

APM funded volunteer research project report 2016

Developing A Tool to Improve Project Productivity

- **by Enabling Project Practitioners to Identify and
address Human and Organisational Dynamics**

Parag Gogate, Rod Willis & Carole Osterweil

APM Enabling Change SIG

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- The 20 sponsors at 14 leading organisations who participated in the research and the 174 individuals who completed the online survey
- Rod Willis of Assentire for making the Innovation Audit available to all free of charge through a Creative Commons License
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About the Team

Parag Gogate is a committee member of the Enabling Change Specific Interest Group (SIG) and leads the Research & Innovation theme. He is the Managing Consultant & Director of Ambition Group, a specialist organisational change consultancy working with organisations, teams and individuals to improve change capability and maturity.

He is passionate about helping organisations, teams and individuals improve their change capability and agility and has been involved with multitude of strategic business transformation programmes and projects in multi-national, complex and fast changing business environments.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/paraggogate/>

<http://www.ambitiongroup.co.uk/>

Rod Willis is co-founder of Assentire Ltd and creator of the 'Innovation Audit 3.0', a framework designed to enhance collaboration through agile learning practice. He integrates 'HC Analytics' with 'Continuous Improvement' and 'Agile Learning' strategies to bring about lasting behavioural change across organisations.

Rod is an APECS Executive Coach, He spent over 25 years in HiTech, working in Blue-Chip companies, establishing high performing multi-cultural teams. His philosophy is one of Continuous Improvement guided by Appreciative Inquiry and Peer-Coaching. His passion Accelerating Collaboration Everywhere™.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/roderickwillis/>

<http://www.innovationaudit.net>

Carole Osterweil is the founder of Visible Dynamics, a boutique consultancy that uses ideas from neuroscience to work with directors and change teams wanting to make a step function change in their ability to deliver at the same time as reducing their stress levels.

She is one of a handful of coaches working with Cranfield University, the Project Academy, and PA Consulting to support the UK government's drive to increase senior change, project and programme management capability.

<https://uk.linkedin.com/in/caroleosterweil>

<http://www.visibledynamics.co.uk/>

About the Enabling Change SIG

The SIG was established in January 2014 to improve the change capability of organisations, teams and individuals.

The Enabling Change SIG is a highly collaborative SIG, supporting and enabling the change agenda across other SIGs, reaching out to SIG and APM members through the Branches, and participating in change related discussions across the APM.

We have a balanced focus on internal and external activities, establishing and developing partnerships with other relevant organisations and groups in order to ensure that we are at the forefront of thought leadership on change-specific topics.

Our mission

The Enabling Change SIG's mission is to 'improve the change capability of organisations, teams and individuals'.

How we work

The Enabling Change SIG aims to develop and sustain individual practitioner, team and organisational change capability by facilitating access to and exploration of change methods, standards, case studies and good practices.

We have a growing collection of reference material on our website, and are in the process of producing an introductory Guide publication.

We foster "Change Practitioner Groups": communities of senior change practitioners in public and private sectors, academics and authors who wish to share their knowledge and experience, explore and address challenges and opportunities for enhancing the change capability of their organisations, teams and individuals.

We also conduct innovative research to support our work and generally advance the body of knowledge relating to enabling change.

Further information on our work can be found on the APM's website by clicking on the following link:

<https://www.apm.org.uk/community/enabling-change-sig/>

1.0 Introduction

This report provides a summary of the research project that was undertaken, approved and funded by the APM's volunteer research fund. The project was sponsored by the Enabling Change SIG and the timelines for completion were from May 2015 to May 2016.

The following sections provide background into the research, overall objectives, outputs and the methodology followed. It also provides a brief overview of the theory underpinning the research, findings and a couple of case studies on how the tool has been used in practice.

1.1 Background

The challenge of understanding and addressing the people and organisation dynamics associated with project delivery, (e.g. resistance to change) has been a recurring theme for APM members. Interest in this subject was confirmed at the APM's Great Change Debate, March 2015.

The Enabling Change SIG recognised an opportunity to develop a tool based on evidence and research that will take the APM closer to achieving its 2020 Vision.

Rod Willis (creator of Innovation Audit) agreed to collaborate with the SIG in a research project to tailor this diagnostic tool to the needs of the APM membership and to create 'norm' tables as part of this project.

The committee took this action forward by applying to the Volunteer Research Fund for financial support which was approved by the APM and culminated in this summary report.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objectives of this research project were to:

- Provide a means of measurement and diagnosis
- Enable project practitioners to quickly explore and identify potential behavioural obstacles at the team / organisational level
- Provide useful indicators for further exploration so necessary action can be taken to minimise the impact of behavioural obstacles and to maximise productivity

1.4 Key Research Outputs

The principal output from this study is a diagnostic tool available through the APM Enabling Change SIG that can be used by practitioners to measure the human dynamics for their own

projects.

For those who are more inclined to the use of statistical comparisons, a 'NORM' table is also provided to compare and contrast the results.

The research version of this tool along with a user guide and the 'NORM' table is now available for download on the APM website in a PDF format.

Other outputs of this project were the individual sponsor reports that were provided for the participating organisations as a way of acknowledging their contribution and testing the tool.

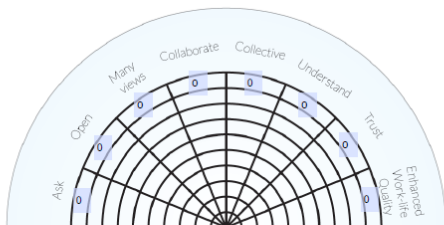
Fig 1 - Diagnostic Tool and user guide

Exploring Team Performance - LEARNING DYNAMIC

Score the following statements in terms of your experience of the Team. How strongly do you agree with the following? Where 1 = Not at all and 7 = Strongly Agree		
Ask	I commonly hear members of the team testing their own assumptions and inferences as well as those of others	<input type="text"/>
Open	Members of the team around here are happy to share relevant information, not keeping it private	<input type="text"/>
Many views	When a team member expresses a different view or position, his or her reasoning is explored in a curious way, e.g. I wonder why you have that view?	<input type="text"/>
Collaborate	It is common that members of the team explore and design different approaches jointly rather than individually	<input type="text"/>
Collective	I see it all the time, members of the team want to hear the view of others, even those issues that may be seen elsewhere as 'undiscussable', such as the 'elephant in the room'	<input type="text"/>
Understand	It is uncommon to see misunderstandings, unproductive conflict and defensiveness in the team	<input type="text"/>
Trust	There is quite a high level of trust across the team	<input type="text"/>
Enhanced work-life quality	Over time, I have seen the quality of working life improve	<input type="text"/>
SUM of above values		0
A = Average = SUM / 8		0.00

Exploring Team Performance - CONTROL DYNAMIC

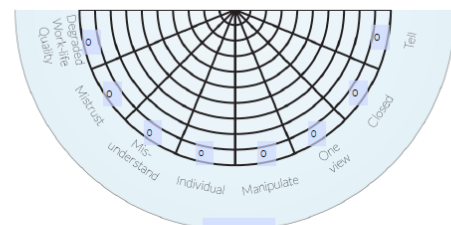
Score the following statements in terms of your experience of the Team. How strongly do you agree with the following? Where 1 = Not at all and 7 = Strongly Agree		
Tell	I commonly hear members of the team telling others what decision should be made or course of action should be taken	<input type="text"/>
Closed	When a team member is advocating their position, they do not share their reasoning	<input type="text"/>
One view	When a team member expresses a different view or position, their reasoning is not explored or asked for	<input type="text"/>
Manipulate	It is common that members of the team wanting to influence others do so by 'easing in' —	<input type="text"/>
Individual	I see it all the time, members of the team don't want to hear another's view in case they find theirs is not the best	<input type="text"/>
Misunderstand	It is common to see misunderstandings, unproductive conflict and defensiveness in the team	<input type="text"/>
Mistrust	There is quite a high level of mistrust across the team	<input type="text"/>
Degraded work-life quality	Over time, I have seen the quality of working life decline	<input type="text"/>
SUM of above values		0
B = Average = SUM / 8		0.00



Group Dynamics: Shade each of the segments with your individual scores

Group Dynamic

0.00



Group Dynamics: Shade each of the segments with your individual scores

Ranges from +6 to -6

Fig 2 - 'NORM' tables document



Innovation Audit Exploring hidden Group Dynamics

"NORM" tables for all 26 Questions used in the APM funded volunteer research project in 2016

Interviews with 14 organisations
Online profiles from 9 of the above (174 participants)

Acknowledgements

APM : For providing funding

APM Enabling Change SIG Sponsor: Martin Taylor

Research design, data input, analysis and reporting by

- Assentire Ltd (Rod Willis), Innovation Audit*
- OMQ Consulting (Carole Osterweil)
- Parag Gogate (Enabling Change SIG)

Use the data in the 'NORM' table to compare and contrast your own findings. Please refer to research report and diagnostic tool for further information on the research findings and on how to use the tool effectively. This is available on APM website under Enabling Change SIG page.

*Assentire® Innovation Audit, made available under Creative Commons License

1.6 Research Methodology

The research was structured as a four-stage exercise:

Stage 1 - Recruitment of sponsoring organisations

Stage 2 – Sponsor interviews

Stage 3 - Online data collection

Stage 4 – Testing the tool for suitability and robustness

Stage1 - Recruitment of sponsoring organisations

Recruitment ran from July 2015 – December 2015 and focussed on announcements to the APM Community, to members of the Enabling Change SIG and to the research team's personal

networks.

Our target was to recruit fifteen organisations who were currently delivering projects and each with a ‘committed sponsor’ who would:

- Identify a single project to be the focus of the research and
- Recruit a minimum of 20 people working on this project to complete the online survey

Our ideal sample size was to get returns from 200 people, and we recognised that we needed a minimum of 100 for the data to be statistically meaningful.

Recruitment closed when we had sponsors from fourteen leading organisations on board. These ranged from global concerns to smaller enterprises operating in the UK. Industries represented included financial services, technology, logistics, professional services, transportation, infrastructure, engineering, facilities management and defence.

The recruitment process focussed on an in-depth interview to:

1. Build the participants’ understanding of the space that the tool would explore
2. Set out the principles informing the research, namely:
 - a. confidentiality for sponsors, organisations and individuals; and
 - b. maximising value for sponsors, their organisations and the APM community
3. Enable sponsors to make an informed choice about whether to proceed to Stage 2 and which project / change programme to focus the research on

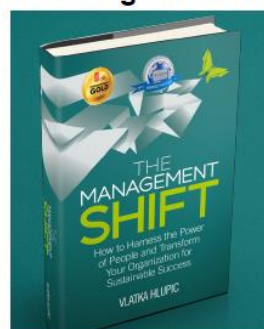
Of the fourteen sponsors we met in Stages 1 and 2, three quarters were leading major business transformation projects and around two thirds were looking to improve their organisation’s project / change management capability.

Stage 2 – Sponsor interviews

Face to face interviews were conducted primarily to familiarise participants with the online survey questionnaire (see stage 3) as well as to understand their organisational contexts.

This was done using a set of interactive cards and a sorting exercise to explore organisational mind-sets at play, an approach inspired by the work of Vlatka Hlupic (The Management Shift, 2014).

The Management Shift



For full case studies, go to www.themanagementshift.com

Interactive Cards



Cards inspired by The Management Shift

Stage 3 - Online data collection

Of the fourteen organisations we spoke to, nine proceeded to Stage 3 and completed the online survey. The survey comprised the 26 questions from the Innovation Audit.

The survey asks the individual to score 16 items relating to the Group Dynamic and 10 items relating to the Group Environment, (see Section 2). It uses a scale of 1- 7; 1 being '*I Strongly Disagree*' and a 7 being '*I strongly agree*'. This meant a score of 4 was neither agree nor disagree.

The online survey also provided a confidential vehicle for individuals to offer written feedback on how the change / project was being run.

Stage 4 – Testing the tool for suitability & robustness

This stage comprised creating the 'Norm Group' and testing the tool for suitability and robustness through feedback to sponsoring organisations.

In line with our principles we offered each of the nine organisations a confidential feedback report and a sense-making feedback meeting. This allowed sponsors to gain maximum value from participating in the research. It also allowed us to experiment with different ways of presenting the data.

Our promise of confidentiality means that we cannot make sponsor reports available here; however, case studies from two organisations have been made available in the following sections as a guide.

Overall, the online survey gathered responses from 174 participants across nine different organisations.

2.0 Theory Underpinning Research

According to The Evolution of Project Auditing 2015 Global Benchmark Study:

“A better understanding and management of social dynamics (why people behave as they do) provides the greatest opportunity for improving project delivery”

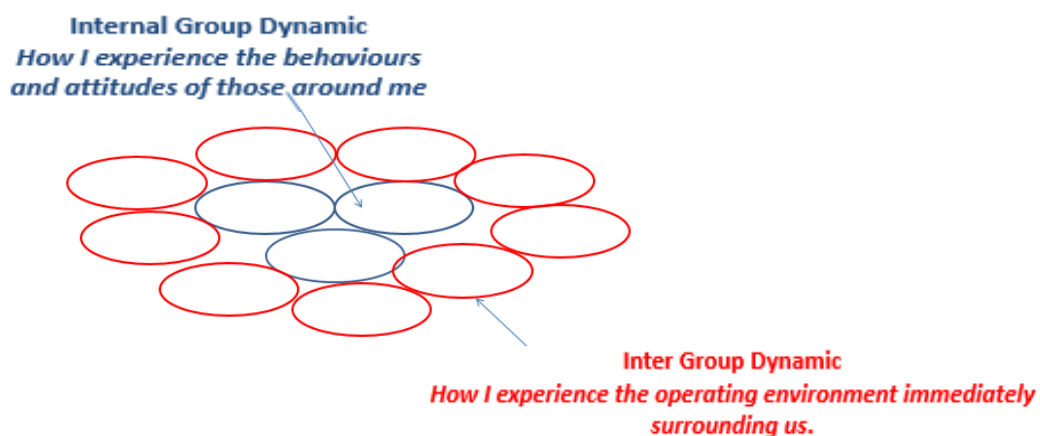
This research essentially looked to increase the understanding and management of social dynamics by measuring the two perspectives shown in Fig 3 below

- Internal group dynamic
- Inter group dynamic

Both are viewed through the eyes of the individual group or team members.

NB: Gathering data in this way, (on how the multiple individuals experience the internal group dynamic and the inter- group dynamic) ¹gives access to important and useful information that is not usually available to project and change practitioners.

Fig 3 – Measuring two different perspectives



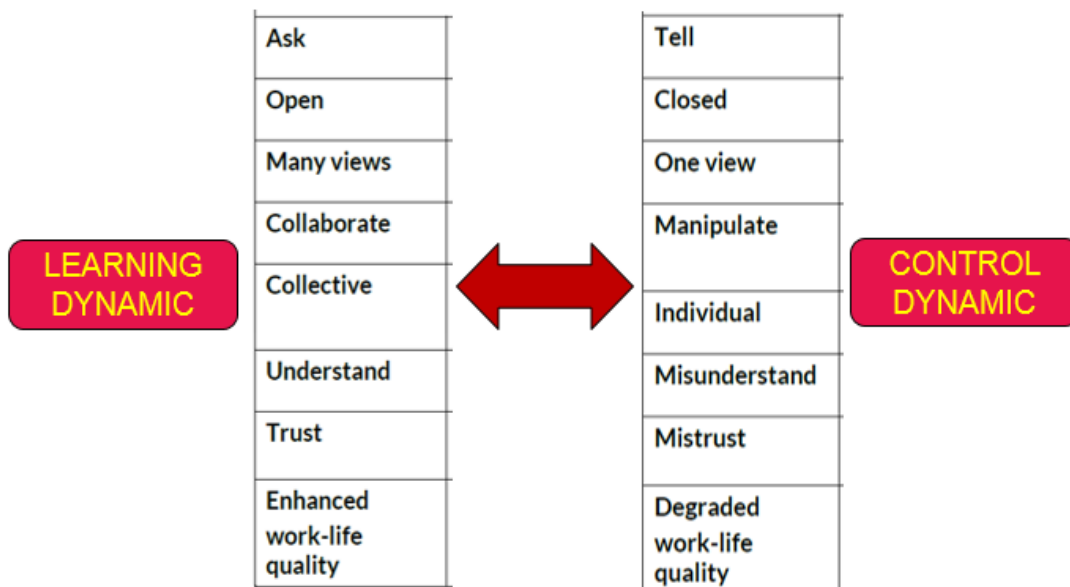
¹ Group dynamics is a study or use of the processes involved when people in a group interact as well as the motivation or ethos underlying the action or behaviour of a group.

A collaborative, agile and productive group / team is supported by strong “Learning Dynamic” behaviours (see Fig 4 below). Strong “Control Dynamic” behaviours tend to work against this (see also Fig 4). The tool sets out to explore eight of these core Learning behaviours and eight of the core Control behaviours that are experienced by every group or a team.

The behaviours underpinning these two dimensions have been influenced by the Unilateral Control Model developed by C Argyris & D Schon and Self-Determinism Theory (SDT) - organisational perspective developed by Stone, E Deci & R Ryan.

See References section if you wish to deep dive and explore these theories in more detail.

Fig 4 – Learning & Control Dynamic



3.0 Research findings

In this section of the report we focus on the online survey. The results of the Stage 2 mindsets exercise can be found in Appendix 1. The online survey gathered quantitative data and qualitative data in the form of written feedback for the use of individual participating organisation’s sponsors.

For reasons of confidentiality this feedback cannot be shared here. However, we wish to emphasise that the written feedback obtained through the online survey is central to making sense of the quantitative data because it provides the context for analysis. As such it formed an important part of the reports to sponsors of the participating organisations. The case studies in

Section 4 give insight into how written feedback adds value.

The overall findings from the 174 responses to the online survey are presented in three different charts:

1. Group Dynamic vs Group Environment
2. Learning Dynamic vs Group Environment
3. Control Dynamic vs Group Environment

Each marker in the scatter charts below represents an individual’s perspective on the two dimensions, using the same scale as the questionnaire.

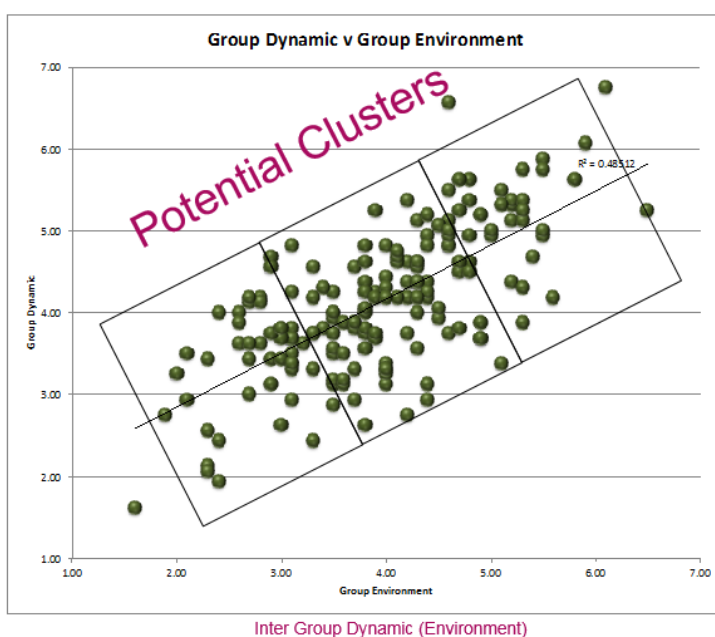


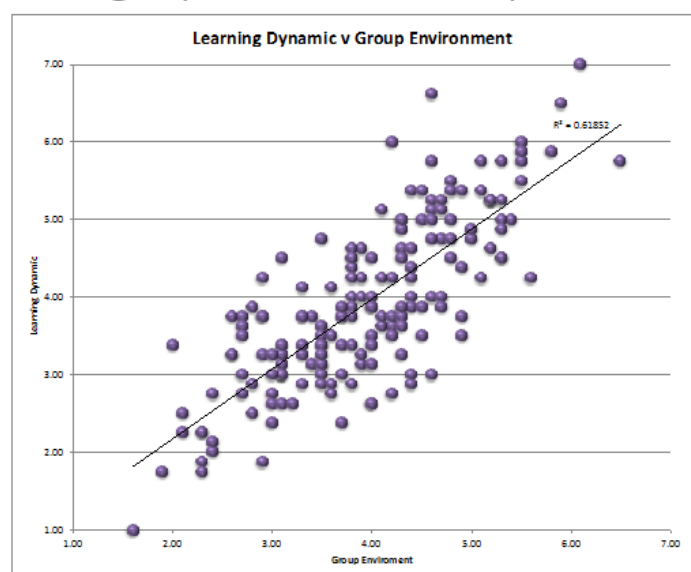
Fig 5 – Group Dynamic vs Group Environment

Whilst a positive relationship was found between the Group Dynamic and the Group Environment, it was not necessarily causal.

We also found three main clusters. Eight of the nine organisations had participants in all three clusters.

Fig 6 – Group Dynamic vs Group Environment

A positive relationship was found between the Learning Dynamic and the Group Environment but again not necessarily causal. We also found three main clusters across all the nine organisations.



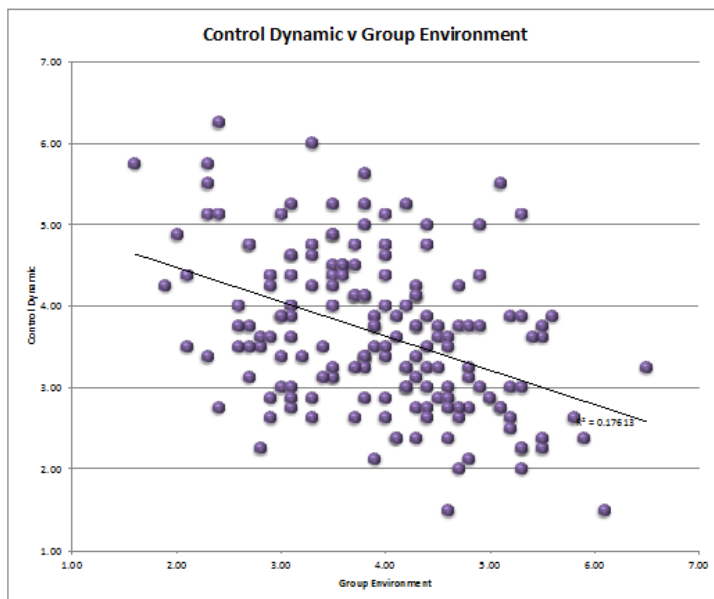


Fig 7 – Group Dynamic vs Group Environment

A negative relationship was found between the Control Dynamic and the Group Environment but again not necessarily causal. We also found 3 main clusters across 6 organisations only.

Taken together these charts suggest and reinforce the theory set out in section 2, i.e. the productivity of groups and/or teams is likely to improve when the members experience their colleagues displaying learning behaviours such as : inclusion, openness, trust, ask, collaboration and understanding.

In eight of the nine organisations we worked with, we also noted sub-cultures existed within the group (i.e. there were three main clusters, each displaying their own variations of Learning vs Control behaviours).

In addition, leadership behaviours and the immediate environment in which the group operates also influenced the group behaviours. (We suspect, although this needs further testing, that this is particularly the case where teams are geographically distributed).

Moreover, as you would expect, each organisation showed a different, organisation-specific Learning vs Control profile.

With 174 respondents, we were well above the minimum sample size of 100, but we were slightly short of our ideal sample size of 200. So whilst we performed a Cronbach’s alpha analysis to test the internal consistency, we believe further validation is required to ensure robustness. Such work is beyond the scope of this project.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data enabled the sponsoring organisations to gain a window into the social dynamics playing out in their projects. Exploration of the Learning vs Control behaviours and the experience of sub-cultures gave insight into potential behavioural obstacles at the team / organisational level and informed actions to increase productivity (see Case studies in Section 4).

4.0 Case Study 1

The organisation in this case study was undergoing a major transformation impacting over 1,000 staff members. The organisation was also working towards building a strong and proud community of over 100 project professionals (Figure 8).

The organisation was keen to understand how this diagnostic tool could help them accelerate building the community.

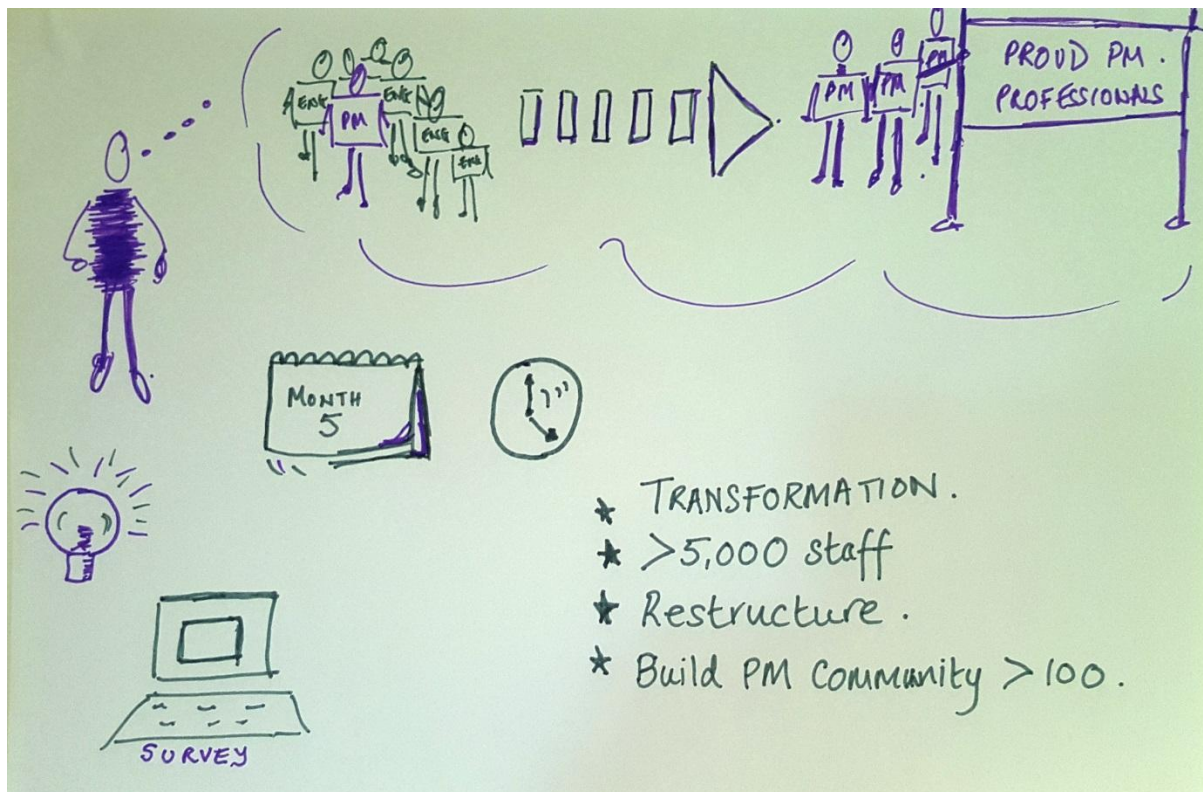


Fig 8 - Source: Visible Dynamics

The research team carried out the sponsor interview, mindsets exercise and online survey using the diagnostic tool to provide a bespoke report to the organisation.

Feedback to this case study's sponsor was followed by a facilitated feedback event with 50 members of the project community.

Figure 9 illustrates how the tool provided a common language and framework for members of the project community to articulate and explore the issues. The tool provided a window into the behaviours, thoughts and feelings of colleagues. It led to a significant change in the way community members were engaging with the project and the way the sponsor was leading it.

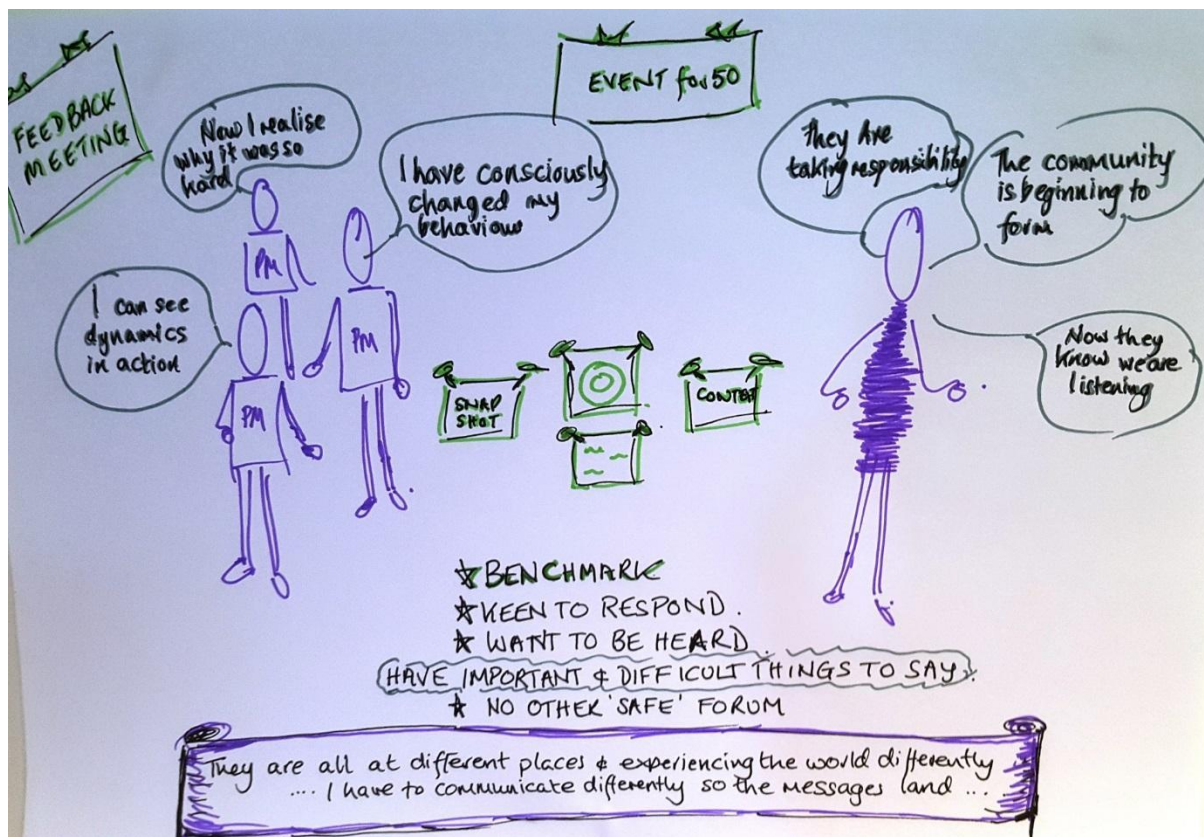


Fig 9 - Source: Visible Dynamics

5.0 Case study 2

Two organisations which were part of the same group company decided to pilot the tool along with the mindset exercise.

The research helped to:

- Understand how two distinct teams across the two organisations could be made to work together in a collaborative way
- Explore gaps in perception of two different organisations with distinct sub-cultures even though part of the same overall company
- Contrast and explore – what should the future state be like?
- Identify similar results around the Learning Dynamic across both organisations – how could that be made better?
- Highlight very different perceived realities around the Control Dynamic for both organisations

At the time of writing the senior executives from both organisations are continuing discussions on how best to use the information provided by the report to enhance integrated working.

6.0 Guidance for Project Practitioners

The research version of the tool is available for all APM members to download and use at no cost and comes with instructions on how to use it. The authors have continued refining and developing the tool since completing this study. You may wish to contact them directly to access an updated version and find out about its application.

You can administer the tool in different ways as explained below in terms of approach used for the case studies described in section 5. For example you can:

1. Download the PDF format, print and use paper copies for scoring
2. Convert the tool to an online survey which has the ability to gather written feedback
3. Use the analysis from the tool to facilitate dialogue in workshop settings

When feeding back results, practitioners have to decide how to frame the dialogue. For example, with the organisation in Case Study 1 the authors explained the findings in terms of neuroscience and the workings of the human brain. Whilst for the organisations in Case Study 2 they framed the dialogue around the Learning and Control dynamic.

The tool can be used to improve the productivity of project and programme teams or the groups and/or team being directly impacted by the change.

Furthermore, the tool can be used as a one-off intervention or as a vehicle for measurement over time to do a trend analysis of the overall scores for benchmarking purposes.

The most important point to remember is that the value is not in the scores but in the conversations, that follow!

By using this diagnostic, practitioners will understand if they are doing better or worse than the 'norm' group across multiple behavioural measurement points.

This is valuable as it aids forecasting and can be developed into an effective behavioural risk assessment extending current best practice.

7.0 References & Further Reading

<http://www.innovationaudit.net>

The Evolution of Project Auditing, 2015 Global Benchmark Study (report); <http://www.brooke-institute.com/research-tools/initiatives/>

Wider reading

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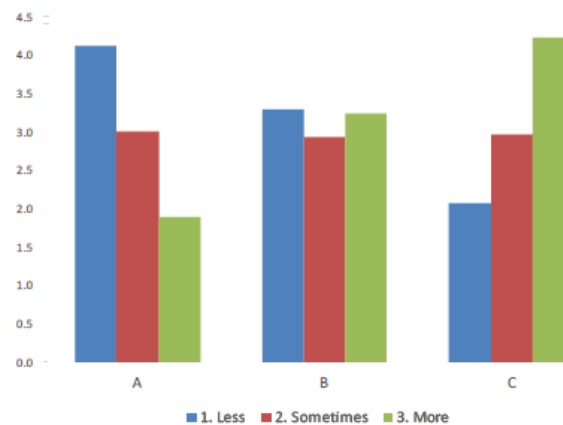
APPENDIX 1

As described in Section 3, the organisational mindsets exercise was used to explore the context in each of the participating organisations.

This exercise was very experiential in nature and we did not log or analyse the conversations that took place. Nevertheless, we did observe some patterns and these are presented here. However, these observations are not statistically valid, they are merely presented as a guide.

Based on the input provided by twenty participants across fourteen different organisations, we found three mindset types – A, B & C.

Fig 10 – Mindset Types from research



Type A – *experienced more of the time*

Typically, a sense of no accountability. Individuals not taking responsibility for their ideas combined with low performance and a can't-do attitude. This combined with a sense of always being in crisis mode and a feeling of not being heard.

Type B - *experienced more of the time*

Putting hearts and souls into the job, striving for excellence intermixed with the feeling of always being in crisis mode. Therefore wanting changes, looking for opportunities to help others however combined with a feeling of not being heard.

Type C - *experienced more of the time*

Putting hearts and souls into the job, striving for excellence and a high achievement. Combined with a can-do anything attitude, always looking for opportunities to develop and connecting well with others.

Type A & B mindsets would relate to more of a Controlling Dynamic and Type C mindset would relate to a Learning Dynamic.