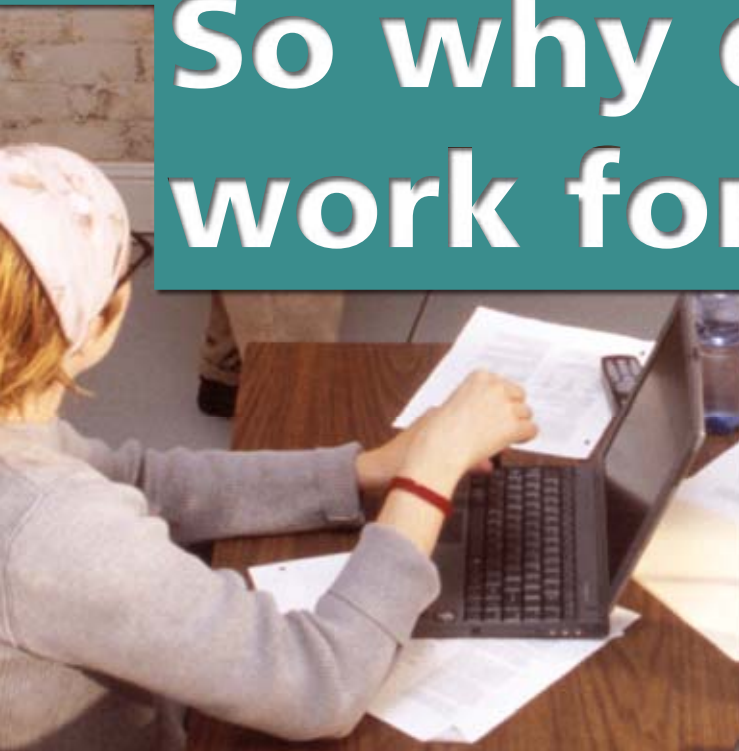




# So why doesn't it work for us?



## Why there is more to life than excellence models

Why aren't we all excellent?

It should be easy, shouldn't it? Take the EFQM excellence model as an example. Founded on the experience of Europe's most successful organisations, based on widely accepted best practice, it provides a framework for assessing and improving organisational performance. And indeed in some cases it works very well – many organisations can demonstrate substantial performance improvements through having used this approach.

The problem is that this doesn't apply everywhere. Both in the public and private sectors we find organisations that have tried the model and either found it wanting, or moved on anyway to other methods. Not to mention others that have never tried it in

the first place. The excellence model is by no means the universal solution to improved competitiveness that it seeks to be.

The same is true of the Balanced Scorecard (although perhaps to a lesser extent because this approach is at a more evolutionary stage). Similar things can be said of other holistic management models, such as TQM, Systems Thinking or Value Management.

There must be a reason why these techniques seem to work for some organisations but not for others. This is an aspect of organisation development that is now attracting interest. From our own experience with clients, we can look back on what

A photograph showing three business professionals in an office setting. A man in a red shirt is leaning over a table, shaking hands with a woman in a blue shirt. Another woman with blonde hair is sitting at the table, looking towards the camera. The background shows office blinds.

The Excellence Model is by no means the universal solution to improved competitiveness that it seeks to be

characterises successful exponents of the EFQM excellence model – what ‘makes it happen’ for them – and come up with a list of factors like

- Visible leadership commitment
- Defined objectives, realistic understanding and expectations
- Appropriate communication and involvement throughout the organisation
- The right method and resources
- Integrating the model with normal business
- Owning the outcomes of self-assessment

But check that list again. Doesn’t it look remarkably like the criteria of the excellence model itself: leadership, policy and strategy, people, partnerships and resources, processes and results? In other words, the model is a predictor of its own success. Organisations will use the model effectively if they are already good at – or at least committed to – its component elements.

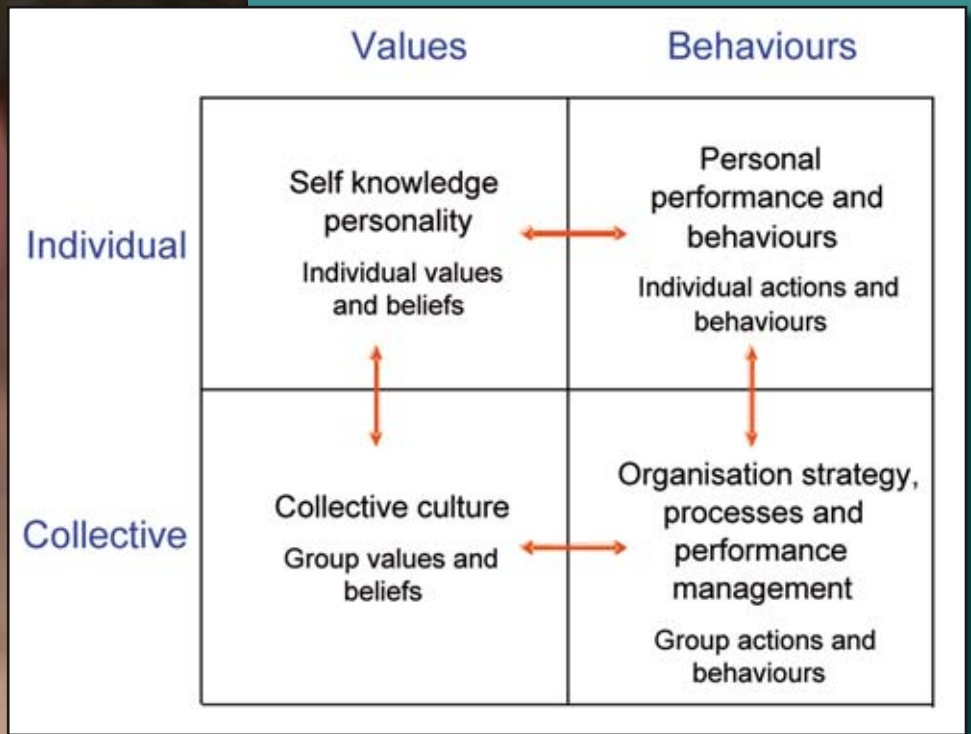
More significant still is the converse. If an organisation does not have the fundamental capability, understanding, motivation and sheer willpower to transform itself, then it won’t. And

no amount of conventional management modelling or self-assessment will do anything to change that.

#### Widening the picture

So how do we pursue real change and improvement in this situation? What is it that gives an organisation the necessary desire and capability to transform itself and hence to take on all of the other ingredients in the recipe for success? Not surprisingly, the answer has to involve people. Organisations are not amorphous entities but collections of many individuals, each with their individual views, attitudes, and perspectives on ‘life, the universe and everything’. This suggests the need for thinking that goes beyond the conventional boundaries of organisational management and seeks to get inside people’s hearts and minds.

This is an emerging field known as integral excellence. In essence, the idea is that everything starts with the individual. As individuals, each of us can enhance our technical expertise and general competence through personal development. This should benefit the organisation we work for, and indeed any other organisation that we may work for in the future. At the same time, how people work together is equally critical, and depends



**You can't simply copy what another organisation has done, any more than you can clone individuals**

on a commonality of purpose, aspirations, and above all values – what people believe in, and how they work is based on this. If we can align these individual and collective perspectives, we should achieve the sort of organisation that can take on any of the advanced management techniques that make an impact on the bottom line.

In one sense it's obvious. Most organisations already give some thought to all of these aspects anyway, through individual development or collective team-based activities. And they recognise these as connected to, but not necessarily a component part of, their approach to organisational excellence. What is more difficult is the idea of 'systematising' this so that it all becomes part of a single overall approach to – yes, integral excellence.

Yet models of this kind do exist, in particular the 'four quadrant' model, developed by American Ken Wilbur, and summarised above.

If we accept this principle, the practical question is then what we do about it. In essence, the answer lies in managing each of the quadrants in parallel.

Of course, there are a lot of questions here and the answers

are not easy. Moreover, these answers will be unique for every organisation – you can't simply copy what another organisation has done any more than you can clone individuals.

But it is possible. Ways of managing all of these aspects of development already exist, and are being improved all the time. The trick is to bring it all together. Manage the whole in this way and you could finally get rid of the attitude that says (in effect if not in words) "I'm sorry, we're not doing performance improvement today, we're too busy".

**Teal Consulting is a management consultancy specialising in performance improvement. Its business is about helping public and private sector to improve their performance and achieve better results. Teal uses a range of services and solutions including lean systems, EFQM excellence model, the balanced scorecard and performance management to achieve clients' goals. To find out more please visit [www.tealconsulting.co.uk](http://www.tealconsulting.co.uk).**