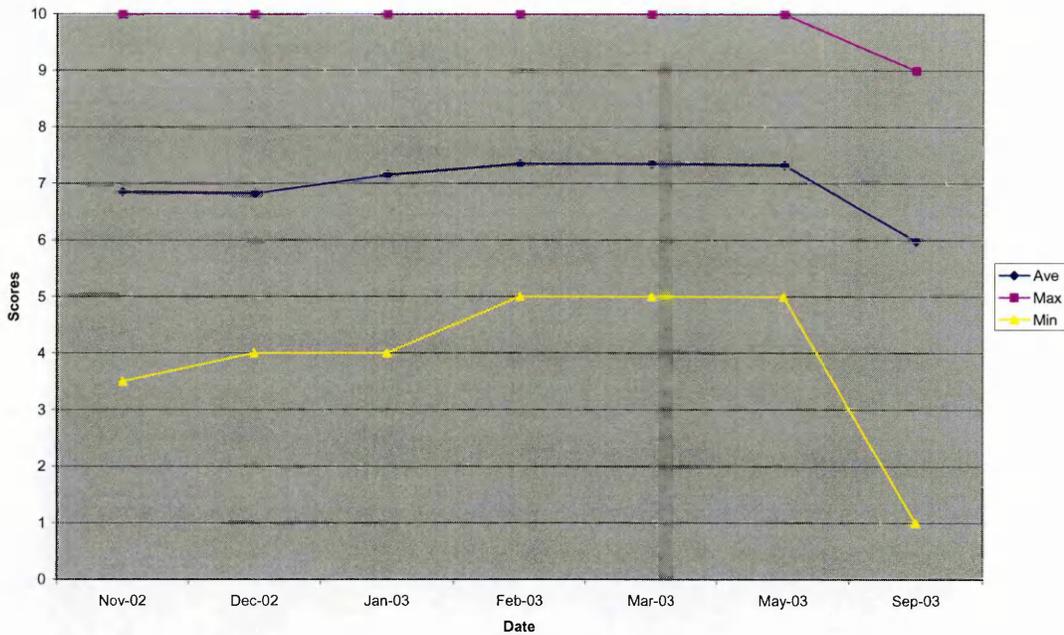
Exhibit 4.9: *Perceptions of Loop Top Management Team's performance to September 2003, using the business measures set out in Appendix 7: By themselves*
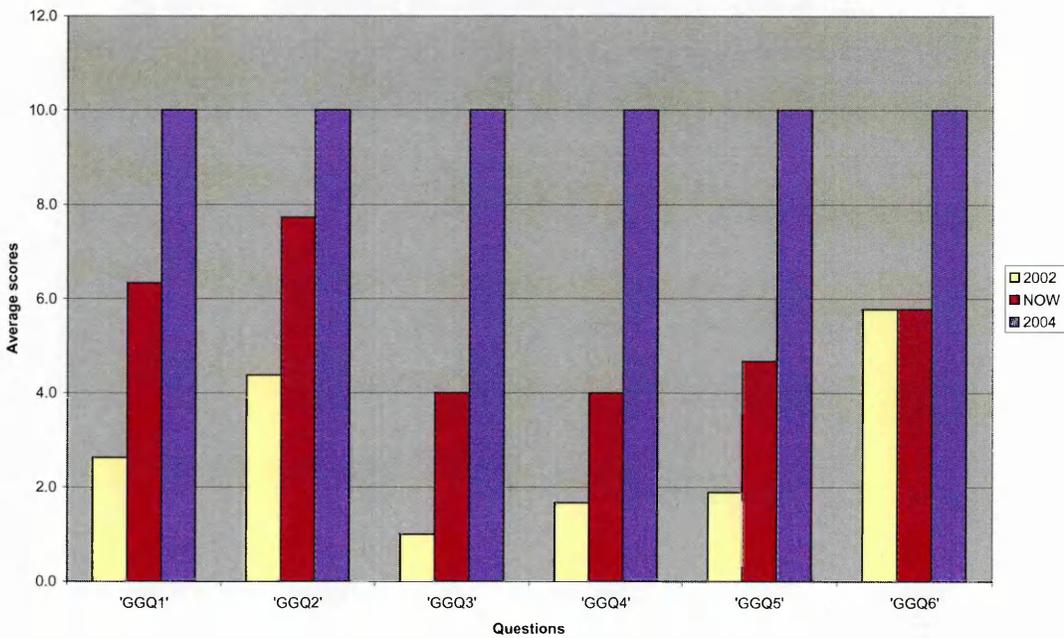
Exhibit 4.10: *Perceptions of Loop Top Management Team's position against the six criteria for great companies (Collins 2001:12) at February 2003, plus one year forward and one year back, see Appendix 17: By themselves*
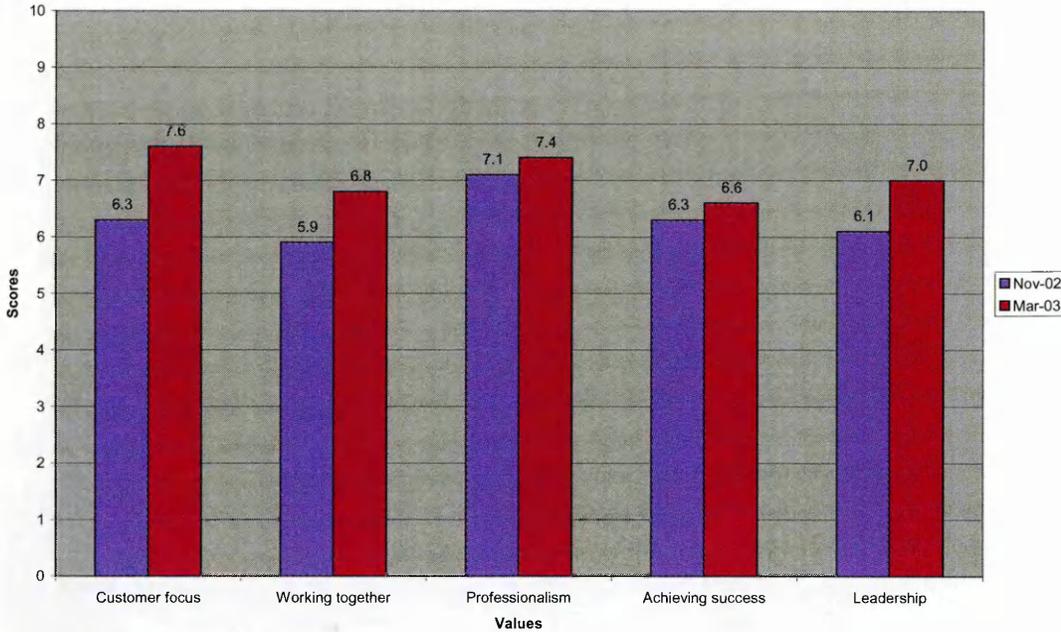
Exhibit 4.11: *Perceptions of Loop Top Management Team's performance against their five company values: By themselves*
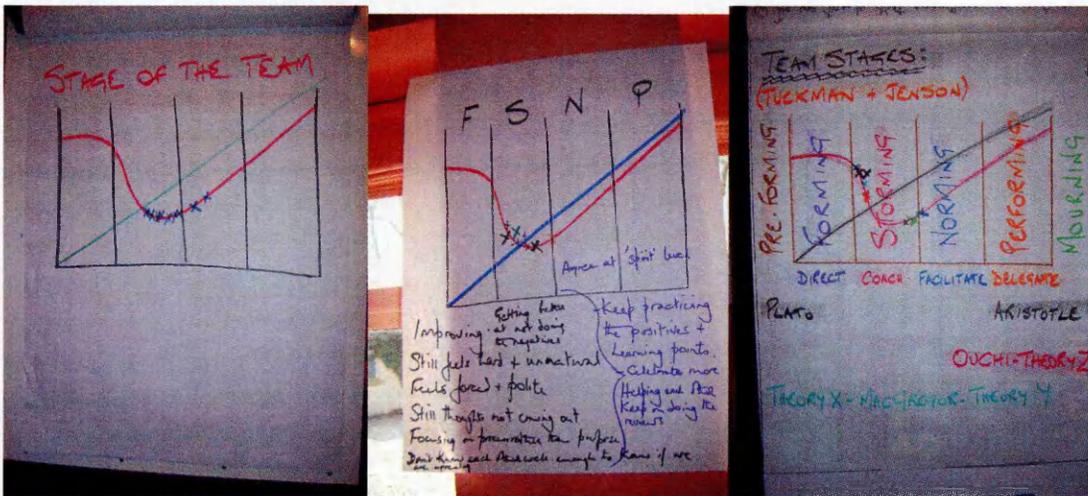
Exhibits 4.12, 4.13 and 4.14: *Perceptions of Loop Top Management Team's stages on the four-stage development model in February, March and May 2003: By themselves*

Researcher's comments

The team was brought together in September 2003 to discuss the breaking up of the top management team, and the formation of a number of new teams, as can be seen the perceptions of team performance reduced, see Exhibit 4.9, and although the measures of both Good to Great criteria and values increased, the movement plotted by the team on the four-stage development model stagnated in storming – see Exhibits 4.12, 4.13 and 4.14.

Summary of the Loop Story

In October 2002 the CEO and HR director met the facilitators and expressed their concern about the lack of effectiveness of their top management team. The facilitators believed that they could help by using the same process that had been so successful with Yorkshire Water, customised to the needs of Loop; so it was agreed that interviews would be carried out and the journey be undertaken, subject to the agreement of the whole of the team at the initial workshop. The interviews uncovered a need for the team to focus more on strategy, act as role-models for the values of the organisation, and be and be seen to be one team.

Seven two-day workshops were held: six between November 2002 and May 2003; then a final workshop in September 2003 at which the CEO shared his thinking process upon why he had decided to disband the team in its present form. The researcher/facilitator was invited back for a one-day workshop in June 2004 where a new top management team spent time clarifying their company's business plan. The first five workshops clarified the team's understanding of the interview feedback and then focused the team on the following areas: what is the team's purpose, the company's key processes and measures, clarifying the team's understanding of the business plan, and the role-model behaviours that the team needed to have. And at the May workshop, what success would look like for the team. In the workshops, everything seemed to be going according to plan and there was little sign of the 'not working together' or lack of effectiveness in the team. In fact, by the end of the fourth workshop in February, the researcher wrote: 'If the team continue with their present level of commitment and love of learning, there is

no reason to doubt that we will achieve the desired outcome, together.'; for not only were they achieving set tasks together, but agreed action plans, they said, were being completed, and even a dialogue process designed in January was being used in the business. And in March the team not only enhanced the dialogue process but also enumerated how their communication together had been enhanced during the past couple of months.

Yet in May, in answer to the question: 'How has the way we have operated feel?' A very different story revealed itself: frustration with progress, lack of integrity in not doing actions agreed upon, alliances teams within the team, and so on. So what changed, or what went unnoticed during the previous workshop for this to come as such a surprise, certainly to the researcher/facilitator? And what could have been done by the facilitators to have enhanced the team's probability of being more effective, and at least moving the team out of storming? Feedback from the team at the initial workshop in November 2002 included that they were being too polite to each other, this comment was made again in May 2003, twice; Also in May comments were made that there was more than one team, those on the inside and those on the outside. So the researcher's belief is that the team were correct in identifying themselves in storming, perhaps sometimes reverting to forming, where politeness manifests itself in the wish of team members not to storm.

The facilitators followed the same behaviours that had been effective with Yorkshire Water: giving the team a process to follow of letting them identify their key issue to be dialogued, and ensuring that feedback was shared at the end of the session. The only clear difference found by the researcher is that during the forming/storming phases of Yorkshire Water, the team stormed against the facilitators when they, inadvertently, provoked them; perhaps if the facilitators had provoked the Loop team this might have moved them on by getting them to storm. For example, adopting two suggestions made by team members in their feedback: if the facilitators had confronted the team to identify the nature of the team that they wanted to be; or gone into more depth when asking for 'feelings' feedback given in the review sessions; perhaps this

might have brought out the conflict that was needed to better understand each others' thinking processes and move the team on. In summary, it may be that the passive approach of the facilitators was not appropriate when the team was stuck in storming. As to how the members could have felt more positive when the team was disbanded during its storming phase; perhaps the facilitators could have done more to reflect, with the team, upon all the positive achievements of the team during the year.

Upon writing this section, the researcher noted that his reflections included actions that the facilitators could have taken; there is an implication here that during forming and storming the team members are so engrossed with themselves – as was identified by one of the members in their feedback – that they are unable to be proactive themselves, does this suggest that facilitators are needed to proactively guide a team through forming and storming?

Chapter 4.3 A4e Work (May 2001 to July 2004)

Introduction

The years from 2001 to 2004 have continued the strong growth of A4e Work and have been three years of change for its top management team. The researcher has focused this final case study on the three questions still needing resolution: Where do conflict and argument fit into dialogue? Is there a road map of the journey that can be shared with the team? And does the process work in any other top management team besides that of Yorkshire Water? The findings of this A4e Work study are that dialogue is just one type of conversation that can be used in top management teams, and it can be useful and there are principles that underpin both dialogue and other types of conversation that are key to keeping a team effective; and also a process is useful as long as it is there for guidance and not as a restriction. The road map issue is dealt with in the conclusions chapter rather than here; and the data would show that as long as there is a will to create a successful team then the process does work.

Company Background

In 1990 the A4e group employed just seven people. Under the leadership of, initially, its group chairman and then together with its group CEO, the company expanded rapidly throughout the 1990s. By May 2001, when this story begins, A4e Work – the major division of the Action For Employment group – employed five hundred people in thirty five locations. To support this continuing expansion a new CEO was recruited in 1999; since then he has changed the members of his team twice during the three years of this research; and throughout this period the company has continued its strong growth under his leadership and that of his team. In March 2003, A4e was named by The Sunday Times as one of the fastest growing companies in Britain not listed on the Stock Exchange, with an annual growth rate of 112% over the previous three years. By the start of 2004, A4e Work employed nine hundred people in seventy five locations.

Overview of the journey

Date	Activity	Facilitators' Involvement	Researcher's Story
February 2001	Initial Meeting with CEO + two fellow directors	The researcher/facilitator made a verbal proposal of how A4e Work's top management team might be developed in line with their aspirations. This was followed up by a written proposal.	Began obtaining data.
March 2001	Interviews of top management team	Colin McGarrigle interviewed all members of the team asking each of them forty two questions, see Appendix 2.	Read through and filed interviews identifying key issues which are recorded in this thesis, and later fed back and checked with fellow-participants. Consolidated the performance measures from each interviewee.
May 2001	Initial workshop	Peter Field and the researcher/facilitator shared the proposed process that the team might follow; discussed whether members wished to be a team or a group (Casey 1985; Katzenbach + Smith 1993); explained the	At this and each subsequent workshop the team recorded their perceived scores of performance measures and,

			on a flipchart, recorded their reflections upon each discussion.
		'World Class Team' process – adapted from Pokora and Briner (1999); gave feedback from all of the interviews; and completed a win/win agreement with the team.	
June 2001 to July 2004	Twenty-two Workshops	Again Peter Field and the researcher/facilitator followed a process of self-development and team development over the two days of each workshop. Initially, behaviour analysis was also taken while the facilitator and researcher/facilitator observed the team in their discussions; where felt appropriate these behaviours were fed back to the team during the workshops. This behaviour analysis data was concluded in July 2003 when the team asked that both the facilitator and researcher/facilitator become part of the team discussing each issue.	In addition to continuing the research started in the initial workshop, when the four-stage group development model was identified, it was shared and, at each workshop, the team identified at which stage they thought/felt they were at in the model. Comments made by team members were also recorded where the researcher felt that they added insights into the team's development. Workshop proceedings have been analysed, recorded, filed and

		lessons learned included in this thesis.
May 2001 to February 2004	Interviews with the CEO	The researcher asked for reflections upon the journey so far, and how he was feeling about the process.
July 2004	Interview with one of the team members	After receiving feedback that a different perspective to the CEO may be valuable, the researcher interviewed this member of the team.

Overview

There are three sections to this A4e Work story: before dialogue, during dialogue, and after dialogue: before dialogue covers the time from March 2001 to April 2002; during dialogue covers from May 2002 to August 2003; and finally, after dialogue covers the period from September 2003 until July 2004:

Before dialogue

All six members of the original team were interviewed separately at the end of March 2001 and a consolidation of those interviews was fed back non-attributably to the first workshop in early May. These are the interview observations that were discussed by the team and then adopted:

'We are not in tune with each others' thinking'.'

'We are under increasing pressure of work.'

'We are a close- knit top team.'

'We need a new structure.'

'We need to prepare for being a bigger company.'

'We need to share the real truth.'

'The top team needs more people; we are missing opportunities.'

'Too many of our decisions are made 'on the hoof' – we need to improve our decision-making.'

'We need to stand back and be more strategic and less detailed.'

'We lack management training and experience.'

'We need mentoring.'

They also marked themselves against six performance measures, see Appendix 7, and these were consolidated and fed back to them for discussion and adoption. Throughout the research programme these same measures were used, and others added, see Appendix 7, and reviews of each workshop were recorded. Approximately half of the two-day sessions was devoted to personal development and half to the team's development, and the workshop reviews were split into three parts: What went well? What could have gone even better? And what action do we need on these points to ensure that the next workshop is even better?

In that first year the reviews showed that what the individuals most appreciated was getting to know each other better, even though much of the time was spent upon addressing their perceived most urgent and important issues. These included a company vision, an organisation structure, and clarifying their roles and responsibilities.

First the team identified their company vision. After this they identified their organisations' processes, their process visions and milestones, and then their values; the values agreed were: 'Be seen'; 'Listen and respond'; 'Give praise'; and 'Mentor business managers'. For each of these values, standards were set, for example, 'Give praise' had three standards: 'constantly every day'; 'act on information received'; and 'follow up'. The challenge was that, throughout this first year, a great many actions were decided upon but, perhaps because of the increasing pressure that the team members were under, little was followed through. This was acknowledged by the team as will be seen later in this section. At the first workshop the researcher listened to two of the team deciding who should win a team exercise, one was saying, 'Let's make sure that (the CEO) wins the game – you know he needs to win everything'.

During dialogue

Throughout the second year, a process of dialogue was used thirty-two times during seven workshops; this process initially consisted of sharing guidelines for the team to follow, see Appendix 5, the dialogue then took place, and finally a review of the meeting captured learnings. This then led to the team designing a process for them to follow, see later in this section, the process was then used until the team found it to be too restricting as explained in the 'after dialogue' section below. In May 2002, the CEO brought two teams together to work as a top management team of twelve; the teams were the original top management team and the team that had been accountable to them, which consisted of the regional directors and some of the head office managers. At this first meeting four dialogues took place around two questions: What way do/don't we want to work together as a board? And what do we need to achieve as a top management team? After the first discussion the researcher shared his adaptation of Flick's (2000:36) 'conventional discussion' (which was called 'debate' by the researcher) and 'understanding process' (which was renamed 'dialogue' by the researcher), see Appendix 5. For the team's review of the dialogues, see Appendix 24.

Comments of team members, at the end of the two-day workshop were:

'I have a feeling of optimism – this group could make a difference.'

'This workshop has gone really fast – exciting + good; open + honest leading to trust.'

'Lots of expectation for the future.'

'No raised voices – respect for each other.'

'Looking forward to moving forward.'

'Enjoyed time outside of this room, informally mixing.'

'Sense of purpose. Reassuring.'

'Surprised how much I've learned, especially the importance of behaviours; even more important than doing.'

'Informing and excited. Frustrated with myself.'

'It's been really good. There was an air of trepidation before we started, bringing two separate groups together.'

'It's been great working with you all.'

The CEO added that, 'It confirmed my personal belief. There were lots of doubters. We can do it with this team and with this number. It has made me feel good that we can do it'. During the workshop, one of the directors asked the CEO why he was sitting back and not contributing to the discussion, to which the CEO replied, 'I'm observing the team, I don't want to contribute at the moment.'

Researcher's comments
The new team worked hard over the two days. There was little argument, just a real will to 'get the job done'. Dialogues seemed to improve as the days progressed although they were still very polite with each other – this is reflected in their feedback. The researcher feels that they are at the 'forming' stage. What was disconcerting was the behaviour of the CEO who was obviously not joining in the dialogues; the reason for this became clear to the researcher at the November workshop.

It was during the July 2002 workshop that the researcher extended the reviews of each discussion to include not just thoughts from the team but also their feelings, see Appendix 24.

Researcher's comments

These dialogues and reviews, in Appendix 24, would have been disappointing to the researcher had he not been working with the four-stage group development model for they seem to have regressed since the last workshop. However, the four-stage group development model shows that after 'forming' comes 'storming'; and with that comes a lowering of morale, and individual comments that are critical of others rather than of themselves.

After three workshops had been cancelled in 2002, the remaining one took place in November, and by this time the team had reduced from twelve to eight. One of the participants commented that, 'this is a bit like 'Big Brother' (the TV programme): there are four fewer of us than last time we met!' At the end of the workshop the researcher asked the CEO:

Q: 'Why did you decide to start out on this process again?'

A: 'This is the best way to develop a highly effective team. We had to find someone who the team can work with.'

Q: 'What are your feelings about the past two days?'

A: 'Fantastic, it was pitched just right. I gained a heck of a lot. Personally I was very frustrated with the previous team, and I was thinking of pulling out.'

Q: 'How should this initiative be taken forward?'

A: 'More of the same and some difference: we are hungry, and we absorb new learning like a sponge. We want to succeed. I know everyone in the team will give their total commitment and honour the commitment we have made with you. Personally, the last two days confirmed that everything we have gone through was right. It was extremely painful and it was right, and we are on the right track. Everything is fitting together so well, and we are beginning to go at a pace!'

Q: 'So what will be the effect of the process, do you believe?'

A: 'We will over-achieve our vision. The fact that the team said it was achievable, agreed with it and bought into it, gave me great confidence in our future together.'

A process

During the first half of 2003, the team developed and used the following process for their dialogues:

1. Review previous learnings
2. Dialogue around the context
3. Select a chair, scribe and timekeeper
4. Agree question and write down
5. Agree output
6. Agree methodology and timeframe
7. Do it and capture key points
8. Continuously summarising and check understanding
9. Check the output answers the question
10. Agree and record next steps – who; when; what; follow up
11. Review: what went well, what could have gone even better, and what actions need to be taken?

Comments of the team in July 2003 included:

'The new process will get under our skins to enable us to work more effectively together.'

'We are twenty times better than we were a year ago.'

'Increasingly, we are using the processes that we learn here throughout the business.'

'I see rifts appearing in this team.'

'This team is not working as one.'

'We've got to have the will to move forward in a team together.'

'We've got to step-change our behaviours and attitudes.'

'I've got the will to change, it will be hard and I may not make it.'

'We've been honest; now we must trust each other.'

Yet in the dialogues and reviews there was dissatisfaction with the process, explained by the following comments: 'too mechanical'; 'the process spoiled our flow'; 'uncertainty around process adherence'. So in September 2003 it was agreed that both the dialogue 'rules' and the team's process be replaced with the intention of the team becoming less restricted in their discussions.

After dialogue

The researcher/facilitator pre-framed the first discussion with a talk on the Eastern philosophy of the yin and yang (Lao Tzu 1989:115), where the yin and yang represent opposites – a 'chaordic' world (Eijnatten + van Galen 2002:391) – a mix of order and chaos, light and dark, right and wrong, etc. He then suggested that if an orderly approach, namely, the 'rules' of dialogue and the process that the team had created were not working, perhaps the opposite approach should be tried. Therefore, a potentially chaotic approach, with no laid-down process or guidelines, was agreed upon; this suggestion was used for the first conversation which terminated with words such as, 'horrible', 'bad feelings', and 'frustration', and there was also one 'really healthy discussion – good' comment. So when the review of the new conversation included 'no clear actions', 'didn't know where we were going', 'no common understanding', the team decided that some structure was essential. So the researcher provided the 'single question format' (La Fasto + Larson 2001:85) to give a structure to the conversations; the team's comments included: 'the single question format is incomplete', and 'we had seven views between the seven of us – it was like swimming in treacle'. By the end of the workshop the team itself had begun to design a more flexible discussion process and a set of principles.

Reviewing the two days, the team members shared comments such as, 'upbeat'; 'confident'; 'OK'; 'reflective'; 'mild frustration'; 'positive'; and 'we've started another journey'. After the workshop the researcher interviewed the CEO, and evinced these answers:
Q: How is the process going for you?

A: It is going excellently.

Q: How are you feeling about the journey?

A: Sometimes it's scary; but for 99% of the time it's good.

Q: Remind me why you want to follow this (overall) process, and why you no longer want to take total control yourself.

A: As a team we get more done. Seven heads are better than one, and it's far better to spread ideas and involvement – we get a better job done. The key is to trust the (overall) process – it works for sure. It's hard for me to let go, but it is rewarding and I've learned it's the only way.

In the November 2003 workshop, the researcher shared Johnson + Johnson's (2003:297) 'Guidelines for decision making' to help in the team's understanding that conflict can be constructive; by the end of the two days the team were, on the whole, beginning to make more positive comments such as:

'Lot of good things happening.'

'Solving issues faster, and at a higher level.'

'Still issues beneath the surface.'

'Sometimes we are our worst enemy; we need to believe in ourselves.'

'We are a lot better than we think we are.'

'We are in danger of staying in 'storming'.'

'We are not yet honest with each other.'

'We are performing a lot better.'

'We have some way to go to get through the 'block'.'

'We have more storming to go before we start to motor.'

'We are creating tremendous things as a team; but we're not fully open and honest.'

'We need to truly understand our performance.'

'Hoping we are coming to the end of 'storming'; there is still much to be addressed.'

In January 2004, the team agreed both the 'principles' for their discussions, and their own updated 'loose' process which they believed would not restrict

their 'flow'. It is as follows: (see Appendix 11 for the original flipchart; on the flipchart, 3a has been added at a later workshop.)

Our principles:
1. No interruptions.
2. Not working to personal agenda.
3. Respect it is true for the speaker.
4. Pause before speaking.
5. Bottom out each idea.
6. Listen and question in order to understand.
7. Be prepared to challenge and/or be challenged.

Our process:
1. Agree chair, scribe and timekeeper.
2. Clarify question to be addressed.
3. Agree process to be followed.
4. Remind ourselves of 'principles'.
5. Reflect for five minutes, individually, prior to the conversation.
6. Summarise and agree outcomes, and any communication needed.
7. Review and learn from session to enhance future conversations.

| **Researcher's comments** |
| It took a little time for the researcher to understand the difference between the process created in January 2004 and the one that held them back in the first half of 2003. Other than the new process having fewer steps, the key for the team was the fifth step in the original process, namely, 'agree output'. By eliminating this, team members have been able to free themselves from pre-empting the outcome of each conversation. When discussing which stage the team was at, comments included: 'we are in danger of performing'; 'we stop ourselves'; 'our beliefs hold us back'; 'we need to take our blinkers off'; 'we need to stop beating ourselves up'; 'individually we are in either 'norming' or 'performing". |

But adopting their new-found process and principles throughout the workshop didn't mean that all went according to plan. When asked 'what could have gone even better, and what actions are needed?' the answer came back as: 'We could have stuck to the principles that we have just agreed!' The action agreed was: 'If we notice (that we are going off the subject) then bring it (the discussion) back on course. Challenge (principle 7 above).'

Reviewing the two days to find out, initially, what went well, the comments included:

'We have identified and agreed tangible outputs that we are in danger of following through.'

'Relevant important stuff covered.'

'We've seen how good the team can be.'

'I have a better understanding of our team issues.'

'We are more open and honest.'

When asked 'what could have gone even better, and what actions are needed?' the answers came back as: 'Energy lacking'; 'Everyone to be here: we are missing two of the team'; and 'Big issues need more time to discuss'. Feelings about the two days included: 'good'; 'good'; 'positive'; 'worthwhile'; 'value-adding'; and 'informed'. The researcher again interviewed the CEO at the end of the two days, and gained these answers:

Q: 'How has the process been for you?'

A: 'It gets better and better; I'm very positive about the two days. We've covered a lot of ground and there's now a greater understanding. And we'll do what we said we will do.'

Q: 'How was it for you, personally?'

A: 'It doesn't get any easier; I just have to cope with it. There's a fine line: I have a foot in two camps; being part of this team and leading the team. It's difficult not to be coercive, knowing the effect is negative; I know we'll gain far more trusting the process. Sometimes I do have to bite my tongue and sometimes I have to say something because it's my responsibility. It's been emotional for me, as usual.'

In February 2004, three 'key areas' were addressed; these were: What are A4e Work's process and principles? At what stage(s) does the team place themselves at on the four-stage group development model? What would be the effect of the CEO's decision to allow the team to work, without his initial involvement, to construct the company's business plan?

First key area: A4e Work's Process and Principles

The team again clarified their process.

Our process

1. Agree chair, scribe and timekeeper.
2. Clarify question to be addressed. (See below)
3. Agree process to be followed. (This may be different for each discussion and depends on the issue.)
4. Remind ourselves of 'principles'. (See below)
5. Reflect for five minutes, individually, prior to the conversation.
6. Summarise and agree outcomes, and any communication needed.
7. Review and learn from session to enhance future conversations.

Item two above: Clarify question to be addressed

Brainstorm issues and then, as a team, identify which is most urgent and important. Identify the context, including anything that is non-negotiable. Double-check the importance of the issue by putting it through the 4MAT model: Why (this issue?). What (needs to be done?) How (will this be achieved?) So What (effect will completing this exercise have?)

Then, agree the question that will resolve or advance this issue.

Item four above: Remind ourselves of 'principles'

1. No interruptions.
2. Not working to personal agenda.
3. Respect it is true for the speaker.
4. Pause before speaking.
5. Bottom out each idea.
6. Listen and question in order to understand.
7. Be prepared to challenge and/or be challenged.

Second key area: Stage(s) at which the team put themselves in the four-
stage development model: Shown at the end of this A4e Work story are the
photos of the six flipcharts on which the team marked where they were from
'forming' to 'performing' during the period from January 2002 to February
2004, see Exhibits 4.18 to 4.23; under four of them are their comments which
have already been referred to above except for those from the final two-day
workshop. On the morning of the first day of the last workshop researched so
far, the first of the two flipcharts was completed with the following comments:

'We've moved forward a bit.'

**'I've marked higher than I've ever done before: last year the team
members were playing games when budgeting; this year has been very
good – we are light years further forward.'**

'I have marked higher as my understanding of the model has changed.'

**'We are not quite breaking through the storming/norming line
consistently enough, (although) we are getting better.'**

**'We are improving – we are still not bottoming out the issues – we need
to work at the honest level – (being) more challenging and demanding.'**

'We keep holding ourselves back – why not just do it!'

**'I'm quite heartened – we have the desire to make it happen – next time
I'm expecting to put my mark in 'norming' or even 'performing'!'**

Immediately after the final discussion of the two days, another four-stage
group development model was filled in by the team for February 2004 to
ascertain where they felt that they had been during that discussion. As can be

seen, marks were placed mainly in norming and the final part of storming, see Exhibit 4.23.

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Researcher's comments

The charts and comments show a definite movement towards a more effective team, yet quite a way to go to be consistently in 'performing'. The marking has been carried out for more than two years and the team are still not there. This process of team development is certainly proving to be no 'quick fix'! (As noted by the Yorkshire Water CEO at the initial meeting with him.)

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Third key area: The CEO's decision to let the team work, without his initial involvement, on constructing a business plan: It is the first time that the researcher has experienced a CEO giving his team the responsibility, at least in part, for drawing up plans for the reorganisation of a company. The CEO's declared purpose was to give the team members the opportunity to create the organisation which would empower them to run the organisation in a way that they wanted; and thus shine as CEOs of their parts of the business. The team followed both the process and principles already set out. Here are their discussions:

The Issue
Why: (this issue?)
To understand what we want to be.
Give us clarity of direction.
To give us control of our destiny.
Communication: everyone will share the same story.

What: (needs to be done?)
An A4e Work Business Plan.

How: (will this be achieved?)
Follow the process that we've already agreed.

So What: (effect will completing this exercise have?)

It will give individual responsibility within the team.

It is an influencing tool.

It will identify clear actions.

It will give clear direction and understanding.

It will improve our chances of having control over our destiny (and it is the best course for our business).

Context: (Non-negotiable)

A4e Work will be divisionalised.

Margins have to increase to more than ten percent.

A4e Work could be split into divisions.

(The new director within the group) needs a job to do.

Focus on the year to 31st March 2005.

The team's reviews of the three conversations are set out in Appendix 24.

Interview with the CEO after this (February 2004) workshop

Q: How has the process been, so far, for you?

A: It's been incredible. My expectations have been exceeded and I also think that how the team has bought into the process is very exciting, and has been a huge factor in the team's success. We could never have achieved this ourselves; someone external was essential. We also needed someone who could fit into the team – Rich and Peter have become part of the team, no longer facilitators. The way our workshops work is that I share with the facilitators areas that I see as key issues that need discussing within the team; other team members also add these and other issues and we agree between us what to discuss. The facilitators intersperse the discussions with new learnings, examples of where ways of advancing the issue may have worked or not worked; and then the team decide on a way forward on how to tackle the issue.

Q: How did the process of standing back from the team and allowing them to create an initial business plan go for you?

A: It was good. The team grew in confidence and although we are still not where we need to be – the draft needs a hell of a lot more work – I know that together we will build a strategy that will be what we need. To become an effective top team, you've got to trust each other. What the process has done is to increase our trust in each other to a much higher level and because of this we are achieving at a much higher level.

Q: What effect has this had on the business?

A: The team now have a common understanding, a common language; we understand much better each others' thinking processes for we have been on the same learning journey together. All the processes that we have been learning are used within the business: the way we conduct ourselves in meetings, as individuals, as a team, and in the way we do things outside of the business. We are now using both our conversation process and principles; and our managers are replicating them throughout the business. Probably one hundred and fifty copies of Good to Great (Collins 2001) have been distributed and read within the company; it means that we can start our conversations at a higher level with the managers. We use why, what, how, and so what regularly in the business (see section 3.3.5 above), and now have very high expectations of others outside of the company too, and they rarely if ever come up to our new standards.

Q: So what have you learned?

A: So many things, it has made me realise that this process is essential to all teams if they want to be effective. Also, it is essential to slow down; unless the team slows down it will never be able to speed up. Also the Tuckman process has shown me that many teams never get out of 'forming' because the CEO storms for the team; so team members sit there listening, and the walk away from the meeting unable to contribute. Our team is now usually in 'norming' and often in 'performing' now.

Q: What have you not learned?

A: I can't think of anything, because we believe that we can say anything in our team meetings so if there is something we think we don't know, we say so. We know there's a lot we still don't know, and that's what's so exciting and so rewarding about the process!

Researcher's comments
During these final discussions, using their own processes and principles, the comments show the team members were supporting one another and the feelings voiced a growing confidence. Whether the increasingly positive discussions were: because of the team members' involvement in an issue that could dramatically affect their future, or because the CEO wasn't present, or because the team have been working together for over a year, the researcher is unable to judge. However, having completed their assignment and fed their conclusions back to the CEO, they requested – and the CEO agreed – that a full week in the following month be set aside for them to revisit and ground their work. They also requested that the CEO should be with them to ensure the outcome would be in line with his own needs. The researcher noted both the team's apprehension with the CEO's insistence that he would stand back from being involved in these initial discussions, and their growing confidence in themselves and each other as the day progressed. The researcher considers that perhaps this top management team has found a new way of working that has broken the pattern of how strategic thinking is approached within the company. So to recap, the issues that needed addressing were: Where do conflict and argument fit into dialogue? Is there a road map of the journey that can be shared with the team? And, does the process work in any other top management team besides that of Yorkshire Water? This case study has shown that although dialogue can be useful, it is just one type of conversation that can be used in top management teams. There are principles that underpin dialogue and other types of conversation and are key to keeping a team 'on track', and also a process is useful as long as it is there for guidance and not as a restriction. Using the four-stage development model as a road map is dealt with in the conclusions chapter rather than here; and the data would show that as long as there is a will to create a successful team then the process does work – 'so far' as Popper would say (Magee 1985:28).

Comments from team members on this 'case study'

(Sent to team members in March 2004)

'Following the time line and noting the different approaches and results has actually provided me with a greater/better understanding of the journey taken by putting the key events in context.' 'I wasn't sure what was being attributed to the benefits of dialogue and what may have been the result of external factors. Whilst you have spoken to the CEO about the process, you have not canvassed the views of others on the effects of dialogue and the process on team behaviours. This may have added weight to what you are stating (This team member was subsequently interviewed; see 'Interview of team member in July 2004' below). The chapter does not deal with conflict and argument. Is this a reflection of the team and our unwillingness to storm? Is it detrimental to the process? You mention it in the last section but I could not identify it in the body of the research. Does not tackle 'why dialogue fails' e.g. team dynamics. Team = comfort = lack of rigour = lack of storming. I am probably moving into territory I know nothing about here!! You use the team's view of where they sit on the Tuckman's model. Is it inappropriate for you and Peter to comment from an external perspective or is there little/no difference? Is where we mark ourselves the 'real thing'? On a slightly defensive note – as if I would – ...you state that we had 6 different versions of what A4e Work 'could be' but make no reference to the fact that we were asked to use blue sky thinking to come up with these. It makes us sound disjointed and inept. Is this a true reflection? I am intrigued to learn more about what you have done with the other teams and what we could learn from them. I would love to meet some of them to compare notes on how they found the process and what I could do differently to benefit even more...I get enormous personal benefit from the work you are doing with us even if I don't always succeed in putting it to the best use.'

Researcher's comments on the feedback

The conclusions chapter picks up the attributed benefits, conflict and argument, the team's perceived unwillingness to storm, the facilitators not giving feedback on the team's performance during their conversations, and on the wish to meet other teams participating in this process.

Interview of team member in July 2004

One of the feedback comments was: 'Whilst you have spoken to the CEO about the process, you have not canvassed the views of others on the effects of dialogue and the process on team behaviours'; so in July 2004 the researcher interviewed the team member who had made the comment:

Q: So what have been the effects of dialogue and the process on team behaviours?

A: I've got a hell of a lot out of it, I'm a lot more self-aware and I've some really good practices now that I use for myself and my team, so do the other team members. It has also had an enormous impact on how we work together; it's created some very strong bonds and given us ways of communicating. Three of the team were either sceptical, cold about the process or didn't believe it would work; it has brought out different sides to them all, we now have an ability to talk about issues that affect our people had we not done that we would have lost more people in our reorganisations. What hasn't gone so well? We raised our expectations of what a top management team can become, this has led to frustrations, having been given a glimpse of what we could become. On the flip side, the team is dealing with things and working together wouldn't have happened without the process; so on balance, it has been worthwhile both personally and for the company.' 'Thank you'.
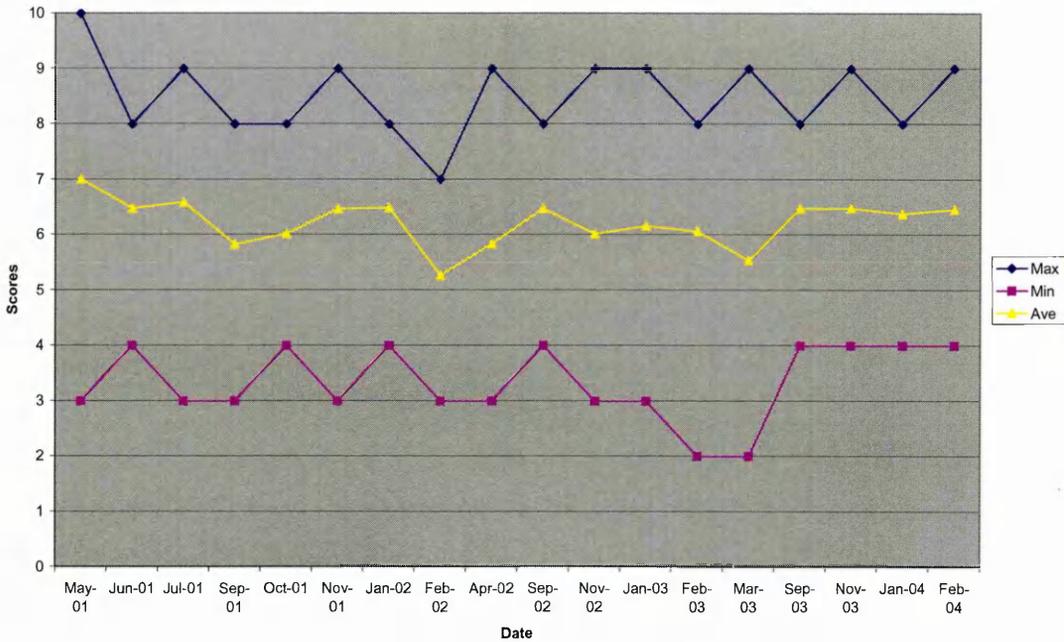
Exhibit 4.15: *Perceptions of A4e Work Top Management Team's performance from May 2001 to February 2004, using business measures set out in Appendix 7: By themselves*

A4e
Good to Great
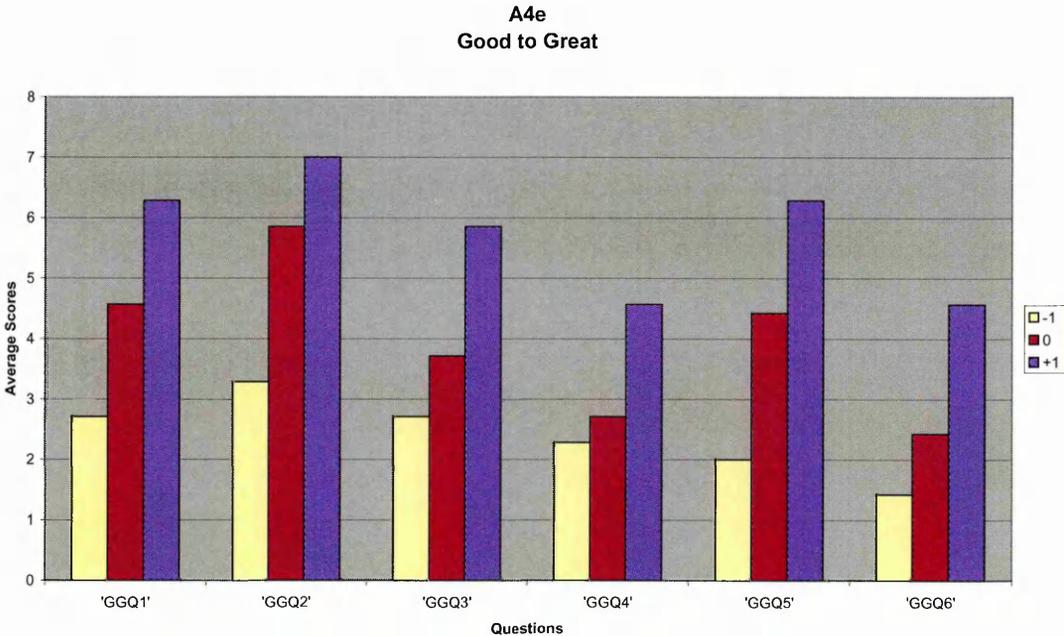
Exhibit 4.16: *A4e Work Top Management Team's own rating against the six Good to Great questions (GGQ) (Collins 2001:12 – see Appendix 17) in February 2003, plus one year forward and one year back.*
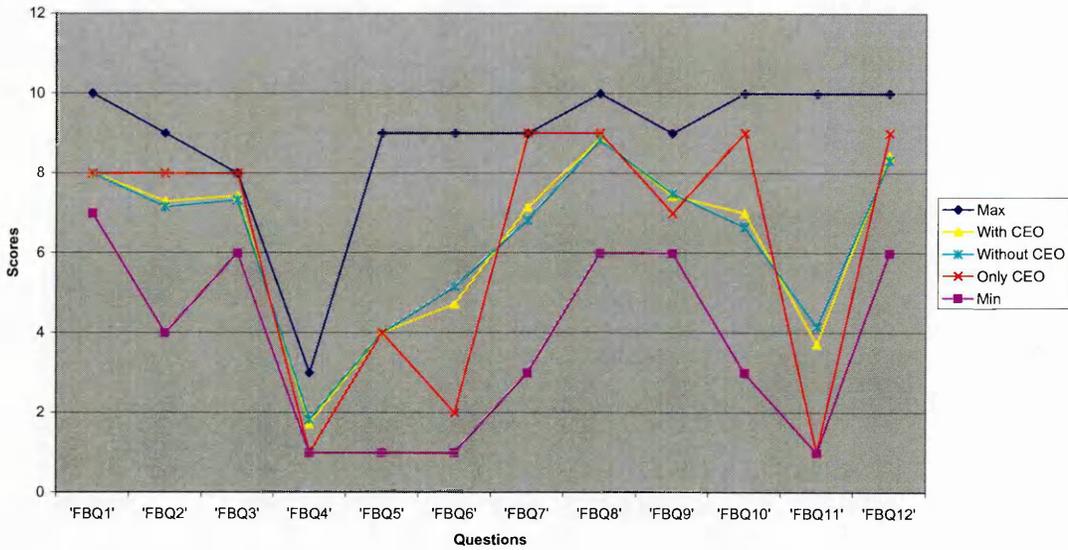
Exhibit 4.17: *A4e Work Top Management Team's own rating against the twelve "First Break All The Rules" questions (FBQ) (Buckingham + Coffman 1999:28 – see Appendix 15) at November 2003, both with the CEO and without him.*

Researcher's comments

The reason for taking measures with and without the CEO was that the CEO thought that his perceptions would be very different to that of the rest of the team; as can be seen there were some differences.
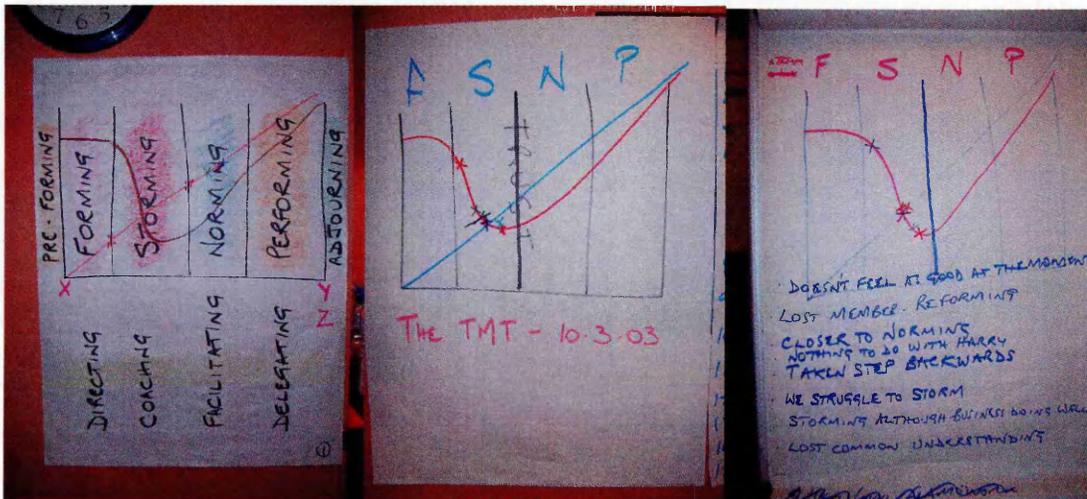
Exhibits 4.18, 4.19 and 4.20: *Perceptions of A4e Work Top Management Team's on the four-stage development model in January 2002, March 2003, and July 2003: By themselves*
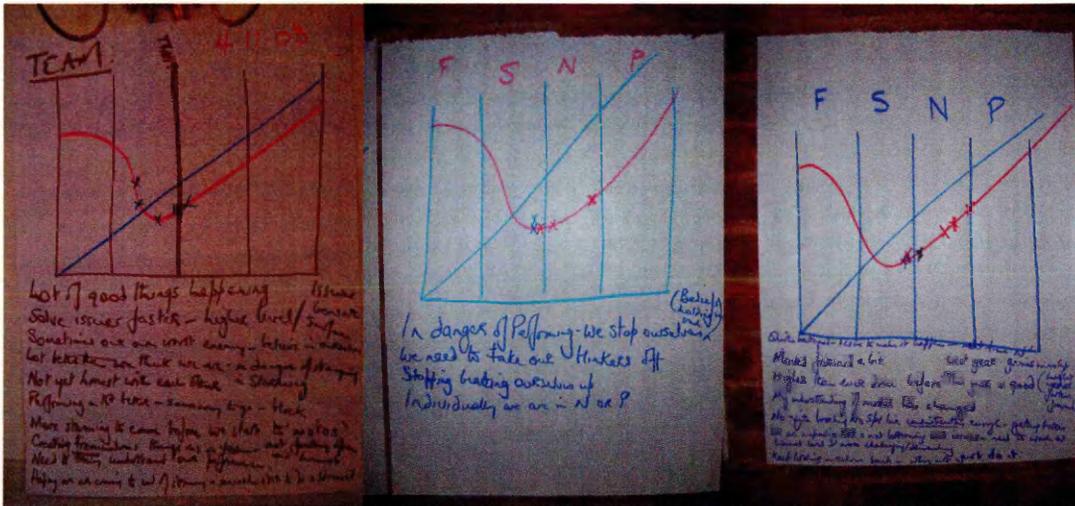
Exhibits 4.21, 4.22 and 4.23: *Perceptions of A4e Work Top Management Team's on the four-stage development model in November 2003, January 2004, and February 2004: By themselves*
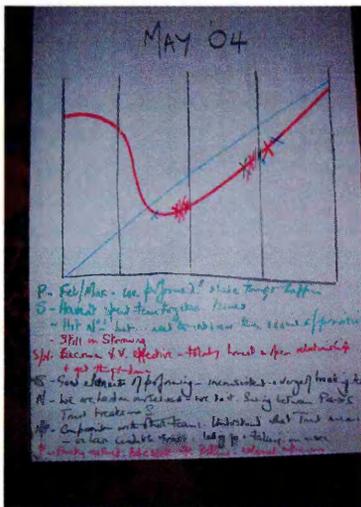
Exhibit 4.24: *Perceptions of A4e Work Top Management Team's on the four-stage development model in May 2004: By themselves*

Summary of the A4e Work Story

The period of this research covers from May 2001 to July 2004; during this time the company grew from five hundred people in thirty-five locations to just over nine hundred people in seventy-five locations. To cope with this rapid expansion the CEO decided to speed up communication and effectiveness by reducing the layers of accountability by amalgamating his top management team with the team that reported to it; he then reduced the size of the team down from twelve to seven, consisting of: the three regional directors, responsible for the operations arm of the organisation, plus support from his deputy CEO, the finance director and the continuous improvement director, and of course himself. It is the researcher's opinion that, because of the speed at which the company was growing, there was a constant need to update

each other with their own current thinking. One of the potential conflict points was between the CEO, with his group responsibility and accountability, and the regional directors, who each ran their own regions which were fast-moving and entrepreneurial yet needed to adhere to shared systems and an overall company strategy. The CEO, knowing that he had a 'must win' personality, found it a challenge to hear others' opinions when he was not only extremely busy but was also very clear in his own mind what the next steps in the company's growth should be (thus avoiding the 'snake pit' organisation trap, see section 2.3.1 and Schwartz (1990:7)). So he found these regular facilitated workshops very important to give him, and his colleagues, space to listen to each other and better understand each other's thoughts and aspirations. Thus workshops tended to start with a disparity of views on current issues, and by the end of the two days a semblance of agreement and direction would be reached. An example of this process was at the July 2004 workshop when, because the CEO and regional directors needed to understand each other better, the remainder of the team left the four to be facilitated through a process which, by the end of the day, gave not only a deeper understanding of each others' positions but also enabled both the CEO and regional directors to agree a list of actions which would satisfy their needs...until the next time.

At the end of the workshop, a flipchart was completed by all four participants showing how, during the dialogue they had moved from storming to, in three cases performing, and norming in the fourth case he commented 'let's see what happens first before moving to performing'.

Fieldwork Summary

After a year of team-building the Yorkshire Water team challenged the researcher/facilitator to introduce them to some new learning that would further enhance their effectiveness. It was in part because of their high expectations of him that he discovered the potential of a dialogue process for team meetings. However, soon after the model was introduced, the team

stormed against the guidelines that he introduced them to, as they did not allow for argument. It was A4e Work who again stormed with the researcher/facilitator finding the theoretical dialogue model was holding them back, so they began developing their own. Loop not only developed the dialogue process to work effectively for them but also used the four-stage group development model more effectively by sharing their perceptions with each other. A4e Work then went further by developing their own set of relationship principles which, together with their dialogue process, were deployed throughout their company. These findings are used as the basis of the conclusions set out in this next chapter.

Chapter 5 Findings
By Doing You Become

"We shall never cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time".

- TS Eliot's 'Little Gidding', one of the four quartets (Eliot 1944:59)

"Everything in nature connects with everything else" – Von Bertalanffy's concept (1952 from Shaw 2002:149)

5.1 Overview of the chapter

This chapter shares the key findings of the researcher after completing both his literature survey and fieldwork, and as these findings were new and significant to the researcher they have been included here as part of the thesis. There were also a further three contributions to knowledge which, because of their theoretical significance, have been included in the following conclusions chapter.

What started off as a search for a process of communication that would enhance top management team meetings has grown into a holistic yet focused way of approaching the meetings themselves: an 'Iterative Meetings Model'. The challenge was how to share these findings, with the reader, in a comprehensive and comprehensible way. The first few attempts were less than satisfactory for the findings seemed to be arbitrary and have little that linked each to one another. Then, when re-reading the pre-learnings in chapter 1, and more specifically section 1.8.3.3, John Garnett's words 'By doing you become' gave me the insight that throughout this thesis there has been one continuous thread. That thread has linked every one of the many interviews and meetings, the forty-seven one- and two-day workshops (16 Yorkshire Water; 8 Loop; and 23 A4e Work), plus hundreds of hours of pre- and post-event reflections that the researcher has been involved with – a

thread that had become almost second nature in its use. This one thread was the action research process, or more specifically, Action Inquiry using the Hermeneutic Cycle (incorporating the 4MAT system); see section 3.3.6 and Exhibit 3.4. In fact, not only had the researcher been continuously using the process but also it was being used within at least one of the top management teams' companies as well (see interview of A4e Work CEO in February 2004). So to continue this consistent thread, the twenty-eight findings are set out under the four familiar headings of: Why? What? How? And So what?

5.2 Why?

5.2.1 Why is the CEO key to the process?

5.3 What?

5.3.1 What is the 'Iterative Meetings Model'?

5.3.2 What do effective top management teams talk about?

5.4 How?

5.4.1 How does the 'Dialogue Process for Top Management Team Meetings' work?

5.4.2 How can top management teams measure their progress or lack of it?

5.5 So what?

5.5.1 So what effects has development upon the quality of arguments?

5.5.2 So what continuing development is needed for top management teams?

5.5.3 So what about teams that are not top management teams?

5.5.4 So what are the learnings for the researcher/facilitator?

5.5.5 So what is the essence of top management teams being effective in meetings?

To enable the reader to focus on specific interests, the table below indicates which conclusion headings might be of most interest to someone concerned from the points of view of a top management team (T), a facilitator (F), or of a fellow researcher (R):

Findings	T	F	R
5.2 Why?			

5.2.1 Why is the CEO key to the process? (Six findings)	Y	Y	Y

5.2 Why?

5.2.1 Why is the CEO key to the process?

It was not the researcher's intention to single out the CEO for special attention however as Collins observed, it is just that one just "can't ignore them" (2001:22), for the power held and behaviours of the CEO are major influences on the process of communication within the top management team.

Findings:
1. The development process is started by the CEO.
2. CEOs have their own unique motives for commencing the process.
3. The CEO holds the power.
4. CEOs set the agenda.
5. There is a balance that the CEO needs to keep.
6. CEOs who wish to develop their teams are positively dissatisfied and, incidentally, love to learn.

The first finding is that the whole process of top management team development would not have started but for the initiative of the CEO in taking a risk and deciding to develop himself and his team, provisionally selecting the facilitators, and letting the team members and facilitators know that this would be a priority for both their time and commitment. They did this either overtly: 'Whatever it takes. In practical terms that will mean about fifteen days of workshops over the next year; this is as well as our regular weekly half-day meeting' (see initial meeting with the CEO of Yorkshire Water); or they made it a priority by implication: by ensuring that regular workshop dates were agreed and diarised by all of the team (in the cases of all three CEOs). Each of the CEOs agreed that team members should be interviewed individually and findings fed back by the facilitators to the initial workshop; it was at this gathering that the team would decide whether to appoint the facilitators or not; as the CEO of Yorkshire Water said: 'Whether you are appointed or not will be the decision of the team not just mine, and if you are appointed you will become answerable to us all' (see initial meeting with the CEO; also Garratt 1997:47 + 2001:81; Herb et al 2001:32; Isaacs 1999a:11) – this was the first shared decision noted by the researcher.

The second finding is that each of the CEOs had very different motives for launching their development processes: Yorkshire Water's CEO said: 'I could do this (the process of developing his team) myself, however I have other issues I need to focus on now' (see initial meeting); Loop's CEO needed the facilitators to help him sort out the lack of effectiveness within his top management team (see chapter 4.2: Introduction); and A4e Work's CEO needed assistance in giving the team space to catch up with each other during a time of rapid expansion (see chapter 4.3: Summary of A4e Work story). Intentions are complex (Stone et al 2000) and each CEO may have had many including just wanting to put a few strategic processes in place (Stacey 2003:228; de Geus 2000:92; McAuley 2001:253; Schwartz 1990:7; Peters + Waterman 2000:15).

The third finding was that during the journey together there was no doubt that the CEO held the power, even though the development process encompassed joint decision-making. The Yorkshire Water CEO appointed his team; A4e Work's CEO reorganised his team twice in the course of this research; and Loop's CEO disbanded and reformed his team at the end of the research period. Power also showed itself as the teams developed - this is expanded upon in section 5.4.1: How can top management teams measure their progress or lack of it?; suffice it to say here that this 'power to influence' ensured that the 'Dialogue Process for Top Management Team Meetings' that was developed, see section 5.3.2, was not a 'classical'/'mainstream' dialogue (Yankelovich 1999:41; Bohm 2000:15), where the characteristics are that there is no authority and there are no coercive influences in the room. Although once initial trust had been established with the CEOs, team members did confront them on their behaviours. Yorkshire Water's CEO was 'ribbed' for wanting a 'strap line' not favoured by his colleagues (see Yorkshire Water's eleventh workshop in June 2001); A4e Work's CEO was challenged for observing rather than getting involved in a team dialogue (see A4e Work's May 2002 workshop); and Loop's CEO was confronted by his colleagues for opting out of a team exercise (see Loop's first dialogue in the fourth workshop in February 2003, referred to in both chapter 4.2 and Appendix 23). It is the researcher's belief that the CEOs could have ended their development processes – and this research – at any time, and it took courage to continue. Yorkshire Water's CEO said, 'We are dealing with difficult issues; and if you create an atmosphere where everyone feels they have a right to an opinion, it creates discomfort. It's a difficult line; democracy does create tensions' (see interview with CEO in June 2001). Loop's CEO told the team, 'I have huge feelings of personal frustration' (see the sixth workshop in May 2003). And A4e Work's CEO commented that, 'It doesn't get any easier; I just have to cope with it' (see workshop in January 2004). And in the end two CEOs did conclude the journey with the facilitators: the CEO of Yorkshire Water, by mutual agreement, before recommencing the development journey with another facilitator shortly afterwards; and the Loop CEO decided that the development process was not helping to enhance the team's effectiveness, so concluded the process and reorganised the team.

The fourth finding is that consciously or unconsciously the CEOs set the agenda: although the most urgent and important issues were brainstormed and then chosen by their teams, it is the researcher's conclusion that had they not been the CEOs' priority the issues would not have been discussed; as Gratton + Ghoshal (2002:219) say, the most important job of a manager is to set the conversations within the organisation, and these CEOs did. For example, the Yorkshire Water CEO decided to revisit the company's vision, and personally decided how it should be done: 'Our vision is fine but not inspiring; it's got no energy, I don't want most of the day wordsmithing...' (see interview before second workshop; also Ferlie + Pettigrew 1996:S95; Owen 2004:12), and the A4e Work CEO said in one of his interviews: 'The way our workshops work is that I share with the facilitators areas that I see as key areas that need discussing within the team...' (see interview at the end of the February 2004 workshop), thus, by implication, setting the agenda.

So the fifth finding is that the CEO needs to be very aware of the balance that he needs to keep between his own top management team and those to whom he reports, as Colin McGarrigle did at Queen Margaret's School in 1986 (see 1.8.2.4). All three CEOs commented on their need to be aware of those to whom they have direct line responsibility: Yorkshire Water's CEO commented 'I don't come in trepidation, but during the meetings I have to balance what is happening here with my other responsibilities (see also Collins + Porras 1998:44; Darwin 2001:3; McAuley 2001:254; Stacey 2003:11), for example, knowing what my chairman would wish and think about our decisions' (see interview in June 2001); Loop's CEO was very aware of his brief which was to rapidly expand the company (see company background); and A4e Work's CEO said, 'There's a fine line: I have a foot in two camps; being part of this team and leading the team. It's difficult not to be coercive, knowing the effect is negative; I know we'll gain far more trusting the process. Sometimes I do have to bite my tongue and sometimes I have to say something because it's my responsibility. It's been emotional for me, as usual' (see interview at the end of January 2004 workshop).

The sixth and final finding under this heading is the CEOs, who are willing to develop their teams, have a positive dissatisfaction and love of learning. First the love of learning: Yorkshire Water's CEO used every opportunity, of which there were many, to get personal feedback, for example, during an interview with the CEO the researcher/facilitator got up to go, the CEO called him back: 'Hold on! You rush in and out of my office asking all of your questions. Before you leave, give me feedback on my performance' (see interview in November 2002); The Loop CEO and HR Director at their final meeting with the researcher/facilitator remarked 'We really enjoyed the process, and learned an enormous amount...' (see meeting in January 2004); and A4e Work's CEO said 'All the processes that we have been learning are used within the business: the way we conduct ourselves in meetings, as individuals, as a team, and in the way we do things outside of the business. We are now using both our dialogue process and principles; and our managers are replicating them throughout the business' (see February 2004 workshop). Positive dissatisfaction: A4e Work's CEO said, 'The team grew in confidence and although we are still not where we need to be...I know that together we will build a strategy that will be what we need' (see February 2004 workshop); Yorkshire Water CEO: 'We could improve if we had more time to devote to this (development process), but we haven't, so it's as good as it can be' (see interview in June 2001). Katzenbach (1998:13) says 'the best leaders...are never satisfied'.

So the CEO is on board, how about the rest of the team?

5.3 What?

5.3.1 What is the 'Iterative Meetings Model'?

The Iterative Meetings Model is a holistic model, the use of which can enhance the effectiveness of meetings. The question that was being addressed throughout this research was: *Is there a replicable process by which existing top management team members can build mutually beneficial long-term relationships with each other, whilst enhancing their team's*

effectiveness? The focus of the researcher was on *how team members should communicate* in order to enhance the effectiveness of their teams. It was only when reflecting upon the work done throughout the research period that it became clear that a meta-model had also been used: an overall holistic model which answered the question, *what needs to be taken into account when considering top management team meetings as a whole*, and the *how team members should communicate* process was just one part of this holistic model. To clarify the difference between these two: the *what needs to be taken into account when considering top management team meetings* – the 'Iterative Meetings Model' – covers the whole range of why, what, how and so what of meetings; before, during and after meetings; whereas the dialogue process – the 'Dialogue Process for Top Management Team Meetings' – addresses *how team members should communicate* during these meetings.

The Iterative Meetings Model is an adaptation of Action Inquiry using the Hermeneutic Cycle (incorporating the 4MAT system) and has been used by the researcher throughout the research journey (see section 3.3.6 and Exhibit 3.4). It consists of three phases: planning before the meeting, the meeting itself, and the post-meeting review and reflection. Each phase is represented by a circle which is divided into four quadrants (see Exhibit 5.1 and Appendix 21): Why? Representing the purpose of the meeting, and has been addressed under section 5.2; What? Representing the content of the meeting (see 5.3.2 What do effective top management teams talk about?); How? Representing the communication process used (see 5.4.1 How does the 'Dialogue Process for Top Management Team Meetings' work?); and So what? Representing the consequences, the implications, of what has gone before – and the next steps (are addressed under section 5.5). With each revolution of the cycle (Gummesson 1991:62) both pre-understanding and understanding are gained, this understanding being dependent upon the conscious and unconscious intentions of the researcher and participants (Gummesson 1991:61).
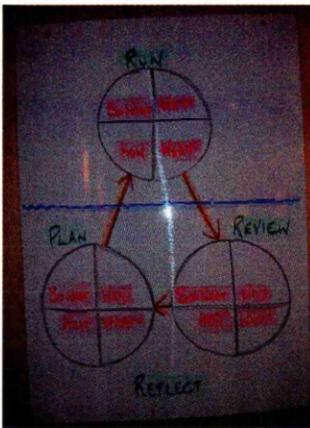
Exhibit 5.1: *The Iterative Meetings Model (see Appendix 21 and Exhibit 3.4 for further details)*

(The researcher is grateful for the assistance of both Peter Field and Peter McNab in enhancing his understanding of this model).

This model was not only used by the researcher and teams, and developed throughout the fieldwork research, but it was also trialled and its validity tested with almost two hundred executives on the ten-day Integral Leadership programme (Field et al 2004d): Appendix 21 shows the charts used in that programme. The process is reflective, the four questions: Why? Prompting - the purpose, people, location, and date/time; What? Prompting - outcome, agenda and pre-work; How? Prompting - the dialogue process; And So What? Prompting - the next steps and consequences. It is interesting to note that this idea of a cycle is far from new, some iterative research methodologies are listed in Exhibit 3.2, also the cyclical principles of natural transformation are over two and a half thousand years old (Lao Tzu 1989:67; see also section 5.5.1), *what this research contributes is the use of this Action Inquiry model using the Hermeneutic Cycle (incorporating the 4MAT system) (see Exhibit 3.4), with its added depth, in enhancing the performance of top management team meetings.*

5.3.2 What do effective top management teams talk about?

The content of top management team meetings needs to be focused to gain the maximum benefits from their time together: Collins (2001) refers to this as the hedgehog concept (Appendix 16 + 17). The issues need to be: what you

are deeply passionate about; what you can be best in the world at; and what drives your economic engine. Garratt (1997:47 + 2001:81; Pierce 2001:79) lists specifically what a board is responsible for (see Exhibit 5.2), note the quadrants and that each reflects the Action Inquiry process using the Hermeneutic Cycle (incorporating the 4MAT system) and the iterative meetings model: Why? (for example, is this company in existence?) Company formulation. What? (for example, do we need to have in place?) Strategic Thinking. How? (for example, should we monitor progress?) Supervising management. And, so what? (for example, are our accountabilities?) Accountability.

Exhibit 5.2: *Role of the board*
(Taken from Pierce 2001:79; Garratt 1997:47 + 2001:81)

Incidentally, the numbers alongside each heading (in Exhibit 5.2) were used when asking A4e Work to score how effective they were within each of their areas of responsibility (see also Appendix 3). When the CEOs and teams identified issues that were most urgent and important to talk through, the subject matter always fell within one of the four quadrants shown above (for example, see Appendix 9: The Purpose of the top management team of Yorkshire Water).

5.4 How?

5.4.1 How does the 'Dialogue Process for Top Management Team Meetings' work?

Before addressing how the dialogue process works there are a number of questions that need answering. So to return to the research question set out in chapter 1: *Is there a replicable process by which existing top management team members can build mutually beneficial long-term relationships with each other, whilst enhancing their team's effectiveness?* The short answer is 'yes', the longer answer is set out below, and uses the three specific research questions also identified in Chapter 1:

In top management teams, is there a:
1. *Process that encourages communication?*
2. *Model that enhances understanding of the teams' progress, or lack of it?*
3. *Way of measuring that progress?*

(Question 1 is dealt with in this section; questions 2 + 3 are tackled in section 5.4.2).

1. Is there a process that encourages communication in top management teams? Yes there is, with the proviso given under heading 3 below.
2. This process of dialogue is analogue not digital.
3. *The process does not work unless all of those present are committed to each others' and the team's success. This is so, however committed the individuals are to the success of the organisation and its people.*

So the first finding is that there is a process that can encourage communication in top management teams; the journey to find this process unfolded as follows: the initial theoretical model (set out in section 2.6), was used with three organisations; the core of that process was an adaptation of 'mainstream' dialogue and Bohm's "limited" dialogue (Bohm 2000:42) (see the end of section 2.3.6) assisted by using a set of guidelines (adapted from Adams in Dixon 1998:117; Flick 2000:36 – see Appendix 5), this was working well and progress was being made by all three teams through both the forming and storming stages of the four-stage group development model (see

section 5.4.2). As the teams became familiar with the model, so dissatisfaction – storming – arose between the team members and the facilitators upon the process being used; the two areas of dissatisfaction were: first, that the teams were being discouraged by the researcher/facilitator from arguing; and second, the teams felt that the sets of guidelines provided (see Appendix 5) were restricting the energy and progress of their conversations.

Upon reflection, the researcher/facilitator became aware that he had, throughout his life, steered clear of conflict and saw it as 'a bad thing and something to be avoided' (Argyris 1990:21; Casey 1996:345-346; Garner 1997:89); thus, to the researcher/facilitator, the guidelines being imposed on the process, where no conflict is mentioned, meant that no argument was allowed; this was before reading Fromm (1993:62) who says "without effort and willingness to experience pain and anxiety, nobody grows, in fact nobody achieves anything worth achieving". The CEO of Yorkshire Water voiced his frustration by saying that the process being used was 'boring' (see June 2002 workshop; also Eisenhardt et al 1999:172; Peck 1990:89); the Loop team may have been discouraged from confronting some of their differences because of this restriction on conflict; and one of the A4e Work team reflected that she had marked herself in 'storming' longer than she would have done had the researcher/facilitator not initially briefed them that it was in 'storming' that all the arguments took place (see Exhibit 4.23 from February 2004 workshop: 'My understanding of (the) model has changed'); for at that time the researcher/facilitator was unaware that arguments occur in norming and performing too (see section 5.5.1).

It was only when the researcher/facilitator agreed, under pressure from team members, that the guidelines should be lifted and the teams could draw up their own processes, that both the Loop and A4e Work teams designed and then improved their own dialogue procedures (see Appendix 11); this was continued even after the research work concluded (see the Loop and A4e Work stories). "We now speculate that the process of nailing down formal or detailed agreements might in fact be built on lack of trust...we had to let go of control over the process" (Smith 1998:122). In fact, three further actions then

took place: first, both the Loop and A4e Work teams gave their consent to share their processes with each other so that each could learn from the other (see March 2003 Loop workshop: researcher's comments) – ongoing research with the Yorkshire Water team had stopped by this point; second, A4e Work also drew up a set of 'relationship' principles (see Appendix 11) – which were still being used and enhanced at the end of this project, underpinning their process – research with both Yorkshire Water and Loop had ceased by this time; and third, A4e Work distributed both their top management team's dialogue procedures and principles within their company to be used to enhance the quality of meetings held both inside and outside of the company. 'We…now have very high expectations of others outside of the company too, and they rarely if ever come up to our new standards' said the A4e Work CEO (see February 2004 workshop).

This was not always a smooth journey of development, for when the team members of A4e Work rebelled against using the dialogue guidelines, they were offered the opportunity to choose from an array of conversations ranging from structured to unstructured decision-making processes (see the A4e Work story); the unstructured conversations (Shaw 2002:20) were tried and found to be 'a bridge too far'; as Maslow found with McGregor's Theory Y, having no structure and being left to one's own devices without any guidance just did not work in practice, Maslow called it 'inhumane' (Kennedy 1998:139). Then some step-by-step decision-making procedures were also used (see February 2003 A4e Work workshop; also LaFasto + Larson 2001:85; Carnegie 1984:64) again without success; at this point the A4e Work team was asked to produce their own procedures and principles for conversing, which they did (see Appendix 11) and the new process worked well certainly up until the end of this research and, incidentally, within the time restrictions of their meetings (de Geus 2000:97).

So the research shows that there is a process that encourages communication amongst top management teams or at least one that can be said to have worked and will work until proved otherwise (Magee 1985:28), with the proviso of individuals' commitment to the team's and fellow team

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members' success. So here is the 'Dialogue Process for Top Management Team Meetings':

Within the 'Iterative Meetings Model' (see section 5.3.1) there is a communication process used within the meetings themselves, namely, the 'Dialogue Process for Top Management Team Meetings'. The model is set out in a particular way: first, the concept – which is the definition of the model; second, the principle – what is it that makes this model unique; third, the process – how it works; and finally, the procedure – a step-by-step outline of how it works. This structure was adapted by Woodsmall (Woodsmall et al 1999:15) from Merrill (1983) and can be seen in Field et al (2004c; Woodsmall et al 1999:15); and it is this communication model that was developed together with the three top management teams during our fieldwork:

Concept (Definition): A dialogue process, including relationship principles and procedures, that contributes to board development.

Principle (Why it works): Dialogues based on a clear set of procedures and relationship principles, used throughout the stages of a four-stage group development model, and reflected upon by the top management team members (see section 5.4.2).

Process (How it works): Initially, follow dialogue guidelines of how to converse within a top management team, when this starts to inhibit progress the team draw up their own relationship principles and procedures to be followed, these need to be regularly revisited and updated.

Procedure (How to: step by step)
1. Share an understanding of the four-stage group development model with the team so that team members may be pre-framed about what they might experience at each stage of their team's development (see section 2.5; also Huczynski + Buchanan 2001:297; Mullins 1994:179). Sit in a circle of chairs so that all team members can see each other (see 'implicit principles used with top management teams' table at the end of section 2.3.6; also Bohm

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2000:16; Charan 2001:78; de Maré et al 1991:15; Ellinor + Gerard 1998:62; Smith 1998:119; Leimdorfer 1992:25), this circle can either include the facilitator(s) or not, whichever the team prefers (see February 2004 A4e Work workshop; also Shaw 2002:21).

2. Ask each team member to complete the fifteen-part questionnaire (see Appendix 7); the results of which will be fed back non-attributably.

3. Agree to work with a set of guidelines (Dixon 1998:117; Flick 2000:36), and place these on a flipchart in a prominent position for all to be able to see and refer to (see Appendix 5).

4. Unless the most urgent and important issue has already been identified and agreed, brainstorm the most urgent and important issues needing to be discussed, writing them on a flipchart for all to see, and then the team choose just one for discussion during this dialogue.

5. Converse around the issue remembering to use the set of guidelines; team members positively reinforce those team members that adhere to the guidelines, and sanction those who do not (Charan 2001:79).

    After a pre-set amount of time, forty-five minutes is recommended (see conclusions chapter 6.3), conclude the dialogue and review the meeting in the following way: ask all participants 'what went well during the meeting?' (thoughts); 'what could have gone even better (both the process and the content)?' (thoughts); 'what are your feelings about the dialogue we have just completed?' (feelings); 'what actions and behaviours are needed for the next dialogue to be even better?' (actions).

    Ensure that all comments are captured on a flipchart; using participants' own words (see section 5.4.1; also, for examples, see Exhibits 4.20 to 4.24; and Appendices 22, 23 + 24).

6. Ask each team member to mark, on a pre-prepared flipchart, where they believe the team is on the team's four-stage group development journey; then discuss and record why they have each placed their mark where they have on the model (see section 5.4.1; also for examples, see Exhibits 4.19 to 4.24).

7. At the start of the next dialogue, which might still be on the same issue if not concluded; commence by reviewing what actions or behaviours will be

needed for the meeting to proceed even better, and adopt those actions or behaviours (see Appendices 22, 23 + 24 for recorded actions to be taken).

8. It will be during the storming or early in the norming stages that the team will find the guidelines restricting. At this point, the team needs space and time to draw up its own 'ways of working'; this consists of a clear set of procedures to follow and relationship principles of working together to support those procedures. Assist this process by sharing examples of procedures and principles designed by other teams if possible (see Appendix 11).

9. Repeat 4 to 9 above, replacing guidelines with the team's own procedures and relationship principles, remembering to revisit and either adopt or update these when necessary at the start of each meeting.

10. Once the team is comfortable with both procedures and principles, consider using them for all meetings attended by team members and, if felt appropriate, throughout the company.

What this research has not discovered is either a process or a set of relationship principles for top management teams to use, rather the contribution to knowledge that has been made is that, during and after the storming stage, only the team itself will know what processes and sets of principles are needed by them, and when they will need updating.

The second conclusion relating to the 'Dialogue Process for Top Management Team Meetings' is that the dialogue process is analogue not digital; this contribution is added because so much of the literature talks about what is dialogue and what is not dialogue, as can be seen from the definitions in Chapter 2, dialogue is positioned as a 'way of thinking' rather than a journey of development (Blake 2004:1; Bohm et al 1991:1; Bohm 2000:xi; Briggs et al 1999:1; van den Heuvel 1997:1; de Maré et al 1991:17; Ellinor + Gerard 1998:xix; Isaacs 1999a:9; Levine 1994:61; Ross et al 1998:3; Senge 1990:242; Ray-Chaudhuri 1998:15; Yankelovich 1999:14). Isaacs (1999a:41) does set out a process although, as discussed in Chapter 2, Scharmer's model (Isaacs 1999a:261) is a much clearer four-part process and shows that like the four-stage group development model there are stages of awareness

that are recognisable along the journey towards 'full dialogue' (see Exhibit 2.5); as will also be seen under the next heading, section 5.4.1.

5.4.2 How can top management teams measure their progress or lack of it?

Findings:
1. Teams can clearly identify where they are on the four-stage group development model, whereas the researcher probably cannot.
2. When a new member joins, the team splits unless the arrival is consciously planned for by the existing team.
3. There may be a better way rather than dissolving a team whilst in storming.
4. Until each stage of development is addressed in depth the team will continue to fall back into that stage.
5. Recurring-phase and sequential-stage theories can be used together.
6. Measures, feedback and reflection are methods by which team members can better understand their own and others' thought processes, and feelings, and the meanings that they attach to their feedback.

The first finding is that teams can clearly identify where they are on the four-stage group development model, whereas the researcher probably cannot. Every participant marked where they perceived the team stood, usually after only a few moments of reflection, as can be seen from the Yorkshire Water story; this process of asking the team was not understood and adopted until June 2002 (see Exhibit 4.7). The researcher/facilitator was not always so clear where the teams were situated; for example, after the March 2003 Loop workshop, the researcher wrote: 'A learning for the researcher was that, only the participants can identify at which stage they are, in the four-stage group development model. The first dialogue was slower, each giving the others space to share their opinions and answer the question (the researcher placed the team in norming); the team felt that although they were improving, they were still in 'storming'.' In the forming stage, teams were feeding back at their

reviews that people were being 'too polite' (see Loop November 2002 workshop and again in May 2003) and 'too nice' (see A4e Work May 2202 workshop and again in July 2002); these link well with the first stage of the four-stage group development model: being anxious and cautious, and dependent (see Exhibit 2.7) and also the first stage of Scharmer's dialogue process (Isaacs 1999a:261) which is 'politeness'. So forming is conveying something from one person to another as an authority to be accepted passively by the other (Freire 1972:61; Huczynski 1996:11; Kennedy 1998:131).

The storming stage was a well-worn path for all three teams: Yorkshire Water: 'I can't get a word in', a lack of questioning of each others' assumptions, storming at the facilitators (see February 2001 workshop); Loop: 'If we don't trust each other, I would suggest that we haven't a cat in hell's chance of getting anyone else to trust us' (see November 2002 workshop), 'I still feel that there are rival factions within the team' (see May 2003 workshop), 'I'm fed up with the two of you clashing' (see September 2003 workshop); A4e Work: 'Some haven't a clue about what the process or outcome was supposed to be' (see July 2002 workshop), 'We have been walking in treacle' (see July 2002 workshop), and low morale. This links with being dissatisfied and frustrated, competing and confused, on the four-stage group development model (see Exhibit 2.7) and also the second stage of Scharmer's dialogue process (Isaacs 1999a:261) which is 'breakdown'; "we have an unshakeable faith in our belief that our beliefs are true" (van den Heuvel 1997:3).

The norming stage was harder to identify, beginning to "practice acceptance" (Aurelius 2004:97): the Yorkshire Water team ribbing the CEO in June 2001; increasing laughter; a hard argument with the CEO who eventually understood and agreed with the team's opinion; also when the dialogue process was introduced using guidelines which were found to be 'boring' (see June 2002 workshop); for both Loop or A4e Work the researcher cannot identify any such behaviours, although the A4e Work CEO did comment in an interview in February 2004: 'What the process has done is to increase our trust in each other to a much higher level and because of this we are

achieving at a much higher level'. This links with reducing frustration, growing confidence and respect, and more openness and sharing on the four-stage group development model (see Exhibit 2.7) and also the third stage of Scharmer's dialogue process (Isaacs 1999a:261) which is 'Inquiry'.

And finally, the performing stage, a "free flow of meaning among all the participants" (Bohm 2002:175): Both Yorkshire Water and Loop were performing when they supported their new colleague when joining their team (see Yorkshire Water workshop in the second quarter of 2001; and Loop June 2004 workshop); Yorkshire Water's team when the trust and respect were so strong that members said: 'give me feedback on how I can be more effective then' and 'it was my fault, I should have done more preparation beforehand' (see June 2002 workshop). And during their session on succession planning some of their solutions were most innovative (Witzel 2004). Although the researcher cannot identify an A4e Work example, when interviewing a team member in July 2004, she said: 'It has also had an enormous impact on how we work together, it's created some very strong bonds and given us ways of communicating... we now have an ability to talk about issues that affect our people; had we not done that we would have lost more people in our reorganisations'. Again this links with interdependent, collaborative and effective, sharing leadership, confident and exciting, and aligning on the four-stage group development model (see Exhibit 2.7) and also the fourth stage of Scharmer's dialogue process (Isaacs 1999a:261) which is 'Flow' (see Exhibit 2.4; and Critchley + Casey 1996:340; Csikszentmihalyi 1998:74).

The second contribution here is that when a new member joins the top management team, the team does not go back to forming, rather it splits the team unless the new member's arrival is consciously planned for in advance by the existing team; if this is done, the team can immediately embrace its new member(s) in whatever stage they are in at the time. An example of this is Yorkshire Water who planned for its incoming director in the second quarter of 2001, and did not repeat this exercise for incoming directors in 2003; in the first case, the existing team spent a dialogue session working on how best to welcome their new team member into both the company and the top

management team. They allocated responsibilities around the team to: 'Welcome him – all of us. Publicise his arrival. Take him out and show him our responsibilities. Draw up a programme of induction. Have a process ready for him to recruit a secretary. Agree a night for all of the team plus our partners, to dine out together'. In June 2004, when the researcher was invited back for a day with the team, this incoming director said: 'I immediately felt part of the team', the members of the 'old' team concurred with this.

In the case of the two directors joining in 2003, no similar preparation took place and, as can be seen from the stages model in June 2004 (see Exhibit 4.7) there is a perception of a split within the team, the 'old' team were just as close but there was a politeness and reservation between some old and new members; however, after one day working together on building their relationships, all agreed that they felt that they were now more of a team and regular time away getting to know each other and learning together had returned as a priority for them all. Although in feedback by email after the workshop comments included 'I can't say I've felt the 'new' team has stormed at all – perhaps after last week we'll go back to that phase!'; contrast this approach with the Loop team's structured process – where the researcher was also asked back for a day in June 2004 – the team had reduced by three members, including the CEO, and increased by one new member: the introduction of this new member followed an extensive induction programme both internally and with external customers. The effect was the same as the initial director of Yorkshire Water in that the incoming director immediately felt part of the team, although no measures were taken; there was an excitement and togetherness that the researcher/facilitator had not observed during his year working with and observing the team.

Third, there may be a better way rather than dissolving a team whilst in storming. A better way might be to spend time together learning from the experience and better understanding each others' perspectives, and thus giving an outlet to releasing and reducing the pain of team members. One of Loop's members fed back 'Whilst I respect (the CEO's) decision to bring our journey to an end when we did, I have always had a view that we stopped our

work whilst we were still firmly in the 'storming' stage. And I wonder how healthy this was. With the new information (that not all the team members wanted the team to succeed) would it have been possible for the team to progress to norming and performing and if we had made that progress would it have made a difference to each individual's commitment to the success of the whole team?' There are two points here: one is that perhaps with more time the team may have come through this 'stuck-ness' in storming in their own time; the other point is that the CEO's action in reorganising the team might have weakened the team further; this is how Peck (1990:99) defines such a situation, which he calls 'organisation': this is where tension is taken away and resolved for the group by eliminating the opportunity for the group to resolve a tension themselves, if this happens the team might well stagnate in Chaos/Storming; and this is what was observed to happen (see also section 2.4).

Fourth, until each stage of development is addressed in depth the team will continue to fall back into that stage. Participants talked of 'moving between norming and performing' and 'I can't say I've felt the 'new' team has stormed at all – perhaps after last week we'll go back to that phase' (see feedback in the Yorkshire Water story). The markings on the four-stage group development model show that sometimes the team members perceive themselves in different stages dependent upon the subject or context that they are discussing; the researcher's conclusion is that until each stage is addressed in depth, for example storming, the team will continue to fall back into that stage even though it may be spending time in norming and performing. As each of the earlier stages is worked through, by recognising the need for openness and listening to understand meaning, the likelihood of regularly returning to that stage diminishes.

The fifth finding under this heading is a technical point. Johnson and Johnson state that Hill + Gruner (1973) and Shambaugh (1978) comment that "most of the theories take one of…two approaches" (2003:28), either the recurring-phase theory or the sequential-stage theory; this was not the researcher's experience in practice. As can be seen in all three company stories, the

teams were engaged simultaneously in both of these processes; both relationship-building and task-oriented processes were used; or recurring-phase theories (Johnson and Johnson 2003:28), together with the recurring-phase theory using the four-stage group development model; or sequential-stage theory (Johnson + Johnson 2003:28). Incidentally, the split between personal and team development works well: at the facilitators' first meeting with the CEO of Yorkshire Water in November 2000, the CEO asked that the workshops be split into two parts: team development and individual development. This combination was used throughout all workshops: so about half of the time was spent in individual learning and self-discovery, and half on team learning – a large part of which was devoted to issues using dialogue and conversations, the core of this research.

The sixth and final finding here is as follows: Measures, feedback and reflection are methods by which team members can better understand their own and others' thought processes, and feelings, and the meanings that they attach to their feedback. All the measures taken in this research are qualitative; none of the measures are objective facts, for they are perspectives of each individual team members based upon their views of the world. When the measures showed a downward trend for Yorkshire Water in March 2001, the facilitator pointed out that their performance was dropping, he was summarily dealt with by one team member who said that performance had not gone down rather their standards had been raised through their growing awareness, these comments were supported by her colleagues; again in June 2004 measures showed an upward trend and this gave rise to comments upon whether the 'bar had been lowered'. The value of the measures has been that they have enabled individuals to talk around them, about what they meant to them, and thus to understand better their own thinking and that of their fellow team members (examples of this are the Loop and A4e Work photos: Exhibits 4.10 and 4.17 to 4.21). "Unless meaning is understood, managing is mindless" (Gosling + Mintzberg 2003:57), also Rickards and Moger (2000:277) comment upon the four-stage group development model that although it does not take account of complexities that studies have uncovered, "nevertheless, the model retains its value as a simple means of

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discussing and exploring team dynamics". Incidentally, the simplicity and ease of remembering the stages of the four-stage group development model is one of its great assets for team members.

5.5 So what?

5.5.1 So what effects has development upon the quality of arguments?

The one finding is:

1. The quality of conflict changes as teams develop.

The researcher/facilitator, when describing the four-stage group development model to the three top management teams, emphasised that storming was a manifestation of the second stage; he initially implied that this stage was unsavoury and should be passed through as quickly as possible; Argyris (1990:21) refers to an "institutionalised defensiveness", and Peck (1990:88) called it 'pseudocommunity', and Critchley + Casey (1996:345 +346) said that "in Britain, we have the...difficulty of our cultural resistance to working with feelings", and this is not restricted to Britain said Kuttab (1998:25); and Mindell adds "so many people are afraid of anger...feelings get submerged" (Mindell 1995:24). What became apparent was that not only is storming an essential stage in the process of team development, but arguments continue throughout both the norming and performing stages as well; the difference being that in these latter stages the quality of argument changes from being felt as personal attacks to being viewed as issues, separate from the parties themselves (Eisenhardt et al 1999:173), where each presses hard to gain added understanding and value from their dialogue together (Collins 2001:115). For example, in February 2001 the Yorkshire Water team stormed against the facilitators, yet as they developed and became a performing team so the focus turned from the individual(s) to the issues being addressed; a new member of the team commented to the CEO that he had never been in a team that had argued so much and yet got on so well (see interview with CEO of Yorkshire Water in January 2004). This is similar to Schein's reference (1988:47) to "growing pains" and Collins' (2001:76) reference to the "raging

debates and many agonising arguments and fights" in great companies. And in feedback on the Yorkshire Water story one team member wrote, 'I strongly agree that the value of constructive conflict was not recognised at the time and we continue to see the benefit of that and are mature enough handle it and handle it for what it is. Less mature teams would probably struggle to get beyond the conflict into the constructive.' Peck says "fighting is far better than pretending you are not divided" (1990:94); Eisenhardt et al (1999:172) add "without conflict, groups lose their effectiveness"; and Schön (2000:254) agrees "a manager's task is to make sure that…conflicts are neither suppressed nor circumvented". Energy between team members changes direction as they develop through the four stages (as shown in Exhibit 5.3): in the forming stage, energy is inwardly focused, as though each is an island unaware of those around them; in storming the energy is outwardly-focused defending against attacks from others and attacking those around them; norming's energy is that of connecting with others, acknowledging their presence and their 'stories' as their truths; and finally performing, where energy returns inside but the inside consists of the team members together searching within themselves for something greater than any one of them separately.

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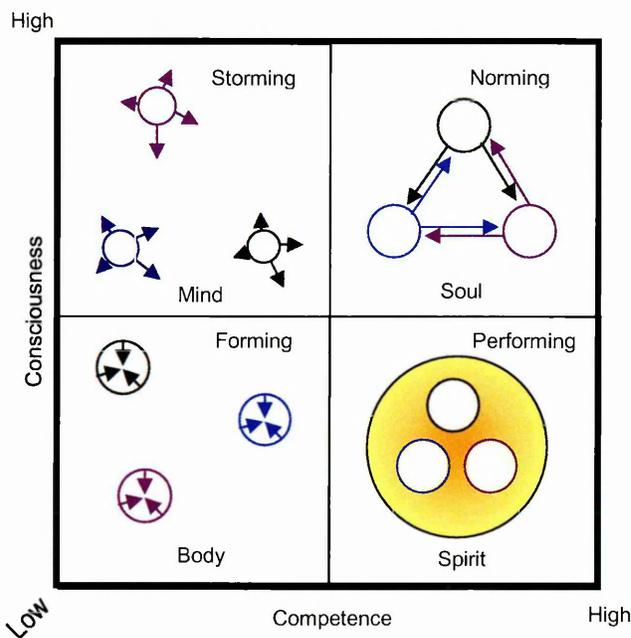
Exhibit 5.3: *Researcher's perception of the direction of energies within the team in each quadrant*

(See also the fifth finding in section 5.5.2)

Perhaps because of the researcher's dislike of conflict, it was not until nearing completion of this research that conflict transformation was recognised as an area which may be of value to the teams, even although the literature survey was full of such references. So what could enhance the quality of arguments through each stage of the four-stage group development model? At the June 2004 workshop with A4e Work the following were used and found effective: the use of curiosity and the inclusive 'and' rather than certainty and arguing (Stone et al 2000:37+39), questioning to clarify one's own impact, and to become aware of the others' intent (Argyris 1985:80; Scherkenbach 1991:64; Stone et al 2000:53; Carlisle + Parker 1989:x), and focusing on each person's contribution to problems rather than focusing on blame (Stone et al 2000:65); understanding that our intentions and feelings are likely to be complex (2000:94; Carlisle + Parker 1989:14); and clarifying that the issue is not the person (Fisher + Ury 1988:21). One of the researcher's recommendations is to carry out more research into this area of conflict transformation in top management teams (see section 5.7).

5.5.2 So what continuing development is needed for top management teams?

Findings:
1. Developing a team needs continuous attention.
2. Contact and learn from other companies on similar journeys.
3. Performing top management teams are hard to satisfy.
4. The more often the team meets to build relationships the more effective it potentially becomes.
5. Learning is a never-ending journey where a destination would be an illusion.

The first finding under this heading is that developing a team needs continuous attention: As one of the Yorkshire Water team fed back, a year after the ongoing research project had finished with them: 'What I have also come to realise is that maintaining a high performing team is a task that needs continuous attention. (The team) all feel that over the last 12 months our performance has slipped because we have paid less attention to this and less attention to the behavioural issues which you, as facilitator, constantly drew our attention to. The positive aspect of this is that we have recognised it and we can probably address this ourselves although we have chosen to address it by asking you to come and help us with an intervention aimed at refreshing our behaviours...I suspect that there is a generic issue for teams here and a positive piece of guidance would be for all high performing teams to periodically spend time reviewing their performance and taking action to avoid drop off.' The researcher concurs with this suggestion as does the Directors' Code of best practice which states that "The board should undertake a formal and rigorous annual evaluation of its own performance and that of its committees and individual directors" (Clawson 2004:23).

Second, there may well be a benefit for teams or individuals within those teams, to contact and learn from other companies on the same journey. Two directors, one from Loop and one from A4e Work suggested that learning from the other teams on similar development paths would also enhance their own understanding: 'I am intrigued to learn more about what you have done with the other teams and what we could learn from them. I would love to meet some of them to compare notes on how they found the process and what I could do differently to benefit even more'. (See Comments from team members on A4e Work 'case study' sent to team members in March 2004.) 'From the opening abstract, I sense that Company A (company names were removed, so at that time the directors didn't know that the company was Yorkshire Water) were more successful whilst respecting confidentiality, it would be interesting for us to understand how they achieved that – what role did dialogue play? – what were the characteristics which enabled them to succeed and whether they have a more successful business than Loop as a result?' (Comments from team members on (the Loop) story sent to team

members in March 2004.) Added to these observations is that both A4e Work and Loop gained from exchanging their processes with each other as they developed their own unique ways of operating (see Appendix 11). This is confirmed by Rickards + Moger (2000:279) who comment that it should be noted that the benchmarking of excellence is strongly related to expectations and competencies of the organization.

Third, because of the speed that the Yorkshire Water team were moving during 2002, which was the final year of this research with the company, a large quantity of fresh learning input was required by the researcher/facilitator at each workshop; for the team's speed of communication and hunger for new horizons was accelerating; within the year the researcher/facilitator estimates that he had more than doubled the amount of new input into each workshop.

The fourth finding is that the more often the team meets to build relationships the more effective it potentially becomes (Collins 2001:164; Katzenbach + Smith 1993:68). This was confirmed by the CEO of Yorkshire Water: 'We would improve if we had more time to devote to this...' (see interview in June 2001). So it is possible for CEOs, teams, and facilitators to give too little time to team development processes, perhaps because it is not seen as urgent and important; and yet as has been shown throughout this thesis, regular and frequent development of teams reflects positively upon the performance of the top management team (see for example Exhibit 2.6: Lacoursiere (1980:151)).

The fifth and final finding here is that there is no end to a team's development journey: the four-stage group development model works well as a basic model which can be easily explained, followed and referred to in conversation (Rickards + Moger 2000:277). It can also be seen as part of an evolutionary process; for the model is positioned in the present, whilst working with it; in the past, when reflecting upon the team's journey so far; and in the future when aspiring to enhance performance within the team. From the past, comes the wisdom of experience and memories of one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours at each stage of the model visited; in the present, one has the unique opportunity of choice to decide based upon one's present thoughts,

feelings, and behaviours at each stage of the model visited; and from those choices so the future can be prepared for. Stories help to build a shared history of the company: throughout all of the workshops, time was initially spent looking back at memories, experiences, and learnings since the last workshop; and sharing these with each other, creating stories (Campbell 1993:245; Jenson 1999:9) for the team to share from within and outside of the organisation. "The craving for stories is part of what it means to be human – integral to any definition of Homo sapiens. We have always lived in a spiritual as well as a physical world" (Jenson 1999:52). The stories were by all participants at every workshop using this formula: ITEAL, in which 'I' stands for the incident being recalled; TEA stands for the 'T'hinking, 'E'motions and 'A'ctions being experienced at that time; and 'L' being the learnings from the whole incident (Field 2004a:5). Further, the researcher has long believed that unless one continues to learn, one's unconscious competence gets overtaken by change and one finds oneself back in unconscious incompetence, although probably at a higher level; thus, with the four-stage group development model working in the same iterative way, the team will eventually return to forming unless teams continue developing themselves. A metaphor that assists the researcher in visualising the process is that of a vine (the researcher is grateful to a participant who, having heard his presentation on these research findings at the world-first National Dialogue and Deliberation Conference in Washington in 2002, suggested this metaphor); the vine ever spirals upwards from the earth; and the more nourishment the vine is given the stronger the roots of the vine becomes, as does its body, its leaves, flowers and fruits. This process of learning, this spiral of knowledge (Nonaka 2000: 20), links not only with the Hermeneutic Cycle of learning (Gummesson 1991: 62) but also with ancient Eastern philosophy, linking back to more than two and a half thousand years of strategic thinking (Wing 1988:8), namely, through the three principles of natural transformation from The Book of Changes, The I Ching (Lao Tzu 1989:67):

1. 'Cyclical change' where change goes through cycles, returning to where it started; for example, the seasons of the year.

2. 'Progressive development', where "progress and development continue with time" and accumulated experiences; for example, a human being is the total of every day's experiences plus each new day's experiences.

3. This final 'law' works through all transformations and is the 'principle of the creative' whereby "all effects in Nature develop from the easy and simple to the difficult and multiple…all spatial change is at first simple and gradual, and easily recognisable without confusion. It is only in the further course of events that this simple and gradual change accelerates into a confusing multitude of impressions": an example of this process is that of an acorn, which is easily replanted, whereas an oak tree is not so easy to move! (Lao Tzu 1989:67)

By linking Tuckman, Casey, Csikszentmihalyi, and the metaphor of the vine together, we have the following image. Note that the roots are just as strong and deep under the ground as the stem is above the ground:
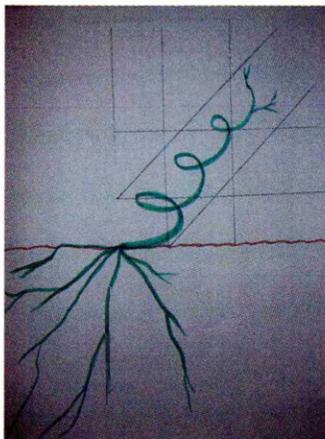
Exhibit 5.4: *The Vine*

Here are a couple of modern quotes that support these findings: "You must appreciate the past if you wish to use the present to get to a better future" (Gosling + Mintzberg 2003: 57); and Scharmer (2002:2+3) writes "you link yourself in a very real way with your 'highest future possibility' and (then) you let it come into the present…learning through reflecting on the past – through presencing, through the 'becoming-present' of the highest future possibility"

(also see Tolle 2001:15). Further, within each higher development stage, there is a different and enhanced quality of thinking, feeling, and behaviours (Csikszentmihalyi1998:41); this is gone into in some depth by Wilber (2000:12) where he writes that there is a correlation between exterior (material) states and interior (consciousness) states. He links the body, mind, soul and spirit (see Exhibit 5.3), with what he terms as the 'big three': thinking (art), feelings (morals), and actions (science) (Wilber 2000:93+147), which are a shorthand version of his four quadrants (2000:147), the 'I', 'We', and 'It'. "Thus, if we continue to use the simple version of the Great Chain – body, mind, soul, and spirit – and if, also for convenience, we shorten the four quadrants to the Big Three (of art, morals, and objective science), then we would have four levels with three dimensions each: the art, morals, and science (which equates to thinking, feeling, and actions) of the sensory realm; the art, morals, and science of the mental realm; the art, morals, and science of the soul realm; and the art morals, and science of the spirit realm" (Wilber 2000:248). So the thoughts, feelings, and actions of team members can change dependent upon which realm, or quadrant, they perceive themselves to be in (see Exhibit 5.5; and for example, see Exhibits 2.6 + 2.7).
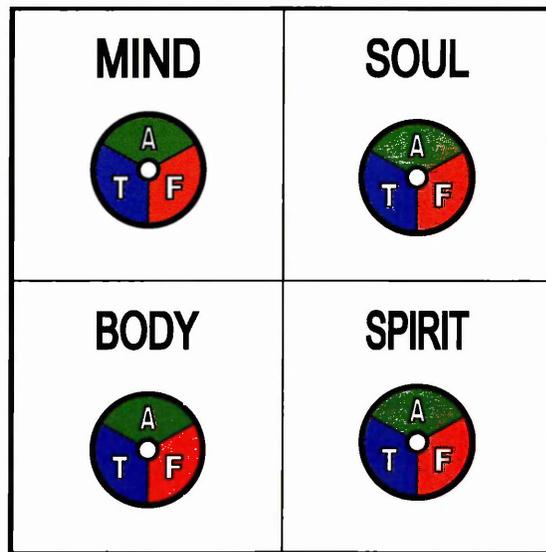
Exhibit 5.5: *Thinking, feelings and actions in each of the 4 quadrants*

It is interesting to observe that the considerable time taken in reading and fieldwork has been relatively small compared with the amount of time

reflecting upon the experiences of the journey. Further, each time these research findings are re-read, new insights emerge; this has been a confirmation for the researcher of the power of the Action Inquiry using the Hermeneutic Cycle (incorporating the 4MAT system) and the three principles of natural transformation (Lao Tzu 1989:67), and of the importance of the longevity of the action research process with the top management teams. As the CEO of Yorkshire Water said at his initial meeting with the facilitators: 'This development is a priority for us and I understand that the development of my team will not be a 'quick fix' – it will take time.'

5.5.3 So what about teams that are not top management teams?

Findings:
1. The 'Dialogue Process for Top Management Team Meetings' may well have a value for other teams besides those at top management levels.

A4e Work's CEO said in an interview in February 2004, 'All the processes that we have been learning are used within the business: the way we conduct ourselves in meetings, as individuals, as a team, and in the ways we do things outside of the business. We are now using both our dialogue process and principles; and our managers are replicating them throughout the business.' Further, the researcher had also been working with a number of other organisations during this research period; one in particular, GB Posters, for one day a month for almost two years; participants in these team workshops consist of all of the company's eighteen directors and managers; the morning was spent reviewing prior learnings, and taking on new knowledge and skills, whilst the afternoon was mainly devoted to discussing an issue using the Dialogue Process for Top Management Team Meetings (see exhibits in Appendix 10 showing the progress that they perceived that they had made). The researcher is not claiming that the process works with all teams, for it was probably a combination of many factors, including: the context – the company had just changed ownership; the facilitators – there were three: Liz Harrison, Dave Alderson, and the researcher/facilitator; the content – from all three of the facilitators; or the participants themselves – newly brought together to

enhance the company's performance by becoming involved in learning and discussing strategic issues together (Lipton + Lorsch 1992). Although this was a large group, for dialogue it was not by any means unduly large (Bohm 2000:viii+13; de Maré et al 1991:15). So the recommendations are that more research is carried out to identify the effects of using the Iterative Meetings Model and the Dialogue Process for Top Management Team Meetings within A4e Work, and within teams that are not top management teams (see section 5.7).

5.5.4 So what are the learnings for the researcher/facilitator?

"This social process of learning is paradoxical because the past...help(s) us to recognise the future and give(s) it meaning, yet the future is also changing the meaning of the very past with which we can recognise the future" (Shaw 2002:46).

Findings:
1. Be aware of the tensions between researcher and facilitator roles.
2. Facilitators have a paradoxical role.
3. Be aware of the facilitators' power to influence.
4. Pace needs to be varied within workshops.

It helped and hindered this research work by being both the researcher and a facilitator: being a facilitator meant much preparation before workshops; being 'in the moment' during those workshops; needing to field questions on the facilitators' processes and comments; and building relationships with team members. Being the researcher involved recording comments and behaviours; reflecting on the processes being followed; writing up the activities; feeding back perceptions to the team for their comments; and reflecting again on the data received. Most of the time these two roles worked well together, both enhancing the other's understanding, performance and access to the team; however, sometimes the joint responsibilities obstructed the process. For example, when the Dialogue Process for Top Management Team Meetings was first being used with A4e Work, the team gathered in a

circle and talked about their most urgent and important issues; the facilitators meanwhile watched from outside of the circle collecting behaviour analysis data. As the team and facilitators' trust grew so the facilitators were invited into the circle to participate in the conversations (see interview with CEO after January 2004 workshop; also Shaw 2002:21); although this was done because team members felt that the dialogues would be enhanced, the researcher's behaviour analysis was terminated as no further data-gathering information was then being collected. So being both a researcher and facilitator is both a help and a hindrance, and is one of the challenges of action science, of which action inquiry is a part; as Argyris et al (1985:4) say, "Action science calls for basic research and theory building that are intimately related to social intervention. Clients are participants in a process of public reflection that attempts both to comprehend the concrete details of particular cases and to discover and test propositions of a general theory…action science attempts both to inform action in concrete situations and to test general theory" (1985:5). So the paradoxical role of the researcher/facilitator needs to be understood before embarking on specific methods of data collection which might later be abandoned, as behaviour analysis was in this research.

This second finding is that, in the context of this research, the facilitators had a paradoxical role in which on the one hand they had a value and on the other hand they were superfluous: to deal with the facilitators' superfluity first: perhaps it was because the top management teams met regularly together that their understanding of each other was enhanced and their effectiveness increased (Collins 2001:164; Katzenbach + Smith 1993:68; Nonaka 2000:26); perhaps if the team had decided upon their own development process, rather than leaving this aspect to the facilitators, they might have developed themselves just as effectively, if not even more effectively; as the CEO of Yorkshire Water said at the initial meeting with the facilitators 'I could do this (the process of developing the team) myself, however I have other issues I need to focus on now'. Conversely, if the facilitators had a value in the development of the teams then this fact needs to be tempered with an understanding that they made mistakes and their subject knowledge was

inevitably limited. The findings of the researcher are that what is important is that facilitators need to admit that they are wrong when appropriate, and be prepared to be flexible, perhaps team members have a better process; for example, in November 2001 the facilitators informed the Yorkshire Water team that there was little more they could contribute, as the team were progressing so well; after a 'behind the doors' discussion the facilitators were informed that, 'This is not acceptable to us. We know that you do have more that you can contribute. Come back (researcher/facilitator) in a couple of months and put forward your recommendations'. It was during the next two months of research and reflection by the researcher that the potential added value of dialogue was uncovered. Another example was in November 2002, when the Yorkshire Water team's momentum slowed down, they commissioned feedback externally and internally to identify perceptions of their performance and how they could further improve, this gave the team added impetus.

The third finding is to be aware of the facilitators' power to influence. An example of this is: should the facilitators have been more proactive in giving feedback as suggested by a number of respondents? This is especially relevant to the Loop team who were stuck in storming; the facilitators were working on the principle that one should provide a process and let the team take it in any way that they felt appropriate, without being forced in the direction that the facilitators might have wanted them to go, for every team is unique and has its own way of doing things. "He dwells in effectiveness without action. He practices teaching without talking...It is, above all, busy-ness that I fear… in order to win the world one must be free of all busy-ness" (Lao Tzu 1989:27, 50 + 52). The personalities of the facilitators had an effect too: 'We have worked with other facilitators both before and since and none has had such a positive force for improvement as yourselves' was feedback from a Yorkshire Water member (see comments from team members on the (Yorkshire Water) story circulated in March 2002); the CEO of Loop said 'We were right to try it (the development process), nothing else had worked. We decided to do it together with you (the facilitators); we knew there was no alternative' (see meeting with CEO and HR Director in January 2004); and

from A4e Work: 'We could never have achieved this ourselves; someone external was essential. We also needed someone who could fit in – (the facilitators) have become part of the team, no longer facilitators' (see interview with CEO in February 2004). An area recommended for more research and reflection is: what the effect might have been if the facilitators had been more proactive in clarifying what participants meant when they gave their feelings feedback, after each of these dialogue sessions (see section 5.7); by doing this one participant observed that the Loop team might have moved on into norming (see comments from team members on (the Loop) story).

Fourth, pace needs to be varied within workshops: each workshop needed a rich variety of pace to keep the teams engaged: for example, the first exercise of the day was usually an ice-breaker, to create fun and clear individuals' minds of outside preoccupations; using Miller's theory (Miller 1956:81) that a person is unable to focus on more than seven plus or minus two pieces of data at any one time. In contrast to this energetic opener, the slow physical movement of T'ai Chi Ch'uan (Klein 1984:6) was also used, in which "there is an odd combination of refreshed alertness and complete calm and relaxation"; by mid-2004 the A4e Work team was also practising 'being present' (Scharmer 2002:3); and in February 2004, the A4e Work CEO commented: 'it is essential to slow down; unless the team slows down it will never be able to speed up'. As Wen Tzu says in the first century AD classic: "When the Three Treasures of essence, energy, and spirit remain calm, they nourish you day by day and make you strong. When they are hyperactive, they deplete you day by day and make you old" (Reid 1993:353); and Scott (2002:xvi) writes "slow down the conversation, so that insight can occur in the space between words and you can discover what conversation really wants and needs to be about". The teams had no trouble with shifting from one activity to another for "movement is fundamental to basic human understanding, and patterned movement... (and is) the core to much of human learning" (McCarthy 1987:128); slowing down was not so easy for some team members (Heider 1986:21), as the CEO of Yorkshire Water said 'I can't stand it when things are slow'. Notice the contrast in styles between these two CEOs.

5.5.5 So what is the essence of top management teams being effective in meetings?

"Leadership involves constantly addressing contrasts, contradictions and paradoxes" (Kakabadse + Kakabadse 2000:5)

This final finding concludes that the essence of top management teams being effective in meetings, in these times of both chaos and order, is that all team members understand the importance of having a mutually beneficial long-term relationship (MBLTR) with each other, preferably in the form of an agreed written down set of relationship principles. When the team is performing a 'family feeling' emerges, 'a sense of love' (see comment by the CEO in Yorkshire Water June 2004 workshop), and as Collins noted (2001:62): around the top teams within great companies there is a feeling of love and respect for each other, and Isaacs (1999a:47) says "through dialogue we learn to engage our hearts; Carlisle notes that such relationships are much like friendships; (and) there is a limit to the number you can truly cultivate" (Carlisle + Parker 1989:11). These mutually beneficial long-term relationships were present in two of the three teams, and the meetings' processes enhanced effectiveness. They were not there with the third team, and the processes failed to add value: 'If we don't trust each other, I would suggest that we haven't a cat in hell's chance of getting anyone else to trust us (see Loop November 2002 workshop). For these MBLTRs underpin all of the interactions that team members have together, whether the journey is chaotic or orderly, for chaos and order are both equally part of the development journey of top management teams. Exhibits 2.2 + 2.3 show that organisations need to live in a world on the edge of chaos (Shaw 2003:446; Pascale et al 2000:61), where teams are "working with considerable uncertainty" (Casey 1985:5 + 1996:37), where problems and dilemmas need to be addressed, and previous experience, pre-reading, beliefs, values, basic assumptions (Schein 1989:14) need to be better understood. As the CEO of Yorkshire Water said in November 2002: 'The process has sometimes been slightly chaotic...' This understanding that chaos and order, "chaordic" as Hock (2000:20) calls it, are two sides of the same coin, and amongst all this variety, this chaos, there is

some order (Morrison et al 1994:8), there is a natural rhythm. This interrelationship of chaos and order was written about over two thousand years ago and is encapsulated in the concept of the Yin and Yang, the model that underpins ancient Eastern Taoist philosophy: Lao Tzu referred to this phenomena in his account of the formation of the universe in the forty-second section of the Tao Te Ching; the principle of knowing polarity (Wing 1988:42):

"The One generates the Two.

The Two generates the Three.

The Three generates all things." (Lao Tzu 1989:46)

The researcher's interpretation of these words is that 'the One' encompasses everything; in this context: all conversations within top management teams. 'The One' - everything - is divided into 'the Two' (yin and yang) – opposites - for example: right and wrong; night and day; male and female, positive and negative, etc.; and in this context, for example, chaos and order – chaotic conversations and orderly conversations. The line separating the two opposites is 'the Three', and this is the energy that moves the opposites, creating an infinite number – "all things" – of contexts. For example, if 'the Two' - the Yin and Yang – are night and day, then energy – 'the Three' - would move throughout both halves creating an infinite number of textures of light and dark, between the darkest of nights and the lightest of days; and in the context of this thesis, 'all things' could for example represent every sort of conversation and dialogue within the team, from mainstream dialogue at one end of the spectrum to problem-solving at the other. The researcher concludes that, in the context of top management team meetings, processes and models are essential to gain order in the chaos; also, underpinning them needs to be an agreed set of relationship principles by which top management teams will work in whatever meeting contexts they find themselves.

"Everything that every effective manager does is sandwiched between action on the ground and reflection in the abstract… Every manager has to find a way to combine these two mind-sets – to function at the point where reflective thinking meets practical doing. But action and reflection about what? One obvious answer is: about collaboration, about getting things done cooperatively with other people". (Gosling + Mintzberg 2003:56). So whilst using the 'Dialogue Process for Top Management Team Meetings' we are

likely to be working with paradoxes all of the time, both yin and yang: the dialogues may be structured or unstructured, facilitated or not facilitated, on a key issue or building relationships, the tensions between the team's role and the role of the individuals within the team; when does the CEO let the team decide and when does he/she need to intervene? The list of paradoxes is endless.

"Nevertheless – and here is a great key to the understanding of myth and symbol – the two kingdoms are actually one. The realm of the gods is a forgotten dimension of the world we know" (Campbell 1993:217).
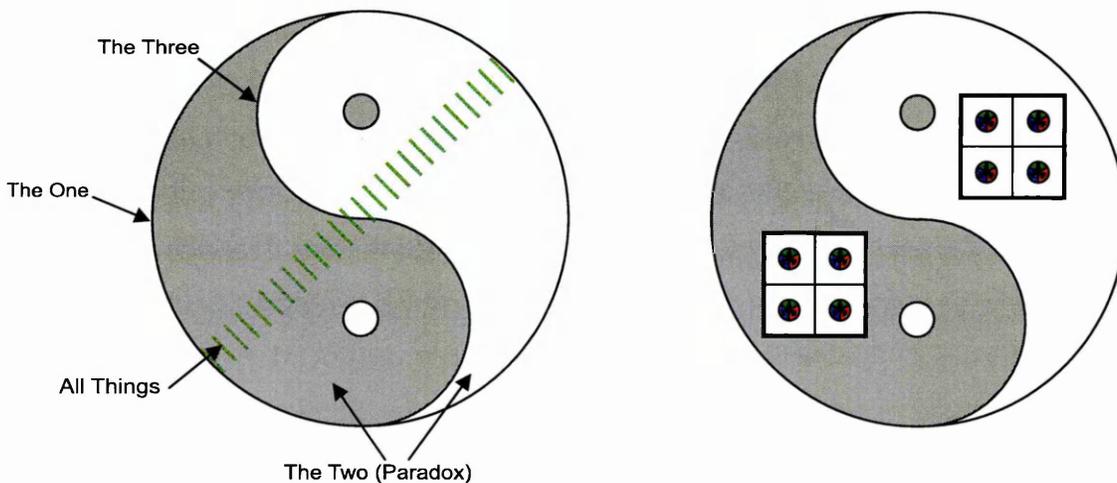
Exhibit 5.6: *Yin & Yang, adapted by the researcher: on the left, to reflect the words of the principle of knowing polarity (Wing 1988:42); and on the right, incorporating thinking, feelings and actions in each of the 4 quadrants within 'all things'*

"...managers need to face the juxtapositions in order to arrive at a deep integration of...seemingly contradictory concerns" (Gosling + Mintzberg 2003: 55). Dialogue not only leads to a deeper understanding of each others' thinking processes (Bohm 2000), it is also enhances ones' understanding of issues being discussed; thus it performs a dual function of deepening the paradoxes of both issues and relationships within the same conversations. So, in conclusion, with the meetings processes set out above, underpinned by relationship principles being lived by the team members, the likelihood of top management teams performing effectively is enhanced.

Chapter 6 Conclusions

6.1 Overview of the chapter

In addition to the findings set out in chapter five, and the recording of the journeys of the top management teams of Yorkshire Water, Loop and A4e Work during their periods of rapid and significant change, there were three further specific contributions to knowledge which have theoretical significance to the effectiveness of top management teams in general and for those working with them. These three conclusions are: first, that top management teams seem to need a specific purpose and/or vision separate from that of their organisations; second, a key principle in top management team conversations is the need for a short cycle of time between dialogue, and review and planning; and third, it seems that the dialogue process does not work unless all of those present are committed to each others' and the team's success – commitment to the organisation's goals is not enough.

6.2 Top management teams need a specific purpose and/or vision separate from that of their organisations

The conclusion and contribution to knowledge here is that each top management team needs to clarify the specific reason for this unique team's existence, separate from that of their organisation; and the team members need time and space to formulate this purpose and/or vision.

The Institute of Directors (Pierce 2001:1; Renton 2001:42) indicate that it is good practice for the board to adhere to the following generic purpose: 'The key purpose of the board is to seek to ensure the company's prosperity by collectively directing the company's affairs, whilst meeting the appropriate interests of its shareholders and relevant stakeholders'. Linked to this purpose the IOD recommend four tasks, namely, 'Establishing and maintaining vision, mission and values (for the organisation); deciding (the organisation's) strategy and structure; delegating to management; and exercising accountability and being responsible to relevant shareholders'

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(Pierce 2001:3; Renton 2001:42; see also Pierce 2001:79; Garratt 1997:47 + 2001:81). The researcher has written more on what effective top management teams talk about in the findings chapter 5.3.2. As a general guide, the facilitators found this help by the IOD most useful in focusing all three teams (see also Collins 2001:90) – see exhibit 5.2 for the chart used by the teams. However, what the three top management teams identified, in addition to this, was a need for a specific purpose and/or vision, created and owned by them, to give an added clarity to their work, and the lack of this clarity hampered their progress.

The Yorkshire Water team decided to take the task of identifying their purpose away from their workshop, to give themselves time and space to address the issue; and returned a month later with an agreed and thought-through purpose. So that they are continually reminded of and focused upon this purpose, the headings were added to the base of their weekly top management team meeting agendas. The four headings making up their purpose are: 'Set vision and direction (for the organisation); Create conditions for organisation to thrive; Listen, understand and communicate; and Monitor and correct (see Appendix 9 for the twenty-three sub-headings of this purpose). The purposes of both Loop and A4e Work were defined more quickly and during their two-day workshops. Feedback from one of the Loop team members indicated that the exercise had been too superficial and should have been taken deeper; the feedback from Loop team members reads as follows: 'The group needed a big objective to pursue and unite behind, but it didn't want that enough to overcome some sort of analysis paralysis...' (See comments from Loop team members in chapter 4.2) and 'We did not, at any point, come to any common understanding of the team we wanted to be...Had we been able to agree, at the outset, the nature of the team we wanted to be, I believe that some or all of us could have become it – or recognised earlier that we could not – although it would in any event have taken much more than dialogue to forge that team' (see comments from Loop team members in chapter 4.2). This suggestion made by the Loop team member, that the team needed to understand and agree what the 'nature of the team we wanted to be' may have been an effective way of enhancing this team's performance.

Another argument the researcher suggests is that if the team members were not prepared to be unconditionally and fully committed to the team and to the success of the individuals within the team (Crockett 2004:72; Katzenbach + Smith 1993:84; Rickards + Moger 2000:280), then should they have been in the team at all? This is taken further in 6.4 below. There is little that the researcher has read on this specific subject of a top management team defining their own purpose and/or vision, so further research is recommended (see chapter 6.6); what is clear in the literature, however, is the importance of companies having a clear purpose and vision which are identified and owned by the top management team (Barnard 1938; Campbell et al 1990:212; Collins + Porras 1998:73; Darwin et al 2002: 276; Katzenbach 1998:153; MacLennan 1999:47; Peters + Waterman 2000:292; Pierce 2001:79; Renton 2001:44; Schein 1985:52; Scholtes 1994:34; Selznick 1957; Vaill 1996:65), and although this is vital for the organisation, this research highlights the need for the top management team to find time to think through, clarify and own, and articulate their own purpose for existing; and what the research has identified is that this is not a 'quick fix' but rather an issue that will take time to identify and resolve.

6.3 A key principle in top management team conversations is the need for a short cycle of time between dialogue, and review and planning

Although there is much written on what should be discussed at top management team meetings (for example, Collins 2001:115; Finkelstein + Hambrick 1996:231; Katzenbach 1998:62; MacLennon 1999:35; Pierce 2001:4+78; Renton 2001:37) there is little on how to review and enhance the quality of those meetings. For example, in the Institute of Directors' 'Standards for the Board' (Renton 2001:39), it is recommended that, to ascertain the effectiveness of the board as a working group, regular reviews be carried out upon 'the degree to which the board's objectives are achieved', and 'the quality of the board's decisions, advice and information received and consequent actions taken', but there is nothing on reflecting, feedback and actions to enhance their immediate performance.

This research has identified that not only is there a need for a dialogue process for top management teams (see chapter 5.4.1 for more on this) but there is also a need for a short cycle of time between dialogue, and review and planning. More specifically, the process is that each dialogue session should be no longer than forty-five minutes, as in the case of the dialogues carried out with all three top management teams. This is then immediately followed by a review of the session consisting of four questions, the answers to which are written up on a flipchart for all participants to see. The questions are: 'What went well during the meeting?' (thoughts); 'What could have gone even better (both the process and the content)?' (thoughts) 'What are your feelings about the dialogue we have just completed?' (feelings); and 'What actions and behaviours are needed for the next dialogue to be even better?' (actions) (see appendices 22, 23 + 24 for details of each of the top management teams' dialogue reviews, including action planning for improving subsequent dialogues). Having completed this exercise, there can be a break before continuing with the issue being dialogued, or moving to a new dialogue, or even terminating the meeting.

There is also little in the literature on how to keep boards engaged with the complexity of issues that they have to deal with (see chapter 2.3.1). This process of immediate feedback keeps the teams in what Csikszentmihalyi (1998) calls 'flow'. The researcher's interpretation of the theory of flow can be captured by four 'C's: clarity of goals, concentration (focus), competence (or skill level), and consistency of immediate feedback. The 'short cycle of time' process achieves all of these: first, clarity of goals, in this context the goal is to learn from the dialogue process just completed; second, concentration (focus), the focus is clearly upon the team's performance during the past three quarters of an hour; third, competence (or skill level), the skill level - certainly in relation to this review process - has the potential of continuously improving as the team continues to complete the cycle of dialogue, and review of thoughts, feelings and actions needed to enhance future dialogues; and, finally, consistency of immediate feedback, by following this process every time and without delay at every top management team meeting (see also chapter 2.3.1).

6.4 The dialogue process does not work unless all of those present are committed to each others' and the team's success

This conclusion emerged whilst the dialogue process was being used with all three top management teams, namely that: The dialogue process does not work unless all of those present are committed to each others' and the team's success. This is so, however committed the individuals are to the success of their project, organisation and/or people – for more information on the dialogue process itself see chapter, 5.4.1. There is a large body of literature which talks of the importance of teams working together and the positive effects that this has upon their performance (for example, Collins 2001: 115; Collins + Porras 1998:173; Critchley + Casey 1996:335; de Geus 1996:92; Hastings 1999:61; Herb et al 2001:1; Johnson + Johnson 2003:559; Katzenbach 1998:161; Nonaka 1996:18; Renton 2001:64; Vaill 1996:60). This researcher's work has found that the contrary situation is also true – that the lack of cohesion within a top management team also has an effect upon their performance, in this case, detrimental.

There are two specific examples of this conclusion: one occurred whilst the process was being used outside of Yorkshire Water by one of the team, and one within the Loop team itself. One of the Yorkshire Water top management team members used the process whilst attending a meeting outside of the company. His feedback to the team was: 'The dialogue process is certainly helpful, and I gained a very clear understanding of where they were coming from. Although it has taken my understanding a lot further, I can't get my message through to them: they are not hearing what I am saying. The challenge is that when others don't know dialogue, and are at the meeting to win the best deal that they can for themselves, then you have limitations on its use. Still, I will continue to practise the process' (see June 2002 workshop). This is a limitation on the use of dialogue, and is an illustration that dialogue is not easy to understand or follow, thus the need for a process of dialogue (see findings chapter 5.4.2) which is designed to help those who initially can't dialogue, to become dialoguers.

The second example is from Loop where there was not a willingness by everyone within the top management team for either the team or fellow members to succeed. In his comments to the team the researcher wrote that, 'The team worked hard during the workshops and there were seldom any personal attacks on each other, yet because of a lack of cohesion within the team, it never came together as one'. Responses to those comments from the team included: 'it didn't occur to me that not all of the team members were committed to the success of the team. Hindsight is, of course, a wonderful thing and I can see it clearly now'. 'In the absence of that common understanding, some individuals could never come together in a single true team – as became clear'. As one of the other team members reflected: 'If we had addressed and dealt with the people issues two years ago, it would have caused considerable pain but, by being tougher on the people and having the right people in the team, the process would probably have worked' (See Collins 2001:13; and Appendix 16. And see January 2004 meeting with the Loop CEO and HR Director). Early in 2005 Loop was again successful in The Sunday Times 100 for the third consecutive year, as one of the best companies to work for in Britain. However the company had dropped from thirty-third to eightieth and the reason given for the fall was: 'Quarterly meetings offer the chance to quiz the senior team, but just 58% of staff are confident about their leadership skills, one of a number of poor leadership scores. Middle managers score much better: more than 80% say that their managers care about them and are honest with them, the sixth and fourteenth highest scores respectively in these areas. While Loop finishes bottom of the 100 best companies for responses on leadership, it ranks 17th for the positive views employees have of their immediate manager'.

6.5 Limitations of this study

One limitation of the research has been the researcher's selection of Action Inquiry using the Hermeneutic Cycle (incorporating the 4MAT system) which is around the line between Burrell and Morgan's (2000:29) "Sociology of Radical Change' and 'Sociology of Regulation", and leaning more to the

Subjective than to the Objective. By adopting this approach a multitude of other theoretical perspectives have been excluded which no doubt would have had different research approaches and may well have had different conclusions from that research (Hassard 1991:296). The researcher's own experience and the experiences of those within the top management teams (Bantel + Finklestein 1995) will have limited the research: "All learning depends on the reflective interpretation of one's experience together with the experience of others" (Lafitte 1957:21). Upon reflection, the researcher's and fellow-facilitator's experiences and positions held, both in companies and in other public arenas, would have had an effect upon the teams' behaviours, especially in the early stages of each team's formation. Probably the greatest limitation of all is that of the researcher's own experience and thinking, and his ability to reflect upon the complexity of all of the facets and links that this research has uncovered. Also, some might see the fieldwork carried out with three client groups as a limitation: the researcher believes that the extensive longitudinal case studies in three different business sectors give the research both breadth and depth, although he is not claiming that the findings are generically true for all organisations.

6.6 Recommendations for further research

There are three areas where the researcher has identified that further research could add value: the first is enhancing the team members' own awareness of themselves and their colleagues; the second is assisting facilitators in becoming more effective; and the third is extending this research to teams other than top management teams.

So the first area is about enhancing the team members' own awareness. Further work is recommended to understand better how the quality of argument changes, how to recognise these changes as the team moves through the four-stage group development model, and what to do – if anything – to assist the process (see also section 5.5.1). In addition, it is recommended that further research be done into understanding themselves and their colleagues' personalities better. During the research, both the facilitator,

Peter Field, and researcher/facilitator spent about twenty days attending Enneagram programmes being run by Don Riso and Russ Hudson (Riso + Hudson 1999). The Enneagram is, in its simplest form, a way of better understanding one's personality; some of these learnings were shared by the facilitators with the three teams. The A4e Work team took the QUEST, the QUick Enneagram Sorting Test (Riso + Hudson 1999:13), also the Yorkshire Water team identified which personality type they felt they each might be; both CEOs identified themselves as Type Eight, and the facilitators felt that the CEO of Loop might well also fit this description. Type Eight is The Challenger: "The powerful dominant type. Eights are self-confident, strong and assertive. Protective, resourceful, and decisive, they can also be proud and domineering. Eights feel that they must control their environment, often becoming confrontational and intimidating. They typically have problems with allowing themselves to be close to others. At their best, healthy Eights are self-mastering – they use their strengths to improve others' lives, becoming heroic, magnanimous, and sometimes historically great" (Riso + Hudson 1999:12). The Loop CEO might alternatively be a Type One who is The Reformer: "The principled idealist type. Ones are ethical and conscientious, with a strong sense of right and wrong. They are teachers and crusaders, always striving to improve things but afraid of making a mistake. Well-organised, orderly and fastidious they try to maintain high standards but can slip into being critical and perfectionistic. They typically have problems with repressed anger and impatience. At their best, healthy Ones are wise, discerning, realistic, and noble, as well as morally heroic" (Riso + Hudson 1999:11). This is an area where more research is recommended, for almost half of both Yorkshire Water and A4e Work teams identified themselves as Eights. Does this mean that Eights are needed in top management teams? Or does it mean they rise to the top whether they are needed there or not? Does it make the slightest difference? Although there has been a proliferation of literature on Enneagrams, certainly since the 1980s, there is still very little written on this subject in business.

To help facilitators in becoming more effective, it may be that identifying learning styles of team members might assist. In parallel with this research

within the three companies, the researcher carried out work to validate, or otherwise, the distribution of learning styles relating to the four action inquiry quadrants (Why? What? How? And So what?) in order to ensure that everyone participating in the learning would be catered for in the style of facilitation provided. According to McCarthy (1987:80), who administered the Kolb Learning Style Inventory to 2367 teachers and administrators during 1986-87 in the USA, she found the following distribution of learning styles:

	%
Why? (Diverger)	23.0
What? (Assimilator)	31.1
How? (Converger)	17.4
So what? (Accommodator)	28.5

This can be compared with the researcher's four years of jointly designing and running a ten-day leadership programme for executives, Integral Leadership; the following distribution was found using Kolb's Learning Style Inventory (Kolb et al 1995:53) – see also Appendix 13:

	McCarthy (1987:80)	Field et al (2004b)
	%	%
Why? (Diverger)	23.0	22.6
What? (Assimilator)	31.1	9.0
How? (Converger)	17.4	26.0
So what? (Accommodator)	28.5	42.4
Number of people involved in the research	2367	177

This could indicate that executives in the UK are more interested in activity (how?) and the use of what has been learned (so what?) than teachers in the USA who have more of a leaning towards learning the facts (what?). The wish for movement was borne out during a number of sessions of Integral Leadership when executives were leaving their places to become involved in exercises even before instructions for the exercises had been given! The

fieldwork research showed that all of the teams were disinclined to look back at previous learnings, thus possibly they were 'how' and 'so what' oriented. As the researcher did not ask the three teams involved in the research to complete a questionnaire there is no data upon their learning styles. It is recommended that more research is carried out to ascertain if there is a preference for any particular learning styles, and what the implications for learning are for the teams assessed.

Research is also required to assist facilitators in becoming more effective, to find a 'route map' to help identify each top team's purpose. The route map would help teams to understand where they are on their development journey. For this task, the four-stage group development model was found to be inadequate by the teams, as was the 'Superteam model' (Pokora + Briner 1999), and the route designed by the researcher/facilitator, see Appendix 18. As the Yorkshire Water CEO said in November 2002, 'A big learning for the facilitators must be that they have to offer a route map of the journey, otherwise we spend time in fog and we get pissed off.' And in Loop, had the purpose been clearer for the top management team, as one of the team's members suggested, the results may have been very different; certainly, Yorkshire Water's team purpose (see Appendix 9) assisted in clarifying where that team should focus. So further work with other teams is recommended, in order to spend time clarifying their purpose and monitoring the effects that this has upon their performance. Finally, on enhancing facilitators' effectiveness, there is a need to understand better the meaning of feedback shared between team members: what would be the effect of the facilitators being more proactive in clarifying what participants meant when they gave their feelings feedback after each dialogue session? Had this been done, one participant observed that the Loop team might have moved on into norming (see comments from team members on the (Loop) story). Feedback included words such as: 'frustrated', 'uncomfortable', 'disappointment', 'relief', and 'excluded'. Had the facilitators taken more time in the feedback sessions and asked what these words meant to those participants, perhaps a better understanding of each others' thinking processes might have ensued.

The last recommendation is to extend this research to teams other than top management teams. Section 5.5.3 covered just one example of working with a team other than a top management team, and also A4e Work has used the dialogue process and principles within its organisation. Although these are perceived as being successful, a more rigorous programme of research needs to be carried out to clarify if these processes work well throughout all teams and not just top management teams.

6.7 The last word

This is left to the CEO of Yorkshire Water when asked in January 2004: 'To what do you attribute your success and the success of the company?' He replied: 'Firstly, luck…yes, lots of luck'.

Appendices

Appendix 1: List of appointments held by the researcher

Non-executive positions held

The following organisations are where the researcher served, or is serving, as a non-executive chairman, director or member:

Association of British Chambers of Commerce

Dyson Group Pension Scheme

G10 – representing Training and Enterprise Councils

Galactic Learning Company Ltd

Hallamshire Investments plc

Highlander Computing Solutions Ltd

Industrial Society

Industrial Society Pensions Scheme

Joint Venture Consultants Ltd

Kent Aerospace Castings Ltd

Prince of Wales Volunteers

Queen Margaret's School (York) Ltd

Saffil Pensions Scheme

Sheffield Chamber of Commerce

Sheffield Development Corporation

Sheffield Economic Regeneration Committee

Sheffield Education Business Partnership Initiative Ltd

Sheffield Hallam University

Sheffield Training and Enterprise Council

The Cutlers Company in Hallamshire

World Student Games 1991

Yorkshire Television Telethon Trust

Project team positions held

The Challenge of Leadership – a five-day strategic planning programme involving one hundred Sheffield Leaders

Industry Year 1986

Painting 1,000 rooms of the 1991 World Student Games village

Parents' purchase of Queen Margaret's School (York)

Setting up a language learning centre for local businesses in an unused local authority school

A three-day '7 Habits of Highly Effective People' development programme for leaders in Sheffield

A charity event at the Crystal Peaks cinema complex

A half-day Tony Robbins event at the University of Sheffield

A night with Tony Robbins at the Sheffield Arena

A three-day sales training event for SMEs at Sheffield Hallam University

Yorkshire Television Telethon in 1992

Top management team positions held

Bamford Business Services Ltd

Bridon Wire Ltd

Dyson Group plc

Dyson Refractories Ltd

Field Enterprise Ltd

Integral Leadership Ltd

Pickford Holland Ltd

The Organisation for Co-operation & Trust Ltd

Appendix 2: Interview questionnaire: used with members of the top management teams, managers, and staff in client organisations

Q1. How long have you worked for the Company?

Q2. What is your job title?

Q3. What do you make happen in the Company?

Q4. What gets in the way of you being more effective?

Q5. Who is your line manager?

Q6. What do you know about any changes going on?

Q7. How will these changes affect you?

Q8. How do you feel about the changes going on?

Q9. How well does your team function?

Q10. How could it be better?

Q11. What challenges do you have as a team?

Q12. How effective is the team?

Q13. How is the team perceived?

Q14. How is the Company doing?

Q15. How do you know this?

Q16. What does the Company need to be doing differently?

Q17. What part can the top management team play in this?

Q18. How do people behave?

Q19. What are the Company values?

Q20. What evidence do you have that these values are lived?

Q21. If there was one thing in your working life you could change, what would that be?

Q22. If there was one thing in the organisation that you could change what would that be?

Q23. How optimistic are you for the future?

Q24. How clear are you about what is required of you?

Q25. How could your working environment improve?

On a scale of 1-10 where 10 is outstanding, how do you score the following?

Q26. Internal relationships within the organisation?

Q27. Internal communications with the organisation?

Q28. Internal relationships within your team?

Q29. Internal communications with your team?

Q30. How good are our relationships with our Customers?

Q31. How effective are the top management team?

Q32. How good is the Company at managing finance?

Q33. How good is the Company at managing customers?

Q34. How much attention do we pay to quality?

Q35. How well do we manage the needs of the people in the Company?

Q36. How good are we at delivering outputs?

Q37. Have the Company got the appropriate systems in place?

On a scale of 1-10 where 10 is outstanding, how effective are you:

Q38. As an individual

Q39. As a team

Q40. As an organisation

Q41. How happy are you?

And if applicable:

Q42. What do you want from this development programme?

Appendix 3: Role of the Board questionnaire

(On a scale of 1-10 where 10 is outstanding)

As a board:

Policy formulation

1. Have you a clear company purpose?
2. Have you a clear company vision and company values?
3. Have you a clear company culture?
4. Do you monitor your external environment?

Strategic thinking

5. Are you clear on how you are positioning the company?
6. Are you clear on what the company direction is?
7. Are you clear on what the company's key resources are?
8. Are you clear on your company's implementation process?

Supervising management

9. Are you effective in overseeing your management?
10. Are you effective in implementing budgetary control?
11. Are you effective in identifying and achieving key business results?

Accountability

12. Do you have systems in place to ensure that you are fully accountable to the company?
13. Do you have systems in place to ensure that you are fully accountable to owners?
14. Do you have systems in place to ensure that you are fully accountable to legislators?

15. Do you have systems in place to ensure that you are fully accountable to other stakeholders?

16. Do you have systems in place to ensure that audits (directorial) are effectively carried out?

Adapted from:

Garratt R (2001) *The Learning Organisation* London: HarperCollins

Garratt R (1997) *The Fish Rots from the Head* London: HarperCollins

Pierce C (2001) *the Effective Director: the essential guide to director & board development* London: Kogan Page

Appendix 4: Yorkshire Water Behaviours questionnaire

How well do top management team members perceive their colleagues demonstrating these behaviours?

- Celebrate and recognise success
- Check that everyone has had an opportunity to say what they feel
- Commit to MBWA (managing by walking about) at least once a week
- More builds and 'what ifs'

(Note: Having decided upon their values, the team identified these four 'role-model' behaviours as those that would reflect members living those values.)

Feedback given by top management team members on their own and colleagues' behaviours:

Feedback to (Name)	Celebrate success	Express feelings	MBWA	Builds and 'what if'
How fellow team members perceive you (average and range)				

How you perceive yourself				
How you all perceive the Team (average and range)				

Appendix 5: Initial guidelines given to top management teams

Initial dialogue guidelines (adapted from Adams in Dixon 1998:117; Flick 2000:36) given to top management teams.
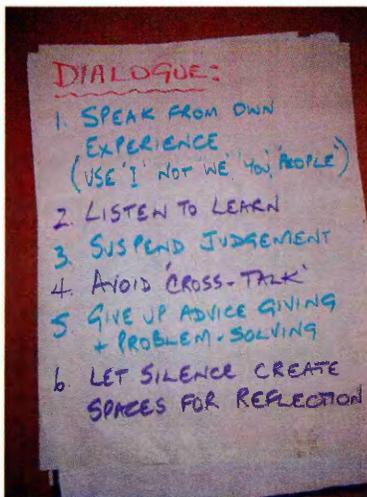
Exhibit A5.1: *Initially used with Yorkshire Water in February 2002 (Adapted from Dixon, 1998:11)*
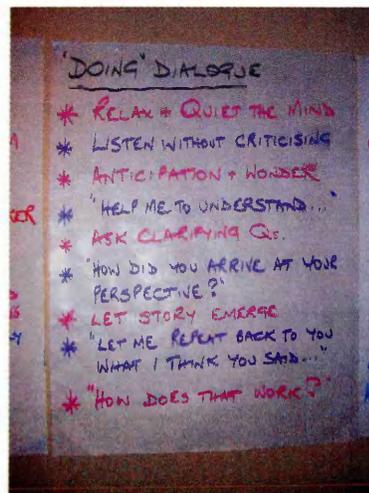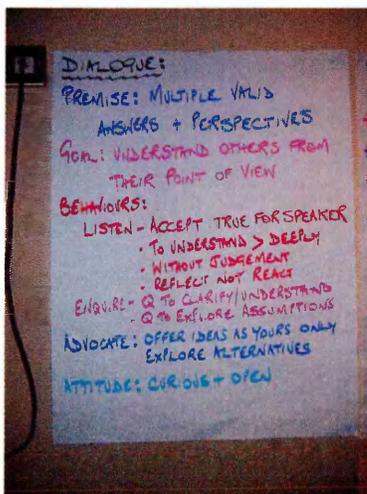
Exhibits A5.2, A5.3, A5.4 and A5.5: *Used with dialogues (Adapted from Flick 2000:36)*

Appendix 6: Conditions for dialogue + conversations

Johnson + Johnson (2003:297) Decision by consensus	Yankelovich (1999:41) Distinctive features of dialogue	Gerard + Teurfs (1997:16) The four skills of dialogue
1. Avoid arguing blindly for your opinions	1. Equality and the absence of coercive influences	1. Suspending judgement
2. Avoid changing your mind only to reach agreement and avoid conflict	2. Listening with empathy	2. Identifying assumptions
3. Avoid conflict-reducing procedures	3. Bringing assumptions into the open	3. Listening
4. Seek out differences of opinion		4. Inquiring and reflecting
5. Do not assume that someone must win and someone must lose		
6. Discuss underlying assumptions		

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Doris Adams (Dixon 1998:117) Dialogue guidelines	Deborah Flick's (2000:36) Dialogue	Deborah Flick's (2000:36) 'Doing dialogue'
1. *Speak from your own experience (use 'I' not 'we', 'you' or 'people')*	Premise: Multiple valid answers and perspectives	• Relax and quiet the mind • Listen without criticising
2. *Practise Generative Listening (listen to learn from others)*	Goal: Understand others from their point of view	• Anticipation! • 'Help me to understand...'
3. *Suspend judgement when listening to the other*	Behaviours: Listen – True for speaker - To understand more deeply - Without judgement - Reflect not react	• Ask clarifying questions • 'How did you arrive at your perspective?'
4. *Avoid 'cross-talk' – talk to the whole group rather than another member of the group*	Enquire: Question to clarify/understand Question to explore assumptions	• Let story emerge • 'Let me repeat back to you what I think you said...'
5. *Give up advice-giving and problem-solving*	Advocate; Offer ideas as yours only Explore alternatives	• 'How does that work?'
6. *Let silence create spaces for reflection between each person's*	Attitude: Open and curious	

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speaking

Janet Smith (1998:120)	Doris Adams (Dixon 1998:117) A simple set of guidelines	Bohm's three basic conditions for dialogue (Senge 1990: 243)
Exploring a sense of connectedness.	Speak from your own experience (use 'I' not 'we', 'you' or 'people')	All participants must 'suspend' their assumptions, literally hold the 'as if suspended before us'.
Inquiring rather than promoting ideas.	Practice Generative Listening (listen to learn from others)	All participants must regard one another as colleagues.
Mutually respectful of differences.	Suspend judgement when listening to the other	There must be a 'facilitator' who 'holds the context' of dialogue.
Attending to silence.	Avoid 'cross-talk' – talk to the whole group rather than another member of the group	
Allowing shared meanings to emerge.	Give up advice-giving and problem- solving	

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Willingness to be tentative. Suspending assumptions. Avoiding defensiveness. Suspending role and status.	Let silence create spaces for reflection between each person's speaking.

Anthony Blake Off the www	Wheatley (2002:29) Principles of a formal conversation process
Listening:	We acknowledge one another as equals
Diversity The more diverse the people and their points, the better.	We try to stay curious about each other
Closure:	We recognize that we need each other's help to become better listeners
Present moment	We slow down so we have time to think and reflect
Facilitation	We remember that conversation is the natural way humans think together

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Patience	We expect it to be messy at times
Application	

Appendix 7: Initial questionnaire used

Questions used in workshops

Original questions agreed with the CEO of Yorkshire Water in December 2000:

(On a scale of 1-10 where 10 is brilliant)

1. How effective am I?
2. How effective is the team?
3. How effective is the organisation?
4. How good is customer service?
5. How good are internal relationships within the business?

This question was added at the request of managers being interviewed:

6. How good are internal communications within the business?

Original questions agreed with the top management team of A4e Work in May 2001:

1. How effective am I?
2. How effective is the team?

3. How effective is the organisation?
4. How good is customer service?
5. How good are internal relationships within the business?
6. How good are internal relationships within the top management team?

These questions were then extended and used in all three organisations to the following:

BUSINESS MEASURES

Team: _____

Date: _____

Score the following on a scale of 1-10 where 10 is Brilliant:

1.	Internal Relationships - Organisation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2.	Internal Communications – Organisation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3.	Internal Relationships – Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4.	Internal Communications – Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5.	Customer Relationships	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6.	How Effective is the Top Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7.	How Effective is the Company at Managing Finance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8.	How Effective is the Co. at Managing Customers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9.	How much Attention do we pay to Quality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10.	How Good is the Co. at Managing Needs of People	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11.	How Good is the Company at Delivering Outputs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
12.	Have the Co. got the Appropriate Systems in Place	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
13.	How Effective am I	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
14.	How Effective is the Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
15.	How Effective is the Organisation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

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Appendix 8: Facilitators' Principles

1. Keep it simple
2. Ruthless on issues, gentle on people
3. Communicate, communicate, communicate
4. Win/win or don't pretend
5. Measure progress
6. Inch wide, mile deep
7. As within so without
8. MBLTR (Mutually beneficial long-term relationships)
9. Hard Fun

These principles were shared with the teams at the initial workshop; plus, after feedback from the Yorkshire Water team:

10. All correspondence from the facilitators should be sent to all members of the team, not just the CEO

(Note: the researcher is grateful to John Carlisle for introducing him to principles two, three, and four.)

Appendix 9: The Purpose of the Top Management Team of Yorkshire Water

This was produced in 2002; see Conclusions chapter, section 6.2.

SET VISION AND DIRECTION

➢ Develop business strategy
➢ Establish and approve business plans
➢ Communicate strategy and plans
➢ Ensure strategy in line with shareholders aspirations
➢ Balance stakeholder aspirations
➢ Establish + live company values

CREATE CONDITIONS FOR ORGANISATION TO THRIVE

- ➤ Make organisation a great place to work
- ➤ Set policies and procedures
- ➤ Manage shareholder relationship
- ➤ Manage external relationships
- ➤ Enable and support teamwork
- ➤ Motive and celebrate success
- ➤ Be a catalyst for change and innovation

LISTEN, UNDERSTAND AND COMMUNICATE

- ➤ Keep in touch with the mood of the organisation
- ➤ Communicate incessantly
- ➤ Encourage openness and feedback
- ➤ Provide support by coaching and mentoring
- ➤ Learn from mistakes - not just punish

MONITOR AND CORRECT

- ➤ Set targets
- ➤ Measure performance against targets
- ➤ Measure efficiency and effectiveness
- ➤ Evaluate performance
- ➤ Establish corrective actions where appropriate

Note: these are touchstones for the team and the four headings were added to the base of their weekly agenda

Appendix 10: Progress of GB Posters' directors and managers during the eighteen months to June 2004
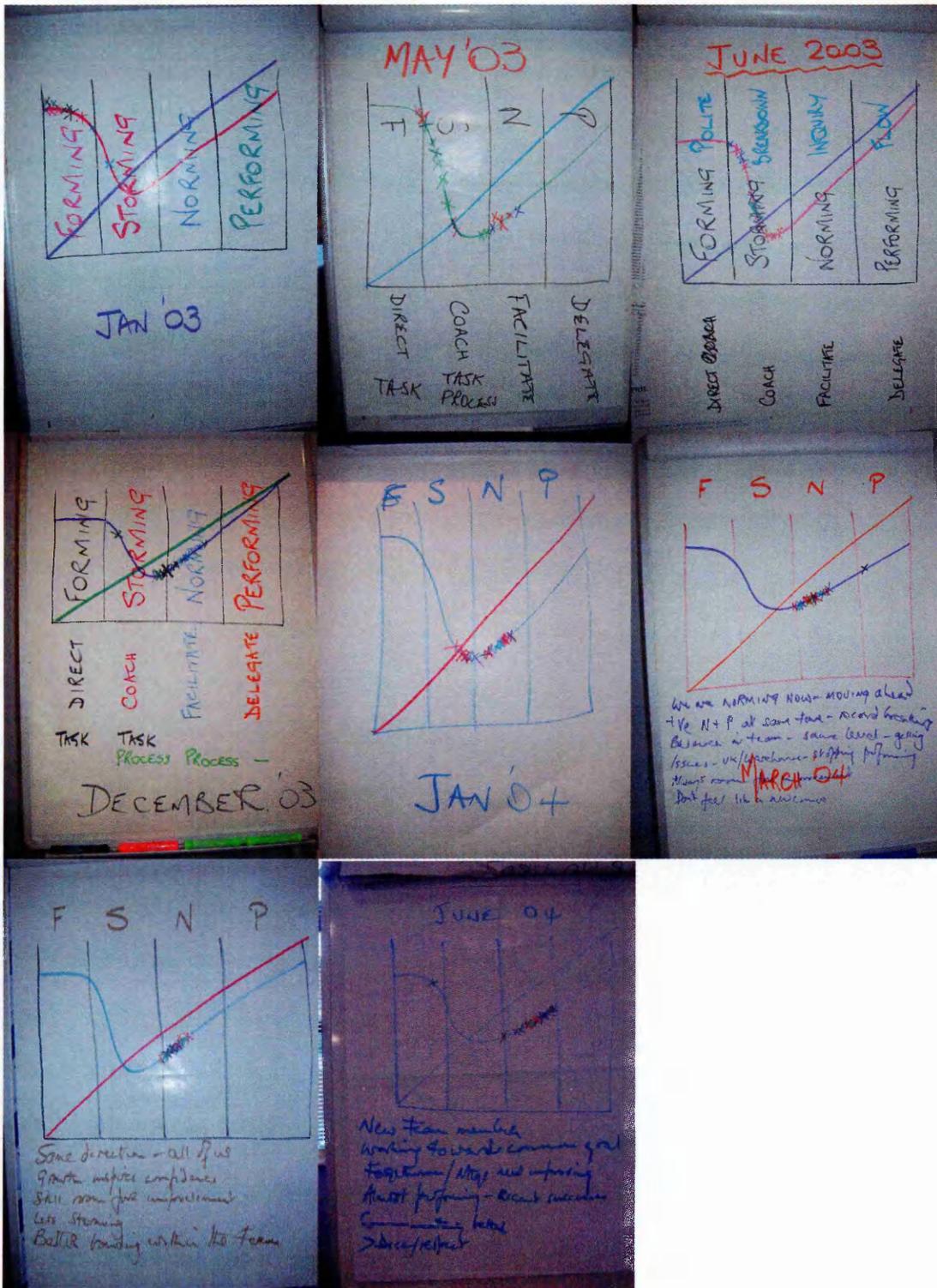
Exhibit A10.1: *GB Posters' progress*

All of the managers and directors were brought together in January 2003, four more joined in June 2003 and a further one in December 2003; in June 2004, one other member joined this team which now has 18 members.

Appendix 11: Procedures produced by both Loop and A4e Work, and principles produced by A4e Work
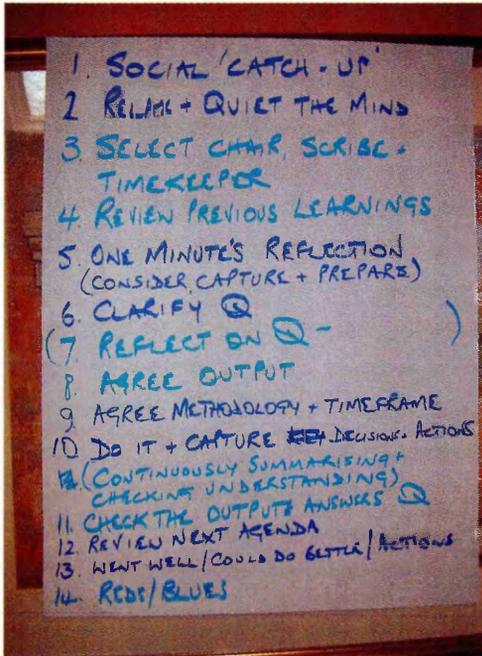
Exhibit A11.1: *Process designed and used by Loop in March 2003*
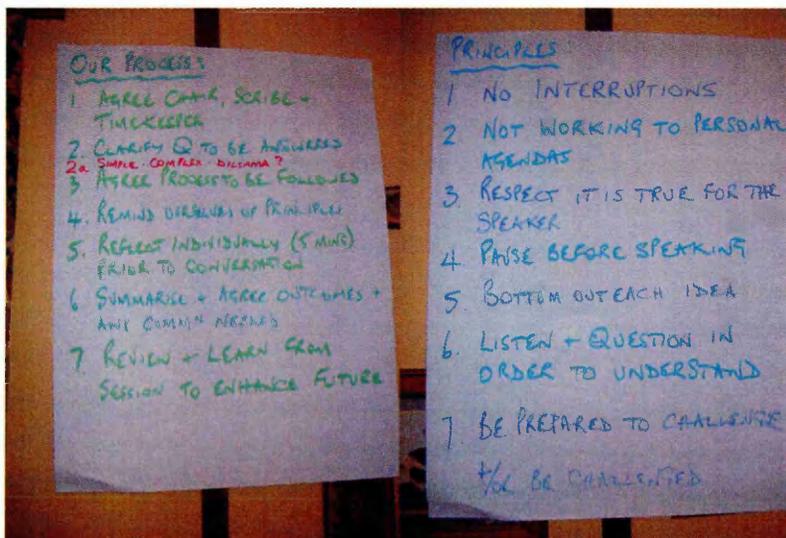
Exhibit A11.2: *Process and set of principles produced and used by A4e Work in May 2004*

Appendix 12: Example of a book review recorded on flipcharts
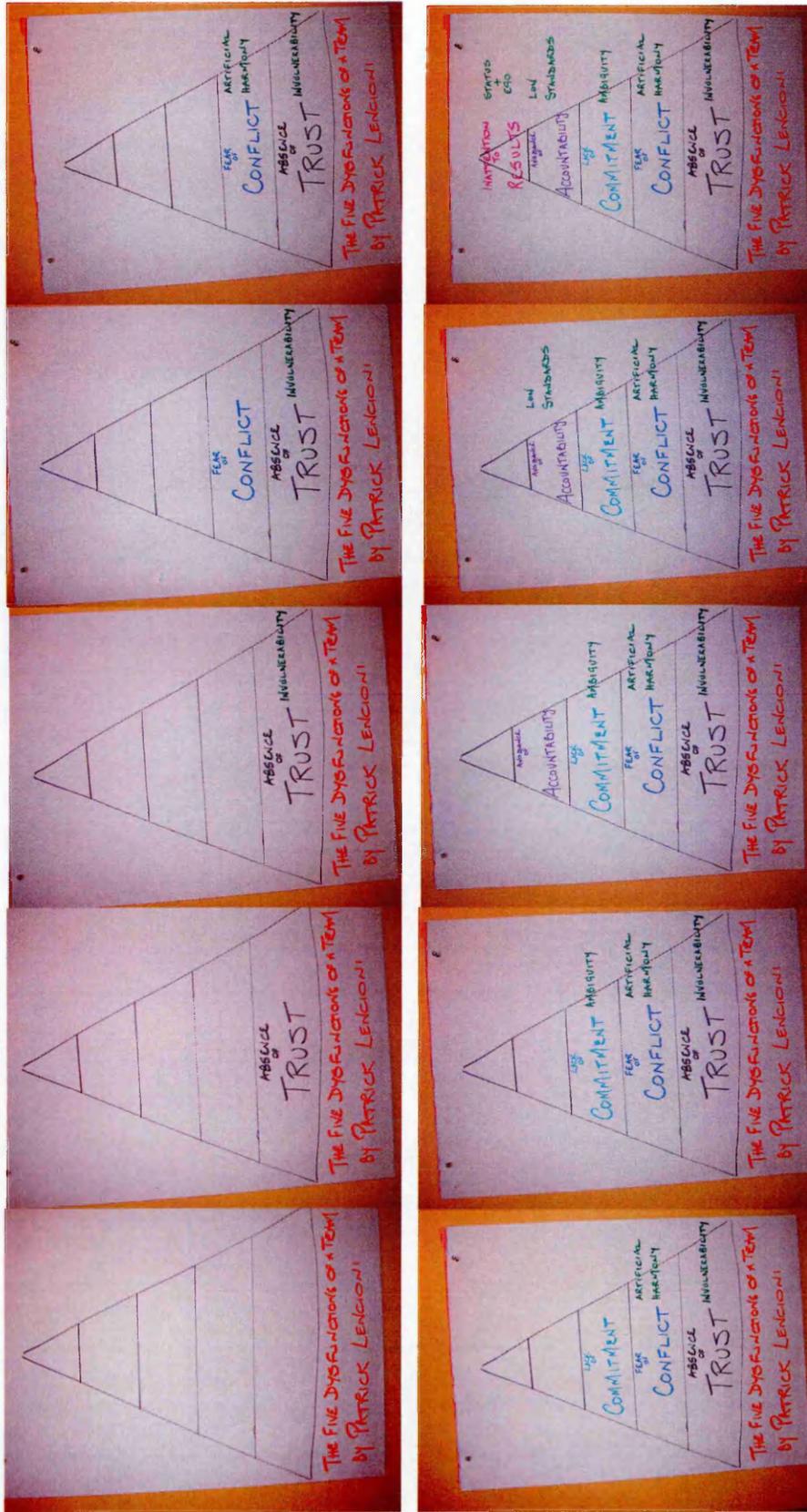
Exhibit A12.1: *Book review on flipcharts*

Adapted from Lencioni P (2002) *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Appendix 13: Kolb's learning styles

Results of using Kolb's learning style inventory (Kolb et al 1995:46) with Integral Leadership programme executives between June 2000 and June 2004 – see 5.7 Recommendations for further research

IL SESSION	S1		S2		M3		S4		B5		S6		S7		S8		S9		S10		S11		S12		Total		
	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%	%
Why	5	15%	2	10%	0	0%	3	25%	3	27%			5	23%	1	8%	5	26%	5	28%	6	38%	5	42%	40	23%	21%
What	2	6%	3	15%	0	0%	1	8%	0	0%			3	14%	1	8%	3	16%	1	6%	2	13%	0	0%	16	9%	8%
How	11	32%	7	35%	0	0%	1	8%	5	45%			3	14%	3	23%	7	37%	5	28%	1	6%	3	25%	46	26%	24%
So What	16	47%	8	40%	0	0%	7	58%	3	27%			11	50%	8	62%	4	21%	7	39%	7	44%	4	33%	75	42%	40%
Total	34	100%	20	100%	0	0%	12	100%	11	100%	0	0%	22	100%	13	100%	19	100%	18	100%	16	100%	12	100%	177	100%	94%
Not recorded	0	0%	0	0%	12	100%	0	0%	0	0%			0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	12	0%	6%
Total	34	100%	20	100%	12	100%	12	100%	11	100%	0	0%	22	100%	13	100%	19	100%	18	100%	16	100%	12	100%	189	100%	100%

Appendix 14: The six criteria in great companies (Collins 2001:12)

1. Level Five Leadership.
2. First who…then what.
3. Confront the brutal facts.
4. Hedgehog concept.
5. Culture of discipline.
6. Technology accelerator.

Appendix 15: "First, Break All The Rules" 12 questions

Questionnaire

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2. Do I have the materials and equipment to do my job right?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3. Do I have the opportunities to do what I do best daily?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4. In the last seven days, have I received praise or recognition for good work?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5. Does my supervisor care about me as a person?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6. Is there someone who encourages my development?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7. Do my opinions seem to count?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8. Does the purpose/mission of the company make me feel that my work is important?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9. Are my co-workers committed to doing quality work?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10. Do I have a best friend at work?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11. In the last six months, have I talked with someone about my progress?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
12. This last year, have I had opportunities at work to learn and grow?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Adapted from: Buckingham M + Coffman C (1999:28) *First, Break All The Rules* Simon & Schuster New York: Business Books

Appendix 16: Good to Great Questionnaire

This questionnaire was designed by the researcher, checked before using with the HR Director, and used to interview twenty-nine directors and managers within Yorkshire Water; interviews were carried out for the researcher by Colin McGarrigle during February and March 2003, and the numerical comparisons of 2002 with 2003, as perceived by those being interviewed, are shown in the graphs section at the end of the Yorkshire Water case study.

Level Five Leadership:

Personal humility v Professional will. Mirror to themselves when things go wrong and window to others when looking for people to praise. Incredibly ambitious – first for the company:

1. Where do you think YW was one year ago?
   - Score 0 – 10
   - Comments – the more specific the better

2. What do you feel about the company now?
   - Score 0 – 10
   - Comments – the more specific the better

3. How do we need to behave in the future?
   - Score 0 – 10
   - Comments – the more specific the better

First who...then what:
The right people make up the team. The wrong people are not in the team, and the right people are in the right places in the team.

4. Where do you think YW was one year ago?

- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

5. What do you feel about the company now?
  - Score 0 – 10
  - Comments – the more specific the better

6. How do we need to behave in the future?
  - Score 0 – 10
  - Comments – the more specific the better

Confront the brutal facts (and keep faith that you will win in the end):
Lead with questions not answers. Discuss issues with people don't coerce. Conduct autopsies without blame. Build 'red flags' that one cannot avoid seeing. And don't demotivate!

7. Where do you think YW was one year ago?
  - Score 0 – 10
  - Comments – the more specific the better

8. What do you feel about the company now?
  - Score 0 – 10
  - Comments – the more specific the better

9. How do we need to behave in the future?
  - Score 0 – 10
  - Comments – the more specific the better

Hedgehog Concept:
The team have a passion for the company's purpose and values. They have a single indicator that signifies its success or failure. The company can become world class in this market place.

10. Where do you think YW was one year ago?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

11. What do you feel about the company now?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

12. How do we need to behave in the future?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

Culture of discipline:
There is both a strong culture of discipline and an ethic of entrepreneurship in the company.

13. Where do you think YW was one year ago?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

14. What do you feel about the company now?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

15. How do we need to behave in the future?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

Technology accelerator:

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In implementing technology: first the company 'crawls', then 'walks' and finally 'runs'. Its IT systems are excellent in this niche, and they accelerate the company's growth.

16. Where do you think YW was one year ago?
   - Score 0 – 10
   - Comments – the more specific the better

17. What do you feel about the company now?
   - Score 0 – 10
   - Comments – the more specific the better

18. How do we need to behave in the future?
   - Score 0 – 10
   - Comments – the more specific the better

19. Where do you think the top management team performance was (overall) one year ago?
   - Score 0 – 10
   - Comments – the more specific the better

20. What do you feel about the top management team now?
   - Score 0 – 10
   - Comments – the more specific the better

21. How do the top management team need to behave in the future?
   - Score 0 – 10
   - Comments – the more specific the better

22. Where was Yorkshire Water performance one year ago?
   - Score 0 – 10
   - Comments – the more specific the better

23. What do you feel about Yorkshire Water is now?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

24. How do Yorkshire Water need to behave in the future?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

25. Where were employee relationships within YW a year ago?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

26. What do you feel employee relationships within YW are now?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

27. How do employee relationships need to behave in the future?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

28. Where was our customer care one year ago?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

29. What do you feel our customer care is now?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

30. How does our customer care need to behave in the future?

- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

31. Where was our internal communication a year ago?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

32. What do you feel about our internal communications now?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

33. How does our internal communication need to behave in the future?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

34. Where was I performing as a manager a year ago?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

35. What do you feel as a manager now?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

36. How does the manager need to behave in the future?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

37. Where was the team performing a year ago?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

38. What do you feel about the team now?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

39. How do the team need to behave in the future?
- Score 0 – 10
- Comments – the more specific the better

Appendix 17: The six Good to Great questions

How Great is your Company?

	One year ago	Now	In one year	Actions
Level 5 Leadership				
First Who…then what				
Confront the brutal facts				
Hedgehog Concept				
Culture of Discipline				
Technology Accelerator				

Adapted from: Collins J (2001) *Good to Great* London: Random House

(Note: Used by the Loop top management team in February 2003, see also Exhibit 4.7).

Appendix 18: Route maps for development of the top management team
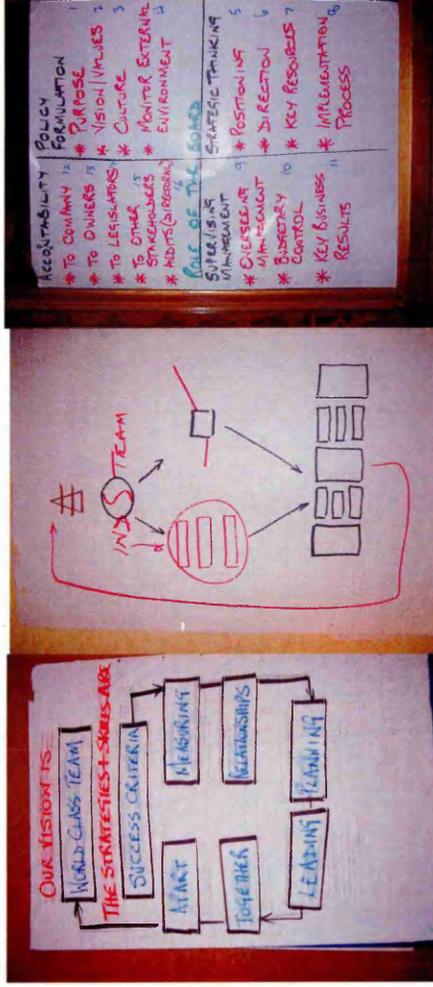
Exhibit A18.1: *Route maps*

The first picture was the route map shared with both A4e Work and Yorkshire Water in 2001 (adapted from Pokora J + Briner W (1999) *The Superteam approach in Stewart R (ed), Gower Handbook of Teamworking* Aldershot + Vermont: Gower Publishing); both companies found it initially interesting but unhelpful as a touchstone, so the model was not shared with the Loop team in November 2002.

The second picture is the route map that was presented to Yorkshire Water in February 2002. It starts with a leadership triangle, and is then divided between the Yin of personal development using The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (Covey 1990), and the Yang of team development using Good to Great (Collins 2001), being brought together with the Business Excellence Model (EFQM 2000). Although this was accepted at the time, the model did not become a touchstone for the development journey.

The third picture was used with all three teams to identify that each area of the top management team's responsibility was being covered (Pierce 2001:79; Garratt 1997:47 + 2001:81). The numbers besides each heading were used when asking the teams to

score how effective they were within this area of responsibility. Scoring was not done with all of the teams so has not been included in this thesis.

Appendix 19: Some of the development processes and why they were used

Development Technique	Why it was used
Ice-breaker	Clear minds of everything except the exercise being undertaken; for example, issues at work or at home.
ITEAL	Clear story-telling process, used to recall 'good news stories' to be shared.
Team exercises	Developing team trust.
Key issues	Brainstormed then the most urgent and important identified for use with the dialogue process.
T'ai Chi Ch'uan	Vary the pace by slowing down and helping the team to centre themselves.
Reviews	Reflect upon the process and content of exercises, dialogues and conversations, and workshops; to learn about oneself, others, the process itself, and to clarify how – if the process was repeated – it could be improved.
Models for both teams and individuals	Give structures to be practiced by participants.
Dialogue, and other types of conversations	Processes to use to enhance the effectiveness of the

	teams.
Win/win agreements	Clarify expectations of both facilitators and team, and identify the consequences of both the success and the failure of the relationship to both.
Fishbone	Used for brainstorming both business and individual needs (Megginson + Whitaker 2003:50)
Conversation and interviewing processes	Relationship-building

Appendix 20: Feedback process used with Yorkshire Water

This process used with Yorkshire Water gave feedback on how colleagues were performing and what they needed to do next to develop themselves.
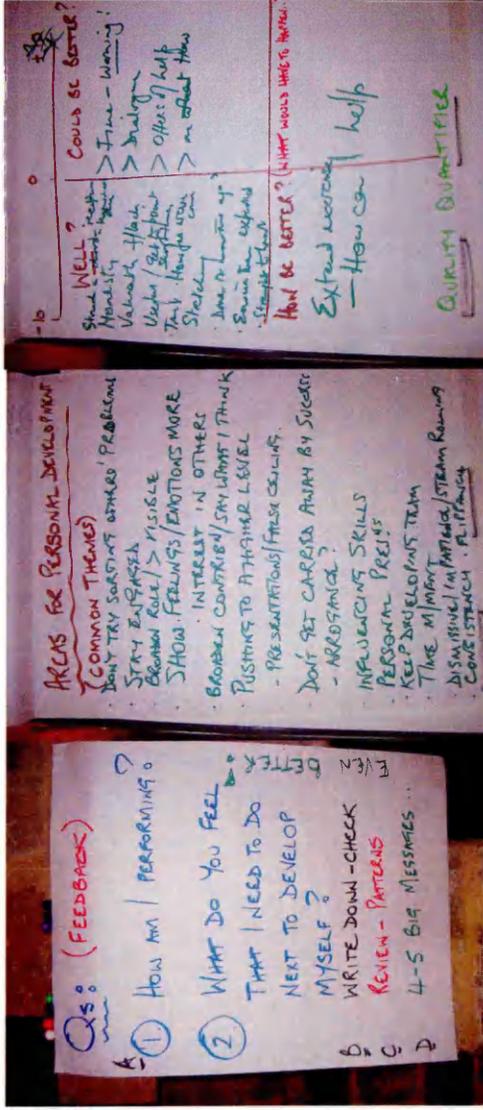
Exhibit A20.1: *Feedback process used with Yorkshire Water*

This exercise gained a ten out of ten rating by the team, and was followed up by each member presenting what their own personal development plans were to the team, some two months later.

Appendix 21: The Iterative Meetings Model

A development of Action Inquiry using the Hermeneutic Cycle (incorporating the 4MAT system) set out in Exhibit 3.4. See also Conclusions chapter section 5.3.1.
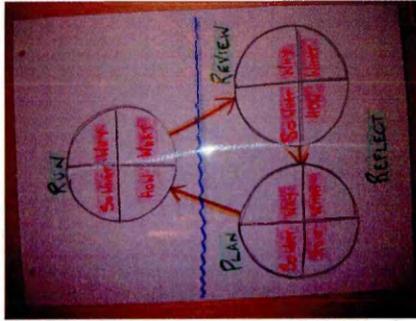
Exhibit A21.1: *The Iterative Meetings Model*

Appendix 22: Yorkshire Water: The team's reviews of their dialogue sessions

(Note: How do you feel (about this session)? Was not asked until early 2003, after the YW research had finished).

In June 2002: YW dialogue one: What is strategy (in our context)?

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
All contributed	Listening	Go through what went well and what could have gone even better before our next dialogue.
Discussed difficult issues	Kept covering the same ground	
Building	We went round in circles	
Respectful	Focus	
Understanding	We didn't capture the points made	
Agreement	Lack of process	
Quality of debate	Didn't bottom the issue x 2	
Summary	Didn't finish the discussion	
Building	Lack of:	
Humour!	- Questions	
Spent time reflecting	- Awareness	
	- Bringing in	

YW June 2002 dialogue two: What is commercial strategy (in our context)?

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?

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CEO listened (a bit)	Less judgemental	Listen to conclusions (instead of attacking content)
Lots of questions	Listening	Ask more open questions
Only a bit of avoiding and ignoring	2nd half – non-judgemental questions	Don't go into defensive mode
Process	Didn't ask, "why did you do this?"	Set content up-front
Actions	Plan first	Seek understanding
Started well the first five minutes	Company versus team	
Better conclusions	Lack of understanding task	
	Summarise	

YW June 2002 dialogue three: What is group strategy (in our context)?

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
Lots of listening	Jumping in	Appropriate use of dialogue and debate
Start/end good	Off topic	
More dialogue compared with last time	Flippant comments	
Summarised	Still 'debating'	
Actions	Team didn't deliver	
Attempted to question and clarify	Doesn't stick in mind	
Less debate		
Went back to clarify		

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Followed up

YW June 2002 dialogue four: What is Yorkshire Water Regulated Strategy?

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
All issues OK Listening Build More dialogue Honesty Fun Objectives defined up front All involved	Only one intervention from CEO Handwriting	Go through what went well and what could have gone even better before our next dialogue.

YW June 2002 dialogue five: What is the process as applied to Commercial Strategy?

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
Enthusiasm Ownership Only one outburst from CEO Contribution from all Clear actions	Long off-line debate Crosstalk Very limited bringing in	Go through what went well and what could have gone even better before our next dialogue

Took time to understand and then bottomed	
More builds	
Improved dialogue	

Appendix 23: Loop: The team's reviews of their dialogues sessions

At **Loop's January 2003 workshop**, Flick's guidelines (2000:36) were again addressed before returning to the question of 'What is our purpose?' for the first dialogue.

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
Ended with a conclusion.	We need to clarify our assumptions.	Review these learnings before we next dialogue.
We started by quieting our minds.	We need to give better examples.	
We expressed our opinions.	We need to interrupt less often.	
We were all involved.	We need to be better at closure.	
We tried to include each other.	We should share our inner voices.	
We recognised when a proposal was made.	We force the speed of dealing with issues.	
	Appoint a chair at the start.	
	Have a process.	

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Hurt; Engaged; Disengaged; Excited; Thoughtful; Pleased; Calm; Disappointed; Settled; Satisfied; Motivated; Helped; Involved; Teamwork.

Loop's January 2003 second and third dialogues followed immediately, addressing the question, 'What are our key processes?'

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
Facilitation.	Didn't reflect.	Review these learnings before we next dialogue.
A good start to the process.	Driving through ideas.	
Chair.	No clear chair.	
All involved.	Too rapid.	
Succinct.		
(One of us) challenged.		

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Engaged; Frustration; Speed x 2; Confusion x 2; Didn't understand; Annoyed; Out of control.

Loop's January 2003 third dialogue: What are our key processes? (Continued)

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
Chair.	Timing realistic?	Realistic time setting.
Completed two of the seven process visions.	Damn hard to get in.	Take in turns and rotate chair.
	We need to build more gaps.	Clarify detail/essence.
Didn't lose our aim.	Dismissal.	Red flag needed.

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Summarised well. Changed when appropriate. Supporting.	Too mechanical (process fit). Frustration. Pace (dilemma). Talking over (one of us). Pedantic. Needed above. Noise. Backtracking. No review. Only one build. Only three testing understandings.

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Frustration x 4; Confusing; Disappointed; Rushed; Not satisfied; Niggled; Hard to keep up; Two camps; Too fast; Variable depths; Randomness; No pathway.

In the February 2003 workshop, the Loop team were becoming more open with both their thoughts and feelings. Their first dialogue was in the form of an exercise called 'Stepping Stones' which required the team to work together to solve the problem.

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
Asking for help	Come up with own solution	More challenging

Joining teams	Lost CEO's interest	Acknowledge outside assistance (we don't need to have all the answers)
Checking understanding	Talked over each other	Act more as a team
Visuals	Not operating together	Record processes used
One minute silence	No closure	
Believed it was possible to find a solution	One person in charge	
Improved on learnings	Overly logical	
Challenged rules well	More challenges	
	Didn't follow through	

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Disinterested; Enjoyable; Frustrated x 3; Ignored; Impatient.

Loop's February 2003 second dialogue of the workshop returned to a key business issue and dealt with the question of 'How do we reconcile the business plan figures?'

What went well?	**What could have gone even better?**	**What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?**
Got answer.	Not the right answer.	Challenge each other.
Framed question.	We wandered off subject completely.	Think of challenge as a question.
One to one.	Stick to process.	CEO needs to share.
Checked understanding.	No flow.	
Opportunity to listen to what is being said.		
Allowed insight into others.		

Everyone understood answer.

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Confused; Confused (during feedback); Frustrated; Pleased.

Loop's February 2003 third dialogue: How do the budget figures reconcile?

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
Clarity of purpose.	Too late!	Set rules at start.
Got the whole story.	Desperate to chase detail even though it	Writing rather than talking.
(The model we used.)	made no difference.	Start with 'idiots guide' to frame expectations.
Logical and calm.		Same framework for next year.
Recollection of figures.		Clear about level of detail.
Concise.		
Next stage captured by (one of us).		

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Pleased with the conclusion; Damn proud of our finance director: She knows her stuff, and can remember numbers; Satisfied; Calm; Closure.

Loop's February 2003 dialogue four: Are there any more key measures needed in the control room?

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
All actions captured.	We ignored some of the proposals.	Test understanding.
Contributions and manner.	Agreeing on the question.	Acknowledge proposals.

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What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
Worthwhile outcome. Focus. Chair positive. Working the process. Lots of proposals and builds.	Going back to the question. Chair didn't know how to get back to the original question. Level of detail. Process to ensure we all get all processes. Bringing (one of us) in. General confusion.	Same level of understanding at the start. Process to clarify question. More practice at being the chair.

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Confused; Trusting; Confusion; Frustration x 5.

Loop's February 2003 dialogue five: Determine next steps to activate control mechanism, and how it will physically look?

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
Got next steps and action. Learned from experience. Chairmanship. Clarity on question. Positive agreement. Tested understanding.	Timescale. Process disconnected.	Volunteering. Check understanding. More realistic timings.

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Tired; Very confused; Satisfied; Calm; Unsatisfied x 2; Checked out x 2; Frustrated; Processed.

Loop's February 2003 dialogue six: (Using a model) do you understand the issues and their importance? And, how can we deliver this outcome?

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
(One of us) had structured thoughts.	Not doing rules.	Do the rules.
(One of us) showed their emotions.	Others might have answer.	
Stopping talking over each other.	Question the importance.	
Focus.	Putting things off.	
Fairly disciplined.	Clarifying questions(ish).	
(The model used.)		
Offer of help.		

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Calmer; Hot; Focused; Constrained x 2; Interested; Intrigued; Thankful.

Loop: March 2003: The team's reviews of their dialogue sessions

Dialogue one. What do we want to achieve by rolling out our business plan? What are we rolling out? Who gets what and why?

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What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
Clarified the questions clearly.	We spent a lot of time saying the same thing.	Clarifying understanding.
Reasonably on time.		Bring in the scribe to the dialogue.
Answered questions.	Thinking others are saying something different.	Don't agree to agree with each other.
(One of us) good closing down.		
Well chaired.	Clarifying understanding.	
Review learnings.	Not everyone contributed.	
Kept to the elements of dialogue.	Clarifying understanding is not challenging.	
Everyone contributed.		
Scribe.		
The minute's silence.		

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Healthy; Hot; The last five minutes were frustrating; Frustrating; Honest; Learning; Wa-hay!

Loop's March 2003 dialogue two: How will we do it? (Above discussion continued)

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
Chair.	We lost our way in the middle of the dialogue.	Let's ensure that when we are doing the right thing, we re-frame our question.
Scribe.		

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What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
Got there in the end. Taken less time. Ended up with an outcome. Decided upon our next steps. Trying to form words in proposal by chair.	We merged the questions. Not enough clarifying. Not enough clear proposals. One of us stopped concentrating.	We must reflect for one minute. Make proposals to 'break' cycles.

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Still frustrating; Confused; Cooler; Relief; Astounded; Productive.

Loop's March 2003 dialogue three: What behaviours do we need to have to be 'role models' for our company's values?

The team's conclusions were: Behaviours to demonstrate our values: Actively helping others to fulfil their potential; Consistently demonstrating that the customer comes first; Actively working to create an environment in which individuals and teams succeed; Actively making things happen.

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
Scribe. Five builds. More proposals. Used existing work. More testing understanding. Scribe compensated for group's lack of direction.	Lack of direction. Three minute timescales are too short for the timekeeper to be involved in the meeting's discussions as well. Difficult for the chair to contribute. Nothing new!	-

	More essence (weren't 'precious' of own ideas). Nothing new.

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Calmer; Detached; Re-inventing the wheel; Not re-inventing the wheel but building; Encouraged.

Appendix 24: A4e Work: The team's reviews of their dialogue sessions

A4e Work May 2002 dialogue reviews

First Dialogue	Second Dialogue
We all have differing views.	We are not particularly good listeners.
We need a clear goal.	No consistency of approach.
Begin with the end in mind.	All got different views.
We are learning to listen.	It's hard to compromise.
We are 'hung up' with our own opinions.	Under time constraints we work better.
It's terribly difficult to agree.	Lack of leadership.
We didn't challenge each other.	Lack of process.
We are not surrendering.	Lack of planning.
We need to plan first.	Didn't start with end in mind.

Third Dialogue	Fourth Dialogue
Slow down.	Go even slower.

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Respect others' views.	Still incredibly hard.
Not an easy process.	We lost energy – a long two days.
Conscious of time, it keeps us in check.	Group CEO's session was an enormous distraction.
Time is not important.	Continue to work to a process.
Important to be flexible.	Need to keep practising these things.
Stopped jumping in.	It's powerful stuff, once on paper.
Listening more.	Chairperson needed.
More structure.	
Tendency to jump straight in.	
Not working together yet – loudest voice wins.	
Still very frustrating.	
Felt very artificial.	
Being far too nice to each other.	
Our large team is a major strength – great diversity.	

A4e Work July 2002: The team's reviews of their dialogue sessions

These reviews include not just thoughts from the team but also their feelings.

First Dialogue	Second Dialogue
We disagree very easily.	We don't stick to the process – we must!
We complicate the simple.	Have we got a process? Some say 'yes', others 'no'.

We hold onto our beliefs – we are 'precious'.	We have been walking in treacle.
It feels intimidating to hold different views.	There is always a dissenting voice.
Some were speaking for others.	We are too nice to each other.
Cross-talk.	No leadership.
Some clarifying questions boxed us in.	Have we got a plan? Some say 'yes', others 'no'.
Lots of expressive body language.	**Feelings of the team**
This has been a painful process.	Frustration!
Hypothetical questions are harder than practical questions.	Losing the will to live!
	Two steps forward and three back!

Third Dialogue	**Fourth Dialogue**
The importance of focusing on the question as well as the outcome.	Lots more building.
We really need to understand the outcome – collectively.	We have more respect for each other.
We need to focus on agreement.	We had more team involvement.
We perform better when emotions come out.	There is still aggression which the team handle better.
We must not hold back our feelings.	Some 'hadn't a clue' about what the process or outcome was supposed to be.
We need to keep referring back to our 'do's and don'ts' upon how we should conduct ourselves as a team.	We still start something, leave it before it is finished, and eventually come back to it.
We want to work together as a group.	We still sometimes put our foot in the treacle before pulling it out.
Disagreement can be healthy.	

Fifth Dialogue
Had we understood the outcome clearly, it would have been less painful and quicker to achieve. We are much more focused when we have a chair. Having a deadline helped. By testing, rather than debating, we speeded up the process. We still continued not to follow the process. **Feelings of the team** When we have something down on paper, it's a relief! I feel better about myself. A little frustrated, we still have a little way to go. A little frustrated, remembering how far we came during the first dialogue six weeks ago.

A4e Work February 2004: Conversation one: Thinking creatively, what could A4e Work be doing in twelve months?

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
Great ideas being put forward. We finished positively.	We should have clarified our question more precisely before lunch: we came	-

Our individual work before the discussion enhanced our collective discussion. We had some constructive challenging.	back with answers to different questions: What will A4e Work look like in a year's time? And what could A4e Work look like in a year's time?

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Excited; Unsure what is going to happen with the outcomes that we feed back; Uncomfortable; Energised, this is what excites me.

A great deal of discussion followed around how to create the business plan. The team had 'six different versions of what A4e Work could be in April 2005.' (One version came from each member except for the CEO who was more interested in reviewing what was being produced by other members of the team.)

A4e Work February 2004: Conversation two: How would I suggest we deliver my proposed business plan to April 2005?

(Each team member then went away and prepared their individual presentation, which they then fed back to the team.)

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
We weren't precious about our own ideas being challenged. There were good questions to better understand.	We lost the flow. We got distracted in the detail.	-

We all bottomed the question. We took ownership. Respect for each other's contribution.	

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Quite excited; Energised; Nervous anticipation.

A4e Work February 2004: Conversation three: What would be the most effective business plan for A4e Work – both its structure and timetable for implementation?

(The team worked together taking parts of each plan which were common to all three and then talking through those other areas which were unique to each participant and arriving at an agreed outcome.)

What went well?	What could have gone even better?	What action needs to be taken to make sure next time goes even better?
We were open and productive. We weren't precious. We kept the discussion at a high level. We chunked up. We are over the (Tuckman) trust line.	More time! Still a long way to go to be continuously performing.	-

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We achieved a result.

The facilitation helped.

The question was asked, how do you feel? The replies were: Good; Positive; Excited; Enthused; Energised.

Appendix 25: Strengths and weaknesses of research methods chosen

Interviews

Strengths	Weaknesses
A clear and consistent set of questions.	Because of the time restrictions of one and a half to two hours, and the need to obtain answers to all the questions, areas of importance may have been missed (Mason 1996: 46).
Every interviewee was asked the same set of questions.	As above, there was little time to explore other avenues, either of interest to the interviewee, or picked up by the interviewer during the discussion. Further, there may be multiple meanings from interviewee experiences (Gulbrium 1997 taken from Silverman 2000: 36). (Note: this should have been picked up at the initial workshop).
The summaries of interviews were fed back to the team within days of the data being elicited.	The interviews were summarised through the 'maps of the worlds' of the researcher and co-facilitator, with all their inherent prejudices and beliefs (Silverman 2000: 126).

	Also, non-verbal communications were not written down (Gummesson 1991: 112; Silverman 2000: 36; Denscombe 2000: 127).
Managers and staff were interviewed over the period to obtain differing perspectives of the team and their performance.	The number, regularity and choice of managers and staff was that of the organisation not the researcher (Descombe 2000: 9). (Note: because so many managers were interviewed, this should not have made a difference).

Ethnography

Strengths	Weaknesses
Pictures of work completed, which are easily recognisable, are filed and available for reviews (McNiff et al 1996: 103).	Original flipcharts are seldom kept as they are both bulky and easily torn.
Major saving of time; no typing up of flipcharts required.	Having a disk of the proceedings does not mean that the participant will refer to it!
Permanent record (McNiff et al 1996: 103), which is reusable for this and other client workshops.	No discernable weakness in this.
Library of photos built up.	No discernable weakness in this.
Easily transferable to clients.	Needs to be quicker than a few days; this should improve with a faster system for emailing.

Business measures used

Strengths	Weaknesses
An agreed list of measures.	These were the teams', managers' and researcher and co-facilitator's perceptions of what should be measured, and are therefore biased.
Consistently used over time to determine trends.	As will be seen in the fieldwork chapter, perceptions of the individuals within the team change over time.
Fed back to team members for comment and discussion.	Comments of team members were initial reactions to the consolidated figures, not after a long period of deep reflection.
Graphs of measures over time show not only changes in 'average' numbers given, but also changes in the range of figures given by team members, from the highest to the lowest scores for each question.	Do these figures really give any better understanding of the team? See conclusions chapter.

EFQM RapidScore

Strengths	Weaknesses
Well established and recognised process of measurement.	This is a generic process and therefore could be seen as inflexible to the needs of this specific organisation.
Basis for assessment, improvement and comparison with	Could take one's eye off the ball of continous

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other organisations.	improvements processes already being carried out.
Involves in-depth discussions amongst employees and outside assessors.	To be part of this process needs commitment: to fill in a detailed questionnaire and then attend two long hard days of discussion. How about the opinions of the less-committed members of the organisation?
Regular use gives comparisons showing progress, or lack of it, within the organisation and with other companies using the same model.	Unless the process is adopted by the organisation as part of its ongoing review system, the results can be viewed as just another report to file. (Note: the reports were acted upon and used within the business to work on areas identified as needing improvement.

The Use of Secondary Data

Strengths	Weaknesses
A more holistic perspective on the businesses (Wilber 2000: 71).	They have their own 'view of the world' too.
Reports from national and local writers following the company (Gill + Johnson 1997: 100).	The articles are about 'special' events and therefore will tend to be abnormal.
National recognition strengthens the belief that the team is effective.	The articles are based on a number of assumptions that may not be apparent from the articles.
In some cases, using their criteria, the authors have	The timelines may not coincide with those of this research.

identified the organisations as exemplars.

A4 Books, Microsoft Word and lever arch files

Strengths	Weaknesses
Easy-to-follow system of filing.	Although Microsoft Word takes up little space, the one hundred and sixty plus A4 books, and lever-arch files do take up considerable space.
Easy-to-retrieve data.	After the first year the Microsoft Word files were reorganised to enhance the system. This broke all of the hyper-links with NVivo and took a considerable time to restore. Also, the filing of articles in lever arch files takes time, patience and precision.
Linked information via datalinks, hyperlinks and references between A4 books, lever arch files, Microsoft Word and NVivo.	Linking, although most effective when in place, initially takes time, much thought and effort to set up.
In case of loss of original data, the system is backed up every week by Freecom SYNC. Critical documents are emailed to Catherine Gibson for filing off-site. Files are also transferred to an additional computer which is backed up weekly by Jenny Parkin; the back-up tapes are taken home	Back-up is available for Microsoft Word but not, of course, for either the A4 books or lever-arch files. (Note: To overcome this weakness, interviews and meeting notes have been written up in Microsoft Word and NVivo.) Also, occasionally when files are misplaced, there was

| | by her for safe-keeping. | confusion about where the most up-to-date documents were located. |

Visual Concept

Strengths	Weaknesses
Visual record of activity.	Magnetic boards and shapes need cleaning before using again, thus information is lost if not captured in some other way. The computerised model takes time to complete – if not fast at typing, which the researcher is not!
Both manual (magnetic board + shapes) and computerised (reflecting the manual system).	Takes time to transfer information from the manual to computerised systems.
Can retain detailed information in the computerised model.	It takes time to add information and the system of data retention is not readily accessible if the model is not being used regularly.
An enjoyable activity which 'unsticks' 'stuck' thinking.	Information can be lost unless stored in some other way, for example, by photographing the results.

NVivo (NUDIST)

Strengths	Weaknesses

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'Infinitely' expandable qualitative research filing and retrieval tool.	NVivo works in the language of 'rich text' and thus must be converted from 'Word'. Also, no drawings, graphs or photographs can be transferred into the system. (Note: Datalinks are made from blank NVivo documents to ensure quick access to these drawings, graphs and photos.)
Easily accessible filing system.	It has taken some time to design a system to ensure that every file needed would be transferred into NVivo.
Files can be further sub-divided into 'Sets'.	There is no automatic way of ensuring that every file needed is included in the 'Set'.
Passages can be filed into 'Nodes' to capture passages from different files.	'Nodes' take some time to read as they also contain detailed references to the headings of original documents as well as each passage.
Files can be searched for key words and phrases.	The two instruction books took a great deal of understanding before this facility became available to the researcher!
There are many other uses that have not been investigated by the researcher.	Having spent time with an NVivo trainer, it became apparent that the system had many additional uses that were interesting rather than required by the researcher.

Marking the four-stage group development model then discussing those marks in the team

Strengths	Weaknesses
Visual record showing the individual team members' perceptions of where they believe they are on the journey.	It is the team members' opinion in that 'moment in time' and can depend upon his/her mood at the time of taking part in the exercise.
A measure, drawn by each one of the team, showing their progress or lack of it (McNiff et al 1996:103).	Perhaps team members follow other members' lead in placing their mark on the flipchart.
A constant reminder of the 'stages model', which becomes part of the team's language.	Does the constant use of this model restrict the thinking of the team?
A picture of progress which can be looked back upon and discussed.	The review can be quite depressing when little progress is perceived to have been made.

Reviewing of previous workshops, reviewing each dialogue and conversation, and reviewing of each workshop

Strengths	Weaknesses
A robust process that is repeated after every team activity.	Can become an imposition when the team want to move on.
Captures the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of the team.	Writing every remark on the flipchart sometimes restricts the full meanings made by individuals.
Simple to review at a later date.	Not an easy process to compare and contrast between individual comments or between different dialogues.
Continuously improving the process.	Teams sometimes forget to look back and reflect, unless the facilitators prompt them.

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