True success through coaching and managing relationships in business and life

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Cultures can be judged in many ways, but eventually every nation in every age must be judged by this test: How did it treat people? Each generation, each wave of humanity, evaluates its predecessors on this basis. The final measure of mankind’s humanity is how humanly people treat one another.\textsuperscript{1}

We have entered a not-so-new reality, one focusing on globalisation, joint ventures, corporate mergers and reorganisation—the world of economic rationalisation. This reality places more pressure on human resource staff to be concerned for the effectiveness and wellbeing of the CEO as well as the most junior associate, to provide streamlined organisational fit. Management feel the increasing need for strategic business programs to provide substantial productivity benefits and efficiency to satisfy shareholders, clients and employees. At the same time those people are continuing to face the same old issues regarding their own interpersonal relationships and balanced life.

Corporations have evolved in the twentieth century, such that capital is now considered not only in terms of its hard, concrete definition

\begin{quote}
"Material wealth used or available for use in the production of more wealth."
\textsuperscript{2}
\end{quote}

but also by less quantifiable but more fundamental measures.\textsuperscript{3} This is summarised by Andrew Carnegie when he says that

‘the only irreplaceable capital an organisation possesses is the knowledge and ability of its people. The productivity of that capital depends on how effectively people share their competence with those who can use it.’
Relationship Capital makes intangible relationships tangible and material so they become the cornerstone of true wealth. It is the type of relationships people have that provides the platform for true progression towards prosperity, creating balance in life.

In the course of my professional experience I have seen three major reasons why people are so stressed and unable to find balance in their lives:

- The information people receive is fragmented or irrelevant to their daily reality. In their desire for personal development, people have accumulated considerable knowledge about management, psychology and self-development, but often have not integrated that knowledge into their lives. We must create tools that close the gap between theory and behaviour.
- People lack of a sense of control over the demands of life. Research has shown that distress is caused by lack of control over fulfilling our needs for achievement and satisfaction.
- People lack meaning (purpose) and hence, inner peace.

The psyche and body respond with boredom, impatience, tiredness, irritation, anxiety and other physical manifestations of distress. The end result for the:

- Individual—is burnout
- Organisation—is inefficiency and collapse
- Family—is breakdown
- World—is impoverishment from the lack of role models left to new generations

Ultimately a lack of peace and meaning results from our ability to sacrifice our spiritual values or replace them with less fulfilling ones—especially goals set up by other people, not truly universal values that would make me a better person and us a better society. Not only adolescents suffer peer pressure. The values we have retained don’t have much validity for everyday application.

In our present state of society spirituality is, even in religious people, isolated and not integrated into everyday processes. Without this vital and nourishing integration, inner peace and meaning will continue to elude us—and with it a vital synthesis which could allow us to transcend life as it is, and raise it to a higher level. The power of creativity is within every person: we have deeply damaged it, but it is waiting to be awakened. This force is yearning to be expressed by us as individuals, and in the meeting we create with other people. When we enjoy satisfaction in work and life, solve conflict quickly and effectively, are able to relate wisely with people around us, and are able to
enjoy rest in our mind, body and spirit, we can say that we are living within the realms of nature.

Where to next?

Since we are taught more about how to become financially secure and professionally competent, than about how to choose the right partner or friend, the people we relate with often become our biggest liability in life. However, when our relationships are perceived as an asset instead of a liability, even the most difficult problem can be approached with a positive attitude and renewed hope. The vital first steps are turning people who are a drain into a gain, and regularly assessing the implications of where and how we live in relation to our work and family environment.

A shift of values is making many people focus primarily on the desire to become better parents, and placing renewed emphasis on friendships, relationships, personal development and happiness. With this fresh approach, a whole new generation of parents is discovering the immense satisfaction of relating more personally with their children and doing unpaid work. I believe that the new benchmark of success will be not mere professional achievement and wealth, but the profound and cherished values people (wives, husbands, partners, children, colleagues and friends) share and recognise in us. It is the quality of our relationships with people close to us and nurtured by us that will be the high-water mark of a successful life.

About this book—Rolf’s story

This book is the result of many years of practice in business consultancy, psychiatry and psychotherapy. It aims to identify some issues men and women are facing, individually and in relationships in business as well as in private and family life. The book will focus on:

- Business leadership
- Personal life management
- Useful skills in developing and maintaining a better style of life

This book has not been written to give ‘quick fix’ solutions for life. Instead, it reveals concepts that will enable you to find your own effective ways of
dealing with the most common yet most difficult issue in life, relationships. Read the book with an open mind. If you get stuck with a topic, come back to it later. You can also interact with other readers and the author by subscribing at forum@playoflife.com.

The basic theoretical foundation of this book is the belief that life exists in the realms of relationships. My strong belief is that following the ideas in the book will definitely increase sustainable bottom-line performance and the achievement of true prosperity.

To explain my philosophical stand I’ll bring together contributions from business consultancy, medicine, psychiatry, psychotherapy, sociology, ethology (comparative studies of human and animal behaviour), philosophy and theology.

The relational concepts are based on the Strategic Relationship Management Model (SRMM) that brings together sociometry (J.L. Moreno, J.G. Rojas-Bermudez, M. Clayton, A. Hale) and contemporary business management practices.

This book is a compilation of real stories, but names of people and companies, as well as the type of industry, have been changed to provide complete anonymity. Using case studies, I present scenarios that represent real contemporary situations, showing the use of practical tools for management and personal development.

This book is not intended as a textbook: the theoretical concepts presented here are a summary of wider concepts that can be explored further through resources in the bibliography and articles on the Internet at www.playoflife.com/rc. People who work in the areas of communication, human resources, training and coaching will find it easy to incorporate the techniques presented into their own training and practice. Those who would like to receive further training in the Play of Life technique or SRMM can enrol in a free course by visiting www.playoflife.com/essentials.

Our players
Rolf, our central figure, has successfully achieved his objectives in business and personal life. He has been able to see the ‘amber’ light (the right moment to stop) and ‘only just’ stop, reflect and act appropriately before the red light, avoiding a shattering mishap.

Inge, Rolf’s wife, has successfully achieved her basic desires for personal and family wellbeing. Inge’s determination not to accept what was imposed on her helped her to confront her husband, risking losing the man she loves and valuable security.
Other characters

Tim, the finance director, who was able to put into practice effective ways of communication, making each associate enjoy contributing the best of themselves to the company.

Henry, the operations director, and his ‘right hand’ James, the national operations manager, who was able to identify that he couldn’t do the job he had been given—and then resigned.

Michelle, the sales and marketing director.

Lynnette, Rolf’s personal assistant, who, with skill, firmness and grace, was able to support Rolf in his process of change as well as to be a link with every level of management and his family.

The story of Rolf and his relationships will be discussed within the Strategic Relationship Management Model.

From personnel to people

HRM (Human Resource Management) has changed from personnel management to people management. This evolution is driven by the realisation of business leaders that people are their most important asset—and the most enduring source of true competitive advantage.

In managing these invaluable ‘assets’, specialised HR managers developed a strategic science of human and organisational performance—targeted directly at maximising individual and company performance. At the company level, the focus is on creating a vision, helping to develop clear unified goals for the organisation, and communicating these internally. At the individual level the focus is on aligning the individual’s activities to the corporate goals through objective setting, performance management, training and development, reward systems and organisational fit, while allowing the individual to maintain a balanced life.

The close marriage between the HR manager and the business manager in maximising outputs of their ‘assets’ has left some employees with a distrust of HR that corresponds with their distrust of management in uncertain times. This is compounded by the increasing ‘invisibility’ of the HR team, as in some instances they have become the ‘distant professor’ providing tools to the managers who bear the daily duty of managing people alone. In this situation, HR is not perceived as providing social or emotional support, or not contributing to the overall company objectives. In some instances this apparent ‘hiding’ behind policy and systems, and oblivion to the actual human/humane element of their trade has led not only to alienation of the employees, but also to management disillusionment with their HR teams.

The HR team may need to overcome a divide of trust and/or credibility
in a particular organisation by building the more ‘humane’ components of their profession. They will need to evolve into visible, effective and ‘engaged’ roles as the coach, mentor, or counsellor who goes to the person in need to work, play, laugh and cry with them. The SRMM coach communicates ‘walking together we’ll find what is right for you’. To do this comfortably, many people will firstly need to go through guided diagnosis of their own issues and impacts, putting effort into resolving their own wounds. The SRMM acknowledges the pressures and tensions experienced by people who deal with people, providing practical tools for self help and peer support in organisations.

Much of the ‘mystery’ of effective human performance in a family, team or organisational context relates not simply to the individual’s work output (in terms of chores done, units or deals produced), but also to their contributions to the health of the family or team environment. Hence, more advanced HR departments have evolved beyond simply an individual performance focus, and have begun to attempt to influence group outcomes, through such processes as team effectiveness training, and 360-degree feedback on managers. Even in such organisations it may be difficult to balance the importance of this relatively intangible evidence with clear ‘output’ measures, in determining an individuals’ contribution level. For example, it is rare to see a top performing sales manager taken to task over some of the deep issues of divisiveness, mistrust and burnout that they may have created in their team through a mantra of ‘do whatever it takes to sell’.

Workers now have values more diverse than simply high work outputs (and associated high rewards); including such measures as a balanced, healthy life, with manageable stress levels. The imperative for HR is to evolve so as to support a richer range of individual and team outcomes.3

I believe that people management is an intrinsic skill for any manager, and that organisations that know the benefits of effective people management must make their HRM department more useful to the needs of the organisation. Some organisations may not even need a HR department, as they may be able to identify in key managers the people-management skills to take on the rewarding task of being internal mentors and coaches to others.

With this in mind, this book will assist:

- The CEO and directors to identify organisational needs and administer solutions by themselves, or develop well-informed situational analysis to direct the HRM correctly to stimulate efficiency.
- HR managers who would like to enrich their previous knowledge in people management.
Managers, line managers and supervisors to develop people-management tools as well as skills in properly utilising HRM if it exists.

Consultants, to incorporate innovative skills in their profession.

This book aims to provide HR teams and managers with a structured method to more effectively measure ‘social–relational capital’, a critical complement to the historical ‘individual capital’ approach.

Solutions are near

Solutions are closer than we believe, but we can only see them when we are ready and really desiring resolution. At times a solution may come at the expense of losing something else: the appropriate choice will be an act of wisdom, not a mere clever or cunning judgment. ‘In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity’, said Albert Einstein.

In the course of a life, people may find themselves at a crossroads where decisions have to be made. This is a solitary moment when nobody can really help; this is when the person is alone in a sacred place. The decision taken is a personal one that will affect the individual, everyone around and potentially the whole society.

The moment of choice is often one of loneliness, but the process of searching for meaning and purpose can be done together with mentors, friends, partners and colleagues, with inspiration coming from books, meditation and prayer. This book will provide companionship through the process of searching for a desirable life of efficiency, joy, satisfaction and fulfilment. It will make available a solid theoretical foundation, tools and skills in developing a social environment where relationships can become of a gain instead of a drain.

This book is based on the belief that:

Those who find wisdom love their soul; those who cherish understanding prosper: for these gifts will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity, provide riches and honour, enduring wealth and prosperity.

Adapted from Middle Eastern proverbs

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2 Contribution from Peter Hooker, Strategic Human Resources Consultant, Sydney.
3 Contribution from Catherine Shaw, Strategic Human Resources Consultant, Sydney.
It’s seven o’clock on a Wednesday morning. Rolf and his wife Inge are lying in bed.

‘Happy birthday, darling,’ Inge says. ‘The kids are preparing a surprise for you.’

Rolf and Inge’s three children—Karen, aged 18, Logan, aged 15, and Katrin, aged six—enter the room singing ‘Happy Birthday’ and carrying a breakfast tray. They kiss their parents, curl up on the bed and hand their father his presents. Everyone is laughing and enjoying being together.

When the children later leave, Rolf and Inge stay in bed a little longer, sipping their coffee and talking.

‘It’s wonderful to be able to spend some time together in the mornings,’ Inge says.

‘Yes,’ Rolf replies. ‘This is the life we dreamt of having when we got married. And now we have it!’

Rolf and Inge are celebrating not just a birthday, but also a new way of life. In the past, there was never time to lie in on a mid-week morning talking quietly together. Rolf’s busy corporate life meant there were always work obligations that took precedence over his desire to spend time with his family.

In the last 18 months, however, things have changed. Rolf was able to see how he often denied himself of staying at home for another hour in the morning or returning from work earlier to spend important, impossible-to-repeat moments with his family. Often he would then find at work that he could not have the teleconference meeting in the morning because the technology failed to deliver or the meeting was cancelled at the last minute.
Rolf is the local managing director of TML, a global manufacturing company whose Australian head office is in Melbourne. Rolf is a happy and satisfied man. He enjoys the support of an efficient and happy executive team that manages more than 2300 employees. He is proud that the company has been able to turn around years of chaos and achieve its objectives this year, and he is confident that the business will expand over the next five years.

TML’s managers and employees are committed to the company, so there is very low staff turnover. And because of the reduced number of accidents in the mill and factory in recent months, Rolf has been able to negotiate lower insurance premiums. Improvement in quality has helped them to win new business from their competitors, who had been waiting for TML to collapse.

The American headquarters of TML is very pleased with Rolf and his executive team. In fact, TML Australia is now one of the best-performing operations within the group, and some of its practices and systems are being studied by Rolf’s counterparts in other countries. At a recent meeting of managers in Atlanta, Rolf was invited by the group CEO, Richard Coleman, to give an address entitled ‘Get a Life’. Richard knew that Rolf was a man of integrity who had found a way to achieve the objectives he had set for the business while also enjoying life. This was a real turnaround in the company’s attitude regarding work satisfaction. In recent years, low performance, including in the Australian operation, had dominated upper management’s concerns and they had paid little attention to matters of employee morale and quality of life.

Richard Coleman is a highly respected and successful businessman and the architect of what TML is today. However, he can be very tough and demanding. Until recently, he believed that people will perform well only if they are under extreme pressure. Neither did he believe in validating his employees for work well done. There was always something else that needed doing! He attributed the company’s success in the past to this style of working. His view had been, ‘If you’ve got a better idea of working, perform well first and we’ll talk about it later.’

Rolf came to Richard’s attention because the Australian operation is now performing significantly better, under Rolf’s new style of working, than are many of the group’s other operations that have continued to employ the old work practices. The change in the Australian company’s fortunes over the last 18 months prompted Richard to invite Rolf to describe to the group how he had turned the company, and his life, around.

Rolf felt both humble and proud. He knew that his performance in Australia didn’t just belong to him; it also belonged to his executive team, to
every employee and to his wife and family, who had all given him the opportunity to develop a new way of life.

Rolf has worked very hard all his professional life. The difference now is that he has:

- Control over his work, rather than his work controlling him
- Learned to trust people more
- Learned how to reward them generously for their efforts and achievements
- Been able to better communicate his objectives
- Been able to give others more autonomy by providing effective leadership

As a result, he has his finger on the pulse of the whole organisation without having to involve himself directly in every dynamic. He also now spends less time managing conflicts between people, because he has, as Lesley Lewis describes it, ‘developed consensus from conflict’. He also made lines of accountability simple and clear; improved the flow of communication through effective networking; and created clear definitions of roles and responsibilities. He can now spend energy in strategic planning rather than attacking small fires. And his effective leadership has set guidelines for better recruitment and practical leadership, and created internal opportunities for stable growth offering career development within the organisation.

Change or else

Rolf is a happy man now, but 18 months ago his story was very different. At that time, he was a broken man. His dream of being an effective leader of a benchmark company, based on effective and harmonious relationships among his team and with his superiors in the US, was slipping away. He had wanted to expand the company, sharing a vision for the future with his executive, and develop personally as a CEO while enjoying a balanced life—and it was all disappearing fast.

He was close to a breakdown, his future with the company was in jeopardy, his marriage was failing, and his children barely knew him. This book tells the story of what happened.

Eighteen months ago, Rolf became convinced of the need to make some important and substantial changes in the company, starting with himself, his executive team, and in his personal and family life. He identified the issues that needed attention, developed an action plan and then took action.

He found, with surprise, that solutions were closer to him than expected. Here’s what happened to convince him of the need for action:

One Saturday morning, Inge sat him down and explained gently but force-
fully that his style of working was having a negative and unbearable effect on her and the children. They were concerned that he seemed always to be tense and unhappy. She told him that if he didn’t make some radical changes, she wouldn’t be able to stay in the relationship any longer. (The build up and the dynamics of this meeting are expanded in Chapter 6.)

This approach from Inge made Rolf remember a conversation he had overheard between his son, aged 13, and a friend: ‘I don’t want to have children.’ ‘Why not?’ ‘Because I’ll never have time to be with them.’

In a directors’ meeting one day, Michelle, TML’s sales and marketing director, and Henry, the operations director, explained that they felt so stressed that they thought they might be on the brink of a breakdown.

Everyone in the company was being pressured to work overtime. They were exhausted, and as a result they weren’t performing effectively and production quotas and quality were being jeopardised. Tension between departments had increased as a result of people’s frustration, ineffective leadership and the lack of communication.

The dissatisfaction that was spreading throughout the company reached the ears of the US-based chairman of the Australasian operations, Toby Tillick, who had been concerned for some time about the company. He was finding it harder to justify to headquarters the continuing losses and high staff turnover of TML Australia over recent years. He phoned Rolf to discuss his concerns and asked him to prepare an analysis of the present situation and an action plan. Rolf knew then that he and the company were in trouble. Headquarters might even replace him as managing director, he thought. It wasn’t the loss of his job that worried him most, but his loss of dignity if he were to be fired.

All of these events occurring at around the same time gave Rolf a clear message: his life was collapsing around him. The realisation that he was on the brink of failure gave him the motivation he needed to turn the company, and his family life, around. ‘I have to make it. The company has to make it,’ he vowed to himself. ‘I refuse to lose my family, my colleagues and the company I’ve devoted my life to!’ This determination gave Rolf the strength to review what had happened and to look for help.

He remembered Og Mondino’s quote:

‘Failure will never overtake me if my determination to succeed is strong enough.’

Where did the vision go?

Rolf thought back over his life. From an early age, he had wanted to be successful in business and to enjoy a close relationship with a family of his own. Rolf
was born in Germany. While studying in London he met Inge, who was completing her studies. Their backgrounds were similar: both had come from hard-working families where the work ethic had dominated personal and family needs. Rolf’s father had suffered a heart attack from stress when Rolf was 16. Rolf remembered him as being very rigid, a perfectionist who always had everyone feeling on edge. His mother had had her hands full looking after Rolf’s father and didn’t have much time or energy left for the children or herself. There had been very few times when the family had enjoyed fun times together.

Inge’s family was also very strict and didn’t enjoy life much. Their attitude was ‘Life’s too tough’. They were country people who worked from dawn to dusk and never took a day off.

Rolf and Inge married and settled in England for five years. They then migrated to the United States where Rolf began his career with TML as an engineer. When TML set up operations in Australia, Rolf was sent to Melbourne to establish business contacts and do the groundwork to establish TML Australia. He was offered the job of managing director, which he and Inge happily accepted. By the time Rolf’s life was starting to unravel, they had been in Australia for 12 years.

Rolf and Inge shared the same vision: they wanted to be prosperous, to raise a happy family and to enjoy life. One night early in their relationship, they shared a moment of insight when they opened their hearts to each other. They had a similar awareness of the majesty of the universe and the wonders of nature. They talked about the purpose and meaning of life. They felt they were blessed in having the opportunity to live abroad where they no longer felt oppressed by their families. They talked for hours about their backgrounds and the sort of family they would like to have, the new life they wanted. They agreed that work wasn’t everything in life. It was important, but so was time spent with family and friends, and to make real the dreams of life. They found that they both had strong characters, valued open and honest communication, and were determined to succeed even against the toughest odds. This sharing of their deepest feelings created a strong bond between Rolf and Inge.

A father’s teaching
One of the things Rolf’s father had taught him as a child was to recognise when he needed help and to ask for it. Rolf’s grandfather, a shoemaker, had lost his business during the war, and Rolf’s father had had to learn a new trade. He found a mentor in a man called Viktor, who taught him plumbing, and much else besides. It was a severe blow to Rolf’s father, then, when Viktor died.
soon after his parents. Viktor had given him intellectual insights, but he hadn’t been around long enough to teach him how to put them to work for him. Rolf believed that his father’s resentment, unhappiness and generally sour temperament were due to the loss of his mentor at a time when he needed his support and guidance. He felt that his father had lost the ability to trust that others would be there when he needed them.

Now that Rolf himself was experiencing difficulties and facing a breakdown, he knew that he needed to find a ‘Viktor’ of his own to help him achieve the vision of the life that he and Inge had seen so clearly all those years ago.

Rolf asked a friend if he could recommend a corporate coach. Rolf contacted the coach who was recommended, mentioned the link with his friend, and explained briefly what the problem was. He hoped that the coach would be able to help him and his executive team find a way to achieve their desired business goals while also developing a better style of work that would improve the quality of life for everyone in the company.

### Looking for mentors

People often find great difficulty in asking for help and in turning to mentors, counsellors, guides or teachers. There are several reasons for this:

- Today’s society doesn’t encourage young people to look to older people for experience and knowledge. Economic rationalism and technology has made older people ‘redundant’.
- Senior executives are often respected as ‘clever’ business people but not as somebody to emulate.
- Economic rationalism and capitalism has placed so much focus on the individual to succeed that it’s difficult to ‘see’ anyone else around you. It’s the survival of the individual.
- There is not much trust in parents, teachers, or in our national leaders.
- Damaging and unsuccessful experiences in asking for help make people think, ‘I’m on my own—nobody can really help’.
- Feelings of being neglected or abused by parents have made people wait for their parents to fulfil old and new needs. They will not accept any other person to fulfil what a ‘parent must do’. This is very serious as such a person may wait a lifetime for satisfaction that will probably never come.
- Individuals are not satisfied when seeking support from the wrong people (for example, looking for maternal or paternal support in a business partner, or husband or wife).
- People rationalise—‘I don’t need help anyway’.
- Individuals receive a strong message of ‘don’t ask for help, you are now a
man (or woman), be an adult’ from parents. This is where pride plays a big role—asking for help is perceived as a humiliating experience, where in reality it is a sign of maturity and strength.

These mechanisms are used as a protection against hurt, but in reality they expose the person to failure and promote self-sufficiency, isolation, cynicism and despondency. It’s easier to believe ‘I can do it’ than to risk failing again. Then, the person may be unable to appropriately ask for help; the request will come inappropriately as a confused or abrupt message, or it will be presented in ways that are very difficult to understand. Then as the need is not satisfied it reinforces the internal message: ‘I knew it, I need to do it myself’.

A new generation is determined to change this trend but, unlike technological change, the process is slow. Looking for mentors is a sign of strength, determination and wisdom. It is also a ‘safe’ way of learning as there is no emotional attachment.

If there is a need, it must be satisfied, and that satisfaction is often closer to us than we think. The first step is to learn how to ask.

Training versus coaching/mentoring

‘Coach’ is a new name for a mentor. Coaches have been more often used in sport where the focus is on skills development. I’m using ‘mentor’ and ‘coach’ as synonymous but I distinguish them from the concept of training.

Training is a formal process that usually involves more than one person and follows a set program. As Gerryts, Taylor and Associates well said, ‘Trains travel on rails’—on predetermined avenues that are often difficult to alter. The learner must adapt to a set program rather than vice versa. Coaching is a more personalised process, although it may also include more than one person. The road to follow is wider with more crossroads.

Coaching is more flexible and tailored to satisfy the needs of the client. A mentor or coach is usually somebody older (but not necessarily) and with more experience. It is someone who provides alternatives and support, and oversees and fosters growth, effectiveness, assertiveness and progress. The essence of this dynamic is in the relationship between the client and the coach; trust, respect and confidentiality must be central key elements in this relationship. Some people suggest that the mentor should not have a stake in the outcomes. This relationship is like a dance, the coach follows the client’s request and the client follows the coach’s lead, quickly modifying the steps if the client needs something different. This type of flexibility is difficult to maintain in training structures.
I remember a conversation with my grandfather when I was very young. ‘Carlitos,’ he said while looking at my eyes and placing a warm hand on my shoulder, ‘look always for a teacher who is wise, who knows about life. Look for a friend, somebody you can learn from, who cares and loves you, and you also care and love him or her.’

I was only ten years old when he said that. I didn’t understand much about it but looking back I can see that his words resonated very clearly in me and I recognise that since I was little I have always been blessed with a good teacher-mentor and a close friend. Later, life gave me the privilege to be a teacher and mentor for many, but my strength has always been in looking for, and often travelling far to look for, mentors.

I remember going from Argentina to Switzerland in 1979 looking for a person whom I believed, after reading his books, would be of extreme benefit to me. I would like to share that the need for wisdom was so important that my wife and I sold our house to be able to afford that trip. An investment I have never regretted. This is how I met Dr Francis Schaeffer, and his input and lovely presence is still in my heart, and through this I believe I have helped many others too. Dr Schaeffer and his wife Edith founded L’Abri (shelter) in Huemoz, Switzerland, which was a centre point for many, especially young, people looking for answers in life in the 1970s.

There were mentors who helped my own father to turn his life around. He was a medical doctor and a wise man, but he became foolish and he lost the plot of life. He lost himself and a child in an accident due to his stubbornness, and almost his marriage. At the edge of collapse, he found a true sense in life and through mentors he was able to turn his life from a curse into a blessing. I remember him going to meet others who were ahead of him in the walk of life. They guided him with patience, openness, ability, love and firmness.

The Bible says ‘a wise man listens to advice’. ‘Wisdom does not dwell just in the individual; wisdom is not knowing all the answers but knowing where to go in moments of need; where to get answers, stimulation or information to find them. It’s also the ability to ‘stay at peace’ while looking for answers or to accept that there are confronting or indefinite answers for certain issues.

The mentor or coach is somebody who can ‘see’ wider and beyond the client’s sight.

Losing perspective—the effects of prolonged stress

Let’s have a look at biology. When we are under circumstances of high demand—physical, emotional or relational—the endocrine system responds with a release of adrenaline that stimulates the sympathetic neurological
system. It is responsible for the ‘fight or flight’ response we experience in a
suddenly stressful situation, a response which is essential for survival. ‘Our
heart starts pounding, our breathing gets faster, and our muscles gear up for
a burst of activity. Afterwards, there is a period of let-down or exhaustion,
where our body recuperates from the effects of such a potent hormonal
pounding.’

This stage is what enables people, as well as animals, to be in a state of high
alert, to quickly choose avenues of escape and to be able to create solutions
to emergencies. This is called stress. When it is well managed it is Active Stress
(alert)—useful and essential for survival. This Active Stress makes a person
respond quickly, accurately and often with brilliance.

When this continues for long periods of time without rest, living under
permanent pressure or demand it creates High Strain, a topic that will be
addressed in Chapter 7. Permanently stimulated, the body cannot rest and
the amount of adrenaline in the system is constant, over-taxing the body
and producing fatigue, forgetfulness, insomnia, immune deficiency and accel-
erated aging.

The down side of Active Stress is that the mind is so focused on a task or
objective that it cannot see outside the point of interest. The benefit, being
focused to ‘solve’ problems, becomes a handicap as the person is aware of
what they are seeing but not aware of what they are ‘not seeing’ as their focus
is too sharp.

Gustav Bally, an ethologist (specialist in the area of animal behaviour),
describes this focused attention as ‘tense field’. When a famished animal is
looking for prey, its whole attention is focused on food and it will not be able
to see much of the territory around. In a relaxed field, when the animal is not
so hungry, its focus is relaxed and wider, enabling it to have more awareness
of and control over the surrounding territory (see Figure 1). In this situation,
insight comes naturally.

There is an experiment in animals that is worth mentioning. Biologists
place a famished dog (1 in Figure 1) in a room with bars (2) that don’t run
from wall to wall. The animal is placed close to the bars, and on the other side
they placed food (3). The hungry and desperate animal tries to reach the
food. It is so tense and focused and its ‘visual field’ (tense field) is so reduced
that it’s not aware that the bars end (4) and there is space between the bars
and the wall. The dog falls asleep from exhaustion, but when it wakes up its
focus is wider (5) and it is able to see the space between the wall and the
bars and goes and gets the food (6).
Living in a tense field

During my internship in surgery I found that professor surgeons were often stressed and agitated when they couldn’t make a diagnosis on a patient lying in the hospital bed. Tests, x-rays and any available diagnostic medium would be used until the diagnosis was made. I found that some doctors were not really concerned for the patient’s wellbeing, but rather for themselves. They needed to have a diagnosis to be at peace, as they could not handle uncertainty and remain in the unknown. They ‘had to know’. On the one hand this increased speed in making the appropriate diagnosis and treatment, but it also made doctors ‘push’ for answers were there were none, making wrong diagnoses and often operating on people only to find that the symptoms continue after a massive operation.

Is anyone prepared to face uncertainty, vertigo, loss of equilibrium, acceptance of knowing nothing, the feeling of never being satisfied? This is one of the most difficult challenges a manager or anyone may face in attempting to look at their life or management dynamics. The avoidance or delay in looking for help, for inviting a coach to think with them, is often based on lack of readiness to face vertigo.

Solutions in corporations, politics and any social interactions are often based not on what is right for many, but what could appease the minds of a few or even one person.

People in the ‘helping people industries’ are often emotionally insecure, as they confront so many emotional problems and often choose their careers due to their own emotional difficulties or the problems of those close to them. They find it difficult to handle uncertainty. University provides ways of understanding emotional issues but there is no context to do anything about them, and the lecturers themselves may also have similar insecurities anyway. In my psychiatric training I found many times that the patients were better behaved, with more kindness and respect, than we, the professionals.
But there is good news: the methods described in this book are of help to those people with emotional ‘unfinished business’, providing a solid ground to act without the need to fear uncertainty while looking for answers in a progressive and positive manner.

**Living in a relaxed field**

Some of the characteristics of a relaxed field include:

- Open vision
- Relaxation (diminished level of adrenaline)
- Time to be idle, so the body is nurtured
- Creative insights
- Communication flow
- Higher tolerance (patience).

Another important characteristic of a relaxed field, as distinct from a tense field, is play. Many transcendent discoveries have been made during play or in a relaxed environment, including Sir Isaac Newton’s theory of gravity, and the discovery of penicillin by Sir Alexander Fleming. Also, it is during play that kittens learn to catch mice, sharpening their senses by playing with small rocks, strings and sticks.

Stuart L. Brown, a physician with a background in psychiatry and a major interest in play and its implications, mentions:

*During the past few years of play study, a slowly rising conviction, which has been a wonderful surprise, has ripened. After spending time with [researchers] around the globe, I believe their immersion in wild play or natural play has altered them. Their personal priorities and world views are fresh, illuminating, and original. Though they make up a heterogeneous group culturally, their focus on, experience of, and observations of play positively organise these investigators, setting priorities for their lives and filling them with a quality of gentleness and resoluteness I have seen in no other group. It is as if play had helped to provide them with an unspoken, but shared, sacred personal philosophy. The implications and potential effects of implementing play as highly evolved linguistics have not been sufficiently researched in human or animal societies and cultures.*

We can trust that the incorporation of play, or a playful spirit, in organisations, families and in any type of relationships will contribute to creativity and loosening up tense and rigid behaviours, allowing quicker conflict resolution.

### The role of a mentor

A mentor or coach can provide many benefits to individuals and their organisations. Below is a summary of what a mentor is required to do or to be.
Work in a relaxed field
With an open visual field, a mentor will look beyond the client, who is absorbed by the problems and the urgency of the situation that creates tension. Solutions are often as close as the end of the bars for the dog or knowing that the tools we have in hand can be enough, if we can play, to achieve the desired objectives. It is the role of the coach or mentor to create relaxed environments to allow people to ‘play’ with ideas, brainstorm, role play and to help individuals or members of a team become a creative genius who can discover new tools. This will definitely save money and time for organisations before they are seduced to buy new technologies. A coach may also be skilled in assessing the tools available to the organisation to make appropriate moves or acquisitions before people are drained and burnt out.

Isn’t it a wonderful objective for the coach or mentor to guide the client to achieve the desired objectives, and enjoy satisfaction and rest? Yes, rest!

Develop wise movements rather than just strength
In the animal world, the head of the flock or herd is not just the strongest animal; it is the one who is able to quickly find water, food or a way out in times of danger and lead the flock to a better place. Also it is the leader who must know where and when it is time for work and rest. Among people, these abilities are not just centred in one person but in the interpersonal, intellectual, emotional and spiritual capital of an organisation. A coach can assist management to identify this capital.

Facilitate quick manoeuvres and quick change
‘I can’t understand why things take so long!’ This is the comment from many frustrated managers who, after identifying a problem with a team, find that the team is very slow to move, act and implement change. They often find that when the issues are resolved the situation changes to a whole new reality. The coach can facilitate quicker moves and help decisions happen rapidly and effectively.

Be a resource analyst
The mentor should have practical knowledge to assess the resources needed to achieve general and specific objectives and tasks. This ability can save organisations enormous amounts of money. The expense can be never-ending, as it will lead to increased expenses in new training. The coach must have experience
and practical ability in helping the executive to assess and manage existing resources, and to expand only when necessary to achieve the desired business objectives. The technological era has cleverly convinced management that any problem can be solved by a new ‘techno-artefact’. This provides a perception that they are dealing with the problems. They can ‘see’ the new machinery, and they can blame the disruptions of a new system that doesn’t work for inefficiency and low productivity.

This has been one of Rolf’s experiences: he listened to different specialists who sold their systems although these didn’t perform even close to the old systems. He and his team spent so much time, money and energy trying to understand and deal with the hardware to software suppliers blaming the company’s internal training. Plans or strategies utilised were problem-focused, not solution-focused.

**Be a social analyst**

The coach must be able to focus on relationships and the roles people play. It has been recognised that performance issues and lack of effectiveness may not arise from lack of knowledge, skill or ability, but from personal hidden barriers and ineffective behaviours that hinder work satisfaction and performance, and the development of effective communication. These barriers slowly build into the behaviour and attitudes of the person. Roles (see Chapter 4) get tinted with covert behavioural trends that usually develop behaviour opposite to that needed.

Later in the book I describe how Rolf, as well as his executive, developed an ‘appearance’ of being in control when they were really lost. This defensive behaviour often produces an initial positive response from the team but, as it cannot be sustained, lack of trust develops, producing the opposite responses in the team. The coach guided them to be aware of that role dynamic and change.

**Be at peace with yourself**

A successful coach or mentor is someone who is content and satisfied in their own life. I am not talking about somebody without problems but a person who is aware of and is working on them; somebody who knows about reaching objectives, enjoys satisfaction and knows about rest. If the coach is unable to experience these feelings, or is feeling in some way under-resourced, unproductive, unhappy and unsuccessful, it would be extremely difficult for them to guide somebody else towards success and prosperity.

Envy and jealously are very strong feelings that can quickly come between the coach and client when the coach sees that the client may be growing
faster and richer than he or she is. Teachers, guides and even parents often resent the development of their students and children beyond what they have gained or achieved in life.

**Be client-focused**
The coach should be more concerned with the client’s wellbeing than concerned for applying their methods, systems or profiles. The coach must go to the client’s world rather than bringing the client to his own method. Otherwise the relationship will be rigid and will push the executive to ‘fit in’ to a pre-arranged system of thought without much space for creativity, when creativity is one of the most important gems of the learning process. A consultant should not have predetermined ideas of what the problem is and what the solution may be.

**Make yourself redundant**
One of the objectives of a coach should be to make themselves redundant as soon as possible, and to leave behind systems and strategies to enable people to support each other from within the organisation. Management may sporadically need external support over the long term, that will provide a more detached place to bounce around ideas.

**Be a healer**
The coach can play a major role in helping managers to develop healthier relational roles. The coach’s understanding, support and non-judgmental guidance can give the client new relational role models. They feel understood, accepted and not judged, helping heal past experiences of oppression and neglect. Resolving experiences of failure and lack of trust helps people to move fear-based management to hope-and-freedom-based management. The coach should have knowledge of other professionals who can further help the client emotionally (see [www.playoflife.com/links](http://www.playoflife.com/links)).

**Inspire mutual confidence and empathise**
Ultimately there has to be mutual confidence and empathy between the parties, as Leckic and Ling point out. The coaching process may not be long but it may be intense. Mutual personal respect and trust is essential for the successful development of the process.

**Be available for future support**
Depending on the project, the coach may be needed for consultation after completing the coaching process. It can be beneficial and save time and
money to keep in touch with the coach and let them know about your progress.

**Are you ready for a mentor or coach?**

Ask yourself a few questions:

- Do I have any goals or objectives I wish to achieve?
- Am I committed to give regular time and consistency to the process for a period of time—let’s say three months?
- Am I open to share what I think and feel? This openness grows as the relationship develops, but it has to have a basic trust from the beginning.
- Am I open to hear what the other person may say about me and my company without feeling criticised or hurt?
- Can I accept corrective feedback without getting defensive?
- Am I open to include and share what I learn with others?
- Would I support other managers to get mentoring too?
- Would I ask my superior for support in finding a coach?
- Am I sure I can afford the process and commit not to stop it suddenly?
- Am I able to trust?

**To recap**

Rolf’s story is a successful one that didn’t happen by chance but by wise choice. Rolf was able to see the ‘amber light’, almost too late but still early enough to act. He was able to hear people around him and start a dynamic change in his life. He was ready to face a coach and to walk with him.

The importance of a mentor–coach has been presented as well as key points needed to begin a coaching process. This process includes reflection, play, and a ‘flow’ of practical solutions that will ultimately enable the person to ‘move around the bars’ or find the strength to break them. Rolf was so close to the problem that, like the dog in front of the bars, he was unable to see that there was a way around.

The coach was able to show Rolf that there is another way of living, and that it is based on how he relates to himself, others and the issues he faces.

Relationship capital is a dynamic interaction between each individual and the opportunities that surround them. For an organisation, relationship capital is represented by the myriad possibilities for interaction created by the opportunities surrounding each individual in the organisation—opportunities that can be both internal and external. Working in a ‘tense field’ will reduce the focus of attention and may even aim it at the wrong place. Relationship capital is the ability to ‘relate’ to both people and circumstances in a way that provides life, freedom and growth.
Working with people is demanding, touches on personal issues, and can put you off balance. If you feel tense and insecure, look to a colleague you can learn from, or a coach you can trust—it will be the best investment you could make in your career. Your own development will make you a wiser manager and you’ll become a wonderful coach for others. And remember to create an environment of play!

1 Lesley Lewis, Personal Corporate Business Profile, UK.
3 Gerryts, Taylor and Associates, Twickenham, UK.
At Rolf’s first appointment with the coach in his office at TML, he knew that there were two main issues that needed attention: he needed to learn how to manage relationships within the company so that the business would prosper, and he was seeking a way for himself and his team to achieve a balance between their work and personal lives. Wal Tibble, who had referred Rolf to the coach, had been working with Henry, Rolf’s director of operations, to create better systems in TML’s factories but had been unable to change the tense relationships among the factory workers. Rolf knew that the problem didn’t lie with the systems or lack of skills in the organisation, but with the complex interpersonal relationships and lack of personal wellbeing at every level of the company. He felt very open to whatever the session might produce in the way of suggestions.

When the coach arrived, Lynnette, Rolf’s personal assistant, welcomed him to TML and showed him to Rolf’s office. When he was seated, he asked Rolf, ‘How can I help?’

‘I don’t really know,’ said Rolf. ‘But we—I—need help. I hope it’s not too late.’

**Coach:** What do you know about my work?
Rolf: Wal Tibble spoke highly of you. He said you don’t take a conventional approach—that you see things clearly and use a method that’s very efficient.

Coach: Have you ever had a coach or mentor before?

Rolf: No. But when I was starting my Master’s degree, we were advised to find an advanced student to help us understand the culture of the university. I found that interesting and helpful.

Coach: What do you expect of me?

Rolf: I don’t really know. But a starting point might be to help me find out what’s wrong at TML and find a way to fix it.

Coach: Can you briefly describe your situation at the moment? How do you feel?

[To ask ‘How do you feel?’ in this situation is a straightforward question that does not expect a deep emotional response. Many managers, especially men, would not be able to answer a ‘from the heart’ question in the first meeting.]

Rolf: Well, I feel exhausted and tense. [Lynnette, who is serving coffee, overhears this and says that there are too many people making demands on Rolf and she is concerned about him.] We started the company in Australia from scratch. We bought two small manufacturing companies and were able to speed up the development of the Australian operation by a couple of years. The people at headquarters in the US were very excited that we were operational sooner than expected, and the shareholders were very happy and we got further capital. After that we were on a budget for three years. We expanded by buying a new mill in South Australia and another manufacturing company in Victoria. We then had a shock when our director of operations resigned to take up a position with a company in Japan. Henry, who replaced him, has plenty of experience and energy, but he hasn’t been coping well with the pressure. He’s feeling pretty stressed. The other directors are Michelle, sales and marketing, who is also feeling burnt out, and Tim, finance. We’re a good team, but I’m afraid I’ll lose Henry and Michelle. [Rolf shows the coach a copy of TML Australia’s organisation chart, showing a flat organisation.]
Coach: Which is the area of greatest strength in the company?
Rolf: The finance department, the sector dealing with corporate management, banks and the US. They have the most stable team.

Coach: And which areas concern you most?
Rolf: Personnel and internal accounts aren’t functioning very well. There’s a lot of tension, and people are feeling frustrated. But it is the operations department that is of most concern. People in the mills and factories are overstressed. The level of staff turnover is too high, and sick leave has increased dramatically. In the last six months we’ve had a few bad accidents as well, which hasn’t helped employee morale. The sales and marketing department is in permanent change with great pressure and demands on Michelle.

Coach: Which issue had the greatest weight for you in deciding to ask for help?
Rolf: My fear of losing control—of losing my job. Not being able to change this dynamic. And . . . Is this confidential?

Coach: Of course it is.
Rolf: My fear of losing my family. [Rolf swallows, looks down for a few seconds and then leans forward in his chair.] Do you think you can help me, and us as a company?

Coach: I’ll need a bit more information before I answer that. What do your wife and children think of TML?
Rolf: Inge hates it. She blames any difficulty we have in the family on TML. My children enjoy the benefits, such as private schools and the money, but they often say I never spend any time with them at home, or that I’m irritable when I am home. [Rolf becomes visibly upset.] Could we talk about this some other time?

Coach: Of course. I’m here to help.

The Play of Life

While Rolf regained his composure, the coach placed a case on the desk in front of him. In the case were small boards and some small figurines and other props.

Rolf: [with a smile on his face] These figures are the same my mother used to send to my children from Germany while we were living in London. They are also the same ones Inge used when she talked to me about our life. (This conversation is expanded on page 88.)

Coach: Yes, they are from Germany.
The Play of Life method

The coach utilises the Play of Life technique as a professional coaching tool. It is an effective, innovative way of communication—it gets to the point, bridges language barriers, and is insightful, quick and fun. This method has been used for personal development, self-help, and for people helping one another. More information is available at www.playoflife.com. Pictures and symbols (hieroglyphics) are the most ancient way of permanent story telling. Shapes, forms and body positions are the basic language of animals. Body language—non-verbal communication—has been the focus of much research. The utilisation of forms, shapes and graphs are often used to explain, clarify and make communication more accessible to the parties involved.

The Play of Life capitalises on all this richness of communication and adds movement—an extra dynamic. The Play of Life is based on solid theory and research. It is a process-oriented method which focuses on achieving clear objectives or outcomes. The theory and philosophical foundation are seeded in the Strategic Relationship Mapping Model (Moreno’s Sociometry), which has as its objective

‘to achieve the desired business objectives while enjoying work and life satisfaction’.

The Play of Life techniques are based on the Expressive Techniques founded on Psychodrama (Moreno, Rojas-Bermudez). Its effectiveness is based on Outcome Maximisation (Raimundo).

The Play of Life method consists of a set of theories and techniques, which evolve in a dynamic and practical way in the hands of a practitioner or an individual for self-help.

The Play of Life kit

The kit is made up of the Play of Life bag, plastic figures, three stages, props, a manual, a code to access the web site for case studies and on-line help, and details of an e-mail forum for interaction with other players or practitioners.

The Play of Life aims to:

➤ Turn complex, subjective issues and ideas into simple, clear, visual representations.
➤ Create a practical action plan.

A picture paints a thousand words.
:Objectively depict complex relationships.
• Identify how emotions and feelings affect each protagonist.
• Expand verbal (i.e., one-dimensional, linear) information into visual (or three-dimensional) information.
• Enables us to discover more about ourselves and those around us, and to make good choices about relationships.

The benefits of the method are that it is:
• Easy to apply
• Easy to reproduce
• Quickly understood
• Safe
• Immediately applicable
• It never fails.  

The Play of Life technique follows three steps or stages which provide structure to the process, allowing the player to make the play more organised, effective and fun. These steps are:
• Warm-up (preparation)
• Demonstration
• Wrapping-up.

**Warm-up**
Warm-up is the time when the individual player, client or group/team prepares for this play. This is an important time that allows the players and the coach to settle the issues in their mind and prepare themselves for a process of discovery. This also helps players to put other worries and problems behind so they can clearly focus on a specific issue. This is time to find a common focus, to be united towards a common goal and to utilise this method effectively to achieve the best possible result.

**Demonstration**
Here the issues are explored pictorially using the Play of Life method. This is where the technique will show its major potential.

**Wrapping-up**
After the demonstration the players have the opportunity to ‘sit’ with what they have explored. This is the time to find how they could transfer what happened on the board into practical strategies for action to effect the desired change. Participants are invited to share their experiences and comment on
the impact that those experiences had on them. This is also the opportunity to find other topics to explore another time, either alone or as a group.

Using the kit— the coach and Rolf

Coach: What we have here is a technology called the Play of Life (warm-up stage). This board is called a stage. What I want you to do is use the figures to represent the members of your team at TML, your superiors in the United States and your family. Can you show me symbolically, by placing the figures on the stage in relationship to one another, what those relationships are? You can also use these other props to depict certain emotions or different types of relationships.

The coach asks Rolf to first start choosing a figure to represent himself and to place it on the stage in a way (position) that could symbolically represent how he feels in the company. Rolf later picked up a figure for each member of the team, indicating whom it represents, and placing it carefully on the stage. Then he placed some props around the figures. When he had finished, he sat back and looked at the stage for a few moments before looking across at the coach.

The technique utilised by Rolf is Symbolic Image technique. The protagonist is the script writer, producer, director, principal actor, plays every role and later becomes a spectator of their own life creation.

The coach carefully observed what Rolf had represented on the stage (see Figure 2.1). Rolf (1.1) had placed himself on the side of the stage, bending over. On the back of the figure, he’d used props to indicate that he was feeling
pressured by headquarters in the US. He had placed the figure representing Lynnette (1.2), his personal assistant, behind him, indicating that she was having to juggle all the problems and issues bombarding Rolf. The other directors were facing in different directions, indicating the lack of a common goal. Like Rolf, they were on the edge of the stage. The figure representing Henry (1.4), the director of operations, was likewise bent over. Tim (1.3), the finance director, was standing up but facing towards the corner, surrounded by his team. Michelle (1.5), the sales and marketing director, was standing up with her hands full of props to indicate urgency and pressure. Rolf had depicted his family (1.6) on the other side of the stage, facing away from him. This indicated that he was feeling disconnected from his family. They had developed interests in which he was not included.

After studying the figures for a while, the coach asked Rolf, ‘What do you see in this picture? If you didn’t know what was happening in this representation and happened just to walk into the room and see it, what would you say it represents?’

Rolf: I see fragmentation, weight, people moving out and one person on an island. No one is relating to anyone.

Coach: If it were a film or a novel, what title would you give it?

Rolf: [Thinks for a moment] ‘Survival, waiting to collapse.’

Naming or giving a title to the representation, and later to roles, provides different levels of symbolism and a metaphor for better insight and memory imprint. The power of symbolism and imagination (story telling, icons, oral or verbal transmitted traditions) is recognised by anthropology as one of the most powerful historical and familiar teachings.

Rolf was shocked by his answer. Although he had ‘known’ there were problems in the relationships at work and with his family, by depicting them on the Play of Life stage, he was able to ‘see’ them clearly for the first time.

The aesthetic power of the Play of Life is in its visual and tri-dimensional character, which creates an internal emotive identification with the image, helping the mind to integrate rational mental information with emotional responses, facilitating insight.

Rolf looked at the coach and asked simply, ‘Is it too late?’

Coach: It’s never too late. There is always something we can do in life. We first need to identify what the problems or issues are in terms of the relationship dynamics. We then need to clarify what your goals and objectives are, and then take steps that will help you to achieve them.

Rolf: Won’t it take a long time to turn this situation around? I know headquarters is very concerned and they are counting each hour.

Coach: It won’t take long to make some changes that will show you are moving
in the right direction and show the headquarters you’re in control of the situation. [Looking at the figures] How long would you say you, your team and your family have been relating like this?

**Rolf:** It started four years ago when we bought the mill in South Australia. This placed an enormous extra pressure on our operations that took all our resources. The manager of the mill wasn’t happy with the takeover. He later resigned with a good package, but we haven’t really functioned well since then and it seems to be getting worse. I can see now that Henry can’t cope; actually I think he was in this helpless position from the beginning.

**Coach:** Rolf, look at this picture that you’ve created, called ‘Survival, waiting to collapse’. When you created it, you did so from a subjective point of view. Now try to distance yourself and look at it objectively as a spectator. What do you see in each person? How do you think each person might feel in the position you’ve put them in?

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**One of the powers of the image technique is to allow the protagonist to detach themselves from the situation, take the role of spectator, to make objective insights.**

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**Rolf:** I see myself cornered, bent over, facing towards Lynnette and carrying a heavy load.

**Coach:** Now I want you to stand up and adopt that bent-over position. What can you see? [The coach also leaves his chair and stands up.]

**Rolf:** [Standing and bending over] Just my feet!

**Coach:** Standing in this position what else do you feel?

**Rolf:** I can’t breathe well, I feel dizzy and it’s like a position to vomit or be molested. I feel so exposed!

**Coach:** Looking at the figures, what could you use from this room to represent the weight in your back?

[Rolf chooses a big cushion; the coach places it on his back and asks Rolf if this represents the weight he symbolically feels. As he says ‘no’, the coach places some pressure with one hand on the cushion asking Rolf to say ‘That’s it!’ when the pressure fits with how he feels about HQ, the coach is surprised by the amount of weight as he must use his two hands to represent it.]

The technique the coach utilised here is called ‘dramatisation’. It is a Psychodrama method or expressive technique. In this technique the protagonist is invited to physically represent feelings, emotional dynamics and
relationships. The person not only talks about them and sees them on the Play of Life board but is also able to physically feel them.

**Coach:** Thank you Rolf, come back please to look at the small stage. What about the other people? What do you see there?

**Rolf:** I used a figure of a young girl to represent Lynnette. I don’t mean literally that I see her as a little girl, but that I can see she is overwhelmed by the problems she has to deal with. Tim looks OK standing up, but he can’t see anyone else but his team. No one can see anyone else here! Michelle is also standing up, but her hands are full of problems. She’s working too hard. I’m concerned about her and don’t want to lose her. Henry is bent over like me; he’s really on the edge. He’s a good man but collapsing in his roles and responsibilities. I don’t know how to help him. If he continues like that, he’ll crack. Now that I think like that I just realised that there are two Henrys. Henry 1 is the one that I just described but Henry 2 is a supportive and encouraging guy, loyal to me as a person. I can see now that I often want to talk straight to him about his performance and the problems in his department as well as about James, his right hand, but I haven’t been clear to him as he is a good man and I respect him. It would be devastating for him to know what I think of him as a leader. He and James are always together but they are inefficient.

The coach asks Rolf to choose another figure to represent the supportive and good Henry. Rolf places a figure sitting down beside him.

**Rolf:** And my family—what can I say? They’re so far away. It makes me sad looking at this picture. This isn’t the team or the family I always dreamt of having. I have a good team and a good family. I don’t want to lose them.

**Coach:** We must also acknowledge that people are often very nice and good for certain roles in life but not for others. In a change process we may need to differentiate who can be a good friend but may not be an efficient manager, or someone who can be a productive achiever at work but whom you may never wish to socialise with outside work. Having both, a mate and a business partner or associate, is a luxury not many people experience. In this process practical and wise changes may need to happen. If not, the ones you would like to keep as they are valuable will leave the company, and those you would not like as associates are the ones who would likely stay. [The coach has the impression, without yet meeting Henry, that important changes may need to happen there, something that may be very difficult for Rolf.]
Uncovering reality

Soliloquy

The coach used this opportunity to explain to Rolf another Play of Life technique, called soliloquy.\(^8\)

Soliloquy is a moment of insight. It consists of asking the person to voice, either aloud or to themselves, how they are feeling at any particular moment. It provides a quick way of detaching from a relationship or situation and assessing how it is progressing. T. Szasz uses the term ‘autologue’ referring to a self-conversation.\(^9\)

The coach explained to Rolf that an example of soliloquy would be detaching oneself mentally from a confusing exchange with another person and saying to oneself, ‘I don’t understand what this person is saying’. Or, ‘I’m feeling really angry with this person’. Or, ‘Does my wife really understand what am I saying?’. He then asked Rolf to soliloquise about the position he was now in, in regard to problems at work and with his family.

**Rolf:** Being in that position I feel very down, very depressed, with no strength to carry on. The load is too heavy. That’s not like me! I’m a very active person, but I’ve been so overwhelmed with work and tension that I haven’t been able to finish anything. I haven’t been able to finalise reports for the US on time. I procrastinate about doing things that make me nervous, and that just adds to the pressure. I feel very snowed-under. I feel anxious and tense. My wife keeps telling me to calm down, but I can’t. She even believes I’m drinking more than usual, but I don’t believe so. What I do know is that I took up smoking again, something I hate doing especially as an example for my kids. I used to be able to juggle a lot of things at once—I’m normally good at multi-tasking—but lately I’ve been losing my train of thought. I’m responding mechanically to people and situations. I feel like I’m on automatic pilot, like a robot. Look at me! I’m tall and strong, and yet I feel so small and weak! I want to succeed, but I’m afraid that it’s too late.

**Coach:** Rolf, I’m very touched by your openness.

**Rolf:** Well it’s now or never!

People are waiting for the opportunity, for spaces to ‘confess’ how they feel, to open up and to seek truth.
Role naming

Coach: Rolf, I’d like you to choose a noun and an adjective that you think describe how you’ve represented yourself in the figure on the stage.

Rolf: I look like a mule.

Coach: And what adjective would you use to describe the mule?

Rolf: Defeated. Yes, I look like a defeated mule.

Coach: So, you see yourself as a defeated mule in a world of ‘survival, waiting to collapse’. Well, that really helps me to understand how you are feeling. And you’ve felt this way for about four years?

Rolf: Yes.

Coach: Have you ever felt this way before?

Rolf: No, just now at TML.

Coach: Rolf, detach yourself from TML for a moment and just focus on your position, bent over, in the corner and carrying a heavy load. Have you felt like that before in your life?

When we see ourselves in positions similar to Rolf’s, it usually relates to old feelings and ways of relating to circumstances and relationships in the past. This is what the coach is searching for. His idea is not to ‘band-aid’ the moment but to help Rolf to identify his patterns of behaviour and change them for good.

Rolf: I guess I’ve felt this way, on and off, my whole life.

Rolf’s response to this question indicated to the coach that Rolf’s present state of mind wasn’t just a response to the specific situation he was encountering at TML, but possibly a more generalised, characteristic way he had of responding to certain types of difficulties.

J.L. Moreno describes the essence of role reversal in the poem *A Meeting Of Two*:

Eye to eye, face to face
And then when you are near
I will tear your eye out and put it in the place of mine
And you will tear my eye out and put it in the place of yours
Then I will look at you with your eye and my eye
And you will look at me with my eye and your eye

*Adapted from J.L. Moreno*
Role reversal

The coach then explained to Rolf that he wanted him to do a role reversal exercise. Role reversal, he said, was a process of putting yourself in someone else’s shoes in order to see a situation from their point of view. ‘Just as importantly,’ he said to Rolf, ‘it can help you to see yourself as someone else sees you.’

He explained that role reversal is a practical technique that Rolf could use at any time in relating to others. ‘For example, if Michelle was explaining a sales and marketing matter to you, you could detach yourself for a few moments and try to see the exchange from her point of view. Becoming her you may think, “Do I feel understood by Rolf? Do I feel overwhelmed by his questions?” Or when you go home in the evening, you could put yourself in Inge’s shoes and take her view: “Is Rolf really here, or is his mind still back at the office?” If you can learn to become aware of other people’s points of view, it will really improve your ability to relate to them,’ the coach explained.

The coach then asked Rolf to choose one of the other characters on the stage and to place himself in that person’s shoes. ‘Soliloquise about how you feel as that person, and about how you relate to Rolf and the others,’ he said.

Rolf: I’ll start with Michelle. From where she is on the stage, she can’t see me. Oh, sorry! I mean I can’t see Rolf. As Henry 1, I feel like Rolf does, bent over. I can’t see Rolf, or anyone else and life is heavy. As Henry 2, I feel close to and supportive of Rolf, but there’s not much I can do. As Tim, I feel more stable, more in control. I can see ahead, but I can’t see anyone else apart from members of my team. As my family, I feel tired and isolated. I’m looking away from Rolf. I can’t see anyone else. [Rolf reverts to his own role.] This is pathetic. Is this what’s really happening?

Coach: When we lose emotional or mental contact with others, we can’t really ‘see’ them, even though we might be physically present. That can make us feel very confused, because although we’re spending time with people, we’re not really ‘present’; we’re not really communicating with them.

The Play of Life is a very revealing exposure of reality that sometimes may shock us.

Rolf: When I look at the figures on that stage, it looks such a mess! Could we change this?

Coach: Yes, of course. This is the time when you are ‘seeing’ what is happening, this is a solid platform to be able to make some changes. Everyone
around you has made it clear that they can’t go on working or living the way they have, but they’re also looking to you, as the leader, to solve the problem in a creative and effective way. Despite how they might be feeling, they trust you. I’m here to support you in doing that, and together we can come up with a practical action plan to tackle this situation effectively. The trick is to look ahead!

Looking ahead

The coach explained to Rolf that it’s easy to feel impotent and ineffective if one forgets that life moves on. A situation doesn’t have to stay the same.

Wherever we are is not more than a preparation to the next step in life. It’s a warm-up to the next stage. The point is: would you take the same step you did before, consolidating this style of life, or would you change and take a new step that will open a new world?

He took another stage and new figurines from the Play of Life and placed them on the desk in front of Rolf. ‘I want you to use this new stage to indicate what you would like your life to be like in the future. What would be your ideal life? You told me that you and your wife talked about this early in your relationship. I imagine you’ve had similar talks with your team about the ideal business you would all like to work in. Forget, for a moment, this other stage and those figures. That’s the past. Look ahead. Visualise a successful life, at work and at home, where you have the sorts of company you dream of, the type of relationships you’ve always wanted.’

Rolf selected some new figurines to represent himself, the other team members and his family. When he had placed each figure carefully on the stage, he said proudly. ‘That’s what I want. That’s what I’ve always wanted.’

Figure 2.2: Play of life—Rolf’s ideal
Coach: What do you see now?
Rolf: I see life, space, room to grow.
Coach: What do you mean?
Rolf: Well, look at me! I’m standing up, looking ahead (2.1). I can see the whole stage, my whole life.
Coach: Describe what you see.
Rolf: As I said, I’m looking up and towards the future. I feel in control. Lynnette (2.2) is in front of me as an interface with the other directors (2.3, 2.4, 2.5), who are very focused and clear about their plans and objectives. We’re a team! Even though we can’t see each other physically, we have easy access to each other. From where I am, I can get to my team very quickly. I can also see my wife and children (2.6). I can look at them just with a small move. They’re standing up. They can connect with me easily, personally at home and by phone when I’m at work. We’re talking and communicating more easily. What’s important for me about this picture is the space between my work and my home life—that space (2.7) there between my team members and my family.
Coach: What do you mean?
Rolf: It’s space for myself. I’d like to be able to do more hands-on things. At the moment, I’m so overwhelmed that I can’t find time for anything. We have a wonderful workshop in one of the factories where I could spend some time designing things. They’re a good bunch of people there. It would be fun. I could take my son with me. That was one of my dreams—playing around with mechanical things with my son. I always wanted to do that with my dad, but he never had the time. My daughter is always asking me to go to the city with her for tea and I can never make it. It’s space to develop business plans, projects and better business alliances. It’s a space to enjoy life.
Coach: Well, you’ve created this space.
Rolf: Yes, but life’s so busy now that . . .
Coach: Rolf, forget about now. Come back to the picture. That’s what ‘now’ will be like in the future. Keep thinking about that. What else do you see?
The Play of Life works on the concept of the ‘here and now’, therefore this experience in the future is lived as present. This creates a better ownership of the experience, is more an ‘I am’ than ‘I will be’.
Rolf: I really want to have that space. I don’t think I’ve ever had space just for me. Inge used to say that to me. ‘Rolf, take it easy. You need some space in your life that’s just for you.’ She hasn’t said that to me in a long time. Just looking at this picture makes me feel that I can breathe easier.
**Coach:** Well, you literally can. Look where you are in the other picture! What else can you see?

**Rolf:** I don’t feel so pressured by headquarters in the US. They’re in the corner as a support, not as a weight hanging over me. They’re good people, you know!

**Coach:** Could you move off your chair again and physically stand up, placing yourself in a situation similar to your position in the figure? What insights do you have about the position you’re in? Give me a soliloquy.

**Rolf:** I love it! It’s fresh and light, and I can see, I feel big, my shoulders are high [stretching his arms]—I can fly!

**Coach:** You look happy there. Come back, and sit down. Choose one person and do a role reversal. Be that person in the future and tell me what you see, what you feel.

**Rolf:** I’ll take Henry’s position. I feel confident. I know where I’m going.

**Coach:** What about your relationship with Rolf?

**Rolf:** I can’t see Rolf physically, but I can feel his presence very clearly.

**Coach:** Talk to Rolf and tell him how you feel.

**Rolf:** Rolf, I feel well. I know where I am and where I’m going, where we’re going as a team. I can feel your support and the support of the team.

**Coach:** Now, become Rolf again. What do you feel, and what would you say to Henry?

**Rolf:** I feel that I’ve accomplished what we needed to accomplish. I’d say to Henry, ‘Henry, we’re a team and we’ll make it!’ Actually, I’m talking to Henry 2, I’m expressing what my heart feels for him, but when I think about it I believe something different.

**Coach:** Say it to Henry 1.

**Rolf:** Henry, I really believe this is too much for you. Your skills are more in design and research but I see you’ve been finding this very difficult. You’re a good person but you’re not a leader, you couldn’t even be in James’s position. I feel awful! I hate this!

**Coach:** Don’t worry too much about it now, but you must know that change includes making choices, and some choices are not easy to make. Remember when you described yourself in the earlier picture as a ‘defeated mule’? How would you describe yourself now?

**Rolf:** I see myself now as an ‘insightful guide’.

**Coach:** Looking at the picture as a whole, what title would you give it?

**Rolf:** ‘Life and possible encounters.’

The coach moved the two boards in front of Rolf, so that they were side by side. He summarised the differences between the two: Rolf the ‘defeated
mule’ in ‘surviving, ready to collapse’, had become Rolf the ‘insightful guide’ in a world of ‘life and possible encounters’. ‘What do you think?’ he asked.

Rolf: I like it. I can’t believe I created something so revealing.

Coach: Moving from the first board to the second board, what would be the first action needed to turn one into the other?

Rolf: Simple—the pressure must go off my back.

Coach: Please do it.

[Rolf makes the weight disappear like magic.]

Coach: How do you feel now?

Rolf: Much better.

Coach: How long have you been feeling that pressure?

Rolf: Since I started at TML.

Coach: Had you ever felt that sort of pressure before?

Rolf: Yes, any time I couldn’t perform what was expected of me by people.

Coach: Anyone?

Rolf: Not everyone. But a lot of people. People who had some power over me.

Coach: Such as?

Rolf: The CEO in the US is one. But generally when everything depends on me. I have a high level of responsibility.

Coach: So, tell me again how long you’ve been waiting for this weight to be removed from you?

Rolf: All my life.

Coach: You’ve waited a long time. Do you think it will happen now?

Rolf: What do you mean? Do you mean it’s too late?

Coach: No. What I mean is that you may be waiting for the impossible. You’ve been waiting for it to be removed from you. That’s a passive response. What action can you take to make your ideal life happen?

Rolf: I must stand up.

Coach: OK. Do it—use the figure.

As Rolf straightened the figure on the first stage, the weight on its back fell off. The coach told him to replace the weight and do it again a number of times. (This action was to reinforce in Rolf the need for standing up and not waiting for something magic to happen to take the weight off.)

Rolf: It’s pretty obvious, isn’t it? I just have to stand up. I just realised that I’ve been more preoccupied by the weight, rather than thinking of myself. But what if I can’t?

Coach: If you can’t, you can’t. But I don’t see any reason why you wouldn’t be able to do it. Let’s focus for now on the positive picture of the future,
which shows that you can. [The coach notes that Rolf needs regular affirmation, this is a sign of his doubts about himself and his loneliness.]

**When people have a clear picture of where they want to be, it’s my experience that they can find a way to get there. They create a path that leads them to their goal.**

**Coach:** Coming back to the two pictures, when you wake up each morning, how do you see yourself? As this figure in the present, or that one?

**Rolf:** This one. The defeated mule.

**Coach:** When you encounter difficulties, how do you see yourself?

**Rolf:** The same.

**Coach:** When you go home?

**Rolf:** Same.

**Coach:** The way we relate to others depends on where we’re coming from, what platform we are using to stand on. In front of you there are two different scenarios, or platforms. They both belong to you. You created them. It’s up to you to choose which one you’ll stand on. The outcome will depend on your choice, no one else’s.

**Homework for Rolf**

**Coach:** I’m going to give you some homework. I’ll take digital photos of these two stages and I’ll e-mail them to you. I suggest you use the one showing you and the others in the future as a screensaver on your computer. You’re the only person who’ll know what it means. You may choose to share the photo with your wife if you want. This photo can be a permanent reminder of your creativity and of the sort of life you want to have.

Last thing at night, and first thing each morning, I invite you to look at the picture carefully for a few moments. Don’t go to sleep until the picture is clear in your mind. Then, during the day, whenever you’re relating to anyone—either face-to-face, or over the phone, or when you’re writing a report for your people in the US—I want you to try to be aware of which platform you’re operating from. You don’t have to do anything except just try to be aware of it.

Once again, the aim of this direction is to stimulate Rolf’s awareness and senses as much as possible to imprint positive images on his mind.
Rolf: OK, I can see the point of that. But what about addressing the issues here at work? When do we start on that?

Rolf’s questions show his anxiety and reveals that he can’t stay in the present; his fearful expectations for the future rule his life. He’s unable yet to stay still and place his feet firmly on the ground in order to make a wise and appropriate strategic move. This is the way he has been working and living for a long time. He doesn’t know where he is. His anxiety doesn’t allow him to ‘stay still’ and act appropriately. It’s not that he doesn’t want to stop, he can’t. He may only be able to do it by a strong choice or by collapse. Being still for him is a waste of time and he also fears that people may see him as inactive and passive.

How can he go somewhere if he’s nowhere? If I’m lost in a city, I may have a map that shows me where I would like to go, but I must also know where I am to be able to find the route. This is often difficult and it takes time. Rolf doesn’t know where he is; let alone where he’s going. In psychiatric terms, this behaviour is called neurosis, a mild disorder typified by anxiety that may include other related psychological symptoms including depression and over-excitement (bi-polar disorder), conversion of psychological symptoms into physical symptoms (hypochondria) and obsessions (circular thinking) and addictions. No, Rolf doesn’t need tranquillisers! He just needs to learn how to live better.

Coach: What do you think you’ve got from what we’ve done today?

Rolf: I can see the company and myself more clearly. I can see where I’d like to be. And I know I have to stand up and take action myself.

Coach: Good. Your objective has become my objective. We’ll make it.

Rolf: I’m concerned about my relationship with headquarters in the US. That’s a priority at the moment.

Coach: I understand. Now that I have a better picture of the situation I’ll be able to help you find an effective and convincing way of relating to them. We’ve accomplished a lot today. I’d like to see you again in two days’ time, when we’ll focus on your dynamic with the US. We can develop a way of giving them a clear message that you’re in control.

Rolf: I’d like that. We’ve spent two hours today. How long will we need next time?

Coach: About the same.

Rolf: I’m a bit concerned about spending too much time away from all the urgent work that’s piling up.

Coach: I understand that you’re feeling pressured, but the work we do will help to change that. Could you ask Lynnette to come in while we discuss our next appointment, as I also need some information from her? [Rolf asks Lynnette to come into the room.]
Lynnette, I need your help. I need to see Rolf the day after tomorrow for approximately two hours late in the day. I’d also like him to be free for half an hour beforehand so that he can spend some time reviewing what we’ve talked about today. And then I’d like him to have another half-hour free after our meeting. Just some time out for personal space before he leaves work.

Rolf is what Covey, Merrill & Merrill call ‘Urgency by default’—the coach is helping Rolf to move to ‘Urgency by choice’. Covey, Merrill & Merrill found, after surveying thousands of people, that six key actions would help them to achieve their objectives:

- Improving communication with people
- Better preparation
- Better planning and organising
- Taking better care of self
- Seizing new opportunities
- Personal development.

Rolf: It might be difficult to find the time for all this. We’re all very busy at the moment.

Coach: Rolf, what platform are you coming from?

Lynnette: Excuse me?


By the end of their first appointment, Rolf had learned that it was his choice as to which platform he communicated from, and that the coach’s role was to stimulate his awareness of where he was coming from when relating with the people around him.

More than ‘wishful thinking’

When the coach says to Rolf ‘we’ll make it’, it is a confident statement that is very important at this crucial moment. It is not just a ‘wishful thinking’ slogan. He really trusts:

- The process that Rolf has started and has committed to continue.
- Rolf’s determination—that ‘if’ he continues facing the issues ahead he will succeed.
- Nature, the force of creativity innately within us. That ‘if’ this force is stimulated the result will ultimately be growth.
- The outcome. Even though the outcome may be different to what Rolf wishes, the coach is certain that at the end of the process Rolf will be a better person.
- Himself. In his relaxed field he is able to see wider than Rolf.
The coach focuses on the outcome desired but also places emphasis on the process. Outcome-focus-only projects would not result in any learning if the outcome were not achieved.

- Rolf’s team. The beliefs that people want and desire to succeed and to put in the best they have to conquer the world. Even though some of them may be tired and negative and may not push in the same direction at a given moment, Rolf can replan, reshape and re-strategise action plans. If things continue to stand still Rolf will probably never know what to do. Action, movement and appropriate ‘stops’ will ultimately show the way to follow. The coach is also aware that some changes may be needed to deal with Henry’s situation.

- Rolf’s wife and family. From the little information the coach has, he can predict that everyone around Rolf is supportive and waiting (at least for the moment) for a successful outcome.

- The system or methodology he uses. This is like a surgeon who can’t ever know the real outcome of a delicate operation but trusts his method, mastery of the surgical technique and use of the surgical knife. In this case the coach trusts the Strategic Relationship Management model and the Play of Life technique.

In these specific circumstances the coach, with the information he has, could predict a successful, though not easy, outcome. However he also has an alternative action plan if things go differently. He also knows that:

- Rolf could be more (emotionally and physically) damaged than he appears.
- He may be not flexible enough to change.
- His team may ‘want’ to change but may find the process threatening and resist it.
- Even though they may succeed, Rolf or key people may collapse after a successful outcome.
- There may be a negative response from the US.
- There may be sudden change in the business arena.
- It may be too late for Inge.

After great expectation and effort are directed towards a much-desired outcome, the brain may collapse when the outcome is achieved. The reason is that the adrenaline level suddenly drops and the whole body crumples. A nervous breakdown or physical dysfunction may occur.
Expanding on the Play of Life

As we have seen, the Play of Life helps people to name and reflect on what is happening both inside (mentally–emotionally) and outside (objectively looking at the dynamics of relationships from outside) themselves. Furthermore, the Play of Life:

- Assists people to express simply how they see themselves in relation to other people and things (work, pressure, conflicts).
- Helps people to see clearly their present situation and allows them to work at ways to improve or, if necessary, to move to a better situation.
- Allows people to record via photographs and video what they have presented, thus recording their ‘ideal’ life picture.
- Helps a consultant to share creative processes with the client.

The Play of Life has been developed to provide a life skills tool for self-help, one-to-one coaching or counselling, group dynamics, and corporate teams and families. The method enhances previous professional knowledge, and provides practical tools for non-professionals who would like to enhance communication and life direction.

Your ability to master these techniques effectively will depend on different factors:

- Willingness to explore or face issues in life.
- Desire for and openness to change.
- The practitioner’s experience in utilising the Play of Life in their own personal and professional issues.
- Your personal values about life.
- Ability to integrate previous professional and life experience into the Play of Life method.

The professional application of the method does not just depend on intuition. Professional training and experience is needed to obtain the maximum outcome from this method. In professional use, as for any set of tools, the practitioner should have a basic knowledge and understanding of when to use this method, which techniques to apply and how to intervene (including the rationale for interventions). The Play of Life Accreditation Program provides professional training on how to apply the method in basic situations. Further training and supervision can be obtained through personal coaching, Internet case studies and interaction with practitioners around the world in the e-forum www.playoflife.com/forum.

Further experience could be achieved through the Play of Life core-essentials free course via www.playoflife.com/courses.
To recap

This chapter has shown the use of the Play of Life technique as a practical and efficient way of looking at the basic questions people have been struggling with since the beginnings of time: Who am I? Where am I going? Where did I come from? Rolf has been able to ‘see’ clearly his basic relational world. This has been a time of empowerment, as he can now do something about it. This clarity came from the Play of Life, as a technique integrated with the Strategic Relationship Management Model. These techniques gave him a picture of his relationships, upon which to base a practical action plan.

TML has a high level of intellectual capital as well as a history that has given them an emotional bond but has not made them efficient and productive. Rolf and his other directors, through this process, now have a solid base from which to look forward to further change.

They know that their professional or technical capital will not create effective change, but what they can create between and among themselves will make a difference. This is their ‘relationship capital’—a capital that cannot be accounted for on a balance sheet, nor framed in a certificate or diploma, but which is captured in the mind and spirit of each person.

The Play of Life is a practical technique you can learn. It can help you to look at your present reality from an objective, aesthetic and visual viewpoint. This allows you to be the scriptwriter, director, producer and lead actor, to play other roles and to be a spectator. From this more detached place you can assess how you are at present—your present relational dynamic—and then create an ideal situation, projecting yourself into the future. Insight will come and will help you to identify the ‘first step’ towards achieving your goal. Firstly, look at yourself and what you must do, and secondly at what others must do. As a leader, you can create ways of making this happen. Don’t forget to ask people around you how they see you too!

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4 ‘Never fails’ means that the power of the Play of Life and Strategic Relationship Management reveals interpersonal dynamics, and it shows the perceived reality existing between them. It doesn’t work as a good/bad or right/wrong dichotomy, but rather focuses on interpersonal fit. Every person can use the Play of Life. If somebody cannot depict a feeling or interpersonal dynamic it is because it is not yet clear in their mind. The Play of Life highlights this and helps the person to clarify their thoughts.
5 Raimundo, C.A. 1994 *Contemporary Psychodrama Techniques*, Active Learning Centre, Sydney, Australia

7 See psychodrama at www.playoflife.com/resources.

8 Raimundo, op. cit.


10 Moreno, op. cit.

11 Raimundo, op. cit.

One of the things most difficult to change will be the culture that has been ‘institutionalised’ at TML. People at TML have been working and living in an ineffective, tense and unproductive work environment for more than four years. Rolf has been working and living as a ‘defeated mule’ in a world of ‘Survival, waiting to collapse’ for a long time; long enough to confuse what is common with what is normal. Rolf finds himself caught in a vicious circle of behaviour he hasn’t been able to change. TML suffers a repetitive pattern of problems that looks like a well-choreographed dance. Rolf knows that this style of life is damaging, even killing, him and his organisation.

New employees have accepted this as the style of the company—even though they are not happy with it, they see it as common practice. ‘This is TML!’ they say, ‘Take it or leave it’. But Rolf and the key executives do not have the same attitude. They say, ‘This is not normal, this is something we have created and we need to change it—if not, we are lost.’ For example, Rolf has created a relational dynamic with Henry that has to change, and this, among other issues, may be extremely hard.

Necessary change is often delayed, as it looks too big to handle. Some people make change happen in areas where it is not really necessary, which gives a false sense of innovation and of management being up to contemporary demands, while the real issues are left unchanged. In the same way, families in dysfunctional relationships often plan a house renovation or buy a new house to make some change, and while the focus is on these projects things look better. However the issues reappear afterwards when there is no other ‘thing’ to bond the family or the relationship.

Other people just change for the sake of change, which may indeed halt
further change. Objective and concrete practices can be easily changed on paper, in organisational charts and new quality system manuals—subjective and emotive behaviours and customs are more difficult to change.

When change is needed, it will happen as a matter of choice or as a matter of urgency.

Working in a tense environment

There are companies, or I should say managers, that create permanent situations of tension to manage their companies or departments. They are often financially successful, well-remunerated associates, usually in highly sales-focused companies. They create extreme levels of tension, conflict, mistrust, internal competition and mis-communication, which make people so ultra-focused on a task (say sales) that nothing else counts. Those who work well in such environments are not aware (or if they are, they may not really care) that that is not how others prefer to work. They impose their style on everybody.

This occurs when power, work or money is a person’s only source of identity, or their way of feeling successful. They may have always lived without rest in their minds. They have to ‘prove’ everything to ‘somebody’. Work and ‘financial success’ are the only things they have, as many of them may have already sadly lost their family and life. For many people this is an opportunity to have revenge on life. They feel they’ve never had anything—‘this is my turn’—and the achievements offered by work are the best things they can strive for, although this is not what they need or really want in their hearts.

Richard worked from the age of seven until 28 in his father’s business. They never had enough money, and he worked from dawn to dusk with the promise, his father’s dream, that ‘this business will be good’ and we’ll buy this or that. A life full of promises and dreams. He felt shamed by his friends at school; he had hand-made clothes, never had any toys and always had to work. His younger brother had a fight with his father and left. Five years later, he called Richard and said, ‘I’m in Adelaide, I have started a successful importing business—come join me.’ Richard, despite the guilt of betraying his father, went to Adelaide.
The problem is for those who, attracted usually by good salaries, recognition or promises of success, try to cope with those environments and don’t succeed. When they realise this it is often too late.

Insecure people or those with low self-esteem often become efficient and extremely productive managers. Their whole ‘identity’ is based on their work success and they develop controlling and abusive behaviours without giving anyone the chance to challenge them. People who work under great pressure and demand are often very kind to those at work but turn nasty to those emotionally close to them, especially their family, who find it very difficult to confront them.

Even if confronted with their behaviour, they are unable to see it as they will often project their faults onto others or will make the family who confront them seem ungrateful, so they are unable to learn. We must have compassion for those around such people; they often find such behaviour very difficult to challenge, and cannot detach or leave as they feel they’re abandoning the ‘hard worker’.

### Ready for change?

Rolf is aware that TML has lost the vision for TML Australia. The preoccupation with ‘today’ (the urgent) has eradicated the vision for ‘tomorrow’ (the important). TML Australia has been following without owning the objectives imposed by headquarters; they’ve been unable to adapt them to the local reality. They feel so behind in responding to the demands of the present that there is no rest and no strategic plan for business in the future. Resources have been misused and people are stressed, burnt out and losing hope, and the company is quickly losing market share. Quality assurance policies and manuals are useful to satisfy government demands but ineffective and impractical for managers and employees. Every move and tactic to deal with present demands is very slow, and time- and energy-consuming. The families of directors, management and employees deeply dislike TML, resulting in increased absenteeism and lower morale. And there is a ‘defeated mule’ as a director.

Now six years later he’s a wealthy man. A Porsche and a Maserati speak of his new financial situation. It is his wife Jenny who is unhappy now, because Richard can only think of his next acquisition. Everything has to be the best. Jenny’s new Alfa Romeo, the beachfront house and limitless credit cards cannot fulfil her need to just talk with him. His needs for ‘successful’ business and to prove to himself (‘I can have it’) are bigger than her voice and presence. Richard is not ready for change. This permanent lack of fulfilment drives Richard and makes everyone in the company responsible for providing for him.
This is where TML is at present. This is not a situation created by fast global changes or take-overs or by facing an aggressive competitor. It has been building up for years and now this reality or culture has been institutionalised.

**Wanting to change is not enough**

TML’s management have tried several ways to change this reality. A human resource manager was recruited three years ago, but she resigned a few months before the coach was hired. She incorporated personality profiles, teamwork workshops and new concepts in leadership, training and management without being able to create change. She contracted expensive management training from reputable companies to develop a vision and a mission statement. She introduced the idea of a new reward system. None of these ideas prevailed—soon after the changes were incorporated the old and ‘well-known’ culture returned. She felt frustrated and not supported or understood by management and she resigned. Why didn’t it work? What happened?

In the assessment the coach found that:

- The corporate culture was more institutionalised than the directors and human resource management believed.
- Poor communication and performance were caused by more than ‘personality’ differences (taken from the personality profiles).
- Job descriptions and KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) were written in QA (Quality Assurance) terminology and managers and employees did not understand them.
- The management development training was approved following excellent brochure descriptions and sales presentations, consisting of impressive and well-designed PowerPoint presentations and manuals, but didn’t provide the practical tools for change.
- Assessments of problems between departments and recommendations for dealing with them, were based only on ‘personality profiles’ without including creative interpersonal assessments and dynamics.
- The human resource manager was rigid and unable to understand the men in the company, and she competed for approval with Michelle, the sales and marketing director.

The human resource manager, directors and senior managers had the right intention and contemporary human resources ideas, and assigned a substantial budget and tools to make the change happen—but it was unsuccessful.

**Time for change**

Why did Rolf wait so long to make a change?
The corporate culture he was living in, even though he didn’t like it, was not restrictive enough to awaken his determination to do something about it. He was not aware that he was dying within himself and the same was happening to his relationships and the company.

The time to activate change, to live differently, depends on every individual but there are common features in the delay:

- Lack of need (I can still see—barely).
- Lack of power (the ‘I should’ is greater than the ‘I will’).
- Not the right time. The person or group may have the opportunity—attending the best inspirational seminar, having the most insightful feedback from a coach or corporate consultant, or having a personal revelation—but if this is not the right timing for that person, change will not occur.
- The situation is not restrictive enough. The triggers that motivate people to find better ways of living are limitation of freedom and the strain that restricts life. People do not look for change until their style of life becomes seriously unhealthy (restrictive). This feeling is subjective and depends on the awareness or sensibility of the individual or group. When this restriction comes (this is at a different level for everyone) some triggers for survival are stimulated and this is the ‘spontaneity’ needed for change. A smoker may choose to quit and never smoke again after feeling a little restrictiveness in breathing, while another person may not stop or even consider quitting even after a diagnosis of emphysema. The sooner the person has an insight, the sooner they can act to address the issues which affect their wellbeing. Rolf clearly saw the message at this point; other people may only look for help after two or more family breakdowns and business bankruptcies. Still others would have acted before Rolf did.
The recognition that ‘real change is needed’ is the spark to start the process; this is the warm-up. It will need a sustained and adequate level of ‘spontaneity’ (an adequate impulse) to continue with the process and creative action to change the corporate culture.

Rolf spent a long time talking with Inge, as well as reading books and magazines about true success, happiness and spiritual growth, and even though he had never truly experienced that ideal life, he had it clear in his mind. He believed that management could be more than just a set of obligations—there could be fun, joy and blessing in doing it.

Rolf had not had good experiences with religion but he remembered a bible teacher who told the story of creation in a pictorial way and made the children feel part of the beauty and balance of creation. She had said: ‘Everything you do in life can be done in a way that will be in tune with majesty; you can become a co-creator of the universe.’ Let’s remember also that when Rolf was invited to create an ideal style of life while using the Play of Life with the coach, he did it very quickly and talked about it with clarity. One of Rolf’s challenges is to assess if the people in his management team have in their minds a picture of an effective, productive and balanced model of working life. His way of hiring people so far has been to focus on their curriculum vitae and references, and not to spend much time on assessing their relationship skills.

The spark can be extinguished

This spark of awareness that change is needed can also be extinguished. This is seen in individuals as well as whole societies. Developing nations, where an abusive social and corporate culture is accepted as the only way of living, may have just a glimpse of a better life but then their ‘reality’ takes over.

In my work in Argentina, and elsewhere in South America, with people who have been culturally and financially oppressed for generations, I found that they ‘accept’ a culture of oppression without the spark of recognition that social change is needed. People do not know anything different; they have been abused and marginalised all their lives. ‘This is fate and this style is right for you’ is what insensitive, abusive and despotic (criminal) authorities would say. These people are not free—they suffer starvation and risk extermination but their awareness has been numbed by a long experience of oppression and misery. Progressive philosophical movements and true corporate citizens try to provide people with the education, knowledge and awareness that another way of living and working exists. They talk about dignity and human rights. Their intention is to provoke an awareness of a better life (warm-up) and to challenge the culture to push towards a new regime: a social revolution. There is strength in education. The sad part of the story is that
often those who educate the people may do so solely to satisfy their own hunger for power, later becoming the abusers and oppressors.

Another factor is that the instinct for survival can easily be squashed by ideology. Demagogic people throughout history have created ideologies and cults that manipulate the masses to achieve whatever they needed to succeed. We can see this in politics and religious cults. The same manipulative behaviour exists in companies too, where every employee in a company is asked to sacrifice their salary and time for the company, for ‘the cause’, while a few executives fill their pockets from the sacrifice of others. But people don’t react, as the process has been well planned and lobbying the right leaders among employees has created acceptance. Oppressive people are very clever in manipulating people.

Rolf and his wife knew they didn’t want that fate (losing the awareness that change is necessary) for themselves, their children and for everyone in the company. Rolf’s team were also aware of the risk of maintaining that corporate culture, that they would lose their dignity and may eventually collapse or just survive in what M. Seligman called ‘learned helplessness’.

**The power of the dis-empowered**

Environments of oppression and inequality do not generate space for confrontation, for people to have a voice in which to present their needs and opinions in an appropriate and constructive way. Those environments have one-sided assessment and appraisal systems without providing an opportunity for the employee to voice their needs and points of view. These appraisal systems are prepared to evaluate the performance of the employee but not the functioning of the manager. Even questions in employee surveys such as: ‘What changes would you like to make?’ are not clearly articulated and there is often no time for the employee to think or prepare an appropriate answer. Management later say: ‘We give everybody an opportunity to give an opinion’ but this is not really right.

Closed systems of communication arise because of two basic reasons.

First, managers are not aware of their communication systems, following old communication models. ‘I was treated this way, this must be the right way.’ People in management are not aware that their methods do not give people the opportunity of expression. They are not fit to really help people to perform at the best of their potential as well as enjoy job and life satisfaction. The intent is right but the practices do not contribute to communication and growth. Second, managers deliberately won’t listen. This may be because:

- They have been trained in a style of work which assumes that if you allow people to communicate, to say what they think, they will just complain and
create conflict. And who wants more conflict? Their motivation is to get on with the job and not give people opportunities to whinge. ‘Do the job first, and then we’ll talk.’ This has been the attitude of TML’s chairperson.

They just want to tell people what to do, not listen, as they are not interested in their opinions. ‘If you don’t like it, leave. People are disposable, just another commodity.’ I must say that those companies are often very profitable, if we accept that profit is only related to money, but this practice cannot be sustainable.

What I found in my practice is that people who use that style of management will also use the same style in their personal life.

Those managers who knowingly use systems of management that get the best out of people, burn them out and throw them away, are sociopaths, people who do not care about anyone else. They often have many people around who serve them as they create relationships of dependency, love and hate. When people want to leave they often feel they are betraying them—manipulators can turn the face of evil to that of an angel in a second, becoming very seductive.

Let people express

Biology teaches us that everything that comes into our body must go out; if not we’ll become sick and may die. The following metaphor is taken from physiology; it may sound rather grotesque, but it’s a reality for everyone. It’s the metabolism of digestion. Whatever we eat will be excreted. The ideal scenario is that the body will ingest a balanced diet; the nutrients will be absorbed by a healthy metabolism that will transform food into energy. What is not needed will come out through the digestive, urinary and respiratory system. The body is provided with effective mechanisms to control ‘when’ and ‘where’ to excrete those elements.

In a dysfunctional system, even though the right foods may be ingested, the body may not be able to control the ‘when’ and ‘where’ to excrete. It may occur in the wrong place and at the wrong time. The person may throw up or have diarrhoea.

Taking this metaphor to relationships we find that the same thing happens to interpersonal relationships. Whatever we experience will have to eventually come out—either appropriately or inappropriately. The appropriate way includes a ‘when’, a ‘how’ and a ‘what’ that will create satisfaction, providing a healthy outcome. Like the digestive system, if we don’t want people to ‘excrete’ what they think and feel in the wrong place and time, we must create the appropriate when, how and what.

The sad thing is that the person blamed is the one who has a dysfunctional
presentation of their inner contents, their thoughts and feelings. The reality is that it is the responsibility of management to create appropriate channels of communication and to receive and process what is presented by employees and to give appropriate feedback.

There is a misconception about sharing issues at work. There is often fear that people ‘may talk’, may say things. Yes they will, whether management likes it or not, appropriately or not, in the right place with doors closed or in the open in a disruptive way. Why not prevent that humiliation, suffering and discontent? Let’s create appropriate appraisal systems, educating management and staff to face each other with skill, clarity and a spirit of respect.

Questionnaires about communication in the workplace, analysing communication with the boss, assessment of key performance indicators (KPIs), clever use of newsletters and informal and formal networks are just few of the tools available to ‘know’ what people think and feel in the organisation. (A model of these tools can be found at www.playoflife.com)

TML’s success was based on the ability to make people part of the process and helping them to present their needs openly. During this process they were able to ‘see’ who was who, which is how they found out who was an asset in the company.

Trust is the essential component in this progressive approach to work practices. If you trust your people, ask them how they feel and what they think about your style of management and the whole organisation. If you don’t trust them, you have more reasons to ask them what they feel and think. What wonderful information you’ll have from dissatisfied people who will talk anyway about you and the company.

If you trust them, ask them what they think. If you don’t trust them, ask them what they feel!

The perception factor

One of the important issues in managing information, the right information, is to be knowledgeable about the perception people have of such things as the leadership, vision, mission and objectives of the organisation, and how changes are made.

Supervisors and line managers are key gateways of information. They are closer to the employees and have more opportunities to mingle with them. People share the most about the team, their beliefs, thoughts and feelings in informal networking. It is while having a drink or a cigarette that people relax
and share information about their families, projects and dreams. One of the best investments an organisation can make is to train supervisors, line managers and junior managers in communication skills, the dynamics of roles, and teamwork. Involving them in decision making and senior staff meetings, and asking them their opinions will bring to the executive a wealth of knowledge and information that would be difficult to obtain otherwise.

Supervisors and line managers who are well-informed about senior management’s objectives for the organisation, as well as about how the company is performing, will be able to motivate the workforce to be united, and to put in all they can to support the company. Employees will perceive their management as interested in them and will support the vision. People are fundamentally loyal—let’s use but not abuse that loyalty.

### Making change happen
There are four inter-related factors required to make change effective: identifying the corporate culture, warm-up, spontaneity and creativity.

#### Identifying the corporate culture
A corporate culture (CC) is a structured, institutionalised and socially accepted (by practice) relational tradition. The CC includes rituals, types of organisational culture and symbols, communication, cultural practices, politics and expectations. A specific culture is based on circumstantial social elements at a specific point of time. A culture that ‘fits’ at a certain time and among particular people may not be suitable for the next generation or even for the same people in different circumstances.

To create change we must know what we need to change and why: the real purpose of change. Is it just a change of the person who’s in control? Aimed at better conditions of life for all, or just for a few? What is the ultimate outcome? Is the investment—including people, effort and other resources, including money—worth it for the change expected? What is the probability of successful change?

Management must be able to identify, as descriptively as possible, the CC of the organisation. Leaving aside judgment, criticism and blame will allow them to detach from the ‘personal factor’ to look at the gap existing between objectives and performance. They must truly accept, first across the senior level of management and later at every level of the organisation, what part of a determined CC is not suitable—unproductive, inefficient and not life giving. This is not change for the sake of change. They must identify which style of living will ultimately be of life rather than death. If the culture you are in works, think twice before changing it!
We often see that even in prosperous organisations some small business units or departments start developing ineffective business practices, and change is needed in those units as their CC becomes ineffective: if this is not realised and modified in time it will expand to other departments, contaminating the whole organisation. This is what happened at TML: this was the culture which developed in the acquired mill and factory in the past four years which was not perceived in early stages by management, who misjudged the reality. It later started polluting other areas such as sales and marketing, resulting in complaints by customers were not given enough and prompt attention. It also affected the finance department and thus the whole company.

Corporate culture is not just a management concept; it includes every interpersonal relationship. As an example, look at the Ferrigno family.

The Ferrignos are an Italian family, second generation Australian. Every Sunday they have, as they have done for generations, a ‘united’ family Sunday lunch. They all want unity, ‘la famiglia unita’—shared values and a good time. They want their children, and their grandchildren, to enjoy the family together. Their aim is high: no one wants to change that objective. The reality is that every Sunday there is a big fight, the father will criticise one son or daughter, the other will defend them and a fight starts. The whole family rarely finishes dessert together. The aim is good; the reality is different. They have a relational CC that everybody hates but no one dares to challenge.

Where should the change of CC come from? Ideally from Don Ferrigno (CEO of the family), but what about his wife, older children or grandchildren? In a system where everybody has a voice, change could start from any level.

**Warm-up**

Once people have identified the CC that must be changed they enter a new stage. ‘Warm-up’ for change is the awareness that ‘something’ has to be modified, that things cannot continue in the same way. It includes talking about ‘the need for change’, jokes about the dynamics, and comments by the parties involved. This awareness of moving towards change and the start of the process, even though it may just be talking about it, is the warm-up itself.
Warm-up is the preparation for the next step: a preparation for change. It is looking at life as a permanent process of change: ‘Wherever I am at the moment, it’s no more than the preparation for the next step.’

Some people, for fear of change would rather die emotionally than grow and move forward, changing their CC. Those people will not enter into a warm-up or they may stay there for a short period of time without making progress into the next stage. At TML Henry and James are extremely unhappy with the pressures in the company but these pressures are not bad enough for them to move towards change. They are not uncomfortable enough. Their warm-up is low.

For the warm-up to be effective it must include other relationships; it’s a social reality that must include people across the social structure—teams, groups, organisations, families or countries.

The effectiveness of any revolution needs the vision, determination, creativity and power of the leader but if the ‘masses’ were not ready for action, it would not make an affective [sic] and sustainable change.

J.L. Moreno

New ideas previously presented at TML were well thought through and had academic backup. The ideas came from a well-motivated but fragmented senior management team, and were not owned by the people from lower levels of management. The warm up of management was high: the warm-up of the rest of the organisation was much lower and in some cases non-existent. They were not part of the process and the information shared was not clear to them. Some were not prepared to even consider change.

Different levels of warm-up create fragmented action and change is not achieved or is not sustainable.

Warm-up is preparation for change that involves sharing, talking, trying different actions, and playing. For example, in the family environment, unhappy family members, after another tense and unhappy celebration of Christmas, may talk during the year about other plans, meeting in a different place, inviting or not inviting certain people, or having smaller gatherings during the year to
try a new way of relating. In corporate management employees may find that the appraisal system is inadequate and does not contribute to the growth and development of the company and its employees. They can talk about it, develop new types of appraisal and test them with a small number of employees or among themselves, role-playing. Formal and informal communication channels must be used, and if they do not exist, they must be made.

When people are determined that something must happen, they generate energy, a ‘force’ among them that needs a channel to be released. This energy is ‘spontaneity’ and that is ‘the appropriate response to a new situation’. In simple terms it’s knowing what to do and not just reacting to the stimulation.

If warm-up does not move into spontaneity, the warm-up will not have the strength needed to succeed. Some people are just dreamers and whingers, who make New Year and Monday morning resolutions that are forgotten a few weeks later or by Wednesday. They know they need change, but they have such a weak warm-up that it does not generate enough spontaneity.

**Spontaneity**

‘Spontaneity’ is generally defined as: ‘The state of proceeding from a natural personal impulse, without effort or premeditation.’ This meaning is almost indistinguishable from that of ‘impulse’, both of which are reactions characterised by speed and lack of thought.

Here, however, it is used in the sense of J.L. Moreno’s definition:

*Spontaneity is the adequate response to a present situation. If the response to the present situation is adequate ‘fullness of spontaneity’ anxiety diminishes or disappears.*

The emphasis is on the appropriateness of the response, and in this it is clearly different from an impulse. Spontaneity is knowing what to do to produce the appropriate response to a situation. Since we can learn new behaviours and skills to expand our roles so that we are more likely to know what to do, responding appropriately (or spontaneity) is something that we can learn.

The opposite of Moreno’s ‘spontaneity’ is ‘anxiety’, to which it is closely linked. Anxiety is a lack of knowledge of how to act. This is further described below.

Spontaneity is an appropriate response—the ‘knowing what to do’. It is a response or reaction not in the sense of a feeling invoked by a particular situation, but in the sense of something that makes something else happen. Of course, it is important that what follow next is appropriate.

‘Spontaneity’ is the energy that, coming from the desire for change and
fed by the warm-up, creates a desire, expectation and power within the individual and the group that provides the muscle to motivate change.

At TML there were ‘efforts’ at ‘spontaneity’, but they didn’t create change. Spontaneity is available in various degrees, and a different level is needed depending on the need or situation. The level of spontaneity used at TML has been lower than that needed—a bigger demand (or need for change) in energy requires a bigger source of energy. At TML the warm-up was not shared across the organisation and the level of spontaneity was low and fragmented. No wonder there was no change.

There are also situations where people have used too much energy, and over-killed the process, like using a bullet to kill a cockroach. In these cases we may assume that the warm-up was high but without an objective it developed into ‘impulse’ rather than spontaneity. This can be a negative experience for workers and management, who will say, ‘We have tried everything; human resource techniques, courses, mentoring, and invested money and time yet nothing changed.’ Organisations and individuals with this belief continue living in misery and despair, honestly believing that they’ve tried everything. Well, it may be everything they knew but not everything that exists! The role of a coach is to expand their limited knowledge.

Honesty, desire, willingness and effort to achieve a goal are often not enough if the person or team do not have the appropriate road map and the fuel to arrive.

Anxiety—the lack of spontaneity
Rolf is tense and anxious; he can’t stay still and is getting exhausted. Anxiety (with its end point, panic) will eventually result in low efficiency, confusion, boredom, stress and physical illness. Anxiety does not represent a lack of knowledge or understanding of the situation, but a decrease of spontaneity.

Anxiety sets in because spontaneity is missing, not because there is anxiety, and anxiety dwindles because spontaneity rises.5

In this context, spontaneity is defined by Moreno as an ‘appropriate response to a new situation or a novel response to an old one’, and it is this response that reduces anxiety.
Some problems are bigger than our resources to tackle them. Spontaneity is knowing what to do in specific situations.

**Spontaneity versus impulse**

Spontaneity is distinct from impulse, although often confused with it. Impulse is based on the speed of reaction, not appropriateness. Impulse can be explained by looking at a neurological reflex called a ‘reflex arc’.

The reflex arc is a way of responding instantly to stimulation to protect the body from harm, such as pain caused by a hot surface. A man is holding a mug of hot tea and inadvertently touches a hotplate—he quickly moves his hand away from the hot plate. He would not think first, ‘This is very hot, should I take my hand off this hot plate now, or later?’ The message goes to the spine and the response is automatically resolved in the spine without involving the brain itself. The action of moving the hand quickly from the hot plate may be appropriate to save the finger from being burnt, but with the movement he throws the hot tea on himself and on his wife who is beside him, creating a serious burn for both. The movement was fast, the finger was saved a bigger burn, but the damage was worse than the solution obtained.

Very often our responses in life mimic the reflex arc. This has been Rolf’s experience. He has been attacking small fires at TML and at home, ‘saving fingers’ but producing greater damage. As he responds quickly and sharply he feels somehow in control, and as he is in a tense field he hasn’t been able to see the damage done.

While impulse is focused on speed of reaction, spontaneity focuses on appropriateness or adequateness. This is why the coach is there with Rolf. Spontaneity is to grow in wisdom; impulse helps us become more cunning and clever. I remember a teacher saying, ‘Cunning is the more rudimentary stage of wisdom.’ Rolf aspires to the highest stage.

Therefore, if we ‘know how to respond’ appropriately or adequately to emerging situations in life, our anxiety will be low. In new situations, uncertainty and active stress may be present, creating challenge and growth, but anxiety and tension will be low as there is a balance between demand and skill or control (further expanded in Chapter 7). Spontaneity is also directly linked to role development (see page 79) and the acquisition of skills; failure to develop adequate roles will increase your tension and may end in panic.
It is not that Rolf is anxious; the reality is that he doesn’t have a role developed (he doesn’t know what to do) to act appropriately—therefore his spontaneity is low. He’s been responding as a ‘defeated mule’. We know that if he could develop (learn) the role of ‘insightful guide’, the story would be different. His anxiety would drop, as the energy (force) used will be placed in effective relationships and not as a misused (wasted) energy that would oppress him more rather than liberating him. Spontaneity is a catalyst for awakening the forces within Rolf’s mind—the desire to be an insightful guide—that are asleep and unstimulated. Previous decisions at TML were made without a shared warm-up, and through impulse instead of spontaneity.

![Spontaneity Tension](image)

Figure 3.1

There is true hope in the fact that people can learn spontaneity: it’s the art of learning how to live better. Spontaneity opens the doors to creativity. Rolf can find a new way of living, and create new behaviours that would stimulate life and freedom for him personally and as a leader of his organisation. The coach is a catalyst who guides Rolf to assess areas that need role development and allows spontaneity to grow.

### Creativity

Creativity is the power of innovation and the effect of imagination—it is making things different. Creativity stimulates wisdom, and wisdom uses creativity to show its richness. It’s a way of finding alternatives to grow individually and as a society.

Humans can be spontaneous creators of systems and doctrines that can lead to destruction, manipulation and death. Organisations can also have
‘creative leeches’ as managers or leaders, who create ‘effective’ systems of dominance that make people perform well and organisations grow at the expense of associates from every level of the organisation. Those people can suck out all the energy an employee has, pushing them often beyond the possibility of repair. This is also a ‘corporate culture’ that managers and employees should be aware of. They should be careful to move out of those perverse systems of work before it is too late.

The problem is that ‘creative leeches’ are often so ‘creative’ that they mask their evil objective with rosy salaries, magnificent promises and artificial standards of living. Company heads and shareholders also create specific corporate cultures that force directors to comply at the expense of their personal lives, families, employees and clients, forgetting the social responsibility of an organisation.

Rojas-Bermudez affirms that to be able to change the CC and imprint new relational behavioural systems, warm-up, spontaneity and creativity must be consistent; the new behavioural model should be exercised across the organisation and communicated with the same or similar terminology. If the organisation wants to send a message it has to be presented in same-time intervals, such as every three days. This will create an expectation of waiting for this information (like a dog waits for food after hearing certain noises).

Change of a corporate culture does not need to be started across the whole organisation at the same time. It can be tested in small business units, the board of directors, the directors’ teams, from which the warm-up can be expanded to other units.

Warm-up needs the energy of spontaneity and it needs creativity to become a useful energy and not an un-aimed rocket (impulse). Creativity needs spontaneity to provide the energy for change.

It is creativity, innovation and re-engineering that will ultimately bring the change to a corporate culture.

If inefficiency is contagious, creativity is too.
Turning the creativity wheel

Moreno explains the process of change with the ‘Canon of creativity wheel’. Not only does it demonstrate how change can be accomplished, but it also gives us insight into how change can fail, even if a great effort has been made.

Moreno calls the corporate culture the ‘cultural conserve’, which is any institutionalised culture applied to all of life as well as our workplace. We live, work and interact with friends, family, and colleagues in a variety of cultural conserves. These include the ways we celebrate birthdays, weekends, and religious festivals, as well as the way we interact at work. A cultural conserve includes healthy and unhealthy habits; how we nurture our friendships and work effectively as well as how we complain and deal with inefficiencies and areas we dislike.

A characteristic of a cultural conserve is that it’s cyclical, habitual, and resistant to change. Of course, you will want to keep the pleasing or healthy aspects of a particular cultural conserve, and may need to work to ‘protect’ what is good. But what can be done if you are unsatisfied with a cultural conserve that may be producing inefficiencies or indeed running you into the ground, as in Rolf’s case?

We can consider changes (warm-up), but if we don’t have the energy to carry out the next step (spontaneity) we will find ourselves once again back in the same cultural conserve. Again we attempt change and this time we may successfully ‘warm-up’ the members involved in this specific dynamic, and be able to develop enough ‘spontaneity’ to move to the next phase, but once we get there creativity is needed. If we are unable to develop enough strength to be truly creative, again we revert to the established cultural conserve, feeling a sense of powerlessness, resentment towards others in the group, impotence, defeat and bitterness. There is also the added legacy that the failed attempt at change has become imprinted on the participants, creating another culture that says ‘change is not possible’ or ‘I can’t do it. It’s too hard’. This is commonly referred to as a ‘vicious circle’.

This type of unhealthy cycle often produces psychological and physical ailments such as burnout, depression, isolation and addictions, as well as physical illness, spiritual depletion and pessimism. But if it is so chaotic why do we stay in this cultural conserve? The basic reasons are that this ‘vicious circle’ is known, predictable and familiar. ‘Never underestimate the power of the familiar’ says Esly Carvalho. Another important point is that to ‘change’ a cultural conserve is to involve others who may be extremely unhappy and may use this and guilt trips (usually in family contexts) as a manipulation tool, as their power, importance or meaning may depend on an unhealthy dynamic.

Changing a cultural conserve, or ‘creating’ a new cultural conserve, will
include everyone in the relationship and sometimes may seem detrimental to those we love.

So, how do we break out from an unhealthy cultural conserve and create a healthy dynamic for your workplace, family or friends?

Take a look at Moreno’s ‘Canon of creativity wheel’. It is possible to break out of the cycle at the dynamic existing between the spontaneity (energy and development of new roles) and creativity (innovation) phases. In order to reach the creativity phase we must first provide sufficient ‘warm-up’ (desire to change), and achieve ‘spontaneity’ (energy to act). You will achieve sufficient warm-up by including as many of the group as possible (or the entire group if possible) when considering changes, and consistently sharing the issues with all the stakeholders. The CC then becomes important in the mind and emotions of the individuals of the group. This will generate a higher level of spontaneous energy that, if associated with creativity at the right time (timing), will have enough strength and innovative ideas to change the dynamic and culture of the group.
The timing for these actions is crucial. All the elements may be present, but if initiated too quickly or too slowly the process may be thwarted. Fortunately, a wise mentor or coach will help to identify the timing of the process.

When we break out of the cycle the group will no longer follow the same pattern and the dynamic of the group will develop a new CC. This CC will grow and change as new developments arise.

Warm-up, spontaneity, and creativity as demonstrated in the ‘Canon of creativity wheel’, are forces that can bring about changes in your life that give you freedom, justice and joy. Living in an unhealthy cultural conserve is extraordinarily frustrating. It is like living as a robot, which is how Rolf feels.

Rolf and his executives at TML have been warming-up and preparing for change for a long time. People around him have been challenging the corporate culture: his wife, his team, his boss, and, ultimately by stress and burnout, himself. He knows he cannot live like this anymore. Rolf knows he has to change to become creative, and that this will directly and indirectly impact on his executive team, every employee, head office and his family. If the CC is not challenged creatively (wisely) others may choose to make isolated choices; Inge may choose to leave the relationship without continuing to negotiate with him. Henry and Toby Tillick may do the same.

Resisting change
People who seem to resist change are those who think they don’t need it (as the CC is not discomforting enough); those who do not know what to do
(low spontaneity and/or creativity); or those who receive a direct or indirect benefit from an unhealthy CC. One example is how many people in governments and in business directly capitalise on war—the longer the better—disregarding the suffering of individuals, families, villages and countries as a whole. Greed and selfishness create self-centred dynamics where the existence of other people is only relevant for personal benefit. In the hands of a leader this is fascism. Others ‘cannot’ change yet; their spontaneity (energy and knowing what to do) is not high enough.

Rolf is lucky that most of his executives want change and he doesn’t want to create a new corporate culture that would be worse than the one he has now. He wants his workplace to support him. He must become a creative force.

Stimulating spontaneity and learning new roles is helping Rolf to move from robot to creative person. Developing new roles is the subject of the next chapter.

![Figure 3.3 Spontaneity continuum](image)

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**To recap**

We have seen that change is not simply a matter of change but a matter of choice, and this choice must have the energy needed to transform old habits into new ones. We don’t need to live in a style of life that is un-dignifying, not the way we are meant to be. Every cultural conserve can be challenged and with enough spontaneity and creativity, everyone can make their world a better place in which to live, both for themselves and for others. Even if we cannot change certain circumstances, we can certainly change the way we relate to them.

At TML the ‘machine’ took over the ‘human’. People at TML had lost their spontaneity, and instead of exercising choice, control and creativity they began to respond mechanically to the demands of life, becoming robots with mechanical and predictable responses. The antithesis of relationship capital is robot-like behaviour and relationships, because there is no spontaneity, and without that there is no capacity to adapt. Relationship capital confers the ability to adapt.
Rolf has learned that interpersonal relationships can become either a trap that restricts our humanity, or a place where our humanity can expand and grow. He has also learned that one person might trigger change, but that this spark will not be enough, as a flame is needed.

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1 Encarta encyclopaedia 2001.
4 Moreno, op. cit.
5 Moreno, op. cit.
8 Carvalho Esly, 1999, *Seminars on Family series*. 
Rolf arrives ten minutes late to a meeting with Michelle and Lynnette. They are happy chatting and having a cup of coffee waiting for him to arrive. Rolf storms into the office angry and without even saying hello to them. He strongly criticises Lynnette for not being at her desk when he rang earlier: ‘You’re never available when I need you! I have to do everything and nobody helps. Even with you, Michelle, I need to come to your rescue with this client for the mess Henry and you have made.’

Michelle and Lynnette look at him and at each other with surprise. They try to explain but he shuts them off. ‘Let’s forget it! OK! And let’s get down to business.’

The meeting is tense and unproductive, and when it finishes he shuts the door of his office and cancels every appointment for the day. He doesn’t want anyone close to him.

What happened to Rolf? He started the day having an argument with his wife; he double-booked today’s meeting with an important school function he promised his daughter he would not miss. He felt guilty as a father and powerless for not being able to control his time. He also got a speeding ticket coming to the office. He has been disappointed with Michelle (as with Henry) for a long time but he was not able to communicate this frustration appropriately. He was not able to control what he wanted to share and just threw it into Michelle’s face.
A few weeks later: It was Michelle’s birthday. Rolf, despite being unhappy with TML sales and marketing, felt grateful to Michelle for her support during the years and he asked Lynnette to plan a simple but meaningful surprise birthday celebration with the executive team. Rolf was very happy and appreciative of the loyalty of the whole team. He went into the room to welcome everyone and in his short speech he thanked everyone by name, especially Michelle. Despite not being a ‘touchy’ person, he gave hugs and even danced with Michelle for a few minutes. He was open to share and allowed people to be close to him too. His wife rang him with a problem about the house and the children and he took the call with openness and was helpful to Inge, when in other circumstances he would respond negatively. After the party the team had a meeting where they discussed key issues, and made quick and important resolutions.

**Two personalities?**

No, there aren’t two Rolfs. People are often perplexed at their own responses to different circumstances, as well as seeing responses from other people. We have here two different responses from the same person in two different circumstances.

The ‘first response’ Rolf is somebody who cannot relate or make contact and is unable to express his feelings in a manner suited to an effective interpersonal relationship, he just dumps his frustrations on people. Rolf has some kind of wall around him that does not allow anyone to penetrate and at the same time he is unable to reach or relate appropriately with people around him. His perception of reality is through a lens of tension (through the wall) and he responds accordingly. He is unable to control his responses.

The ‘second response’ Rolf relates closely and warmly to his team and everybody in the room. He is now able to reach, to link and develop appropriate communication. He is able to control his responses.

**The wall—our behaviour and personal space**

Rolf, for long time, until Inge confronted him, was not aware of his behaviour. He was getting into his own cell without noticing the effect his behaviour had on himself and others. Understanding the way we relate, looking at the roles we play in life, will allow us to find ways to exercise control over our behaviour, positively affecting situations we face in life. Rolf believed he was in control and on top of everything until he discovered that the ‘sharp and cynical confronter role’ he was playing was no more than a cop out, giving him the perception that he was in control while the opposite was occurring.
Each person plays a multitude of roles, such as son, brother, uncle, father, employee, policeman or doctor. The role by itself is only important from an analytic point of view; each is an independent entity. To be able to consider the ability of the role we must see it at work. For any role to be in action it needs another role to relate to, and that role needs to be complementary. For example, an uncle would need a nephew; a father would need to complement a child (Figure 4.1); and a doctor, a patient. When both parts know what role to play the relationship flows and a ‘link’ (Figure 4.1: C) is created. For example, in the father and son relationship (Figure 4.2), every time they relate in those roles they grow; next time they meet they will start from a stronger relational platform and the relationship will become stronger. For a link to develop, it needs time. Quantity is important as well as quality.

Figure 4.1 Personal space diagram

This will not happen if:
- The father wants to play the role of a dictatorial manager, for example, in giving orders. The son will notice that the dynamic between both has changed, there is not as much flow and the link does not grow.
- The father or son are stressed or withdrawn. They will not be able to relate; their emotions block them off like a wall (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2: Personal space diagram
The same thing happened to Rolf when he would come home tired and stressed and, instead of relating with his children as father, and to Inge as husband, he related to his family as a CEO or totally withdrew behind a ‘wall’. The family met physically but not emotionally, as there was no ‘link’.

When there is a wall around us (Figure 4.3: D) we cannot see the effect of our behaviour on other people: we just see ourselves—the wall is like a mirror that makes us see introspectively without really knowing what we are doing—and a basic point in interpersonal relationships is to know what the other person feels and thinks. Living inside the wall is deceiving: we live without any understanding of the other person’s view of us, as if our reality is the only one that counts. As we don’t know what we don’t know, it is difficult to do anything about it.¹

This wall creates a personal space (PS) (Figure 4.3: D). This space is a private space, a territory that is perceived as personal and needs to be protected. If anyone comes into it is felt as an invasion, creating a strong defensive reaction. The PS can expand in moments of tension or anxiety (as in Figure 4.3: E), such as when we face situations where we do not know what to do, or how to act. It can contract in relaxed, predictable situations, when there ceases to be a wall (Figure 4.1: F).

Analysing Rolf’s experience we find that when he came in to the meeting with Michelle and Lynnette, his PS was expanded (as in Figure 4.3: E), due to the tension with his wife, feeling guilty and powerless, being late, feeling under pressure at TML for not performing, and being angry at the tension between marketing and sales. Michelle and Lynnette were unable to pass that barrier. He was inside the wall, spinning in confusion and couldn’t find a way to relate to them, just as they couldn’t reach him. His responses were inadequate and not complementary.

![Personal space diagram](image)

Figure 4.3: Personal space diagram

In these situations the person with the expanded PS is usually not aware that they are not connecting, not really relating with the other person. They get more and more frustrated, as the ‘other’ is not responding as expected, resulting in them further expanding their PS and becoming even more distant.
As the response is not complementary, the ‘other’ (Michelle and Lynnette) may also feel frustrated to the point that they will also build up their walls too. We now have more than one person responding incongruously. The same situation could happen in any group, team or family situation where one person with tension will provoke everybody else, creating a situation of no communication and generating shared confusion, withdrawal, abuse and hurt.

The expanded PS does not allow people to control their emotions and find adequate responses and roles to relate with other people. It may hurt people unnecessarily, and creates confusion and distance. The person is not aware of what is happening or unable to do anything about it.

In terms of communication, in the first situation Rolf is out of control and his reactions are not appropriate to the situation. He cannot create a link, the flow of communication is disrupted and messages are unable to reach him. Conversations based on a dynamic of tension and anxiety (expanded PS) are often long and end in a worse situation than they started in, and without resolution. If we create an environment of tension we will be unlikely to experience the best from the people around us.

When your personal space is expanded, you experience:
- Lack of control.
- Inappropriate management of information. You say what you don’t want, but don’t say what you do want.
- Uncontrolled emotional reactions—feelings and emotions you feel and express are not consistent with what is happening.
- Lack of conflict resolution—after a long conversation you find yourself in the same or a worse place than where you started.
- No growth, as there is no learning
- Physical manifestations including: faster heartbeat, blushes, butterflies in the stomach, pains and aches, digestive disorders.
- High anxiety, low tolerance.
- Over-reactions: being over-critical, screaming or shouting.
- Under-responses: withdrawal, depression.

Creativity flourishes when we have a sense of safety and self-acceptance.

-Julie Cameron

Things that will cause your personal space to contract include:
- Relaxed environment
- Predictable responses
Peaceful talk
- Warm-up, preparing for new or known situations
- Relaxation, mediation, prayer
- Medicines, tranquillisers
- Alcohol, which could have a temporary relaxant effect but with unexpected and unmanageable after-effects.

The second situation shows that as Rolf’s PS was contracted he was able to relate with his team, be close to them, even dance and have fun. When the PS is contracted even difficult interactions become easier to overcome, and without alcohol.

Even new skills or rudimentary knowledge (poorly developed roles) can be enough to allow us to interact; we may have more tolerance and flexibility, an example being Rolf’s ability to shift from work to family issues. These situations bring the possibility of learning or developing new roles resulting in practical knowledge and skill.

The creation of a relaxed environment is essential for new skills to develop. This is the perfect place for a new employee to acquire knowledge, or for a new manager to learn the key secrets of the new job. If you practise a new skill (role) in a relaxed field and relate in a person-to-person dynamic, you will find that new demands or challenges in life will be confronted with much more ease and new roles will develop accordingly.

Connecting to people—a matter of skill
The term ‘skill’ denotes a reasonably complex movement that requires at least a minimal amount of practice. Thus ‘skill’ excludes reflex acts. The performer of a skill must be attentive and alert enough to be receptive to some kind of sensory information, which may in turn lead to some kind of motor act. The performer then makes a decision (choice) about how to act or not to act; and this generally depends upon past experience (role training) within similar situations and with similar stimuli, as well as upon feelings (self-awareness) about personal capabilities. If they decide to act, the next event is the selection of an appropriate motor response from the entire ‘collection’ of motor responses that they have acquired (pool of roles).²

Skill involves awareness of stimulation and appropriate response (regarding time and manner), and is dependent on experience and training.
For Strategic Relationship Management, ‘skills in relating’ are the talents and competence we have in roles. The skilful manager is a manager with a well-developed role, someone who knows how to act (high spontaneity).

Every person has many roles in life. Our roles are in permanent development from the time we are born. They start with basic (physiological) skills like eating, hugging or urinating based on neurological maturation, and evolve into social relationships such as son or daughter, to later develop into student, friend, etc.

In Strategic Relationship Management, we use the term ‘role’ as a way of describing the ‘skill’ a person has in relating: every time we relate we do it through a role (such as doctor, friend, employee, mother, wife). The relevance of thinking of skills as roles is that skills relate to our individual ability to perform a task. When we, in Relationship Management, talk about roles we include the:

- Purpose of the role
- Objective (guideline) of the role
- Performer of the task, the protagonist
- Complementary person or specific ‘other’ (it can also be a thing or even a thought)
- Dynamic between each party to the relationship (link)
- Outcome (expected).

Each person plays several roles in life; all these roles are skills the person has been acquiring since birth, creating their ‘self’.

### The self—what are we?

The different roles we have described form part of a hub that is the self, the essence of what the person is (see Figure 4.4). Every new experience and every learned skill will not only enrich a particular role but the person as a whole, as the new information is now available to other roles. Educating employees in appropriate relational behaviour may look like a waste of time, but is one of the best ‘value for money’ investments corporate executives could provide. They will treat each other more effectively, conflict will be minimised, morale will be high, loyalty will be increased and first-class customer service will naturally flow. Relationships with family and friends will improve. Each person will also learn how to relate to and even treat machinery better resulting in better product quality, maintenance savings, fewer accidents, quicker assessment of training needs and the highest standards of service. The individual will be richer.
The strength of the self directly depends on the well-developed roles the person holds. A person with more developed roles will have a stronger self; this will be relevant and noticed when the person has to respond to new and stressful situations in life. This is where a strong self will be able to find ways of ‘surviving’ difficult situations and find alternatives to solve problems. Their skill is greater than the demands upon it.

Our ‘self’ or personal identity is not the name on our birth certificate, on our passport or our title at work; it’s the sum of all the roles we have developed in life since birth. Reinforcing the concept, a person with more developed roles will have a stronger self than a person with few roles. The characteristics and richness of these multiple roles are stored in the self as a pool of information. The role’s uniqueness, with its strengths and weaknesses, is stored in a common pool that can later be accessed and used by any role.

Working for many years with migrants and people in exile I found that two persons of the same age, family and with a similar experience of escaping from atrocities and abuse from the same country will adapt to a new country in totally different ways. The person with more developed roles and more roles to play in life will have more chance of making the new country their new home. The experience of playing different roles has contributed to the person and provided their ‘self’ with diverse kinds of information. If the migrant is not ‘too pressured’ by the new reality, their PS is not too expanded, they will find a role to play. Their role may be rudimentary but their well-developed pool of information will make it strong.
The development of roles is based on affection, mutual interest, care, and trust and this happens between people. As we develop and expand our roles in life, we will develop as people. The role of a manager or a parent includes the ability to expose their employees, associates and children to a myriad of opportunities, this will make them stronger people who will not be scared to face new situations in life. Security is not in the money we have but in our internal ability to face difficulties, in the relationships we have around us and in the values we hold.

Our ‘selves’ in society
Each person relates with the surrounding world and the social structure through roles. Rojas-Bermudez\(^3\) compares the social structure with the fisherman’s net: each knot represents a self, while the strings represent the many roles the self (knot) has.

The metaphor of the fishing net places its focus neither on the individual nor on their relationships but focuses instead on the ‘whole social structure’. Pressure or pulling at any place on the net will affect the whole structure; furthermore a knot with the strings cut off will fall.\(^4\)

The knot (i.e., self) interrelated with many strings (roles) will have more strength (social significance) than one with less strings. The strings can also be thin or thick. If there is pressure on the net, the knots with fewer strings (roles) will be isolated before the ones with many strings. Using this illustration Rojas-Bermudez suggests that the isolated analysis of an individual role outside the overall social structure within which it operates only serves the interests of an ‘analyst’ and has no significant impact on the lives of others or on the organisation as a whole. Robert Kiyosaki follows this similar line of thought when he suggests that a person who maintains a broad range of roles (generalist) will have more possibilities of success when under social pressure than a person with one (specialist) role.\(^5\)

The key for management is that senior executives must realise that any deficiency in communication between two or more executives, between employees, or between departments, could have a generalised impact on the whole company. As we live in a society that focuses more on superficial performance rather than on processes and relational reality, we may not have in organisations, and in our personal lives, sensitive ways to quickly assess inter-personal, intra- and inter-departmental communications. The result is that when relational issues are assessed, it’s often so late that the remedy is expensive in time or money, or too late to retain valuable people in the organisation. Employee satisfaction questionnaires, evaluations by bosses, and appropriate, timely appraisals that include ‘interpersonal relationship’ questions can provide
enough information to promptly assess any deficiency in the organisation. But none of this will be effective if there is no link (strings) between people.

CEOs are often so focused on ‘performance’ they are not aware that key people or key departments do not communicate with each other. L. Gratton, in *Living Strategy,*6 points out the imbalance between management knowledge about financial management and human management. Management face corporate chaos, and the chairman, the board, some concerned shareholder or somebody expressing what they think in their exit interview will point out these issues, instead of management.

A manager who comprehends the social-net system and has a finger on the pulse of relationships will quickly assess, identify, deal with, and prevent problems related to inter-personal communication and personal, as well as team, effectiveness—and it’s not too difficult to do. This manager will be ahead of issues. Scenario planning, as proposed in *The Fifth Discipline,* provides key tools for playing with different scenarios to prevent expected and predictable outcomes in the business world (although they can also be applied in inter-personal relationships), to be ahead and save time, money and energy.

A finance manager, in charge of personnel for a small and prosperous business, calls me every four to six months in stress. ‘Please help me! Look at my people—they are not producing, making mistakes, resigning and I can’t do my job. I need to be freer to focus on strategic planning and I always get involved in fighting small fires and doing the reports myself.’

Interviewing some of his key employees I found that:

- There is a big gap between the manager’s expectations and what the employees think the job entails.
- The employees feel disconnected from each other, so they cannot help each other in moments of demand.
- Daily meetings are focused only on tasks and not on the relationships in the team.
- There is no time in meetings to vent needs and concerns.

In a report to the manager I highlighted that the needs of the people in his department could be met by increasing the time of one meeting a week by 15 minutes to allow people to talk about themselves: ‘How are we? Can we do things differently?’ I also proposed introducing one meeting of 15–20 minutes with each employee every month and at other times as required. The suggestions were accepted but as they were always rushed, they could never do it. The time that this would require in four months, among the seven employees would be around 12 hours—expense: nil; disruption: minimal. As they were unable to do it, four months later they spent ten hours of meetings with the
coach—expensive outlay, highly disruptive and one employee was lost to the organisation (with the hiring and training costs involved wasted). This company had only ‘task’ connections, not ‘relational strings’, and the knots couldn’t hold together. And they still haven’t learnt yet.

Such managers are the best suppliers of clients that recruiting agencies, coaches and counsellors could ever have!

Roles

The role is the channel through which people relate; it is the skill in relating. Roles can be poor, adequate or well developed, and this depends on the practice, skill and ability to deal with specific situations.

Moreno states that roles can be defined as the actual tangible form which the self takes in a determined moment. Self, ego, personality, character, etc. are meta-psychological postulates; role is a final crystallisation of all the situations in a special area of operation through which the individual has passed (e.g., the eater, the father, the aeroplane pilot, the doctor, the manager).

The role is formed by a combination of individual and shared (collective) patterns of communication. They include and represent the character of a social structure—what makes the person ‘fit’ into society. Each role is unique to the individual, as it takes on the specific style and shape of the person who’s playing it (e.g., we have a stereotyped role of a doctor, but each doctor gives their own style to the role).

We have mentioned that roles, as skills, are not static; they develop through practice. Every time the role relates through a ‘link’ (appropriately with another person or task), the role develops.

Relevant feedback (information telling the subject how he is progressing) is necessary for learning to occur; the more feedback the [person] receives, the faster he learns.

Recruiting an experienced person for a job is really asking for somebody with a ‘well-developed role’: this is the person who will be able to ‘do things right’ despite tension, problems or difficult situations.

Roles are also collective, as they comprise elements from the social environment. Each action or behaviour we have is tinted with shapes, mannerisms and practices from family traditions, places where we’ve worked and cities where we’ve lived.

Lynnette, Rolf’s personal assistant, began working at TML not long after she graduated from secretarial school. She had always been an efficient secretary but not at the executive level she is now. In her early experience at TML, when her role was new and poorly developed, she was only able to do limited tasks
and she made some mistakes. She felt insecure but as she felt supported by Rolf, who was not as tense and anxious as he was in the recent years, she felt confident in asking many questions. Michelle was a good mentor for her. Insecurities and mistakes diminished as her role grew. She is now an efficient, secure and accurate personal assistant, a key pillar for Rolf. She can now take much more pressure and tension before her PS expands beyond her role as secretary.

A ‘relationship’ takes place when two complementary or corresponding roles meet. Boss–employee; father–child; husband–wife; seller–buyer. As I have mentioned, the meeting of two complementary roles forms a ‘link’. The link is a spiritual (not religious) experience—spiritual as it cannot be physically measured and involves an emotive event. It’s a powerful experience that allows the role to grow—we really know within ourselves when we ‘meet’ (connect) with somebody else. Every time a link is formed, roles develop, and both parties are enriched. It is essential to quickly identify if we are meeting or not, as we can spend a long time explaining something to somebody, but if there is no ‘link’ or meeting, the issues shared may likely be forgotten or misunderstood. The meeting is important even in its simplest form—a two-second acknowledgment of understanding of a task could save hours of hard work.

Roles and personal space—how we relate

There is a direct relationship between role development and PS, as the larger or better-developed role will be able to extend beyond an expanded PS (see Figure 4.4, p.76).

We noticed that in Rolf’s first situation, his PS, in stress when he arrived to the meeting with Michelle and Lynnette, was expanded beyond his larger well-developed role as a manager. For a link to be formed, for a meeting to happen, the two roles (Rolf as manager, and Lynnette and Michelle as employees) must relate with each other and they must be complementary.

Learning to be a parent

The power of a relationship is in the ‘link’. Through it, the parent is able to ‘know’ more about their child, and the child can ‘know’ more about their parent. The link is something that stimulates this knowledge in both of them: it helps the parent to be a better parent and the child to be a better child.

As parents learn more of what it is to be a child, their own experiences of childhood are increased. If their experience of being a child was of pain or neglect, the development of a new loving relationship could heal those sad experiences. If the memories are good, it will enrich the soul and we have then a healthier, well-functioning parent. For the child it is similar: being able
to experience a link with a parent, the child will know their parent better and will, without noticing, incorporate in their self the role of a ‘good parent’—this is the essence of the role model.

Not only will parent and child benefit with this dynamic, every time a ‘meeting’ happens it creates a powerful message of ‘it’s possible to develop a relationship of trust, love and growth’.

The child will also absorb experiences of others in relationships, the way their parents treat each other, other children, and their attitudes about money, work and faith. This child will be a good marriage partner, parent, friend, colleague and boss. We need more healthy children to become progressive parents, managers, partners and friends.

The same role development and role models exist in every area of relationships. The process of grooming an employee for a new position can be an experience of growth for the whole department or company. The time to begin this important investment is in the recruiting interview, even in the attention given to writing a job advertisement. And then there are the first days at work (induction) where the ‘imprinting’ (as Lorenz describes it) takes place, the ‘first impact’. The new employee can easily perceive the type (or lack) of leadership in the organisation, and all subsequent events are tinted by the first impression, or imprinting.

**Our fluctuating personal space**

We are not machines. We are surrounded by unpredictable circumstances (note: we are fairly predictable!). So many things can happen to rock our internal emotional world, as well as to stabilise it. Everybody has experienced being downhearted, and after receiving a compliment or hearing a joke the mood ‘magically’ changes. Or having a wonderful time, then we get bad news and touch rock bottom. We are on one hand extremely strong, but like crystal we’re fragile.

The focus of relationship management is in the relationship; we have learned that this relationship ‘happens’ in the link and this is the result of two roles being complementary. The ability to begin, maintain and finalise (complete) a relationship—that is, maintaining the link while it is healthy for both parties—is a practical, if not the most clear, demonstration of wellbeing. The ability to practise this skill in every role we play in life would make us rich people; a wealth nobody would be able to take from us.

Let’s notice that health includes the proper finalisation of a relationship that cannot continue and must end. If this occurs, the experience of that relationship will leave behind a wealth of good memories that will make new relationships richer. Lack of appropriate farewell, too soon or too late, without
a clean finale, would leave the parties with unfinished business that would be carried into other relationships with hurt and distrust.

**The four warning flags**

*First warning flag: the link is easily lost*

Look for signs of feelings not heard, anxiety when the other person is talking, avoiding contact, finding it difficult to return a call, having conversations finish unresolved.

We are not educated to have a ‘sensitive relationship sensor’. Relationships get damaged and there is not much awareness of the weakening process. We often see the signs too late, when there is not much we can do about it. To test the link, consider the points described in ‘The wall—our behaviour and personal space’ (page 70).

*Second warning flag: finding relationships increasingly difficult*

Roles are skills developed through practice. If the link is weak or non-existent the role will not grow, creating role poverty and lack of development. As a person feels ‘disconnected’ from others, their roles are not stimulated and they withdraw more, further affecting their role development and the ability to relate to others. They may be more connected to ‘things’ than to people. They feel that they cannot grow or find it increasingly difficult to solve relational problems and to complete regular tasks.

*Third warning flag: psychological discomfort*

Identity is based on the roles people play, if the roles are weakened the self gets weak too. Identity is damaged and psychological responses and unpleasant emotions start arising. These include depression, awkwardness, fears, panic, emotional ups and downs without a direct reason, anxiety and other psychological disorders. The person loses a sense of direction, self-esteem, meaning and purpose in life.

*Fourth warning flag: becoming physically ill*

When the body cries this is a sign that the last barrier has been broken and we’re in deep trouble. Poor health and specific physical illness—from recurrent respiratory problems to heart and other disorders—affect the person, often putting them out of action.

Nature has strong protective mechanisms to prevent the collapse of a human being as an individual as well as part of society: this protection starts by providing keys to assess relationships, the way we relate. Rojas-Bermudez in his role theory says: ‘We get sick from the outside (the link) to inside (the
body). And we get healed from inside to outside. Each stage has warning signs that enable the person to deal with the problem in a timely and appropriate manner.

Looking for help
People usually seek help at the third or fourth flag when it is too late or very difficult to make good progress.

One of the most important tasks for the leader and HRM is to be aware of the steps into sickness and low performance. One of the tricks is that damaged people often perform well, as work may be their only source of happiness and wellbeing, and managers don’t want to (and shouldn’t) affect their performance. The downside is that to maintain that performance, other areas will suffer and the person may collapse, creating high risk for the organisation.

Low morale in an organisation is a symptom that management have failed to assess at the third warning flag. There is a risk of instituting this as a corporate culture; something not easy to change, as Rolf is finding at TML.

Healing
Strategic planning based on solid foundations and a practical plan is mandatory. We must first know that the healing process will work in the opposite direction to the damage. It must include emotional rebuilding and role development.

Low productivity and efficiency (reflected in mistakes, low quality control, accidents and customer dissatisfaction) show that the flow of communication has been failing for some time. The first warning flag has not been perceived or not dealt with adequately. Two functions are necessary:

- Creating or re-creating an environment of communication where people can relate and express what they need.
- Role training, clarification of job descriptions to make them relevant, and mentoring or coaching to individuals and groups. If these actions are taken early, they could quickly recreate the well-functioning team.

Encountering personal space
When someone’s personal space is expanded, their awareness of mistakes or inappropriate behaviour usually comes late, if ever. As the person is often not aware of what they have done or have not done, they may not be aware of how inappropriate their behaviour is, therefore they will not be able to repair the damage done by it. Even if the person is clearly confronted by someone, they may not be able to acknowledge their own behaviour. It’s very similar to things done under the effect of alcohol or drugs.
When the PS of one person clashes with the PS of another, the result is disconnection. This is commonly how family fights develop. A dynamic may start with a simple argument and escalate to a massive argument. Not one of the participants in the discussion is able to be aware that they are not ‘relating’. This is where people deeply hurt each other.

The expansion of the PS always correlates to some physical and emotional manifestations that can be discerned so that action can be taken before it’s too late. This is called ‘the amber light’.

**Stopping at the amber light**

Red to stop, green to go, and amber is time to stop or accelerate. It’s a time for (quick) choice.

Michelle, the sales and marketing manager, has been frustrated and angry with Henry, the financial director, for ages. When she relates to him on issues related to production and delivery of products, they always end up fighting. She finds that she is the one who, without noticing, starts shouting at him. ‘I feel so frustrated by his answers! We start the conversation in a peaceful and civil manner and suddenly I find myself shouting at him.’

Michelle sees herself talking to him amicably (green light) and suddenly she is shouting at him (red light). She doesn’t have an amber light, a moment where she could assess that the situation is heading to ‘red’, therefore she is powerless and loses control. Michele learns that the space (time) between green and red is so small she can’t recognise it.

She takes one recent situation to analyse. Michele warms up to the situation and she later demonstrates the dynamic utilising the Play of Life. She finds that soon after she starts talking, Henry becomes clumsy and insecure in his answers. This infuriates her as she sees him as weak and ineffective. Her intention in shouting at him is to wake him up, but, of course, it has the opposite effect. He shrinks and becomes more defensive, and that sparks in her more frustration and anger. She ends every conversation exhausted and frustrated, and blames him for her stress and tension (see ‘Anxiety—the lack of spontaneity’), and for her team’s lack of productivity.

She later recognises that seeing him weak, clumsy and insecure makes her stomach tight and she clenches her teeth. Michele has found her amber light, ‘tight stomach and clenched teeth’; for other people it would be other things such as flicking a pencil in their fingers, or feeling a need for a cigarette or a glass of wine. As she is able to recognise her amber light, she is now able to do something about it and find better ways of saying or expressing what she believes, without shouting.
The concept of the amber light is similar to the ‘aura’ for people suffering from epilepsy. A few seconds before the epileptic attack may come, the person perceives some kind of signal, being subjective or objective, that announces that the epileptic attack is at the door.

The amber light is of immense importance as it provides a time where a person can take control over what could become uncontrollable.

What really happens when we go from ‘green light’ to ‘red light’ is that our PS expands and we cannot relate to the other person. An indiscriminate out-of-control response happens (impulse). The expansion of the PS will produce some signals in different moments of expansion until it’s too late. The ability to know these symptoms is the ability to know where to change tactics and behaviour before losing control.

The problem with working under a ‘red light’ is that it gives us a false sense of control over the situation and another person. When Michelle used to shout at Henry, she believed that she was in control and teaching Henry a lesson. In reality it was Henry, with his manners, who had control over Michelle, making her react in a specific, predictable way. His response stimulated Michelle to ‘go to red’.

Having control over our own behaviour, the future, the weather, others and life in general is one of the biggest ambitions of humankind. Here is an opportunity to have control over our emotions and save time, incite the best in other people and live life using less energy. The amber light is a platform for change.

Many business decisions are taken from a position of weakness, fear or over-confidence that gives us a false view of life. Decisions taken from these situations risk being weak, fragmented or inappropriate. As mentioned before, Michelle had the feeling of being in control when in fact Henry had control. Identifying the amber light is to maintain control, to give the self the opportunity to find the best way of dealing with the situation (high spontaneity).

Warm-up and personal space
We have talked about warm-up in the context of corporate culture as a preparation for an event. This preparation for a new situation is also a key element in contracting the PS. Rolf moved into the office in the first situation without spending any time in ‘preparing’ himself to face business issues. He was still stuck in his domestic problems. Preparing for an encounter helps the PS to
contract, makes roles available to link with the other person, and gives time to create some kind of speech in preparation for the next step.

Warming up can be done in seconds. The ‘blank page’ technique is designed to quickly warm you up to emerging situations. Place a blank piece of paper (say A5 size) to the side of your working area on your desk. Leave that page in the same place all the time. When you receive a phone call, or you wish to make one, turn from what you are doing and look at the blank page. Imagine the face of the person you need to talk to, and bring to mind the issues you need to talk about, or the issues you believe the other person may want to talk to you about. Breathe deeply and begin the conversation. The time required for this simple exercise may be no more than five seconds and may save you hours of disappointments.

Executives often move immediately from one meeting to another, carrying with them the ‘spirit’ of the previous meeting. This can damage the dynamic of the next meeting, as the manager may not be able to adapt and meet with the dynamics and people present in that environment. Personal assistants can be trained to help their bosses quickly warm-up between meetings and phone calls where different emotions may be stimulated.

Henry finishes a tense two-hour meeting with the union regarding old disputes. He leaves uptight without resolving anything, although he believes the union representatives were fair. He must move quickly to another room to resolve some issues with suppliers who haven’t been paid and intend to stop delivering to TML. Here he must be a good political player to renegotiate trade terms and conditions. He comes into the room with the warm-up he had in dealing with the unions, and is very abrupt and dismissive with the suppliers. They become tough and decide to stop delivering and halt any further negotiations until the whole account is paid.

**Warming-up to go home**

Rolf has been coming home tense and anxious. Nobody in the family wanted to be close to him, not even the dog. His PS is always expanded and he is cranky, noisy or withdrawn. He was unable to relate to any one. When he learned the concept of warm-up he understood that he must ‘farewell’ the office to be able to ‘welcome’ home.

Rolf learned how to ‘farewell’ the office, leaving work behind to open up his mind and heart to home. Warm-up is the preparation for the next event. His successful method was to ring home two or three times each day to ‘touch base’. If he received a call from home and he was ready to talk, he took it. If he was busy, he was honest and told them he would ring back. And he did ring back (often with the help of Lynnette, who would remind him!).
If he was too focused on a specific issue, he would say, ‘Could you hold a minute?’ and then warm-up using the ‘blank page’ technique. He never talked if he was unable to ‘connect’. This meant giving total attention to the relationship, never typing or browsing the computer. He then rang home when he was ready to leave, to ask for news at home. This gave Rolf information to ‘prepare’ for whatever would happen at home.

As he learned this technique he was happily surprised when he found that it was not so difficult to move from one role to another. He changed from CEO to father and husband, without disturbing his concentration and attention to business. At home he often needed to phone the United States or clients overseas. He was also able to distance himself from ‘family’ for a short period of time, warm-up into the CEO role, be efficient in the role and come back to connect with his family. If the conversation with HQ was tense, he would stay in the office, without doing any work, until he felt ready to be with his family. He learned that when his PS is contracted he can share things about TML and they are not heavy or imposing to other members of the family.

Mega-roles
Mega-roles are overdeveloped roles. We know by now that role growth depends on the level of stimulation, or feeding of the role. For example, Hamish, who spends more than 12 hours a day at work, does not relate much to his family, and only reads business and leadership articles that develop his role as a manager much more than the rest of his other roles.

We also know that the self, or identity, is the sum of the roles people have. If the role that is mostly fed is the one of ‘manager’ at the expense of other roles, the identity of the person will mostly depend on that specific role of ‘manager’.

It is not surprising that when at home, a place were the dynamics played are foreign to him, he will feel like a ‘fish out of water’; his PS will quickly expand and will keep every other role but the manager inside the PS. He will relate with the more comfortable role, the only one available to him.

By way of illustration, take a pen and a piece of paper and sign your name. Now do the same with the other hand. Only someone skilled with both hands can do that easily; others find it extremely difficult. Which hand would you use, automatically, to sign your name? The same principle applies with roles—we always choose the best-known role first.

Mega-roles can be of great use in a company. Having a mega-specialist in key areas such as IT or sales can bring a leading edge to the company. However there are problems. For the individual, the benefit that may arise from having an over-developed role in one area of life may likely be detrimental to other
roles or areas of life such as family, or other skills at work. For example, he’s the hospital’s best surgeon, but he’s the worst communicator and extremely rude to everybody. He is the most creative programmer, but he’s crazy. She’s a brilliant sales person—the best in the state—but she’s mad. Ask her whatever you want about different types of management teams, but don’t ask her to run one.

For the organisation, such people are often rewarded financially and recognised by people who directly benefit by their mega-role, but are extremely demanding to other people around them. If a company chooses to have somebody with a mega-role and poor interpersonal skills, it’s important to know the limitations the person may have. Use the best from the person but ensure that there are mechanisms to protect others from being damaged by their inappropriateness—if not, in the long run the damage in the company may exceed the benefits.

Seventeen-year-old Katie is crying with her cousin. ‘I’m glad that my dad won the tender for the hotel in Hobart, that’s good for him but he doesn’t even see us children. He sees Mum a bit but only when he needs something, as he is emotionally dependent on her. I need him but he doesn’t understand. He’s just an architect.’

When I spoke to Katie’s father, he recognised that his only motivation in life was to be ‘somebody’. He became a renowned architect, but has his times of loneliness in five-star hotels or travelling in first class. He relates perfectly and efficiently with business partners and ideas such as architectural plans but he misses being able to laugh and have ‘connected’ good disagreements with family and children. He understands he has a mega-role and without modifying much about it he’s learning how ‘to be present when he’s not present’, and developing stimulating roles he knows he’ll value in the future. He will then become ‘somebody’ loved by people, not just a well-known architect.

When it is easier to stay at work than to come home

I found in my consultancy that very often ‘too much work’ has been an excuse not to go home, or for those who didn’t have a family or friends, not to go to their loneliness. People with mega-roles often choose to stay at work as the roles they have to deal with ‘home’ issues are poorly developed and a small fight between children can be experienced as an overwhelming enormous battle. Better to be busy at work. Others create work after hours, not because
it’s necessary, but because there is no place to go; no (perceived) welcoming family or no friends. Acknowledging this reality may be hard but it is the starting point in being honest and true to ourselves. If a person prefers to stay at work instead of going home they don’t have the right to impose that on everyone in the office. Look for somebody with whom you can share this reality, or join the forum@srmm.com.au.

'I relate therefore I am’

Identity is an expression of the self, and, as previously mentioned, the self is the sum of the roles we play. Philosophical and psychological schools of thought based on existentialism suggest, ‘we act because we exist’. The assumption is that a ‘self’ exists before the action. Moreno challenges this concept by demonstrating that before the self—that is, the manifestation of the maturational of the brain cortex—the child acts through psychosomatic roles. The child is relational even before birth.

The important point that Moreno makes is that the person since conception is relational, and that the child is not relational because it exists, but it exists because it is relational. Relationships create the foundation and are the self itself. I do not become a son, a neighbour, a doctor, a husband or a father because I exist. It is because I have those roles that I exist and that ‘I am’ the roles I play in life. This is a mind-blowing concept as it places the essence of identity and meaning in the way we relate.

We must highlight that these relationships are not just inter-personal; they include my relationships with my self, others, the metaphysical world and personal thoughts. Relating is the essence of existence, and this relating really takes place in time and space, in the moment, the here and now. This dynamic places the person in the central point of the flow of life: I’m in the heart of relationships, between people, time and circumstances.

Managers who understand the importance of ‘relating’ will be able to create work environments and dynamics that will facilitate ‘the way we do things’. The Management by Objectives theory, suggested by P. Drucker, which aims to achieve the highest level of performance from each employee—and, let me add, to sustain it while they enjoy a high level of work and life satisfaction—can only be achieved if people can become better people while developing a better and more profitable organisation.

CEOs must understand that they will have a delightful honeymoon with shareholders and the Board but a disastrous marriage with associates, if they do not really comprehend the importance of promoting diverse role development appropriate for each employee, and an environment where people can become better people.
To have a stronger workforce, managers must learn how to facilitate role development. The more roles the organisation can stimulate in the employee, including the development of family and social roles, the stronger the workforce will be and people will not want to leave (as seen in the net metaphor).

David is a partner in a consulting accounting firm. This global organisation spends millions of dollars in traineeship and providing state-of-the-art training to new accredited accountants and economists. What they find is that after a period of three to five years these (now better-trained) professionals will leave to start their own practices or are poached by other organisations, a cheaper way of training.

Looking at the role development at those companies we can easily see that the new, fresh employee can be exposed to a diversity of departments to learn different tasks, but all of them are in a narrow area of development. They may ‘pass through’ other departments as visitors, but not develop skills: if there is no role development there is no enrichment of the self. Just exposing a person to different jobs would not necessarily develop those roles; the roles must find another complementary role to play to be able to increase. During experience in different departments, employees must have some level of responsibility and accountability. The lack of multiple role stimulation creates mega-roles as the person is stimulated in only one area.

Many new professionals who enter the corporate arena find they experience mono-role development, overwork, an environment of strain and no balance. It’s no wonder the person would wish to ‘disappear’ from that place. But as the ‘self’ has not been enriched, it is more likely that the person may create or find a new working environment that is the same or worse than the one they have escaped from.

Is it so difficult to understand? If I drain my employee of all of their energy and strength at work, they will arrive home empty, depleted, irritable and broken, unable to relate to anyone. If they are drained at work, and unable to recharge and be enriched at home, what kind of employee, partner, or associate will I have in a short period of time? Let me tell you: a robot.

Some managers will argue that this is the only way to be really effective: take away someone’s free will, push them to the limit and they will give you their life. This can be true because it is exactly what cult leaders do to people, the typical ‘brain wash’. But we know that a person who values life and is really committed to true success and genuinely interested in high but sustainable performance will have a vision of developing creative innovators and not
robots. Can you imagine a team, and an organisation, with creative innovators instead of mechanical followers?

The solution is to:

- Create a relational environment. Where do you start? Yourself.
- Encourage every manager and employee to develop their role with new challenges. Where do you start? Yourself.
- Create possibilities for people to ‘play’ other roles, make them rotate from department to department or from activity to activity (remember they must have some kind of responsibility and accountability). Where do you start? Yourself (it is not necessary to start from the bottom to learn).
- Not take every drop of blood from your people: let them use some for family and personal life. They will later bring more blood to your company and the family will be supportive of their work as it is a blessing not a curse to the family. Where do you start? Yourself.
- Help people to be ‘creative’ even in the most repetitive activity. Where do you start? Yourself.

To recap

The core of relationship capital is in the ‘relationship’ itself. Within the model described, this is called the ‘link’—the actual interaction in communication. It’s not in what I feel, I want or I am; neither is it in what the other person feels, wants or is. It’s not in them or in me but between them and me, among us, as the SRMM postulates.

A permanent awareness of our personal space gives us the opportunity to relate by exposing the best of our selves, not the worst. Being surrounded by the people who help our personal space to contract is one of the best assets we can have in life—we call these people ‘low maintenance’.

Healthy relationships are those that make us better people, help us grow and help us to be the people we are meant to be. Our identity is the sum of the roles we play; therefore, by looking at them we can see what we are. There are roles we play that may give us much apparent satisfaction and effectiveness, but they are no more than mega-roles that eat up all our attention and energy, causing us to lose the opportunity to expand ourselves with other people, especially family and friends. As a result these precious people may often prefer us to be away at work rather than with them.

An organisation that is serious about its true bottom-line performance will incorporate in every strategic plan a genuine look at the relationships within the team for the whole company or for each department. These must be living documents that do not just end up in personality profiles consigned to filing cabinets.
The most capable people would like to belong to an organisation within which they can grow, and not just remain as static machines.

2 Adapted from Encyclopedia Britannica CD-ROM 2000.
4 Rojas-Bermudez, op. cit.
9 Lorenz coined the term ‘imprinting’ to describe the development of a fast learning process of recognition of a ‘parent’ figure by animals. It is the first impression, an experiential seal that may never, or with difficulty, be changed. Lorenz, K. 1965, Evolution and Modification of Behavior, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
10 ‘There’s more to experiencing a joke than just getting the punch line. It also feels good, and that’s reflected in the brain’, says neuroscientist Vinod Goel from York University in Toronto. He looked at what parts of the brain were activated when different types of jokes were heard and what parts turn on when we think a joke is pretty darned funny. Simeone, L. Analysis: New study shows how the brain processes humour, Weekend Edition—Sunday NPR, 25/2/2001.
Rolf felt both excited and a little apprehensive as the time approached for his second appointment with the coach. After the first session, he had rushed home to tell Inge what had happened. He was unusually cheerful, she noticed. Most days he was uncommunicative, even morose; but now he couldn’t stop talking! She knew that he had reached a crisis point at work, and she couldn’t go on for much longer with things the way they were at home. She felt a tiny glimmer of hope.

When the coach arrived at Rolf’s office at the appointed time, he was met by Lynnette, who was smiling broadly. ‘I did what you asked,’ she said. ‘He’s been in there for half an hour without any interruptions. I didn’t even put his calls through.’

‘Excellent,’ said the coach.

As he went into the inner office and greeted Rolf, he noticed that he seemed more relaxed than at the start of their first session two days earlier.

‘Hi, Rolf. How are you?’ he said.

‘Not too bad,’ he replied. ‘I can see the situation more clearly now. But I’m still very worried about how to tackle the problem with the US.’ He frowned as he picked up the printout of an e-mail he’d received from Toby Tillick.

**Coach:** I understand. We’ve got a bit of a challenge ahead of us today. The outcome will depend on which platform you’re coming from. Remember, you can operate from the platform of being a defeated mule or an insightful guide. You can either carry on the way you have been, like a robot, as you said; or you can take on the role of the creative person you said you wanted to be. But before we start, tell me more about how you’ve been since our last session.
Rolf: After you left I felt good. I went home and told Inge what had happened. But when I was getting ready for bed I checked my schedule for the next day and started to feel pressured again. I had a teleconference scheduled with the factory managers and the directors to talk about budgets. Tim had set it up, as he’s concerned about our expenditure on IT equipment and personnel. He thinks we can’t afford it until we’re out of debt. Tim’s view, which the factory managers share, is that production is down because the equipment is obsolete and everyone’s really stressed out. He reckons we have no choice; we have to upgrade the equipment and employ more staff. Michelle doesn’t care either way, she says. Her main concern is having to deal with complaints from clients when we can’t deliver what they’ve paid for. She feels like she’s the one who has to clear up the mess and find us new business. It’s a real mess. And I’m in the middle. I can see everyone’s point of view. We can’t afford to do it, but we can’t afford not to produce. And we can’t afford to lose any more clients or valuable people like Michelle and Tim. I’ve got to sort it all out. So, I wasn’t feeling too good when I went to bed the other night, because I was thinking about that.

Coach: Rolf, which platform are you coming from?

Rolf: The usual one, I guess—defeated mule. But it’s all so difficult!

Coach: Yes, I can see that it’s difficult. But if you try to deal with this situation in your usual way, you’ll get the same result you usually do. Let’s look at it from the point of view of the insightful guide. Remember that in the second stage you set up, you’re standing upright? I agree that the problem’s a difficult one to solve, but if you come at it from that platform instead of your old one, at least you’ll be able to see more clearly. Remember that when you feel like a defeated mule, all you can see is your feet. If you can stand up and look ahead, you’ll feel more in control.

Rolf: I understand.

Coach: Good. Let’s move on. Let’s look at this e-mail and talk now about what’s happening with the US. I understand they’re waiting on your report, and that what you communicate to them in that report is very important. Before we continue, let’s have a look at these photos of the stages from last time. I want you to concentrate on being an insightful guide. That’s the role we’ve mapped out for you that will get you to where you want to be.
By reminding Rolf that his current defeated mule role (his coping role) was the reverse of the role he actually wanted to take on, that of the insightful guide (his progressive role), the coach was encouraging him to take on the role of his ‘better self’. He explained to Rolf that his coping role was no longer working—in fact, it had already started to fragment. A person whose role in life has fragmented typically experiences anxiety, apprehension, stress and burnout (see Chapter 7). They find it difficult to trust others, and so they become distant in their relationships. Every time Rolf played the role of the defeated mule, he explained, he became his ‘worst self’. If he could adopt the progressive role of the insightful guide, he would be a better person; one who would be able to motivate others, achieve the objectives of the organisation and enjoy a better home life.

**Role Cascade**

At this point the coach used the Role Cascade. It’s a powerful and descriptive way of representing the roles we play in life as a response to other people’s roles or stimulation. This interaction creates a cascade of reactions that ends in a final situation.

In this instance the coach started the conversation with the Play of Life and he moved on to the Role Cascade.

**Coach:** Let’s move on. We’ll focus on the person you need to communicate with in the US, the Australasian chairman. That’s Toby Tillick, right?
[The coach placed another Play of Life board on the table.]

**Coach:** Rolf, when you think about Toby and the way he’s relating to you at the moment, what image do you have? Choose a figure to represent him, like we did last time, and place him on the stage in a way that symbolises the image you have of him.

[Rolf chose a figure and placed it in the centre of the stage, standing upright and with one arm raised.] (For photographs illustrating this technique, see www.playoflife.com)

**Coach:** How do you see yourself in this dynamic? Choose a figure to represent you.

[Rolf chose the figure of a young boy and placed it in front of, and very close to, the figure representing Toby.]
Coach: Does this represent how you see the relationship?
Rolf: Yes. When I look at it, I feel tightness in my chest.

Coach: What two words would you use to describe Toby’s role? Is he a supportive encourager, for example?
Rolf: No! He’s an insensitive demander.

Coach: I’d like you to write that down in this box.
   [The coach handed Rolf a piece of graph paper. Rolf wrote the words ‘insensitive demander’ in the space the coach indicated.]
Coach: Now, what words would you use to describe you in this relationship?
Rolf: ‘Clumsy justifier.’
Coach: OK, write that down. Now, how do you think the dynamic between you is changing?
Rolf: I feel like he’s becoming tougher on me.

Coach: Could you show me that using the figures?
   [Rolf moved the figure of Toby closer to the Rolf figure and raised Toby’s other arm.]
Coach: What words would you use to describe him now?
Rolf: ‘Arrogant tyrant.’
Coach: OK, write that down. And what about you?
Rolf: ‘Obedient servant.’

Coach: How do you think the arrogant tyrant would respond to you as an obedient servant? Move the figures again to show me. What words would you use to describe him now?
   [Rolf moved the Toby figure back a couple of steps, lowered one arm, and then pointed one hand at the figure representing himself.]
Rolf: He’s a bullying dictator.
Coach: And what about you?
Rolf: This is when I become a defeated mule! I just can’t deal with it.

The coach explained to Rolf that the boxes he had marked on the sheet of paper mapped his and Toby’s relationship in the form of a role cascade graph. He connected the boxes with arrows to show how one role cascaded into the next.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Toby Tillick (counter-role)</th>
<th>Rolf (role taken)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insensitive demander</td>
<td>Clumsy justifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrogant tyrant</td>
<td>Obedient servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying dictator</td>
<td>Defeated mule</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.1: Role Cascade graph I
Rolf: I’m surprised that I described myself as clumsy in the first box. Normally I see myself as being strong and decisive at work. I don’t know why I said that.

Coach: Do you want to change it?

Rolf: No. There must be some truth in it, I guess, if I said it.

Coach: Rolf, what is the purpose in playing the role ‘clumsy justifier?’

Rolf: To protect myself.

Coach: Looking at the end result of this relationship, what is the role you end with?

Rolf: [Looking at the diagram] Defeated mule.

Coach: Well, this is the real purpose of playing that role.

Rolf: What do you mean?

Coach: If you want to go from Melbourne to Sydney and you take the plane to Perth, where would you arrive?

Rolf: In Perth.

Coach: You may ‘desire’ to go to Sydney but the ‘purpose’ of taking the plane to Perth is to go to Perth.

Rolf: I get it! Desire is not enough—I must make the right choice of plane.

Coach: That’s right. Every time you start as a clumsy justifier you’ll end as a defeated mule. The literal purpose of our action is not ‘where I would like to arrive’ but ‘where I’ll most likely arrive if I travel in this way’. If you don’t like your corporate culture, warm-up, think and talk about changing it, get the ideal picture or destination. If the opportunity comes, share it with others. Build up energy, spontaneity and take time to allow internal creative processes to develop within yourself or open to see other people’s customs you would like to incorporate into your life.

Role models

The coach believed that Rolf’s use of the word ‘clumsy’ might not have been an accident. Although he said he didn’t usually think of himself as being clumsy, the coach thought it possible that Rolf had learned earlier in his life to take on the role of being clumsy when faced with situations where he felt pressured.

The aim of the coach is not to ‘psychoanalyse’ Rolf. The questioning about his history is not to enter into his private life but to find a thread of an event that may be the reason why he’s living or behaving in certain ways. Whatever was useful before may not be the best solution at present.

The coach placed another sheet of paper on the table. He asked Rolf to write the word ‘clumsy’ under the heading ‘role taken’, and directly beneath that to write the word ‘justifier’.
Coach: You said that when Toby acts towards you like an insensitive demander, you respond by taking on the role of a clumsy justifier. Which of those two words, ‘insensitive’ or ‘demander’, makes you feel clumsy? And which one makes you feel like a justifier? Write them in the box next to them.

Rolf: I guess I feel clumsy when he’s demanding, and I feel like I have to justify myself when he’s insensitive.

Coach: Let’s look at the relationship between the first two—you feel clumsy when he acts in a demanding way. Can you remember having that sort of relationship with anyone else before in your life?

Rolf: Yes. When I was seven my parents moved me to a new school. I’d been really happy at my old school, and I got on well with my teachers. But at the new school I went to, the teachers weren’t very friendly. There was one teacher, a man, who I was really frightened of. He made fun of me in front of my classmates because my family was poor. I used to feel really nervous around him and would drop things and be unable to answer if he asked me a question. I felt really humiliated and frightened. He made me feel very small and clumsy.

Coach: When you think about it now, what would have been the best way to respond to this man?

Rolf: I should have felt more self-assured. I wasn’t inferior to the other students academically. He just made me feel inferior.

Coach: And if we look at the relationship between your need to justify yourself when someone acts insensitively towards you, have you felt like that before?

Rolf: That’s how I felt around my father all the time. We all felt like that, even my mother. He always made us feel guilty, like we were in the wrong. I saw how my mother behaved with my father, and I did the same.

Coach: And how do you think you could have responded differently? What would have been a more appropriate role?

Rolf: Clear presenter. I’d like to have been able to present the facts clearly to prove I wasn’t in the wrong, without having to justify myself. Or if I was in the wrong, just to accept the fact without feeling guilty.

Rolf finished filling in the boxes of his role cascade graph, which now looked like Figure 5.2.

Following this exercise, Rolf said to the coach that he was able to see that his taking on the role of a clumsy justifier wasn’t a recent behaviour to do with his relationship with Toby Tillick, but went right back to when he was a child. Fear seemed to be the trigger, he said. He had seen his mother as a
Figure 5.2: Role Cascade graph II

Role model and behaved the same way she did, even though it didn’t achieve the desired effect, which was not to feel guilty and wronged but to be able to explain his position clearly and rationally. He admitted to the coach that he hadn’t been aware that he was still using an inappropriate role model. He now realised that if he could discard that model and replace it with a new, more appropriate one, he would be able to act differently in future and have a better life.

Coach: Do you think people are aware that you take on this role of clumsy justifier?

Rolf: Maybe my wife’s aware of it. But I generally hide it pretty well.

Coach: How do you do that?

Rolf: I present another face instead, like maybe a sharp and cynical confronter. I hate to see myself as weak.

Coach: That’s very different! How do you move from one role to the other?

Rolf: [Sheepishly] A drink or two sometimes helps.

Coach: That’s interesting. I’d like to come back to that another time.

The coach explained to Rolf that while, in the past, he had been able to conceal his clumsy, justifying side from everyone except his wife, it was now becoming more difficult to always present himself as being strong and decisive. The pressures had built up to such an extent that he was starting to crack. He was becoming tired from the effort of presenting a different face to the people at work, including his superiors in the United States, and this was making him very vulnerable (this is role fragmentation).

Rolf agreed that if he continued to play the role of clumsy justifier with Toby Tillick, he would end up like the defeated mule in the first role cascade graph. On the other hand, it would be unwise to antagonise Toby by presenting himself as a cynical confronter. Neither role would help him to become a more successful leader. It was time to change, to create a new dynamic.

The coach reassured Rolf that he was committed to helping him learn new, creative roles to replace his old ones. He explained that by doing this, Rolf
would become less anxious and become able to change the way he operates. Their immediate goal, he said, was to find a way for Rolf to confront Toby that would have a positive outcome for Rolf and the company. He had already been able to give a name to the role he wanted to play with Toby—‘self-assured, clear presenter’—it was now time to develop that role.

**Coach:** Rolf, look at the stage again. You’ve presented yourself here as a clumsy justifier. How would you represent yourself as being a self-assured presenter?

[Rolf chose another figure, an adult this time, and placed it on the stage some distance from the Toby figure.]

**Rolf:** In the previous situation I was allowing myself to be bullied. I was too small, and too close to him. On the other hand, by acting like a sharp and cynical confronter, I can make myself feel bigger and less intimidated. But I don’t want to be either. I just want to be me. By placing myself at a distance, I can get a better view.

**Coach:** From this new position, do you still see Toby as an insensitive demander?

**Rolf:** Yes, I do. But now I can see him. Before I just felt him. Now he doesn’t look so big, and I can just be me.

**Coach:** Go back to being the first, small figure for a moment. As that person, how would you respond to his request for a report on the situation here at TML?

**Rolf:** I don’t know what to say. I feel small and frightened.

**Coach:** What would you say to him?

**Rolf:** I don’t know. I might mumble, or I might shout at him. That’s why I’m procrastinating.

**Coach:** Rolf, now be the second figure. What would you say to him as that person?

**Rolf:** I feel better as this person. I’d say, ‘Toby, I understand your concern. I’d like to assure you that we are going to make some changes here at TML Australia.’

**Coach:** ‘Going to start’ or ‘have already started’?

**Rolf:** Good point.

**Coach:** Do you remember responding to a similar situation as a self-assured presenter?

**Rolf:** No. I’m only like that when there’s no conflict or when I’ve had a couple of drinks. When there’s conflict, I act like a cynical confronter. People see me as strong, and they respect and trust me. My wife hates it, though, when I’m like that.
The coach suggested that Rolf set up a meeting with his directors so that he could meet them. In the meantime, Rolf should practise his self-assured presenter role. He asked Rolf not to do any more work for the day, but to go home early. This would help him to remain focused on practising his new role. If he stayed at the office, the coach explained, something might happen to make him feel pressured, which would make him revert to his old role. He should also avoid getting into any arguments at home, for the same reason.

Rolf was at a delicate point in his transformation. He needed to be determined to reach his goal and creative in finding ways to do it, while at the same time he probably felt very alone in a strange place between his old life and the life he wanted to have. The coach reassured him that he had the support of the people around him. He had a very good chance, he said, of changing his life from one based on anxiety and fear, to one where he would feel in control and where his need to feel appreciated, loved and respected would be fulfilled. Until their next meeting the following morning, the coach said, Rolf should try to think positive and remember the happy times in his past.

The roles Rolf has created are new: they are fragile and rudimentary. They are still in the ‘role creating’ stage, they haven’t been exercised yet. The coach’s suggestion of leaving the office at that time is based on the knowledge that the situation at TML is in turmoil and it could erupt in an emergency at any time, which will disrupt Rolf’s warm-up.

The coach is using this opportunity when Rolf has slowed down and is able to focus on only one thing. He is also aware that Rolf can be easily stimulated in ways that would motivate him to respond with old patterns of behaviour and that this would delay this new role development.

Changing direction — living as a hinge

Rolf is a hinge, he is changing direction. He has been living in certain ways that follow a generational pattern of behaviour; now he’s changing direction.

He is motivated to change his behavioural patterns and is learning a new way of relating. Role models he has been utilising since he was a child have been challenged. Being a hinge is to confront roles and styles of life (corporate culture), even though they might be generations old.

Being a hinge is not easy; it’s not just difficult, but it’s often at the edge of the impossible. We can even say that being a hinge is a sacred place where the forces of old behaviour face the new, fragile and rudimentary vigour that wants to conquer new lands. Being a hinge is a spiritual process; it’s spiritual because it involves relationships.
What is essential here is to have the knowledge of a better land ahead that is the goal or objective in life. There must be determination to achieve it, creativity to make a new role and spontaneity to make it happen. Being a hinge is lonely—the self, the person as a whole, faces the struggle to exercise the new role.

A relational container, a support, can make a difference. A container is an environment of trust and support. It consists of somebody who cares, who holds some authority for the person. It can be a mentor or coach, a friend or a partner. Children or followers often also give emotional support and encouragement to change. Being a hinge is not just for the self; it benefits others, it benefits society.

Rolf’s old or known patterns have been of a defeated mule, clumsy justifier or cynical confronter. He also has had the help of his dubious friend alcohol, which offers help with one hand and knocks him down with the other. Can Rolf change? Yes, he can, if . . . Every possibility of change depends on an ‘if’. Looking at Rolf’s situation we may believe that he will likely make it as he has:

- Awareness of the seriousness of the present situation
- A developing environment of trust and support
- A goal or objective
- A mentor/coach
- A friend/partner/colleagues/family
- A child/followers
- Determination.

Managing by fear

During the past four years Rolf’s management was based on fear. Fear in
himself, that he would not be able to achieve, and confront situations at work and in his family; fears that key people in his life may leave him; fear of losing his job. Fear of fear.

Appropriate fear is necessary to stimulate instinctive and rational mechanisms for survival. Smelling smoke at home and being worried that there could be fire is an appropriate response that could save your house and your life. Looking at a profit and loss account that shows a loss and questioning why is appropriate. But if the financial controller is fired after the first unsatisfactory profit and loss account, that may be inappropriate, an over-reaction. Likewise, no response, comment or questioning—a paralysis—is inadequate; it is a reaction below appropriate level. Both reactions are based on panic or sometimes ignorance.

Panic is the highest level of anxiety and fear. As mentioned before it could come from paralysis or over-reaction, but the important factor is that it is inappropriate. (See page 60 for a discussion of anxiety and spontaneity.)

One of the major factors in responding to life in a fearful rather than hopeful way is that the foundation, the platform the person is based on, is a history of failure, dissatisfaction, lack of support, neglect and/or abuse. Stories of unsatisfied needs.

Strengthening the platform of life—the Pillars of Life

As Rolf has been living in fear for such a long time, during the meeting the coach asked him to play a simple yet profound exercise utilising the Play of Life called the Pillars of Life (for the complete technique see www.playoflife.com/selfhelp).

Rolf was directed to only think of positive, worthwhile and good situations in life. Things that when remembered could produce a sense of appreciation—feeling loved and respected—and give a sense of control, achievement and possibility. The significance of this technique is that it only dwells on positive things. As we know, Rolf was feeling extremely down (‘defeated mule’) and this was the time to help him create a better platform.

He remembered, and was surprised by, many of his memories; about 20 good experiences, including:

- Four years old. Being held by his mother when he was sick; feelings of being supported and loved—‘I’m with you’.
- Eight years old. Fight with a friend, feeling devastated. His father supported him, encouraged him and made him feel understood.
- Twenty-three years old. Spending the first day out with Inge in a park in London. Loved, not alone, the world at his feet.
Coach: Rolf, how often do you think of these things?
Rolf: Never.

Coach: Looking at the situation you are now in at TML, including your work and family reality, which of these messages could give you a feeling of peace, of hope?
Rolf: ‘I’m with you, encouraged, and understood, the world at my feet.’

Coach: Well, Rolf, you have now another picture, apart from the one I took at the first meeting. I would like to invite you to think many times each day on these things. They belong to you, were gifts given to you. I also recommend you share those experiences with your children.

This practice gave Rolf a great sense of hope and companionship. There were many moments he had wanted to quit, to fire everybody, to start again, but he stayed with his picture, his vision, and this made his personal space contract. This allowed him to find appropriate actions that gave him positive results.

The Pillars of Life is a technique based on one of the principles of the Relationship Mapping Model. Its purpose is to highlight the beauty, life, health and good memories people have. They help them to identify and enjoy what ‘is’ or what they ‘have’, and not to focus on and complain about what ‘is not’ or they ‘don’t have’.

Pillars are positive, valuable experiences people have had and can hang on to to sustain them in difficult moments in life.

There is a wonderful invitation and piece of advice in the Bible in which the writer encourages people to:

*Fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely and honourable.* (NIV Bible, Phil 4:8.)

This is not just religious advice, it is commonsense teaching. Viktor Frankl mentions a wonderful experience while he was in a terrible place, a World War II concentration camp. At the end of his strength, feeling he was collapsing, he remembered a moment with his wife, whom he knew was already dead. She was his girlfriend at the time and they were together on a bus trip. He remembered the laughter, fun, happiness and her presence. He kept this memory in his mind and survived the atrocities of the concentration camp.
When we look at our past we create a lens, which we look at our life through. The important thing here is that we look at our present and our future through the same lens. If the lens we use to see and understand our past is negative, foggy, full of resentment and bitterness, we must accept that the same lens will also tint the reality of our present and our future.

Many counselling methods and psychological schools are based on dealing with issues of hurt from the past, such as neglect or abuse people have suffered, so that people can be free in the future. The problem is that focusing just on the hurt, neglect or abuse from the past creates a lens that makes the present look blurry and the future look dark.

After assessing what major issues the person or team is presenting, this method identifies the beauty and strength, the parts of the past that can provide life, support and a firm foundation. The theory is based on this premise: people are not alive because of the torture, aggression, neglect or abuse of the past, or the misery of the present; they are alive because of the strengths, or pillars, that have sustained them through life. Role models, people, good experiences, and books are some of the elements that create a foundation for life.

Rolf’s opportunity for change was not an accident; it was based on solid ground, strong foundations that enable him and his team to make the company succeed.

Caring enough to confront

Relationships at TML have been strained for a long time. They have failed to find ways of facing each other to be able to really say what they think about each other’s performance. They lack effective systems to confront each other. Failure to meet deadlines, to meet objectives, and to report problems are a few of the issues they have been facing.

Systems and procedures are essential to create effective work practices, but the final efficiency of the methods will lie in the human factor, the interpersonal relationship.

Caring Enough to Confront is the title of a book by David W. Augsburger. The word ‘confrontation’ has connotations of conflict, crisis, and mutual hostility or quarrel. The Collins Dictionary defines it as:

n. 1. the act or an instance of confronting. 2. a situation of mutual hostility between two powers or nations without open warfare. 3. a state of conflict between two antagonistic forces, creeds, or ideas etc.

Going ‘to confront’ is like going to war. In our language we do not have a word to describe the act of presenting to another person what we think of
them, or our opinion of their performance. This is why in relationship counselling one of the most difficult issues is how two or more people in a family can tell the other person what they feel and think of them. Conversations at this level often become intense and aggressive, ending worse than when they started. Looking back to ‘the way we relate’, we find that when confronted, our personal space expands, the roles get enclosed by a wall, and there is no ‘link’; no flow of information. The SRMM provides tools to make confrontation possible without the need to fight.

Let’s put some things together. It is important that the person who is confronting has a good warm-up, to have their PS contracted. As the person is warmed up, their PS contracts and the appropriate role can emerge so that the person will be able to ‘choose’ the right words and actions to make this a successful meeting (e.g., a father will confront his child as a father, not as a manager). They would also need to create an environment where the other person could also have their PS as contracted as much as possible. We must acknowledge that both roles are difficult, so it will be essential to be aware of the ‘amber light’.

**Steps for an effective confrontation**

1. Start your conversation with a positive point. Our fear of confronting or being confronted is based on the difficulty of showing somebody that they were wrong, only to find ourselves being wrong. The emotional response is what makes the PS expand, therefore if we could build up the confrontational experience through elements that would appease our emotions, we could create a solid base to start the process.
2. Is there a common understanding of the objective of the person or department you are facing?
   If YES, go to 4. If NO, go to 3.
3. Is there a common understanding of the objectives of the job and key performance indicators, including time deadline?
   If YES, go to 4. If NO, see below.
4. State the facts, clearly without judgment or making it personal.
5. Relate the relevance or how this fact would directly or indirectly affect different areas. You can say: ‘Are you aware that if you do not achieve this objective, it may affect:
   - Customer service (internal customers, other people or departments, external customers)?
   - Financial impact?
   - The reputation of the company?
   - What the principal would think about us?’
No understanding of the key performance indicators

If the answer to point 3 was NO, this is the opportunity to clarify with
the employee if they really understand the objective (the purpose of their job) as well as to clarify the ways of assessing the performance of the job (KPIs): clarity is essential. The employee should have time to think about their response. It’s important to assess if an employee who has been confronted is able to describe their point of view following the same points: such a conversation will be descriptive but not defensive.

When we ‘state the facts’ it has to be based on ‘common agreements and understanding’. Looking at the ‘objectives’ of the job and the ‘key performance indicators’ will give concrete parameters.

For example, consider the following exchange:

**Boss:** Do you understand that the objective of your department is to ‘test new materials within 72 hours after the sample is released’? That your report must be lodged with operations, with a copy to the MD, within 48 hours, or, if you find that this is not possible, you must write a memo as soon as you find you cannot make it on time?

**Testing manager:** Yes, this is my understanding.

**Boss:** Then, today is the fifth day after release of the fabric with the new polyester and you haven’t produced your report. Can you tell me more about this?

TML managers have really failed in confronting each other; they have no language to do it, no practical systems and no clear parameters to measure against.

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On one of my visits to the Australian psychodramatist Max Clayton, he noticed that the gardener had planted a small tree that would grow more than 8 feet high under 6-foot eaves. He walked up to him and said: ‘Hi Jack, this is my friend Carlos; Carlos this is my friend Jack. Hey Jack, you’re doing a great job there.’

‘Thank you’, answered Jack, with pride on his face.

Max went closer to the tree and touching the tip of the tree said: ‘Jack, I wonder how do you think this 8-foot tree will handle these 6-foot-high eaves?’

Jack looked at the tree, and noticed the roof for the first time. ‘I think I will have to do something about it!’

I was perplexed by this practical lesson in being a ‘naïve inquirer’. I would have said, which I regret to admit: ‘Haven’t you noticed that the tree will grow higher than the roof?’ This apparent question is really a statement: ‘You, stupid idiot, you’ve planted an 8-foot tree under a 6-foot roof.’
In response to this anecdote, Rolf admitted, ‘I wouldn’t say anything on the spot, but may come back later and take care of it myself. I would keep it in mind and at some time I would vent this in front of everyone, making the person feel so inappropriate and exposed. My family hates me for this.’

During this discussion, Lynnette came into the office and Rolf asked her to file a pile of documents into three categories. Lynnette forcefully answered, ‘No, I’ve decided to do it differently and I’ll do it after the long weekend.’ ‘OK,’ replied Rolf, and continued the conversation.

**Coach:** Rolf, do you relate like this often?

**Rolf:** What do you mean?

**Coach:** What just happened in your interaction with Lynnette?

**Rolf:** I asked her to file some documents and she said no. She will do it in her way when she can.

**Coach:** Do you know how is she going to file the documents? Are you at peace with her answer?

**Rolf:** No, I’m not. Now that I think about it, I’ve been asking her to file those documents for three months now and she always responds in the same way. What can I say? She’s otherwise so efficient.

**Coach:** I don’t know what you could say but here we have an example of how you build things up inside you, and when you least expect it you’ll throw it at her. Remember, everything that comes in, must come out. This issue, compared with other things you have in TML, is almost insignificant, especially when she’s so efficient, but it shows some of your ways of relating.

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**Moving forward—from rehearsal to reality**

Rolf’s next appointment with the coach consisted of a short meeting with the directors, Henry, Michelle and Tom, at which the coach observed Rolf’s style of relating to his team. Rolf had followed the coach’s advice the previous afternoon to think positively about himself and what he was trying to achieve. He felt this morning that he was coming from his ‘ideal’ platform—that of a self-assured, clear presenter—and not from his old platform of clumsy, defeated mule.

**Rolf:** We’re in a very difficult situation at the moment. We’ve had problem after problem, and we’ve just about reached the point of collapse—as a company and as individuals. It’s time for us to tackle the situation wisely, decisively and with determination. We have to change TML so that it can become a strong, healthy organisation that we’re all happy to be a part of. As directors, we have to support each other, and
we have to support our managers, who have to support their employees. It’s got to start at the top and extend right the way through the company. We’re going to find a way for everyone to work effectively and enjoy their jobs while also having a more balanced life so that they can enjoy more time with their families. I feel that I have your support, the support of our principals in the US, and my family’s support in making this happen. We’re very fortunate also to have the support of our coach here. You will each have the opportunity to work with him. By making this journey together, we’ll be able to achieve our goal.

Henry, Michelle and Tim listened attentively to what Rolf was saying. When he had finished, they congratulated him on his determination and his positive view of the future. They knew they had a lot of work to do to make Rolf’s vision a reality, but they felt that they now had a goal, and a leader to show them how to achieve it. Rolf was like his old self again!

Rolf felt energised by the meeting. He said to the coach, ‘I feel great! I haven’t felt like this in a long time. I’ve become so used to feeling defeated by everything, I’d forgotten what it’s like to feel self-assured and in control. I hope I feel this way when I’m explaining things to Toby Tillick.’

At that moment, Lynnette entered and said: ‘Mr Tillick for you, Rolf.’

‘What should I do?’ he asked the coach.

‘Take the call,’ he replied. ‘If he asks you how things are, tell him you’ve just had a meeting with the directors and you’ve agreed on an action plan.’

Although the call was unexpected, the coach encouraged Rolf to be spontaneous and ‘go with the flow’. He felt that Rolf would be able to continue from the platform of being a self-assured, clear presenter. He believed Rolf had successfully begun to transform himself into the person he wanted to be.

Toby wanted to talk to Rolf about some matters unrelated to the situation at TML Australia. Just as Rolf thought he was winding up the call, Toby asked him, ‘How are things going?’

Rolf could feel himself starting to bristle. He felt like Toby was patronising him and being a strong demander. His first thought was to give a cynical reply, but he quickly realised that by adopting the cynical confronter role he would lose his new sense of control and become a ‘robot’ again. His response to Toby’s question was open, honest and positive. He explained the situation clearly and confidently, and didn’t try to justify himself to Toby. He said he would e-mail him the action plan for TML Australia in the next day or so.

When he had finished speaking, he was surprised by Toby’s response: ‘Well, don’t overdo it, Rolf. I can tell that you’re handling things well and I know you’ve got the support of your people. I know you’ll do a good job. We don’t want you to burn out, though. We need you there.’
By changing his own role platform, Rolf had enabled Toby to do the same. From being a patronising strong demander, Toby had become a supportive partner. Here’s how the role cascade looked now.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Toby Tillick</th>
<th>Rolf</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patronising strong demander</td>
<td>Self-assured clear presenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open receiver</td>
<td>Interactive colleague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive partner</td>
<td>Satisfied partner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.4: Role cascade graph III

Rolf discussed with the coach how the call had gone, saying he was pleased that he had been able to overcome his usual pattern with Toby. ‘I got the impression from Toby that he’s behind me and really wants us to turn the situation around. I don’t feel so threatened by him now.’

To recap

The central point in this chapter is the hinge, the possibility for change. Organisational change is often practised in such a way that the change just happens in organisational charts, systems, procedures and strategic plans, but is not translated back to effective performance.

Role mapping provides a clear way of assessing the dynamics of our relationships, which are not easy to quantify, assess and measure. This technique provides a valuable and objective platform from which we can act to create change and not be stuck in repetitive behaviours that impoverish our soul, life, organisation and family.

We can move forward, and we can increase our relationship capital by developing more dynamic, more creative relationships. If you would like to assess the people you are relating with, to see if they are a drain or a gain, look at www.playoflife.com/selfhelp.

This chapter describes Inge’s experience in a workshop called ‘The Art of Living with Busy Partners’.

‘Living with Busy Partners’ is a three- to five-day program over three weeks that includes individual coaching with professional coaches. It has a flexible structure, where people coming from different stages and personal realities can meet and find a safe yet challenging environment where they can pause, reflect and learn better ways of living. The program can be tailored for companies to reflect on issues about life and communication.

The discussions in this chapter act as a short script for a workshop, but also as a practical methodology that anyone faced with the challenge of living with a busy partner can use. It describes what is possible when people—in this case women—are invited to honestly investigate their view on life and take positive steps towards a healthier life for themselves and their families.

The pressure that individuals and their families go through to develop and maintain a business is well known. People acquire great knowledge and skill in business development, with detailed marketing and sales plans, budgets and fairly accurate financial forecasts—but no forecasts of the pressure a business may inflict on a family. This pressure often creates the breakdown that takes every family stakeholder by surprise and often damages an organisation.

When people affected by life with a busy partner look back on their lives, they can see clear signs early in the process indicating that things were going from bad to worse.
The ‘Living with Busy Partners’ series intends to provide clear tips to highlight areas of risk as a preventative function, as well as provide remedial tools when the situation has already created some damage. The following case study is just an example of many situations people face in the course of relationships.

The reality of busy-ness—the absent partner

The process of change in Rolf and at TML was firstly triggered by Inge, Rolf’s wife. Her story is typical of what it is like to live with a busy partner.

When Inge and Rolf migrated to Australia to start a new life, Inge supported Rolf in accepting the position of MD at TML. She knew that every beginning is hard and that it would be difficult, and that much time would be needed to set up the company. Inge chose to delay her professional development in education to allow Rolf to settle in his position. This suited both of them well, as they always planned to create a family where parents could be present, especially in the first years of the children’s lives.

But now, ten years later, Inge is still waiting. Four years earlier Inge had approached Rolf and challenged him about his style of life. This made Rolf even more distressed and distant with her and the kids. She was worried that the ‘settling in’ had taken too long, but Rolf had said, ‘Support me now, just for a little bit longer. We will be over this soon and then we’ll enjoy life.’ Inge intellectually accepted this request, but could not cope with the emotional pressure. She withdrew her application for work as a university academic. She stayed with the children, as Rolf needed to work long hours. Week after week he wasn’t around, holidays became shorter, and the only time he was home early was to entertain business people where Inge had to put on a ‘friendly’ face. Rolf became aloof, emotionally disconnected and irritable. Supporting him was no fun anymore. Inge became sour and unpleasant to be with.

Inge felt lonely and angry with Rolf. When he arrived late in the evenings, she would pretend she was already asleep, or say she had a headache, or would go out with friends. Some of those people were also lonely and resentful about life and men, which didn’t give Inge any hope or peace. Their company filled her time but not her heart, and created more resentment and hostility towards Rolf. This environment at home gave Rolf a wonderful excuse to prefer to be at work rather than at home.

Inge was not aware that her mind and heart had shifted their focus from Rolf. At the beginning of the relationship her mind was on the possibilities of enjoying life with the man she loved and with her children. When things didn’t change and she felt forced to accept the opposite of what she wanted and had
been waiting for, her focus changed to pain, despair and defeat, and a feeling
of not being respected or cared for.

Workshop—Day 1

Which lens?

After preliminary introductions, the workshop begins with the facilitator
asking participants to introduce themselves to the other group members ‘as
you are in the future’, as though they are living the style of life they wished
to have; that is, they must reply in the present tense.

Inge introduces herself: ‘I have a husband who isn’t so busy, I’m not angry
and I don’t have headaches. My children don’t overwhelm me, and I don’t
spend time on things that distract me from studying...’

The facilitator then invites Inge and other participants to do it again from
a positive viewpoint. Inge then changes her description: ‘I’m enjoying my
marriage with my husband; I feel healthy and get pleasure from my kids.
Working at uni is rewarding and I’ve been offered a PhD.’

Inge is not the only one in the group of 16 women who uses a negative
description to introduce herself. She is surprised that some women are not even
able to identify an ideal picture in their mind. Others are very clear of what they
want but they need some validation from other women to reassure themselves.

The facilitator explains: ‘If you use a reverse or negative vocabulary the
focus is still on what you lack. If you look through negative (dark) lenses you’ll
see negative; if you look through positive (clear) lenses you’ll see positive.
Using that terminology is not just a linguistic issue—what it reveals is that you
are based on an unconstructive and undignifying platform as a parameter for
your life.’

We must be aware of the type of lenses we are using. Sometimes we become
so used to dark glasses during the day that we forget we have them on. We
only become aware that we can’t see clearly when someone else turns a light
on, notices it or when our sight is really limited. This slow loss of sight and the
unawareness of the process is frightening. As Maturana said in the Tree of
Knowledge, one of the more significant things about knowledge is ‘we do not
know that we don’t know’. Nobody in this group is aware, until the workshop,
that they are using ‘negative’ lenses.

In five years of running this workshop for 450 women, we found that in
responding to the first question of ‘picture yourself in the future’:

- 38% used negative language
- 20% were unable to picture an ideal future
- 18% used positive language but didn’t believe that could ever be true
15% used positive language and hoped to obtain their ideal picture
9% used positive language and felt confident they would really get what they wanted.

Negative language in this context is defined as the use of opposite emphasis in the description of an event or feeling, such as ‘I’m not sad’, instead of ‘I’m happy’. Negative language requires the recipient of the message to translate the concept from negative to positive (‘I’m not angry’ doesn’t give an idea of what the person is really feeling) and in this translation the other person may not arrive at the conclusion or understand the meaning that was intended.

Where did this lens come from?
Negative lenses don’t come from nowhere. The group is asked to think about the first time they used that lens.

Inge remembers that she started using negative language when she was an adolescent. Her mother used to say to her: ‘Don’t complain, at least your father is not an alcoholic and your mother is not a bad woman.’ She knew very well what they were not, but she couldn’t create a strong picture of what they really were. She stopped using it when she met Rolf but has now been using it again for about four years.

The facilitator invites those who have identified a negative way of viewing life to ‘describe your ideal life using positive language and a clear, firm tone in your voice’.

Inge responds: ‘It’s Friday night; I come back from my work tired but happy. There is noise in the house; there is my husband playing with the kids. We have dinner together and plan the weekend.’

Most of the group has been able to describe an ideal with positive language. They are encouraged to experience ‘being there in the future’. They are guided to enjoy that reality and to apply what they feel in their bodies, to get off their chairs and to walk and relate to others in the group from that position of an ‘ideal’ life. This is an expressive psychodramatic technique that people can openly relate to.

Inge notices she is grinning. Her eyes and neck are relaxed. Her arms move more freely and her head is lifted so she can see better and breathe more freely. And she notices, with surprise, that her headache has gone.

Every participant experiences the life they would like to live. Even those who verbally are unable to describe it are able to physically find a style of life much closer to the one they wish to have.

The workshop participants reach this point before the morning break, without any drugs or emotional hype. They do so because this energy, this
style of life, was within them all along, the facilitator was only the catalyst. The challenge is now how to obtain and create what they found in the workshop in their personal life. This is the goal of the workshop.

Living in the hinge

The facilitator continues to explore the concept of an ideal life: ‘When you look back at your family, your father’s or mother’s generation, do you find that those family members had enjoyed the type of “ideal” life that you are picturing now?’

Two women saw their parents living that happy life, but they can’t create the same in their marriages. Three believe that their grandparents knew of it but not their parents. Nine women acknowledge that their parents and grandparents didn’t know about this type of life; and two said that one of their parents did know about a life of light, freedom and growth but they had been ‘squashed’ by the other person.

The workshop participants who don’t have a story of wellbeing are ‘in the hinge’, a place of change of direction (see page 101 for further discussion). Being in the hinge is to break patterns of behaviour, to change our ‘cultural conserve’. It is to live towards new horizons that are often threatened by old behaviours and practices.

To be in the hinge we must have:

- Awareness of a goal in life—a destiny of true prosperity and wellbeing;
- Awareness of a past history—role models and patterns that have to be changed;
- Insight of what is the first step ‘I’ must do towards the goal;
- A container—a person or people, and a proper environment, in which to be at peace to make such a choice.

Inge clearly sees her ideal; she also identified familiar role models she must change. She feels happy and positive, waiting to discover how all of this would be put together to face her busy husband. It is time for morning tea.

Back to the present

At this point the facilitator introduces the Play of Life kit and describes its use (see page 27 for a fuller description of how this method is used). Inge and
the group are invited to bring their ideal back to their mind and then depict an image of that ideal life utilising the Play of Life. This allows them to create in a concrete, three-dimensional form what they experienced, and then give that picture a name.

For Inge it was ‘Discovering life’. The group shares how surprised they are to be able to create such images so quickly, and all their images have titles that express life, light and contentment. (The facilitator takes a photograph of each Play of Life image and gives each participant a framed copy at the end of the day.) In this instance, the facilitator starts the process from the ideal instead of the present.

**Looking at ‘today’s life’**

After lunch the group have a good stretch and a short walk around the park. They are invited to look at plants, birds and the beauty of nature and to take from it a small thing that they like, such as a flower or leaf, to the workshop.

After looking again at the ideal picture that was left on the desk, the group is then invited to create another image on a second Play of Life board—the situations they are living in at present. The title of this image for Inge is ‘Shattered dreams’ or ‘Defeated by deceit’. Participants share their titles and, although there are some jokes to break the gloom, there is mainly heaviness, pain, sorrow and a lot of anger.

One of the important advantages of this workshop structure and the use of the Play of Life and expressive psychodrama is that the participants feel as though they’ve known each other for ages, but at the same time they don’t know any intimate details or private information. They just have ‘pictures’ of each other’s lives. (See the Play of Life photos or [www.playoflife.com/busypartners](http://www.playoflife.com/busypartners).)

In the comparison between both representations each participant is invited to highlight key elements that are relevant. A few things are prominent for Inge in this picture that represents the present:

- She’s very close (physically) to the family but there is no communication—she’s looking more out than in and Rolf is out altogether.
- She’s sitting down, as if waiting for something to happen.
- When people are hurt they often have people around who feed their distrust rather than provide fresh air, which provides solutions or appeasement.
- She is close to Michelle.

**Finding the first step**

The facilitator asks the group to place the two stages in front of them and identify the commonalities and differences between them. The titles of both
pictures are written on a whiteboard leaving a blank column between them (see Figure 6.1).

The workshop participants are not surprised when the common descriptions of the ideal view are presented: ideal, together, communication, unity, people see each other. For the ‘present’ situations, there is almost a mirror opposite: fragmentation, loneliness, oppression, no one sees others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of present</th>
<th>Title of ideal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Shattered dreams’ or ‘Defeated by deceit’</td>
<td>‘Discovering life’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common words</td>
<td>Common words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one sees others, fragmentation, loneliness, oppression</td>
<td>Ideal, together, communication, people see each other, unity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.1: Comparing the present to the ideal

Inge and the other participants have clearly articulated and pictured where they would love to go, and where they are at the moment, but there is an important blank space to fill in between the two situations.

The facilitator adds the headings ‘From’, ‘First step’ and ‘To’ (see Figure 6.2) and explains how important this step is: ‘This is the main reason you are here today. The most important outcome or goal for today is to find the first step towards achieving the ideal picture you have created. You have in front of you two stages and the description of your titles. Looking at the picture that represents you at present, what is the basic or first movement needed towards the ideal?’

This is a significant moment in the workshop process. People often have the perception that they have tried ‘everything’ to change their life and have become discouraged: ‘I have tried so many things and nothing has worked.’

Inge describes her first move as ‘to stand up’ and the meaning for her is ‘the possibility of change is in me’.

This was the end of the first day. They leave with the first step in mind, and are invited to only think of the ideal picture and not to talk about any negative things from the workshop with their partners—a hard task but an essential one.

Some participants are unsettled as the only way out they see is leaving the
Figure 6.2: Comparing the present to the ideal—and the first step

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FROM</th>
<th>FIRST STEP</th>
<th>TO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title of present</td>
<td>'Shattered dreams' or 'Defeated by deceit'</td>
<td>'Discovering life'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common words</td>
<td>Determination, new friends, more rest, allowing myself to enjoy, leave guilt behind, stop whinging, delay anger, forgiveness, a practical sense of God</td>
<td>Ideal, together, communication, people see each other, unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one sees others, fragmentation, loneliness, oppression</td>
<td>To stand up</td>
<td>To stand up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Workshop — Day 2

The day starts with breakfast, some stretching and individual meditation: a time to think about the ideal picture and to think of the people around them, in their present circumstances. This is to create a balance between the work on themselves and the reality of living in relationships. Many workshops are designed to ‘think about me’, to ‘find myself’, but the reality is that the ‘me’ must live with others, the essential philosophy of SRMM.

Making the first step real

Participants are guided to bring back the ideal picture to their mind (warm-up). The facilitator asks each participant to identify the practical meaning and the effect the ‘first step’ will have in their lives.
Several members of the group have identified that there is no hope; that the result of the first steps will be to leave their marriages. Inge knows she is close to this reality herself, for she knows that some areas of her marriage, such as trust, respect and intimacy with Rolf, have been seriously neglected or have even died.

Distinguishing between love and like

The issue of love in marriage is a principal focus, with respect for people’s individual definitions of love.²

The feeling of ‘I really like this man (or woman)’ may not reach an emotion of love. Love is an emotion that is difficult to identify and to stereotype, as it belongs to the most private emotions. Love includes strong liking, very strong affection, an intense feeling of tender affection and compassion, and passionate attraction and desire. The transitive verb ‘making love’ is synonymous with more than just intercourse. Love becomes ‘beloved’ when there is affection, care, closeness and desire for the best for the other person.

Inge learned that she has been confusing love with like. Inge really loved and liked Rolf. She also loved and liked her own profession and her desire for becoming a better woman. She undoubtedly loved her children for whom she wished the best. The relationship with Rolf was from the beginning the perfect synergy to grow in love. But Inge saw that she had started competing with TML and trying to win the battle. Jealousy, envy, resentment, feelings of rejection and abandonment grew to a level where she felt she hated Rolf, and couldn’t compete any more. Inge was able to see that as Rolf chose his career and the company instead of her, and became distant, aloof and unapproachable, she starting disliking him deeply to the point where she strongly believed she didn’t love him anymore. During this session in the workshop, Inge identified that although she still loved Rolf, she disliked him and he was no longer her ‘beloved’. She needed to do something about it. She also knew that if she stayed any longer in this strong ‘dislike’ she would lose whatever love was remaining.

The facilitator guides participants to analyse their relationship with their husbands, and explore areas of beauty, strength and richness in their relationships through the Pillars of Life exercise (for a complete exercise on the Pillars of Life see www.playoflife.com/selfhelp). After looking at the good memories, they delve into experiences of pain, where they felt hurt as well as areas in which they acknowledge they also hurt the relationship.

The workshop is structured to help participants avoid hasty decisions and their results. The facilitator reminds the group of an undertaking that each of them signed at the beginning of the workshop. They undertook not to make
any decision or have open discussions or confrontations with anyone with regard to the issues covered in the workshop for at least two weeks after they completed the whole program. This is to facilitate thoughtful decisions and not impulsive reactions.

The participants are asked to:

- Be aware of the platform from which they are living their daily life, to look at behaviours and attitudes and to be aware if those belong to the ‘ideal’ picture or the ‘present’ one. Each moment is an opportunity to ‘develop’ the first step.
- Start and finish the day with the ‘ideal’ picture in mind.
- Share that picture with others, without criticising the present.
- Refrain from ‘pushing’ for change in themselves and others. This is not the time to change; it’s time to create the desire (warm-up) and energy (spontaneity) that will develop in creativity.

It is enough to be aware of the journey ahead and to be convinced that it has already started.

With this ‘homework’ participants are farewelled to meet again as a group in one week’s time. Two individual meetings with professional facilitators and counsellors will take place during this week. Participants are encouraged to eat well and to do some physical exercises, such as stretching.

Workshop—Day 3

Participants had arrived the night before for supper to catch up with each other, to create a good warm-up for next day.

At this stage the group is divided into three smaller groups, each led by a trained facilitator, according to the various life situations arising from the first day of the workshop. Those who have a strong view on separation form one group to discuss specific issues relating to this difficult situation, and are challenged to see their reality from different points of view; while another group does further work on determining their first step. The third group learns how to find ways to confront and deal with their significant relationships.

Learning how to confront

Confronting people, especially those close to us, is difficult and we don’t receive nearly enough training in life about it (see page 105 for more about confrontation).
The results of a questionnaire used in many workshops (involving 355 women) reveal why it is so difficult. The women were asked to consider the following statements twice, once for themselves and once for their partners, and mark each from 0 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree). Figure 6.3 shows an average percentage of the degree of agreement with the statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>He</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I always confront my partner in tense situations</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use abusive vocabulary when I confront my partner</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I withdraw when we have arguments</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When happy or content I would never address any tense issue</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I bring previous hurt and pains to conversations</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know when and where to confront</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I lack a language in which to talk or present my needs</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t say the things I want to say and I say things I don’t want to say</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I build up resentment and I would explode or release it in a fight</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe communication between us broke down a long time ago</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find sex mechanical, sporadic or non-existent</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel we don’t have intimacy, words of affection or care</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe children directly suffer the consequences of our tension due to my behaviour with them (withdrawing, overprotecting, tension)</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I thought of having an affair as a practical alternative</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My health has deteriorated as a result of the tension in our relationship</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I lack hope</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wait for my partner to make the first move</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel very hurt and resent forgiving my partner</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I blame work for most of our problems</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I blame my partner’s parents for our problems</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I blame having children too early</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I blame myself for not developing professionally</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe we needed a better spiritual bond between us</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

? Less than 70% of participants answered this question

Figure 6.3: Questionnaire results
Forgiveness—a step to start again

Among the workshop participants there is a common feeling of generalised resentment towards their partners, lives or parents. The facilitator invites them to look at forgiveness.

Forgiveness is always a difficult topic to face; many people are affronted at the thought of forgiving—‘It’s not fair! Why should I forgive!’ When this reaction is aroused, the facilitator must affirm that forgiveness is a process and not a matter of being right or wrong. It is an act of grace that can only exist by an exercise of choice. It is not a matter of feelings. Forgiveness can be chosen in a moment but the process takes time. Participants can only do what they can do. Don’t push it—the process will continue at its own pace.

Some participants were not able to even think about forgiveness; they were respected and invited to just listen to other experiences and thoughts.

In *Women Who Run with the Wolves* Clarissa Pinkola Estes writes: ‘The work on rage cannot be completed without the ritual of forgiveness.’ She identifies four stages of forgiveness:

- To forgo—to leave it alone
- To forbear—to abstain from punishing
- To forget—to aver from memory, to refuse to dwell
- To forgive—to abandon the debt.

**To forgo**

To begin to forgive, it is good to forgo for a while. This doesn’t mean forgetting, just putting the grievance/s on ‘the back burner’ for a while. A time for rest for the mind and heart, while other resources are developed. It takes off the ‘pressure’ and gives some rest, ‘decanso’ as Estes describes it.

**To forbear**

‘The second phase is to forbear, particularly in the sense of abstaining from punishing; neither thinking about it nor acting on it in small or large ways . . . To forbear means to have patience, to bear up against, to channel emotion.’

Estes sees this phase as containment that helps to focus, not to spread the hurt and resentment around. It’s a discipline that gives some grace to the process and prepares for the next phase.

**To forget**

To forget is not amnesia. It is a voluntary action ‘to refuse to dwell on the grievance’. This means letting it go, surrendering it. It requires a decision not to allow certain thoughts that would poison the spirit to occupy precious space in the mind.
To forgive

‘Forgiveness is not surrender, it is a conscious decision to cease to harbour resentment, which includes forgiving a debt and giving up to one’s resolve to retaliate’ (C.P. Estes).

‘Forgiveness is an act of creation’—to create a new life without the load.

Practical forgiveness

Participants were guided through an exercise of playing different roles while sitting in different chairs.

- Play the role of a prosecutor—take your time to make a list of accusations. Be tough, clear and descriptive.
- Become a defender—look at each topic and see if there is any way to explain or to justify some of these accusations.
- Become a judge—make the person pay for their actions or give a blanket pardon, releasing the person from any restitution now and forever.

This is the time to choose whether to continue carrying the weight of resentment or to start the process of forgiveness.

Confrontation time

The group that felt ready to confront their husbands was coached in the art of confrontation. Others, depending on their own situation, were given different opportunities to continue with their process after the workshop. The process of the other groups can be obtained at www.playoflife.com/selfhelp.

If you are facing a similar situation, you can confidentially access www.playoflife.com/lifecoach and place your question. You can also do it using an alias name and a confidential e-mail from, for example, www.hotmail.com or www.excite.com.

Start from the positive

The women were coached in how to face their husbands and openly talk about their feelings and thoughts about the marriage, their past and especially what they wish and desire to have in the future.

The facilitator begins by bringing to their awareness the key points they found in the Pillars of Life exercise, emphasising the importance of beginning a confrontation from a solid platform:

‘We have talked about love, looked at areas of beauty and strength in your relationship. A practical plan could include using the Play of Life kit, given as part of the seminar, to show the ideal picture. Start with the vision you had
for your marriage, and look again at the Pillars of your marriage from the Pillars of Life exercise. Mention positive moments (Pillars). Show, using the Play of Life, your ideal image of family. Then you can move to what you see as the reality at present and share how you feel about it. Only use descriptive words and “I” statements. Try to create your speech based 80% from the ideal and 20% from the present. Using the Play of Life will make it clearer. Make your presentation short and visual and after you make your point just wait for feedback.

Be aware of warm-up

Warm-up is the preparation for a coming event (discussed in more detail on page 57). The reason workshop participants are not allowed to confront partners or anyone else until ten days after the workshop is that they have been highly ‘warmed-up’ with these topics. Their level of awareness is high and they are emotionally ready for change, but the person they want to confront may not be ready, may not even know what the person is talking about. Their warm-up has a different level of awareness.

When you confront a person, you must be aware of their ‘pace’, whether they are following you or not. You can assess that by making a short pause and asking something like: ‘Is it clear?’ or ‘Do you understand what I’m sharing with you?’ Note that you are not asking if the person agrees or not, it’s only important at this point that the other person ‘understands’ what you are saying.

If they don’t agree say: ‘At the moment just look at my perception of the reality, this is not a judgment. After I finish you can tell me your point of view and I’ll listen attentively. Let’s see if we can start looking at our relationship in a fresh and new way.’

If you don’t follow a process like this, you may feel at the end of the conversation that you’ve been very clear and explicit but the other person could be totally in the dark.

Place and timing

Most people confront others in moments of tension and anger, and when they feel tired. It might be after a fight about sex, parents, money or kids. Sometimes they use some (or a lot of) alcohol, and choose to confront in inappropriate places, like in the car while driving to have dinner with friends.

The best place and time for a ‘talk’ is an environment where you can be together without interruptions. Create or use a moment when you are connected, and hopefully at peace, even though you may be nervous. This might be after reading a good school report from the children, or while
sharing a quiet coffee, or after spending time with friends (only if you are not too tired and haven’t had too much alcohol), or after making love.

*Do not defend*

The conversation may become tense and awkward. Do not defend your points of view or yourself. Just state: ‘this is how I see it’. When you defend you automatically give the other person power. You’ll never win—it is more important that you both win. Just explain your point of view. If the other person does not understand, don’t worry too much—the next time will be better.

*Watch for your amber light*

It is very easy to return to old behaviours. Everyone has learned certain communication codes that may trigger old behaviour mechanisms, and you may find yourself yet again in ‘known’ places.

As soon as you feel you may be losing control, stop: this is your ‘amber light’ (this is described in further detail on page 84). Key signs are shortened breath, anxiety, and butterflies in your stomach or anything peculiar that you recognise as a sign that you may soon lose control. When this happens, detach physically from the situation and compose yourself. Put your mind in order, have a look at what is happening, and when you’re ready, come back. This may only take few minutes. A couple of easy things to do could be to offer a cup of tea to the other person and to go make it, or even go to the toilet. They are simple steps and they help you not to lose control.

*I’ve tried everything*’

After we have tried every possible avenue we know to communicate what we think without getting any response from the other person, we often feel deceived and powerless. However, we may have said the right thing in the wrong place, or the wrong thing in the right place. The issue is not that we haven’t said it, but the context or how we’ve said it.

Like a crop that needs to be planted at the right time to grow and be harvested, we must be aware of the different variables to know when and how to confront. If you tried confrontation before and it didn’t work, think how you can make it happen now.

*The objective*

The obvious goal for this face-to-face confrontation is to clarify issues, make amends, look for solutions and solve problems. This is the desired end result, but it is not going to happen in just one step. Don’t raise your expectations
too high; think, ‘I’m not going to solve anything now, solutions will be created as we walk.’ The aim of this presentation is that your partner will clearly and without doubt understand what you are saying and able to ‘see’ where you stand, think and respond, if possible with a reaction ‘from the heart’. You cannot do more than that.

After sharing your story, you will have to wait for the other person’s response and choice. He, in this case, may choose to:

- Accept what you have said and commit to change. Congratulations!
- Keep what you have said in mind and think about it. Don’t despair; ask if possible for a time when you can continue talking about it. Don’t leave it open—it may never happen.
- Want to come back to it again, as he may not be clear. Fair enough—you can ask what things were not clear. Look for a day to continue talking about it.
- Reject what you’ve said as he has a totally different view of the reality you’re living. We often have totally different views of our reality. He could present, utilising the Play of Life, how he sees the situation. The Play of Life could help him to clarify his position. You may both need a relationship counsellor to help you out.
- Accept what you are saying but choose not to do anything about it. There is not much you can do at the moment. You may try again another time.
- Accept what you’re saying and promise everything, but in such a tone of voice that you know he doesn’t mean it. This is a difficult situation; he may find you’re whingeing ‘again’ and not take you seriously or he’s not ready yet to look at the situation.
- Accept what you have said but strongly reject any further steps. He could say with words or actions: ‘This is life, this is me, this is our reality, I will never change: take it or leave it.’ In this case you may need a supportive coach to help you to decide what your next step is.

**Inge’s experience**

Inge was ready to let her pain go, to forgive and to start again. She believed that there was nothing to lose and too much to win if this worked. Listening to other stories in the workshop helped her to see she had a good chance of making the life she wanted.

Inge was glad she had to wait ten days after the workshop. She had another two individual coaching sessions with the facilitator, who helped her to use this time to work on herself and make a list of accusations, as well as the defense process. She learned how to be clear and to treat Rolf as an adult and not as a wounded child, in a patronising way, as she found she often did. She
was also able to see her mistakes and her part in the relationship, and she chose to forgive Rolf for many hurts and deceptions she felt in past years. She was also able to ask him for forgiveness, as she was sorry for her part in the relationship. With that she felt slightly closer to him, making her more open to find the right time and place ‘to talk’.

She was clever—she made Rolf promise her he would be at home on a Saturday morning without any work to do, and Inge arranged for the children to be out of the house with their own activities. She waited for two Saturdays until this happened.

Inge brought a surprise breakfast for Rolf. She baked a cake his grandmother used to make for him and gave it to him in bed. They had wonderful time—not long but good. They were affectionate and intimate. When Rolf was close to her and she said, ‘I love you’, after some time (an eternity for Inge) he replied ‘I love you too’.

**Inge:** I remember when we were in London and we stayed in bed till late on weekends.

**Rolf:** I remember that, it was nice.

**Inge:** In the last weeks I have become aware of how many things we have developed and how we have grown, especially with our children. We’re blessed with them.

**Rolf:** Yes, we are.

**Inge:** Now we’re so close I’d like to share with you a dream. Is that OK?

**Rolf:** Yes, of course.

She stood up and brought the Play of Life kit to Rolf. ‘I’ll show you a dream,’ she said. She used familiar words to describe the picture, similar to those spoken when they first met. He became teary and said: ‘It looks familiar, doesn’t it? If I could, I would do anything to make this dream true.’

‘Do you really mean it?’

‘Yes,’ he replied. Inge kissed him and said ‘thank you’.

When Inge showed Rolf her picture of their current lives, he agreed with the picture. ‘We’ll get there’, he said changing his soft tone of voice and becoming sharper and more distant and moving away. But Inge, instead of withdrawing, said ‘Rolf, stay here, YOU may not be able to do it but WE can. Rolf, I would like to tell you that if we don’t start this journey soon I won’t be able to continue this type of life.’

‘What do you mean?’ he replied.

‘I think you know. We must do some thinking about us. Rolf let me tell you again: I love you, we love you, very much.‘

Rolf became silent, didn’t say anything.

‘You say you’ll “do anything”, the only thing I know now is that we could
start now—it may work or not, but not because we haven’t tried.’

The conversation was left like that. It was the first time that Rolf didn’t defend, fight back or play the role of not being understood after giving ‘so much’ to the family. Inge felt satisfied with her presentation; it was the first time she didn’t withdraw or become critical and judgmental. She had just opened her heart. She was happily surprised with a bunch of flowers from Rolf later that day. She knew he got it!

**It never fails**

If we make this presentation correctly it will never fail. Talk from a position of love, focus on creative issues, present your needs without judgment and do it in the right time and right place. Just open your heart.

‘Never fails’ means that your message is extremely powerful, and does not judge or condemn. If the other person doesn’t agree or has a different point of view, there is a place for clarification. If they agree with your presentation, they will respond with their true style, with whatever integrity, ‘realness’ and ability they have.

It also never fails as the other person will tell you what their values are, and we may need to accept that some people will choose business instead of family, money instead of peace, social recognition instead of love, public fame instead of being accepted at home. Peer pressure is not only something that adolescents suffer—it’s endemic in our society and the value systems we live by are often not the ones we would choose if we stopped to look around at the people in our lives.

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Opening your heart with clarity and love is very powerful.
It makes the other person naked—they cannot pretend anymore, and cannot lie to you or to themselves.

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**The result we don’t want**

It is painful when we must accept that the other person’s choice is not the one we really wanted. What would you do? This is the time for wisdom. It is time to look for a supportive mentor and friends who will be with you in the process of choice. This is also a lonely time, as every person chooses differently. Don’t panic or escape, just continue walking in this path.

When someone shows you repeatedly, by word or action, that they have chosen other things instead of you or your marriage, you may need to accept that that’s it! Some people change the original contract of marriage, so that it ceases to be relevant anymore, making their partner obsolete.
Life gives us opportunities to ‘renew’ relationship contracts, but sometimes the renewal or restoration is not possible. These are agreements we made at a certain time in life, when we did the best we could with what we knew at that time. As we grow, we change, for good or bad, and agreements may need to be reviewed. This is a time of choice and often a crossroads at which, whatever you choose, you may lose something. There is only the satisfaction that in the long run it will be for the good, and a blessing. It’s difficult to accept that there are things that we may never change, even though we may try very hard.

I must say I believe that the restoring power of faith can change the unchangeable. This was true at least for my father who changed, as he put it, only by the grace of God from unbelief, arrogance, rage, dictatorship, addictions, and neglect of his family to a man of care, warmth, faith and peace.

Others choose differently
Inge knew that some women from the workshop had chosen to end their marriages, as they really believed that it was too late and chose not to ‘confront’ their partners. They didn’t believe it was possible or worth it!

One woman told how she had presented her views to her husband very clearly, after working hard on forgiveness. He had time to think. A few weeks later he said: ‘I never had anything in my life. My parents weren’t caring, and they struggled for money through the recession. My father was a loser and I was always ashamed of him. Now it is my turn. I have a job and I can do whatever I want. I’m in demand around the world, I can buy anything I want and my children will be proud of me. Don’t ask me to change what I wanted to have all my life. Family is important too but we will be able to enjoy it after we build up security and proper assets.’

She didn’t accept that proposal, and with great grief, chose to say farewell. While she’s still waiting for a miracle in her husband’s life, she has moved forward in her own life.

Inge today
But Inge was blessed by Rolf’s insight. Not long after she confronted him he was able to be receptive to other signs at work, and was able to turn things around.

Inge felt proud of herself, as she knew she was a real hinge in her life. She’s now enjoying her life as a woman who can choose how to play the roles of wife, mother, friend and professional.

Inge’s experience was a fortunate one; some people do not have the same outcome. Reasons include: confronting the issues too late, when there is too much hurt and distrust; one of the partners chooses work success instead of
family; the desire is there but not the emotional or rational ability; and one or both members resist looking for relationship coaching.

It’s never too late to confront and face your relationship—even if you don’t like what you face, it will show you what you are dealing with and allow you to make informed choices. Many men and women, after having a clear picture of the relationship that is far away from their personal desire, ‘choose’ to continue in that relationship. They, after that decision, would not have much right to ask for help anymore, even though they may cry about not having what they want. Reasons may include: ‘for the children’; ‘I’ll wait a bit more’; ‘I love this man or woman and I’ll stick it out’; religious reasons; and loneliness (‘it will be harder than this type of relationship’).

The important thing is that if I ‘choose’ to continue in the relationship after ‘I positively know’ that it is much less than I need, I can’t blame the other person anymore, as I have made a personal choice.

Even if you are afraid, look at your relationships! It will be OK if you look for workshops like the one Inge attended, or find a personal coach, a professional or a wise friend who could help you assess your readiness.

Some insights from Inge’s story:

- Many people’s relationships suffer because of the conflicting priorities and demands of work and family life.
- Often when a pattern of negativity is established in life, we learn to expect negativity and look at life through a ‘dark lens’, but keeping a positive vision of the future is essential to success.
- Being ‘in the hinge’ of our lives is an opportunity to change the way we have been living—a time of great creativity and potential.
- The Play of Life can be used to identify practical steps towards change in a difficult relationship.
- There are very important distinctions between ‘love, like and being in love’. It’s possible to love someone, but to also dislike them.
- Love or like can be found when we believe it has been lost.
- The few practical steps to forgiveness—to forego, forebear, forget and forgive—can create a non-threatening process for confronting issues in a relationship.
- When confronting, be aware of your own and your partner’s state of warm-up and choose an appropriate place and time for the confrontation. Watch out for triggers that set off past behaviours.
- Don’t expect instant results, and be prepared for what you must do for each possible result of the discussion.
- Fill your heart with clarity and love never fails.
To recap

Inge has been challenged to the core by a basic relationship, her marriage. She knew that her financial capital was not enough, that her identity, dignity, purpose and meaning had been weakened by the type of relationship she had developed with Rolf, and with life itself.

She was able to assess her relationship, to look at it from a challenging and creative platform and make a decision to confront Rolf, and herself. Her eagerness for true life and not just survival gave her the energy needed for change. She was able to choose life and to avoid dwelling in the past.

There are tools that we can use in the struggle to change our behaviour towards new roads to travel, rather than repeating old and ineffective paths.

This chapter also emphasises that distinctions between work and home are partly artificial, in that healthy relationships in both areas are necessary for overall happiness and productivity. Companies need to consider how to help their people to develop and maintain strong, healthy relationships at home. If this can be done, it will add dramatically to the firm’s relationship capital. Partners, family and friends will become collateral partners and supporters of the company.

**burnout** (n.) 1. a total loss of energy and interest and an inability to function effectively, experienced as a result of excessive demands upon one’s resources or chronic overwork. 2. to cease functioning as a result of exhaustion of the fuel supply. 3. to become or cause to become exhausted through overwork or dissipation.  
*Collins Dictionary*

Burnout is a predictable process, ruled by logical and measurable indicators that serve as clear warnings to make burnout preventable. As burnout follows a predictable linear path, it is possible to prevent it. And when you are absorbed by it, it is possible to reverse the process.

Luban¹ says burnout is the gradual erosion of energy and spirit as a result of long-term stress. It’s not the same as depression or work addiction or mid-life crisis, she says, and burnout calls for different methods of healing. John B. Izzo² calls burnout disengagement from work. Burnout is psychological and spiritual. It is losing a sense of fulfilment. The job becomes so unsatisfactory that you spend your off time complaining about work.

The development of burnout differs depending on work or activities. People in welfare-type work usually get burnout due to being overworked, giving too much of themselves to others, and feeling underpaid and unsupported. Junior employees and people under-skilled for a job may feel something similar—especially when they believe they have no control over the demands made of them—they feel stuck.

Burnout develops as a sign of helplessness and powerlessness, which was the case with Rolf, or as a result of boredom when people can do their job effortlessly and are living without challenge.
Some salespeople, usually after they have been on the job a while, put off challenges and slip into the habit of accepting easy sales. Before long the job becomes repetitive, boredom sets in, and the downward spiral starts. This type of burnout is often seen in parents who have given ‘everything’ they have to their pre-school children without expanding themselves as people: when the kids start school a huge vacuum of lack of purpose overtakes their lives.

In our work environment, if we feel we are given challenges appropriate to our level of skill and competence, this is very satisfying. But when there is an imbalance between the two, there is dissatisfaction. This is described in the following graph.3

![Figure 7.1: Karasek graph](image)

Karasek clearly illustrates in this graph that an environment of high demand balanced by high control is the environment for growth-promoting ‘active stress’. This is the natural environment in which to develop new behaviours, expand roles and be satisfied. It provides a sense of growth.

This is what attracted Rolf and the other directors to join and commit to TML. The offer for Rolf and Inge to move to Australia had a balance between high challenge (demand: the creation of a new company) and high control (their previous experience as migrants, Rolf’s business experience outside and within TML, and a family bond).

Rolf and Inge, the directors, management and employees enjoyed the first years. They saw the possibility of growth and expansion. For many years they enjoyed job (or role) satisfaction and growth. They finished every day tired but not exhausted, looking forward to the next day. Communication among
the family was fluent and problems were seen as opportunities to conquer. They slept well at night. Rolf enjoyed work, he felt on top of it, and everything moved in a predictable way.

While in this stage, Rolf saw the opportunity for expansion. TML had started business in Malaysia and it was time to expand locally. This is when things went wrong. The acquisition of the mill and factory in Victoria and South Australia dramatically changed the plan for growth. The challenge far exceeded their ability to manage this new situation. Problems took them by surprise, and they were not prepared to deal with the continual pressures presented by workers, union representatives, and the resignation of the operations director.

The previous owners of the two companies found themselves in difficulties with personnel and unions over the sales of their businesses. They feared retrenchments and even the closure of one of the companies. They offered employees benefits that the new owners didn’t know about and were unable to maintain. This arrangement was hidden and they misled TML. Soon after the acquisition in a meeting with the financial and operations directors, union leaders and managers asked for the benefits offered. The directors were surprised by those requirements and unable to satisfy them. The staff were disillusioned and angry, and felt manipulated. They reacted with strikes and low productivity, unwarranted sick leave and low quality in production.

The end result was that workers, unions and TML got a challenge bigger than they could control. The pressure from the US headquarters made things more arduous for Rolf. And, as described previously, the demands of the job became so great that he moved away from his roles at home. New pressures at home didn’t help and Rolf became worn-out and inaccessible. He was facing ‘high strain’ and role dissatisfaction/role disintegration. Anxiety and frustration were so high that he couldn’t cope anymore. Rolf discovered a new companion, alcohol, which he named his ‘only friend’ and his confidant. Others only saw the ‘cynical confroner’ that allowed him, for a period of time, to appear to be in control.

Rolf tried—he did the best he could at that point in time—but his best was not enough. He knew it and he gave up, let things pass and developed a cynical attitude of passivity and boredom, alternating with manic episodes of desperation. He was really tired, the demands were so great and his perceived control (what he believed he could do) so low that he adopted an attitude where he minimised the problems by not attending to them or referring them to someone else (avoidance). The new systems introduced by the new human resource manager kept managers busy with the sense of ‘we’re doing something about it!’ They got some breathing space, but were not able to modify core issues without the full presence of the head of the company. Rolf began experiencing role fatigue. He was burnt out, a ‘defeated mule’.
Quick ten-point checklist for assessing stress and burnout

Answer ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ to the following questions—are you:

1. Physically and emotionally exhausted?
2. Less satisfied in business?
3. Less happy and satisfied in your work?
4. Experiencing increased tension in personal relationships?
5. Seen by others as distant and unapproachable?
6. Experiencing a change in libido and enthusiasm?
7. Feeling powerless?
8. Experiencing meaninglessness?
9. Feeling isolated?
10. Experiencing self-estrangement?

If you answer ‘Yes’ to more than six points, then you risk:
- Job loss
- Malpractice
- Family breakdown
- Failing relationships
- Decline in health and vitality
- Unhappiness
- Depression
- Addictions
- Inability to plan for the future
- Unproductive leadership.

For a more comprehensive questionnaire look at www.playoflife.com/surveys.

Some signs of job satisfaction may be:
- Tired but not fatigued or worn-out
- Innovative, creative
- Effective at communicating
- Having a spirit of celebration and fun
- Seeing problems as opportunities
- Being quick to respond but not imposing
- Restful sleep
- Quick cure to common illnesses, such as flu or digestive problems
- Caring for oneself—for example, food, exercise
- No ‘need’ for alcohol or tobacco
- People around comment on positive aspects of behaviour
- Engaging and ‘staying’ in conversations
- Absence of body tension or aches
Enjoying intimacy  
Feeling supported  
Satisfied with sex drive  
Life has meaning  
Enjoying faith and hope.

Set up to fail

The process Rolf endured follows a regular pattern. Sally, a successful national sales manager of a newly floated company, even more starkly demonstrates it. She shares two contrasting feelings regarding a common activity.

Sally’s change didn’t come abruptly as a result of an accident or financial turmoil—it was a product of unchecked 14-hour workdays. Sally is burnt out.

Ask children what they want to do when they grow up, and you are not likely to hear ‘I’d like to work 85-hour weeks in hyper-competitive environments where the only reward for completing a demanding project is beginning another’.

‘When I finished university and started working as a regional sales manager, a new position just created in a small manufacturing company, I felt so energised that I got up each morning and dressed before the alarm clock went off. Finding what I was to wear was an easy task. My trip to the office felt short with new ideas blowing into my mind all the time. Every problem was a challenge, every difficulty a venture to conquer. The lack of a sales team was a creative challenge. Going to the gym was fun, and reading books was insightful. “Tomorrow” was an invitation to life, going out with my boyfriend an adventure, and he was working in a multinational bank with similar experiences. I felt alive.’

But she continues: ‘Now, six-and-a-half years later, I react with anger to the alarm clock, nothing fits me properly, even though I have lost weight. Travelling to the office is an endless journey and I turn the radio on just for noise and to not have to not to think. My marriage with Terry, for five years, is boring. Every problem is a calamity and I fear losing my job. I can’t exercise and I find myself eating junk food. “Tomorrow” seams a heavy duty I need to survive. When I finish work I have no energy to be in touch with friends or do any exercise. I’m just surviving.’
The ladder of success

When Sally started at work she had no experience, no money, no teamwork, no car, no clear plans, no job security (she had to succeed to show management she was capable) and no time to lose. She remembers feeling excited, secure, invigorated, with high self-esteem, confident, with her future in her hands, recognised, smart and powerful.

Sally moved up the ladder of success and then down the slide of boredom, tiredness and just survival. The ladder of success has some predictable stages. The following is adapted from S. Berges, from the Harvard Medical School’s Department of Psychiatry.

Genesis—starting out

It doesn’t matter if you are a new graduate, somebody who has been promoted in your company, or someone looking for a better job, starting out always stirs up a potpourri of contrasting emotions: from a sense of strength—‘I can do it! I’ll get a wonderful position’—to powerlessness—‘Who can employ me? Is there a place for me?’

Let’s say you accept a job within your expectations or even at a better level; for example, you were expecting a position as a supervisor and instead got a management position. Fresh optimism flourishes in your mind; your whole body reacts with energy and wellbeing. You may have a sense of inadequacy and fear of not being able to perform, but your family and friends are there as an encouraging support.

These experiences stimulate the creation and secretion of internal hormones called endorphins and dopamine creating a sense or perception of success, power, being at the top and wellbeing. The new job is a challenge; you have the task of developing a new team and this is a stimulating developmental stage. Mistakes and things that don’t work properly at this stage are quickly transformed into exhilaration. There is also appreciation from within the company, from peers, superiors and people below in the organisation, and satisfaction from customers and suppliers. There is a new horizon, a new challenge, a new stage.

Expansion stage

You are now based on more solid foundations, and expansion, new markets and trust from the executive are ahead. As a ‘solid’ manager, you will be further invigorated with prestige, financial benefits and, in many cases, with global recognition. In social gatherings, you comment about business problems with some sense of superiority, expressing a feeling of ‘I will conquer’.
The position is so important that relationships and time spent with people often change to adapt to this new stage and new acquaintances. Your family also experience changes in interpersonal dynamics—everyone has to understand that ‘this is an important stage in the job, very soon when things are on the rails we can get back to normal’. These changes are often imposed on family. Obligations, commitments and expectations from work rule your life. You are convinced that ‘it will only be for another month/quarter/year’. The people around you, especially family, create an independent and autonomous lifestyle where you, the ‘manager’, are more detached from them. You are too busy.

A new culture is being created in your personal life. Work has to be first! Family, personal life and the rest will come later. Do not disturb—you are busy. Do not confront—you have to be protected, you can’t be annoyed with anything. Our financial security cannot be placed at risk.

A culture is also being developed at work. You can really be trusted—you will stay late, until everything is solved. Everyone is adapting to your idiosyncrasies as you are key to the operations of the company and nobody dares to confront you or disturb the system. New challenges motivate you every day—you are so important!

This stage will continue until you have achieved a certain level of stability and solidity. An indicator of when this stage is changing is when, after two or three new problems, you feel no sense of difficulty and no feeling of new achievement. Berges calls this stage ‘maturity’.

**Maturity**

You have been promoted to a level where no further advance is possible in the organisation, at least for the near future or only if somebody retires. You are permanently busy; but know that this running around is often part of the culture of the job but not a real need. This is a culture that is difficult to change.

The department can almost run without your presence. Financial security and corporate benefits are close to the uppermost. Peer recognition is not as important as before; there are also fewer people, if any, at the same level to share this stage. Business success is an everyday experience without the stimulating power of the beginning. No important changes are needed in the team; the company is growing at or above the forecasted budget.

This is the time of risk. This is the stage that—if not addressed quickly—could have ill implications.

Your family culture has developed without your real presence—a man may have been a virtual father, husband and friend. Now when you are not so
needed in the office, you would like to come back to family and friends, but they have developed a life without you. It’s now difficult to find a place to fit. CEOs, senior managers and independent professionals who find themselves in this category know internally that they need to do something about it. Communication with family and friends is often fragmented and they have given up saying anything about it. This is a difficult time.

This should be an opportunity for change, a time to enjoy what you and your family were waiting for so long—‘the company does not need me as much as before: I’m free!’

But it’s not so easy. Your relationships have not been managed wisely; there has been no warm-up to the next stage. Coming back seems impossible but you can create a similar pressure that provides the perception of being challenged, of being useful. You can create a new business, which is what Rolf used to do—every time he felt depleted and with lack of stimulation he created a new area in the business without much thought and planning.

This creates a false sense of power as the new activity overcomes the boredom. This release of adrenaline and dopamine provides a new perception of achievement. Some managers may start a new demanding sport or hobby, or make risky investments that could keep them awake for many nights.

This attention seeking, together with aloneness, arrogance and adultery, are the four As of burnout, as described by S. Berglas. I have added another A—addiction.

**Adventure seeking**

Adventure seeking could create unnecessary risks for the business, the individual and family. Many people have faced extremely difficult times, even bankruptcy, in this stage of their lives. This includes physical risks as they embark on dangerous activities or sports. This is the time when people think of change; to think about the family, renovate the house or buy a new residence or just hyper-focus on a new project, but in the same way as before.

The desire to reconnect with the family is not ‘relational’ in the sense of communicating with them and sharing the same spirit. It’s a new determination that will give new challenges (e.g., ‘I’ve decided to give more time to my children’), and the family may believe that the person is changing when in reality they are relating to the ‘new project’, not to the family—the family are secondary, but they may believe that this is good. The manager cannot be disturbed again as they are worried about the ‘new business’—the new parent, the new kitchen, the new house. There is so much tension that after a family has finished working on the dream house, there is no energy left to enjoy the dream home.
## The 4 + 1 As of burnout

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adventure seeking</th>
<th>Aloneness</th>
<th>Arrogance</th>
<th>Adultery</th>
<th>Addictions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Mono-focus</td>
<td>• No real connection with others</td>
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<td>• Self-centred</td>
<td>• Lack of awareness of others’ needs even though the message may be clear around them</td>
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<td>• Preaching attitude, tries to convince everybody their ideas are the only ones</td>
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<td>• Hyperactivity</td>
<td>• Prefers own company</td>
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<td>• Excitement</td>
<td>• Immerses in ‘solo’ player’ activities, e.g. computers, swimming, golf</td>
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<td>• Feels rejected if people do not agree with them</td>
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<td>• New beliefs, often opposite to previous ones</td>
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<td>• Dramatic change often with religious experience</td>
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<td>• Decreased need for sleep</td>
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<td>• Miscalculates risk</td>
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<td>• Chin up</td>
<td>• Others are never enough</td>
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<td>• Looks down on others</td>
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<td>• Intolerance</td>
<td>• Inflated self-esteem</td>
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<td>• ‘I know better’</td>
<td>• Flirting behaviour, first unconsciously, later by choice</td>
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<td>• A ‘lecturing’ attitude</td>
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<td>• Loss of flexibility</td>
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<td>• Business adultery</td>
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<td>• • Flirting with other people about business ventures</td>
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<td>• • Offensive to business partners</td>
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<td>• • Dismissing business partner: ‘I don’t know how I could work with you for so many years’</td>
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<tr>
<td>• • Boredom</td>
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<td>• • Low threshold to pain, especially emotional</td>
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<td>• • Looks for quick fix</td>
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<td>• • Defensive behaviour</td>
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<td>• • Unbalanced emotions</td>
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<td>• • Easy to make relationships; difficult to maintain them</td>
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<td>• • Often accompanied by sexual dysfunction</td>
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<td>• • Need to increase amount of drugs</td>
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<td>• • Many decisions to quit but no success</td>
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<td>• • Never satisfied</td>
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<td>• • Often more obvious to people around the sufferer</td>
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Figure 7.2: The indicators of burnout
Jeanne felt tired and unhappy with her 60-hour working week, plus being a mother, wife, friend and daughter. Attending a seminar she made the decision of her life: ‘To work not more than 30 hours a week, start yoga, exercise, and have more time with my children, husband and friends.’

After six months of immense effort she found that her relationships hadn’t improved and her work suffered from her absence. She saw, with pain, that the time she filled before with work and conversations with family about work or other ‘stimulating’ stuff had shifted to topics about yoga, meditation and her new life. She spent more time at home and with friends but she only talked about the importance of a balanced life and other healthy stuff. The children were tired of her ‘sermons’ on healthy food and meditation, and her friends tired of hearing about self-help books. She spent more time with them physically, but instead of talking about work she changed to health. Jeanne just shifted her approach to business into a ‘healthier’ world but without internal change.

The problem that can arise with this type of behaviour is that working as she was, Jeanne was losing family, friends and her own personal life—but changing radically to almost the opposite doesn’t work either. She may become sceptical of any possible changes and return to her old pattern of work that at least gave her good money. The sad part is that she may not have any idea of what happened, why her changes didn’t work.

Aloneness

Regardless of a project that may involve many people, you may relate to the task without relating to others, without creating inter-personal relationships. At work you have no real connection to people, and at home you cannot relate either, as communication flow is foreign.

Withdrawal is often the behaviour of choice. You may try to be more involved in the kids’ sports or try to be involved in home dynamics, but in the middle of the conversation you may get up and go to read the paper, watch TV or sit at the computer.
Arrogance

‘It was devastating when I heard my son, 21 years old, talking to his friend over the phone after we had been talking. He was telling him: “My dad is pathetic, he believes he knows everything and nobody can push a word in when we are discussing anything. I would hate to be like him. My sister can not stand him either and Mum is just dominated by him.” I was shocked,’ said Chester crying.

Being confronted with the reality that you are so far away from the ideal of true success can be devastating. Two basic directions will confront you: to deny it or accept it.

Denial comes when the picture you are seeing is bigger than you can handle. There are no roles developed to tackle this ‘overwhelming’ reality. Most people, especially those—such as politicians, doctors and pastors—who are trained to deal with people, will block it from their minds and emotions with smart rationalisations. The Collins Dictionary defines the verb ‘rationalise’ as follows:

1. to justify (one’s actions, esp. discreditable actions, or beliefs) with plausible reasons, esp. after the event. 2. Psychol. to indulge, often unchallenged, in excuses for or explanations of (behaviour about which one feels uncomfortable or guilty).

Acceptance requires great humility and an environment of support without judgment and criticism. The road to change, ‘being in the hinge’ as I have described it earlier, will be one of real exploration of a ‘Road Less Travelled’, as Dr Scott Peck describes with elegance. You will need a new script and new roles to create a new life environment.

Arrogance is difficult to address, as the arrogant person is not aware of what they don’t know and strongly believes they are above everyone and that they know everything. ‘Been there, done that, seen that.’ ‘I’m OK, you are not OK’ comes across very strongly. Strong, clear and loving confrontation by people around them is necessary. If this is not heard, a more drastic event in life may (or will) make the message clear—divorce, dramatic problems with children, loss of a job, serious illness. The loving confrontation is preferable; see ‘Caring enough to confront’ (see page 105).

Adultery

Adultery may not only involve romance or sex; it can also be in business or work when somebody flirts with other business opportunities that compromise
the focus and attention to the primary commitment. It is also an attention-seeking behaviour and often related to aloneness.

**Addictions**
Addictions are behaviours developed to avoid unpleasant situations or feelings. Some people even ‘avoid’ what for many would be pleasant feelings, such as comfort, relaxation and love, because they do not know how to deal with them.

Norbert Myslinski, Associate Professor of Neuroscience at the University of Maryland points out:

‘Addiction can be manifested in various ways. It may occur in the form of excessive ingestion of drugs—including cocaine, heroin, alcohol, and nicotine—or as compulsive gambling or overeating. But a common denominator of all these forms is that the brain’s reward centres are activated. In addition to reward centres, a person’s brain has punishment centres. Stimulation of these produces feelings of fear, anxiety, and restlessness. In a normal emotional life, there is balanced activation of these two types of centres.’

In situations of high strain or burnout the balance is broken—we know which centre wins.

Lack of a balanced life would produce unexpected physical and emotional responses. The body, mind and emotions will feel the lack of balance and ‘reward’ will be urgently needed, stimulating addictive behaviours.

Addictions are widespread. Today, in the United States alone, 12.8 million people take illicit drugs. The cost to taxpayers amounts to about US$70 billion a year in extra health-care costs, lost productivity, additional law enforcement, vehicle accidents, and crime (Merrylands Neuroscience Research Institute).

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**Beating burnout**
Paul Birchard suggests three basic steps in dealing with burnout:

1. Don’t look for a long holiday as a first measure
2. Analyse
3. Set goals.

To these, the author adds:

- Find a mentor
- Turn to healthy living
- Change your work pattern.
Don’t look for a long holiday as a first measure
This may be the last thing you need. If your stress is from business your level of adrenaline may be high and you will need to wind down before you go for a long rest. A sudden stop from a long stressful suffering may make the body collapse—a heart attack, stroke or sudden depression are possible. But if you are burnt out from ‘welfare-type work’ you may need a long break and get rest for mind, body and soul.

Analyse
Look at the process Rolf went through with the Play of Life (see Chapter 2) and follow a similar process. You can make it three-dimensional and dynamic with the Play of Life kit.

Set goals
After your analysis, create an ideal situation and make this your objective, your goal. Find out what is the easiest step and do it. What is the most enjoyable relationship you have? Make regular contact with that person.

Set small, achievable goals. Resist the temptation to violate this tenet. Select a short, fixed time period. One month is good. On a calendar or day planner, for each workday, put in one goal. Don’t go overboard. Put just one.

Renewing old, basic goals or setting new ones will make you feel reinvigorated. For a practical exercise, see www.playoflife.com/selfhelp.

Find a mentor
Continue with small steps. If you are not satisfied during this process, it’s because either you haven’t yet found what makes you tick, or you are still drained and need a little more time to recuperate. If you wish to know more about your vocation look at www.playoflife.com/selfhelp. Find somebody to talk to. Look for somebody close to you with whom you could share what you feel; this person is not a counsellor, just a friend, so don’t look for ‘solutions’ from them, just companionship. Find a mentor, as described in Chapter 1.

Turn to healthy living
Start changing your food habits slowly. Stop drinking alcohol and smoking, and don’t exaggerate about how hard it is. Don’t overdo it and don’t buy expensive exercise equipment or commit to a strenuous gym program.

Change your work pattern
Look at your daily schedule and change it. Add pleasurable things, change the time you eat your lunch, invite people for a cup of coffee. Don’t spend much
money, just find nice places to go. You can invite your partner and children for lunch. Go to a bookshop and browse books in areas you’ve never been before. Don’t only talk about business with your business partner in your next meeting: expand the conversation to some other issues. Look for meaning, for faith. Just look at nature, and desire that the same balance you encounter there could flow through you. Look for meaningful and transcendent faith. Give something back to society: help in the school canteen, support welfare organisations, visit a person in need, go to the working bee at your children’s school, offer to drive your neighbour’s children to sport once a month.

For specific personal help and for your organisation request information from: enquiries@srmm.com.au.

To recap

As well as considering the positive aspects of our relationships, relationship capital accounts for areas of life that have been drained, abused or misused. One of the major costs in modern organisations is from the direct and indirect effects of burnout. People in that state usually want to give up, or they create the inevitability of future surrender by redoubling their efforts until they can no longer function. You do not need to give up, or to over-extend yourself. Wherever you are, whatever you feel, whatever has failed for you, whoever has abandoned you, you can start again. Within SRMM, we trust that it is possible to grieve for what has been lost, and to be able to start again to regain life, laughter and satisfying work and other relationships.

Starting again is not the same as giving up, it is creating a new platform for change—giving up is remaining on the old platform with the burden of failure. This new platform is based on a belief in the essence that exists in every person, the essence that creates desire for true realisation, prosperity and wellbeing.

1 Luban, as described in Corrigan, Patricia 1995, ‘Burnout to balance: One journey’, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 6 Mar., p. 3D.
6 Dopamine is a chemical found in the brain that acts as a neurotransmitter and is an intermediate compound in the synthesis of noradrenaline (Collins Dictionary).
7 Denial occurs when a person behaves as though unaware of something which he may reasonably be expected to know. (Gelder, M. 1991, Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry, Oxford University Press).
11 Myslinski, op. cit.
Before the executive weekend away, the coach had a one-to-one meeting with Michelle, the sales and marketing director.

Michelle welcomes him with a smile and introduces Leanne, her personal assistant. Michelle was very encouraged by Rolf’s presentation at the directors meeting and his approach to the US, but she doesn’t believe that there will be big changes at TML.

Michelle has been at TML for almost ten years. She is at TML because she found Rolf stimulating; she liked the challenge and wanted to succeed professionally. Rolf offered her support to finish her MBA.

During a postgraduate course she met Inge, Rolf’s wife, in one of the electives. They completed an assignment together and became friends. Rolf liked Michelle and he found she had good business connections in capital cities, something that would be useful for him in a new country.

From the start, Michelle expressed her difficulty in trusting the coach: ‘I’ll be frank with you: I really feel uneasy. I’m sorry if I offend you but I have to say this. This is a company managed and directed by men, and you are another man who will counsel men. What about the women’s perspective? It has been very difficult for me to stand up to all of them. They ignore me, bully me or become patronising. But in reality I don’t care how they treat me, what I really care about is that we’re going down the drain, my team is overworked and frustrated, we could be taken over by the US or any other company and my effort, which cost me and the family so much, would be totally lost.’

Coach: I can see your point. It’s not in me to defend myself, you’ll see if you can trust me or not, I hope you will.

Michelle: That’s OK.
Coach: [The coach opens the Play of Life kit.] Michelle this is your turn with the Play of Life. We use this tool to communicate visually. I would like to know what is your view of the team of directors. This stage represents, or is the context, of your relationship with the directors, your marketing team, and your family. Choose a figure that represents you and place it on the stage in a place that would symbolically represent where you feel in the executive team as well as your own team, and then choose figures for work colleagues and family.

Michelle represents herself with a figure with the hands lifted (1.1). Michelle sees herself holding a large load on her own without much help. She attributes this to the resignation of two senior sales representatives. The whole marketing and sales department is overloaded due to difficulties in the production area creating conflict with clients by not providing products on time. Michelle has not been able to reach new clients; she is afraid of losing some strong existing clients as well, as they have already lost important accounts to other competitors. She views her team as little children sitting down waiting for her direction (1.2).

She perceives Tim, the financial director, in a corner on the right looking in the opposite direction (1.4). Rolf, the managing director, is in the middle of the stage in a permanent circular, revolving mode (1.3). This makes him willing to be in every area but really unable to be anywhere. Henry, the operational director (1.5) is half in, half out. ‘He’s over the edge, he’s really incapable. But when I vent something to Rolf he defends him strongly.’

Michelle is worried about the tension between Tim and Henry, and that this situation is not new and it would be very difficult to change. Her personal assistant Leanne (1.6) is behind her, overseeing customer services until a new person is hired following the resignation of the customer service manager.
Coach: Thanks, Michelle. You have been very creative!

Michelle: Thanks, I like creativity, something I cannot afford at the moment.

Coach: It looks like you’ve placed everyone in TML, but I notice your family is not on the stage, even though you mention them verbally.

Michelle: Oops! This is not good. This is the discussion I had with my husband last night. This is what he says: ‘We are not in the picture.’ But he doesn’t understand the pressures at work. [Michelle used figures to place her husband and two children outside the picture looking out.]

Coach: Michelle, looking at this picture, can you tell me what you see? Just imagine you don’t know what is happening here [pointing to the stage] and just describe what you see.

Michelle: I see a woman holding a mountain with children passively observing her. Then there are people scattered around with one in the middle spinning around.

Coach: What about communication?

Michelle: The woman is the only one who can see the children but there’s not much she can do as her hands are occupied and the children are passively looking at her.

Coach: Michelle, if this were a play or a film, what name or title would it have?

Michelle: ‘Alone, I’ll make it!’

Coach: I would like now to find a role to describe you. Chose a noun and an adjective to describe this person you are seeing in front of you. For example, ‘successful achiever’.

Michelle: ‘Overwhelmed conqueror.’

Coach: Michelle, this is your present situation, I would like you to picture in your mind an ideal life you would like to have. On a new stage choose another figure to represent you and follow the same direction. Project yourself into the future, create a picture and make that picture your present. Therefore it will become your present.

Michelle’s (2.1) ideal is to share the load with her team and to have her personal assistant (2.3) close by her. She wants to see every team member able to hold team issues in one hand and be free to seek new business opportunities with the other (2.2). She desires to see herself freer to re-establish contact with important lost clients, as well as to seek new ones. As her relationship with the factory is essential for linking client’s needs with quality products, she wants to see Rolf (2.4) behind her, supporting her and the company with great vision and determination. Tim (2.5) and Henry (2.6) are close and working together; they can see each other and there is a synergetic relationship. Ultimately, Michelle desires to see her husband, her children (2.7) and herself all spending more quality time together.
Coach: What title would you give to this picture?
Michelle: ‘Together we conquer’ or ‘True success’.
Coach: Which role do you see the person in your place playing?
Michelle: ‘Peaceful achiever’.
Coach: What do you feel within yourself when you see this picture that represents ‘True success’ or ‘Together we conquer’ and you living like a ‘Peaceful achiever’?
Michelle: It’s difficult to picture. I can picture the ‘achiever’ but not the ‘peaceful’.
Coach: Michelle, this is your creation, it’s not mine, you created it and you did it very quickly. This may represent that you have it very clear in your mind. You may be even thinking of this often.
Michelle: Yes and no. Almost every morning I have flashes of wanting this, some peace, and about the true values of life but I push it away as it seems impossible. My whole situation is different to the ideal life and I have to make it. I have to be strong and not give up. Peace will come. I’ll make it. I have a family to support and a job to do.
Coach: Would you like to talk about that another time? Rolf has asked me to provide an assessment and an action plan to help the directors and senior executives to communicate better and move towards the better performance of the organisation. He also places great importance on helping the team and employees to ‘get a life’.
Michelle: Yes of course, I would like to talk more about it.
Coach: [The coach places the two stages side by side.] Michelle, if the first stage is the first frame of a film that’s called ‘From “Overwhelmed conqueror” to “Peaceful achiever”’ or ‘From “Alone I’ll make it” to “Together we conquer”’, what would be the first movement, the first frame towards achieving the second stage?

Michelle: Rolf has to stop spinning and take control.
Coach: For how long have you been waiting for Rolf to stop spinning?
Michelle: For a long time, especially the last two to three years.
Coach: What if he can’t stop spinning?
Michelle: TML will collapse and many of us with it. I’m not afraid of losing my job as I believe I can get another one very soon, but would I have any energy left?

As often happens, the protagonist of the scene is waiting for somebody else to change, to make the first step towards wellbeing, rather than having control over it themselves.

Coach: Let’s look at you. Life becomes too fragile, frustrated and dependent if we are waiting for someone else to change. What can you do, what would be your first movement to achieve your desires? Just forget about anyone else. Just focus on you, what can you do in relation to someone else or in relation to something?
Michelle: I have to let go of that mountain.
Coach: Make that movement using the figures.
[Michele makes the figure that represents her throw the weight away.]
Coach: What would happen if you do that? Just look at the stage. What would be the next step?
Michelle: Somebody will start taking it.
Coach: What is next?
Michelle: I would sit down.
Coach: Look at your figure and be in that picture. You have thrown the weight and you are now sitting down and others are taking the weight.
Michelle: No I can’t. I can’t see myself giving up. I must make it.
Coach: Michelle, let us dream! Could you imagine yourself in that situation?
Michelle: Yes I can. I would really like it! But it’s impossible!
Coach: Let’s leave it like that for the moment. We’ll talk about it later. You have in front of you two distinct situations. These pictures you have
created can be described as two different lenses through which you see life. Michelle, which lens do you use more often?

Michelle: The first one, without any doubt.
Coach: For how long have you been using the first lens?
Michelle: For as long as I can remember.
Coach: Have you ever used the second one?
Michelle: No, it’s totally foreign to me. It’s only a dream.
Coach: Do you know anyone who uses this kind of lens?
Michelle: No, I don’t think so. And people I know who are relaxed and don’t worry about life are losers, wimps. I’m not like that.

Michelle has been able to expand her awareness of her own behaviour. Though awareness is not enough to change a pattern of behaviour it’s the first step towards substantial change. The coach chose, at this point of time, not to dwell more on her ideal image, as it is too foreign to her. The ideal of being peaceful, although it’s what she really wants, has for her at this time negative connotations. Michelle’s opportunity of identifying a new image for better living is a warm-up towards changing her corporate culture. At the moment her role of ‘peaceful achiever’ creates tension within her. She knows well the role of ‘achiever’, but her personal experience tells her that only losers, dags and new-age dreamers could be ‘peaceful’.

Surrender—it’s not giving up!

This is an important challenge for Michelle and an opportunity the coach has to walk beside her, as a catalyst that would help bring the best in her towards true prosperity. She wants to succeed in life and she has only one way of achieving that.

She can learn that she can be prosperous and at the same time enjoy good health, a balanced life, and peace. She is facing a difficult task; this is an issue in the realms of spirituality where she needs to learn to surrender, to let it go. In letting go, Michelle will have to realise that she cannot do everything. She must surrender her ideal of ‘Superwoman’, ‘I can do it’, ‘Nobody can help’, and accept ‘I need help’, and ‘Others can do it’. For a person who has developed roles of control over every circumstance in life it is very difficult, at the edge of the impossible, to learn this lesson.

The reality is that we have opportunities in life, like this one for Michelle, where she can learn by choice how to surrender. She has a choice. Life often teaches us lessons through pain and suffering such as illnesses, accidents, or collapse of the stock exchange—where we are forced to surrender by decree, not by choice. The sad thing is that behaviours and styles of life like Michelle’s may create a proneness to accidents and her tension at home may develop
ill-feelings in the family or behavioural problems in the children that may, sooner or later, demand that Michelle throw the workload away despite her reluctance. Asking people like Michelle to stop moving is like asking a tightrope walker to stop moving—their balance depends on their constant motion. This is the price of living on a tightrope.

Strong philosophical traditions have suggested that prosperity is related to satisfaction and happiness, that both are achievable and that prosperity is ultimately linked to wisdom (the ability or result of an ability to think and act utilising knowledge, experience, understanding, commonsense and insight). Both individuals and society are able to claim this achievement. For Michelle, her work became her god and her style of work her daily prayer.

Living ‘for’ something, not ‘against’ it

Coach: Michelle, can you tell me more about your difficulty in accepting the role of ‘peaceful achiever’ as an alternative for you?

Michelle: The only people I’ve met that had some kind of peaceful spirit are people I don’t really respect much. I believe they’ve just accepted defeat in life and as they can’t be successful they convince themselves they are at peace. They don’t have aspirations or goals. They are losers.

Michelle has only one sister who is five years older, Mina. She felt her parents preferred Mina, whom she always felt compared with. She describes her father as a rigid and stubborn man, somebody she knew little and who was often ‘socially’ drunk. Her mother was a resentful woman, bitter and jealous. ‘She never achieved anything, she only knew how to whinge or whine.’ Mother overprotected Mina since she was little. She was a pretty girl and was the only ‘good’ thing that happened to her.

Michelle described her path in life: ‘I couldn’t achieve what Mina achieved until she was 18. She got married to an older person, a manager of a big mine company. She loved that glamour; she lost all her identity and became part of the corporate parody, from party to receptions, to overseas trips. She was nobody by herself but her marriage gave her money, prestige and to Mum something to be proud of. Her husband was, and still is, an arrogant and patronising man, I always hated that. The role I saw my sister and mother play towards men was sickening and denigrating.

‘I knew I had to be different and I promised myself to succeed in life, to make it and not to be like them. I always wanted a respectful and loving man. I was very lucky in finding Chris. He is a tranquil and supportive man. He is a technician, he likes his 8 to 4.30 job and he’s very good with our two daughters. I’m a lucky woman. The problem is that I can’t see them very often.
I never finish work before 8 pm and when I arrive home I’m exhausted. When I get home at 9 they have already eaten, they are doing their homework and Chris goes to the gym.’

Michelle is lonely, like her role description ‘Alone, I’ll make it!’ Make what? She cannot even mentally connect and relate to the ideal role she created. Michelle may never really make it if she continues in that struggle for life. She is a woman living ‘against’ something (her sister and mother’s role model) not ‘for’ something.

People hurt by life may create a life based on a negative parameter instead of a positive one: ‘I’ll not be like . . .’

This is why many revolutions fail. The reason for the fight may have ethical merit but the basic motivation and driving force is against something, instead of moving towards a new, creative system.

Michelle’s drive for life has been against specific role models of women and men. She is no different from those adults who suffered financial misfortune when little, who can only see security as not being poor; they can never enjoy what they have, as it will never be enough. They don’t live towards (or ‘for’) wellbeing but ‘against’ poverty.

The positive results of a life driven by an ‘against’ motivation will not be sustained, as there are never enough of the natural elements of satisfaction that allow rest. It’s a permanent drain of energy.

The energy used by a negative motivation is so great that it has to come, or be taken, from any possible source. The people who suffer the most for this action will invariably be the ones emotionally closer to us, especially children and partners. In my experience as a psychotherapist I saw, utilising a numerical metaphor, that if a person gave ten points more than necessary to their work for a long time, for the fear of being poor or not accepted by others, they needed to take 20 points from another source; such as family, children or health. When the motivation that drives our actions is based on pathology, ill feelings and unresolved hurt it will never fully satisfy the soul and will produce no peace.

Living ‘for’ or ‘towards’ reinvigorates the body and the soul and the results can be easily maintained as rest becomes easily possible. For a detailed description of how Michelle dealt with her hurt, look at www.playoflife.com/selfhelp.

 RESPONDING TO EMOTIONAL PAIN

People respond to pain in two basic ways. They may become totally dependent on others, not able to think, to live, to decide, to have a personal opinion; they may feel they can’t do it without him, her or them. They may feel lost in their sense of being; they may only exist if someone else makes them exist.

Or, they may say, ‘I need to do it myself. I’ve been disconnected from others
and I need to find power in myself. I can do it!’ They could create a sense of autonomy, believing that they don’t need anyone else and can travel along as a self-contained, strong person who can cope with everything. Some self-help techniques stimulate these types of feelings. ‘I can do it! I’m in control. The power is within me. I will never allow anyone to possess me, to touch me, to make plans with me, to dream with me, to live with me. I can do it!’

Relationships become either an unknown experience or a controlled game where these people don’t let go and don’t receive. ‘I can do it!’ can mean ‘I exist alone’.

Finding a place of rest

Michelle is hurt, but she is a gentle and warm woman, who believes that soon—when she has ‘achieved’ in life, when she is somebody by herself—she will be able to enjoy her children. When an adolescent, she made a decision that she would not be like her mother and sister, that she would have a man very different from her father as a husband, and that she would give her children and him a professional, self-sufficient and successful mother and partner (she didn’t accept the word ‘wife’). With strong willpower she worked hard to be a ‘professional—self-sufficient—successful’ but not yet a mother or partner. She believes that this will come ‘after’—but after what? Work has become her identity—she had developed a mega-role, difficult to change.

Michele has no place to rest; work is an environment of extreme distress and home is a foreign place where she feels remote and detached.

Michelle is now aware that she has to do something about her life. She understood that living against her mother and sister role models was not giving her anything but draining her, her family and work. For Michele ‘living against’ has been giving her the container, the energy to keep her alive. It was the best place and best time for her to be in. The most important thing is, she now has a goal to move ‘towards’, rather than living ‘against’ anymore.

It was not easy for Michelle; there were many issues she had to rework in her own life, with her husband and children, as well as the expectations at work. Something that kept her moving was the knowledge of what she really wanted and what the coach said to her: ‘Sometimes this process will not be easy—it will be at the edge of the impossible.’ Therefore she knew the potential cost and risk from the beginning. She knew the importance of a contract, and this proposal of a new life was a contract she signed with tears, she knew she had to commit to it.

Michelle is now ‘just’ enjoying the ‘being’—the knowledge that she can’t, nor does she need to, control life anymore: ‘peaceful achiever’. She has now monitored her tiredness and level of stress because in those circumstances
she, without much warning, comes back to old systems of behaviour, to old fragmented roles. She identified her ‘amber light’: a diminished appetite, tension in her jaw and rejection of her husband. When she is in that space she leaves work earlier, takes her Play of Life kit and goes for a few hours to a place where she can rest and look at the way she is living and the roles she is playing.

**Health and performance**

Organisations that have built up their performance on the basis of mega-roles, where work is the only heaven, will experience a dramatic change (seen as financial loss) if people from the team are wisely expanding other roles in life—learning how to enjoy family and friends, or personal or professional development. This role expansion has to be exercised in the limitations of place and time: as no one can be in two places at the same time it will create pressure and conflict among people who ‘expect’ a certain commitment. But this change could help the company to be an attractive place to work, and a desirable environment for those who want a life.

The story of Tracey and Ken is a perfect example of what can happen, for individuals and companies, when people start to ‘look after themselves’.

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**Tracey is a senior partner of an international legal company; her husband Ken is a senior partner in an international accounting consultancy. Three months ago the counsellor from the school their two daughters attend called them for a meeting. She was very clear that it has been detrimental for the girls to be left at the school at 7 am and picked up at 6 pm by a babysitter they don’t like. The children were, like the parents, performing well at school. They were top in their classes but they were always by themselves and often complaining of headaches. The parents defended themselves saying that they learned that quality was more important than quantity, that they attend most of the sporting events and school functions, and they were also involved in parents’ activities.

The reality was that they did all of that with good motivation, but as they were so busy and concerned with their high-profile jobs, their presence was mechanical, not emotional. They were not ‘connected’ as a couple or parents. After long conversations among themselves and with the school counsellor they accepted that their whole world was work and what they were emotionally giving to the children was not enough.

Tracey and Ken started changing their style of work and this created an immense negative reaction in their working relationships.**
The reality is that healthy people will create a more sustainable effectiveness based on true performance outcomes, rather than on number of hours worked. We know the old slogan: ‘work smarter not harder’. But managers who cannot change their corporate culture, their style of work, may strongly criticise those who don’t appear to work as hard as they do.

To recap

The key element in this chapter is also a core principle of relationship capital; life is a force that has to be projected towards not against. I found that in unresolved relationships there are handicaps that hinder people from establishing new relationships. Michelle spent all her energy in fighting a losing battle, she had to surrender and let the past go to be able to discover a new way of living. High performance by key employees is so often founded on unhappy, distressed, unfulfilled people. This performance is brittle, and it can break at any time.

The firm that manages its relationship capital looks for sustainable performance from its people. It does not condone burnout, but actively helps its people to balance their lives.

To maximise relationship capital, we need to look for healthy ways of relating. When unhealthy dynamics are discovered they should not be criticised or judged, but understood. The Play of Life can help us here by allowing us to take a respectful look at our relationships with increased understanding, and to take a first step towards resolution.
This chapter describes the practical application of the Strategic Relationship Management Model, and the use of the Play of Life technique in teamwork, in the context of three-day executive workshop for TML, conducted by the coach.

The aim of this chapter is to highlight key points that make such a workshop productive, with practical and efficient outcomes. The techniques used may be easily applied by people with some training in people management. The purpose of Strategic Relationship Management is that every manager or supervisor willing to be involved can be trained in essential skills, without the need for long courses.

At TML
The basic issues facing TML are not financial. Their loss of market share is not due to poor product innovation or quality. These are the objective symptoms of a deeper organic dysfunction. The basic conundrum relates to the emotional state of its managers, fragmented communication and a poor organisational fit that, from the top to the bottom, has contaminated the whole organisation. The remedial process is not to patch here and there, but to help people to be able to identify the strengths of each individual, of the organisation and of areas to develop; have a clear understanding of the objectives of the organisation and each department; and to map the holes in the system that must be filled at the right time.

Pre-workshop work
So far, the coach had conducted three meetings with Rolf and one with each director; a few short meetings with Lynnette and one with the other personal
assistants; and a meeting with the managers who report to each director. These meetings consisted of the following:

**Where to from here?**
Using the Play of Life technique, the coach assessed each person’s perceptions of TML’s present situation, and the perceived objectives of the department, divisions and the whole organisation. This included questions from personal, executive, departmental and whole organisational perspectives. They looked at key strength points as well as at the gap existing between the present and the objective. They were guided to identify their own view about the ‘first step’ needed, as individuals and as a department, towards achieving goals.

**Open discussion**
There was discussion about TML’s history, success and areas to develop. Topics included the major difficulties they faced as individuals, as directors and as a whole organisation, and included a discussion about the perceived culture in the organisation. All these topics were effectively discussed in only one session due to the use of the Play of Life as a practical and focused method of communication.

**Relationship mapping analysis**
Each manager completed a ‘Graph of relationship choices’ (an adaptation of the sociometric Acceptance and Rejections test), a graphic representation of how each member of the senior executive relates to each other and how they perceive the relationships among other members. This choice of analysis is based on the premise that there is bilateral emotional relationship—acceptance, rejection or indifference—between people, called ‘Tele’ by Moreno. This is one of the most important issues in organisational fit. It’s not the emotional, professional or skill capital the person may have but how the individuals can work with each other—the relationship capital. The result of this graph is explored on page 179.

**Employee satisfaction survey**
Every employee at TML completed a short questionnaire. The directors were asked if they would support, and commit themselves to work on, the results of the survey in each of their departments. They all accepted and discussed the issues with their managers who also shared it with the supervisors.

**Job descriptions**
Managers were encouraged to read their job description and to make any comments and changes necessary to make it relevant to their real role, and to
clarify areas that didn’t represent their work. They were also asked to do the same exercise with other managers and supervisors after the executive workshop.

**KPIs**

Participants were asked to review their last two appraisals with the people they report to, and to look at the appraisal with people that reported to them. They were also asked to review the way they were appraised and to make some comments about it.

## The strategic plan

Based on the information gathered from these meetings, the coach, together with the directors and senior managers, prepared a strategic plan for TML, summarised below:

**What**

A plan to:

- Identify (clarify) objectives for the whole organisation, management and teams.
- Identify what has been happening ‘between and among’ the team (relationship mapping).
- A comprehensive action plan, that could run for at least six months, put into practice mostly by people from within the organisation.
- An assessment of the intellectual, skills and relationship capital of the company—what do we have?
- An assessment of the ‘needs or holes’ at the company—what don’t we have?

**How**

The action plan will be delivered via strategic planning and programs relevant to TML’s re-engineering process, progressively customised as information is gathered. Programs are likely to include:

- Executive coaching
- Training management for internal coaching
- Coaching/mentoring programs, workshops, seminars, team-building, reading material
- Inter/intra-departmental studies and action plans
- Organisational analysis including surveys, tests, appraisal systems.

**When**

The first stage of the strategic plan is already under way, consisting of:

- Meetings with directors and personal assistants (already completed).
Executive workshop, off-site for three days (see below).
Completion (before executive workshop) of Relationship Mapping diagrams (see page 179).
Completion (before executive workshop) of Employee Satisfaction Survey (ESS) (see page 169).
Senior managers, junior managers and supervisors give input into the job satisfaction questionnaire.
Managers’ assessments of and recommendations on the results of the ESS.

Communicating the plan to head office
Rolf sent this plan as the basis for a six-month strategic plan, including sales and profit target, to Toby Tillick in the US. Tillick was satisfied with it and was supportive of Rolf. TML Australia’s senior management were pleased with the proposal, as they felt part of it and they trusted that there would be space for them to vent what had been in their minds for so long.

Due to the urgency of the situation, TML chose to work hard and to accelerate the process—they agreed to complete the first stage within one month. In situations of less urgency this first stage may take up to three months, but not longer, as many people, both management and employees, may lose focus and interest. On the other hand, some industries and organisations are so dynamic that after three months they may be in a different organisational reality altogether; while other organisations have a different culture and are slower.

Rolf was pleased with the strategic plan as it had a short-term focus. He felt that he could have some control over the situation. He has been extremely frustrated at the slowness and lack of practical problem solving by management. His experience was that whenever there was a problem, the people involved in solving it created a working-team; it took days or even weeks to meet and present recommendations and action plans for somebody else to implement. The reports were usually late—so the problem had already developed into something different—and incomplete, or if well presented they were without practical plans to execute. These situations made Rolf try to solve problems by himself rather than share relevant issues with his team, creating further stress and resentment as he felt unsupported, as well as leaving him physically and emotionally unavailable at home.

Executive workshop
Rolf and the other directors understood the importance of conducting an off-site executive workshop. The goal of this three-day meeting was to create a common focus at TML, a new starting point, and develop a united solid and
committed platform from which each member could successfully continue
the process of re-engineering a way ahead for TML in their own departments.

The coach was aware, from previous meetings, of differences and tensions
among the directors and different levels of management. He chose not to
dwell on past issues but to look at the future, identifying the objectives they
have as individuals and as a team. The coach capitalised on the fact that, even
though there were different personalities in the team, their common commit-
ment and objective was to see TML succeed and not be taken over by the
US. This was a time to regain confidence and trust with each other, and fully
commit themselves to the project.

Looking at the future in this case is to create a strong new pillar on which
people could focus. Choosing not to dwell in the past is not to avoid conflict,
but to create a solid ground on which to stand, so that they can look at the
difficulties they face from a solid platform at the right time.

The people invited to this workshop were the directors and every person
reporting to them. The directors’ personal assistants were also invited to the
workshop to effectively support the directors, provide an important link between
the director and the whole organisation, and to learn better ways to free the
directors from other issues so that they can focus on executive matters.

**Educational aims**

Another goal for the workshop is to provide key educational skills and tools
to the team. This pedagogic aspect aims is to give participants the necessary
elements to increase their discernment and not to make mechanical (robotic)
changes to their lives and departments, that may have limited and short-term
results, but to provide informed assessment and skilled leadership.

One of the important aims of the Strategic Relationship Management
Model is to train people within the organisation, substantially reducing
training and consultancy expenses, as well as empowering people from
within the organisation to ‘permanently’ create the organisation they wish
to belong to.

In my research I have found that organisations frequently spend large
amounts of time and money in training—development and strategic
planning—but this is not integrated into the whole wealth of the organisa-
tion. Job descriptions, key performance indicators, reviews and appraisals are
often done in a fragmented way, filling file cabinets but remaining irrelevant
to the day-to-day running of the company. I have also found that in their desire
to promote change, managers conduct surveys and tests, and send people to
training without providing any relevant feedback and follow-up. Lack of
interest and support from employees is the result.
Training every manager and supervisor with practical relationship management skills can definitely change an organisation. Each manager will use the skills in their own style, but without a doubt will be able to keep their finger on the pulse of their team and be able to take preventive or remedial action before major surgery is needed.

The Strategic Relationship Management Model helps management to practically streamline systems and procedures (such as job descriptions, key performance indicators, job objectives, appraisal systems) to be applied throughout the whole organisation. It also provides tools for accountability and facing each other over performance: ‘caring enough to confront’. They also learn how to confront (face) their bosses to create a better and more efficient environment in which to work. They will look at exit interviews with interest, without criticism of the interviewee.

The program for the executive workshop includes:

- The importance of the warm-up in meetings.
- Presentation of the Strategic Relationship Management Model (described in Chapter 10).
- ‘Where to from here’ using the Play of Life.
- TML’s present situation and change management (previously described).
- Corporate culture—how to change ineffective patterns of practices and behaviours (overview of Chapter 3).
- Creativity and spontaneity (Chapter 3).
- Analysis of the relationship mapping graphs and diagrams. This identifies ‘key’ people in the communication channel, and aims to reach each employee and for management to understand their needs. Each participant filled in a basic relational questionnaire and handed it to the coach.
- Identification of people who are performing well and those who aren’t, to develop a practical action plan, using the Leadership Mapping Model.
- Analysis of the report from managers about the Employee Satisfaction Survey.
- Developing a ‘plan of action’ from the results of the Employee Satisfaction Survey.
- Developing a feedback letter to employees with comments from senior management, acknowledging the effort of responding to the survey and including the plan of action to be taken on each point.
- Identifying ‘urgent’ issues.
- Highlighting the important issues and making practical action plans to deal with them.
- Developing a practical agenda for meetings.
- Having fun . . .
The coach followed the Strategic Relationship Management Model structure for meetings consisting of warm-up, presentation and sharing. This simple structure allows the group to begin to address their issues on the same platform, united in focus so the few minutes spent in the first stage are easily justified. After the presentation of issues, finishing with a ‘sharing’ stage provides a closure of the meeting and a warm-up to the tasks ahead.

**Warm-up**

Warm-up was previously described in Chapter 3 in relation to the role it plays in individual preparation for organisational change, and how it influences a whole organisation to build up a social or collective response which builds up spontaneity and creativity.²

Warm-up in this context is to create an emotional and mental preparation to open up issues that belong to the individual in their role in the team. Having different levels of warm-up fragments a group—if somebody has been thinking, processing information and getting ready for a meeting, and others have not even been thinking about it, when they meet it they would be in different level of awareness (warm-up). It would be very difficult to have a meaningful encounter, to share similar emotions or energy, and the interaction will be uneven, leading to high levels of frustration. The person who has warmed-up doesn’t feel supported, and the other person feels pushed, overwhelmed and even bullied. Failure in meetings is often due not to the lack of abilities of the team or lack of interest, but to people coming from different thinking processes and being unable to engage in the process. Warm-up unifies people while preserving their different styles.

There were principally two types of warm-ups the coach took into consideration, preparation for the whole workshop and for each session in the workshop.

As a warm-up to the whole workshop, in the lead-up to the workshop, the directors have all been involved in preparing and conducting the Employee Satisfaction Survey (ESS) (see page 169) and the relationship mapping exercises, the results of which are to be discussed during the workshop.

For each session, the psychodrama and action methods (explained below—and see [www.playoflife.com/essentials](http://www.playoflife.com/essentials)) warm-up technique was used, based on the theories and techniques of sociodrama, psychodrama and sociometry. The warm-up in each meeting could be on a verbal (people talking about their expectations) or non-verbal or experiential basis, where participants use different expressive methods like drawing, sculpting and movement. In this case a combination of both methods was used.
About psychodrama

Dr Moreno believed that the role training (the growth of the person as a whole) used in psychodrama would influence a wider context of daily human interaction. With practice through the experiential methods, we would become sensitised to others, strengthening our capacity for empathy and effective responsible behaviour. The overall result would be:

*a more creative and effective performing organisation with a compassionate and supportive environment, sustained by organisations truly responsive to the human needs they serve.*

Psychodramatic methods and techniques are actively used in a broad range of human relationships, educational and industrial environments throughout the world. The actual role playing is an original psychodramatic technique. This method has shown itself effective in improving awareness, resolving conflict, communicating, training, and improving self-esteem, personal effectiveness and relationships.

Verbal warm-up

The verbal warm-up begins with a simple ‘How are we?’—an opening a space for each member to share their thoughts and their expectations about the specific session. The coach explains the process of warm-up as a moment where participants can find a similar wavelength of thought, spirit and emotion to take the next step together, and that the next step would be at a pace which would not leave people behind.

During the warm-up process, the coach spends time explaining how team members can learn how to share personal issues while maintaining total privacy. For example, Michelle’s personal assistant, Leanne, had been having difficulties with her teenaged son and her husband for some time, but she never said anything to anyone. In many meetings she has been somehow absent, ‘not there’, responding irritably, and perceived as not committed and inefficient. She learned there was a space to share personal issues, when asked ‘How are we?’ she simply said: ‘I’m not very well; I’m facing some difficulties.’
She became a bit upset but after a few seconds she felt better, more together and able to be present and efficient in the team who responded with a ‘present’ silence, looking at her with affection and care. She really only verbalised what everyone suspected, but as they didn’t have her version of the situation they were left to imagine reasons for her behaviour.

Bringing human issues to our team will only make the team more human.

Only practice will give the chairperson of a meeting the ability to discern the right amount of time to devote to a ‘How are we?’ part of the verbal warm-up, and the level of detail that is appropriate to share. The chairperson of each meeting has to be very disciplined in the management of this time. Spending a few minutes, depending on the size of the group, will likely open up issues which, if not expressed in the right place, may take long a time to solve. This type of warm-up also includes the opportunity for people to express how they felt in the previous meeting or meetings, and the outcome desired for this or following meetings. This is also the time to comment on how effective they feel such meetings are (e.g., too long, need to spend time on x, y or z).

Resistance to verbal warm-up

I have experienced some resistance to this opening time for meetings. Surprisingly, I found the same resistance on this issue when I have been involved in management workshops in welfare and religious types of teams. Some people find that sharing how they are makes them extremely uncomfortable, and these are usually the people who have more interpersonal relationship problems in the team. People find this difficult because:

- The problems they are facing are too big and they are scared that if they open a window they would not be able to stop the flow of pain that is contained inside.
- They do not want to mix work and personal issues. There is a misunderstanding about this point: as I have noted earlier, whatever goes inside must come outside. It is self-deceiving to think that big or important issues contained in our hearts will not get out in some way.
- They fear talking too much, and do not know how to stop somebody who always takes too much time. There is no real training in our society on how to share our ‘stuff’ while monitoring if the other person is
following us or is being overwhelmed. If this is the issue, I suggest people speak in short phrases and wait to see if the other person can continue listening or not.

They lack practice. You can start practising to open up a little with close people around you.

**Non-verbal warm-up**

The physical warm up involves the body in this important stage. This could just be a short breathing or stretching exercise while sitting; walking around; or could include some ‘play’ exercises that would help each member to ‘meet’ and set up a common foundation. Some warm up exercises are found at [www.playoflife.com/essentials](http://www.playoflife.com/essentials)

In this opportunity at TML, the coach invited the team to stand up and move around the meeting room, while looking around the room and at the view through the windows. This exercise helps participants to be comfortable with the new venue and with each other, and to say ‘Hi’ to each other while stretching and having few deep breaths. These few minutes will save unwelcome distractions later.

The coach then acknowledges that there is a great wealth of knowledge and experience among the people of TML, and asks the person who had been with the company for the longest period to stand in one corner of the room, and everyone else to stand in a line according to the length of their employment, from the longest-serving employee to the most recent one. They are then invited to remember anecdotes from different stages of TML’s development. They remember funny experiences, such as being fined by the Fire Department for lighting a fire on the fifth anniversary BBQ. People who are no longer with the company are remembered with affection and, let’s say, with some jokes too. The general comments and laughter give the meeting a warm and welcoming feeling.
They then continue the workshop with a short and succinct presentation of the Strategic Relationship Management Model (Chapter 10) and the analysis of the results of the SRMM Survey.

He who would eat the fruit must climb the tree.
Scottish proverb

The need for action

During a break in the workshop, Rolf became very agitated. He wanted action. He wanted results. He knew his staff were very good in ‘assessing’ problems but not taking practical steps to solve them. His thoughts and comments came out in the group as criticism and judgment, changing the ‘spirit’ of the groups. Indeed, the coach had observed that this was the way all TML meetings ended up—extremely tense, with fighting, criticism and blame.

After discussing these feelings with the coach, Rolf recognised that his reaction and comments were based on his well-known platform of fear, anxiety and tension as well as resentment of not feeling supported. He saw again how difficult it was for him to stay in the present, that his worry about ‘performance’ became an obsession and he was unable to ‘see’ people and to enjoy what he really wanted: people and relationships. He recognised that his point—‘What are we going to do about it?’—was valid but the way he presented it was inappropriate, and in the process he discouraged people who were feeling more alive and hopeful. Rolf also understood that people had been reacting to his frustration rather than to his reasons. People were able to hear his ‘noise’ but not his words.

The coach encouraged the group not to be satisfied with just a positive, ‘bonding’ experience, but to use this energy (spontaneity) to participate in a real cultural change. Talking about emotional capital, intellectual capital and relational capital is not enough—action has to follow. Many good ideas die in informal conversation around a coffee table or while sharing a beer with team members or friends. At the TML workshop there were not many surprises or discoveries. The basic issues had previously been thought through by individuals and formally or informally in small groups, but they lacked the spontaneity and creativity to make their opinions and recommendations known. Knowledge is not enough if we don’t have tools and skills to use it.
‘What did you do about it?’

To tackle problems we must identify:

- What is the issue?
- Who will address the issue and propose solutions?
- How action will be taken?
- When will action be taken?

Every time an issue was raised in the workshop, the coach adopted the position of a ‘naïve enquirer’, asking: ‘Did you know about this?’ When the answer was ‘yes’, the coach would ask: ‘How long have you known about it?’ followed by: ‘What did you do about it?’

The purpose of this line of questioning is not to expose participants (even though they feel exposed anyway), but to create a common thinking and vocabulary. These are the very questions they could start asking and answering themselves and with their employees and fellow workers. If we desire an effective organisation we must not be afraid of asking these questions.

The SRMM provides a basic guide to follow when people face a problem or if they have a comment or recommendation to make. The following form is a practical template to complete individually or with a team who is addressing an issue or problem.

The most important focus of this way of thinking is to make people aware that whatever the issue is, it will always have a ‘relationship implication’ and will have relevance to others. This is the essence of relational capital—who and how is the ‘other’ involved?

Employee Satisfaction Survey (ESS)

After the group had a clearer view of the SRMM as a template to make an informed situational analysis of the company, the coach introduced the results of the ESS. Participants were invited to make group comments and to develop practical responses to it, and then to write a letter of feedback to employees for delivery first thing on the next working day.

The survey was an anonymous questionnaire, only identified by department and, in operations, by factory or mill. The responses were sent directly to the office of the coach, where the tally was done, and graphs that included the whole organisation produced. The response from employees was a success: 94% compared to 65% of previous questionnaires. This positive feedback was definitely due to the involvement and ownership by line managers and supervisors—they were not just informed but invited to be part of the process.

After the directors had agreed with the idea of administering these questionnaires, they asked their managers (including line managers and supervisors) to read the questions and provide suggestions. After they agreed
Let's talk about it and deal with it!

Date: ……………… Created by: ………………………… Department: ……………………
Distributed to: …………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………….. ………………………………..
Copy to direct supervisor: ………………………………. N/A ✷  Copy to MD: .. N/A ✷

1. Briefly describe the issue:

▲ Idea to enrich the company ▲ First time this happened ▲ It happened before on what occasion?
▲ For how long has this been happening?

2. Is this issue relevant to other people or departments? ▲ YES ▲ NO
If YES, describe and distribute to relevant people. Always send a copy to the supervisor.

3. Provide some background about the issue(s) described in point 1.

4. In your own words describe WHY you believe this happened or has been happening.

5. If this issue is not effectively addressed, what would be the impact on:
   a. CUSTOMERS? — internal (other employees) — external
   b. COMPANY REPUTATION?
   c. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS?
      To the company:
      — bottom line
      — additional sales needed to cover cost of mistake
      — cost to get more clients to replace lost business
      — cost generated by lost business
      — claims
   d. OTHER?

6. What kind of solution(s) do you suggest?

7. What type of resources would be necessary to deal with this issue?
   Does the company have these resources? Please describe.

8. SUPERVISOR
   Date received:
   Action taken:

9. Task completed
   OUTCOME: ………………………………………
   Informed creator of document and people involved DATE: …………………

Figure 9.1: Template for dealing with issues
with the questions, the manager or supervisors closer to the employees informed them about the questionnaire, the scope and the importance of this new strategy. They were reassured that the information provided would be kept confidential and that they would receive a speedy response that would include the final reports, and the recommendations and action plans for each department. Some supervisors even organised BBQs in one break for each roster so that there was a longer break, giving them time to use an overhead projector to look at the questions together. The answers were completed privately but surrounded by fun, serious and insightful comments and jokes about the questions. Managers were surprised by the commitment expressed by employees, and feelings that the company was ‘their’ company.

Figure 9.2 shows a sample (in graph form) of four questions answered by employees throughout the company. For complete details of the survey and results see www.playoflife.com/srmm.

Then the group was divided into three small mixed groups to analyse the graphs, make comments and recommendations, and to present a draft letter to employees thanking them for their participation with a copy of the final report showing departmental and total responses.

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**Figure 9.2: Employee Satisfaction Survey graphs**

**Do you feel you get sufficient warning of all changes that affect your work?**

- Yes: 23%
- Uncertain: 15%
- Sometimes: 15%
- No: 47%

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**Is creative thinking and innovation by employees encouraged by this organisation?**

- Yes: 38%
- Uncertain: 31%
- No: 31%
Managers were happily surprised by the response from the employees and were aware of their desire to be part of the changing process. Supervisors informed the managers about the open BBQs, the comments and conversations employees had while answering the questionnaires, and how much knowledge they had about the company. Even those very sceptical about the process made very positive observations that would have remained unknown if they hadn’t used the survey.

Working as a coach to senior managers I have found that the wealth of experience and talent in organisations is enormous. If such creativity was utilised it would definitely benefit the company, saving money, effort and resources. It would solve basic and repeated problems. The lack of solutions to recurrent problems creates deception and exhaustion, making the most valuable employees question their loyalty and commitment to the company.

I have seen a great level of frustration among senior and not-so-senior partners in large companies. They feel that they are not considered as people, that their ideas don’t count. Their disappointment and dissatisfaction rises as they feel they live on a merry-go-round without change, and their issues, concerns and voices are totally ignored. Disillusion arrives and with it depression, ‘learned helplessness’, distress and burnout.

The most capable associates, when they can notice their dissatisfaction early enough, are the ones that often leave for new horizons, leaving behind the ones who believe themselves ‘loyal to the company’. The reality is sometimes that the ‘loyal’ workers may not be able to leave, because they are scared or unable to find a new job or they are already burnt out with no energy to move. This becomes a ‘why bother?’ attitude.

To maximise relational capital the organisation must have educational
programs to help people to learn how to ‘sell’ their ideas well—in effect, this is internal marketing—and avenues where those ideas can be expressed, recognised and valued (this doesn’t mean that management must do whatever people want). You can practise the same approach at home. Children need to learn how to comment and to know that their thoughts or ideas, even though they may not be the best on earth, have been listened to and considered. The parent can also coach the child to present their ideas in better ways; this is educating people to ‘have a voice’.

TML management had been happily surprised by the richness of intellectual capital they had in the organisation. To maximise the opportunity for people to have a voice in their own departments, managers were trained in how to conduct a short presentation on the issue of internal marketing.

The training budget had been shrunk after big expenses in HR training without much benefit. From this weekend education was strongly encouraged, even though the financial director was primarily against it. Training needs were presented to management every quarter. The relationship mentor and training officer would assess the requests, and look at the internal ‘talents and skills’ database in an attempt to have internal staff provide the necessary training. If external training was required, the person attending the course was encouraged, when appropriate, to present the material learned to other people in the company. This approach gave people the opportunity to ‘give’—to feel useful—and the organisation could have a ‘consultant on call’ in the company, which saves money.

The courses provided by internal trainers included: dealing with deadlines; stress management; presentation skills; conflict resolution; leadership; communication skills; graphic arts; writing skills; IT and computer skills; train the trainer (in association with an evening college for official certification); and industrial relations law.

Other activities, such as relaxation exercises and meetings for people with similar religious beliefs or interests, were introduced and encouraged and office space was made available before or after work.

Organisational fit

Organisations often overwork their people or over-spend on investments or technology, thinking this will magically solve their problems. Unfortunately, however, often the people involved are not considered, and when there is mismanagement of interpersonal relationships, further damage and cost results. While many businesses enjoy growth and global supremacy, many executives—and a great number of people across all organisational levels—suffer in powerless despair. People often prefer to overwork than to face
the reality of home or loneliness. What damages the person, and ultimately the long-term effectiveness of a team, is not that the person chooses work instead of family, but the lack of awareness about the true motivation for this behaviour and the pressures placed on other people.

I have found that organisations often withhold addressing inter-personal relationships, overall fit and balance issues, fearing these issues are far too big or too personal or solve. In reality, solutions are often much closer than expected. If people are willing to tackle issues and have the right tools to do so, then the possibilities for closing the gap are strong.

I believe that a balance can be struck between corporate effectiveness, sustained bottom-line performance and job and life satisfaction. It simply requires skill, focus and time. Solutions become apparent only when we choose to stop, see, reflect, and then proceed to deal appropriately with the inter-personal issues first.

### Relationship mapping

Relationship mapping is one of the practical tools from SRM for assessing relational capital, and the results from TML’s relationship mapping were discussed at the executive workshop.

Relationship mapping is based on Sociometry, created by J.L. Moreno, which provides a well-researched, sound and efficient medium to assess and deal with relationships. We need more research to identify which are the forces that make teams and groups more efficient and productive, but we don’t need more research to identify the importance of interpersonal relationships in our life.

Reduced bureaucracy, economic rationalisation, privatisations, globalisation and ‘right-sizing’ have placed more and more pressure on teamwork and group performance to deliver high-quality products and services. Individual management positions are being replaced by managing teams, saving organisations huge amounts of money while providing more efficiency, solidity and lower risk, as responsibility is spread out. Pressure from demanding shareholders and greed has increased pressure on companies where the CEO finds it difficult to balance an attractive return to shareholders, a satisfactory workplace, and acceptable customer service.
New generations of managers also bring into organisations new expectations of working smarter not harder, where creative alternatives can be developed, including job share, flexible working conditions and working from home. These novel approaches to work demand a higher level of interpersonal association, flexibility and communication to sustain what was once supported by more rigid organisational systems.

An organisation may possess the best technological systems and procedures, balanced scoreboard models with proper leadership, team-building programs and prestigious intellectual partners, but efficiency will always sit in the realm of relationships, centred ultimately on the basic relationship between two people.

Relationship mapping looks at relationships from a dynamic and performance-based view, where outcomes and processes are balanced with each other. The main focus is the achievement of the bottom-line objectives in the most efficient manner possible.

**Background to the method**

Identity is given by the reality of the relationship that exists between and among people. It’s not what happens ‘in’ the individual but what happens ‘between’ people. The three basic questions—‘Who am I?’, ‘Where am I coming from?’ and ‘Where am I going?’—have always been asked by humans. Traditional attempts to answer these questions have been based in circular or individual processes without the direct intervention of other people. Astrology tries to get answers from the stars, philosophy by going into one’s own mind, psychology into the self, capitalism into productivity, communism by analysing the distribution of wealth and power, and religious convictions into people’s relationship with their beliefs and god(s).

Relationship mapping focuses directly on the relationships between people. It is the link between two people where the essence of the individual comes to fruition (Rojas-Bermudez) and by analysing it we can assess identity and modify it accordingly. Living in a world of individuality where things start and finish in ourselves will never provide a complete view of what is happening in the bigger picture. Placing ourselves in someone else’s shoes (role reversal) will give a more complete picture of the reality of a relationship. It’s not just what ‘I’ feel or think about something, but the relationship ‘I’ develop with the ‘other’ person. On the other hand, identity is not just what I think about myself; it includes what others think of me, even though I may not agree with it.

Moreno coined the term ‘tele’ to describe empathy or double action—the current of feelings between two people. Every emotion projected or received will always have reciprocity from the other person. Tele is ‘insight
into, appreciation of, and feeling for’ the actual make-up of the other person (Hale citing Moreno 1982). Moreno describes three basic emotions in relationships—acceptance (positive), rejection (negative) and indifference (neutral)—and these emotions will have a double action. For example, in TML’s role mapping we’ll see that Rolf feels ‘acceptance’ towards Tim and he feels the same for Rolf. This is positive ‘tele’ as they match each other’s perceptions.

For the purpose of role mapping, the smallest social–relational unit is called a ‘social atom’. For TML, the managing director, directors and personal assistants form the social atom level 1; level 2 consists of senior executives, and includes people reporting to directors. The social atom for each department will also have different levels and will include social atoms of specific divisions. The reason for identifying these social relationships is to be aware of the structure of our essential life relationships. It would be unwise, even though tempting, to start working on dysfunctional relationships in distant departments while your own department is in disorder.

A social atom is not isolated from other social atoms; relationships between them must exist if we desire an expanded and inclusive achievement.

Completing the map
TML has developed an identity that no one is pleased with, but there has not been enough warm-up and spontaneity to change as yet. The time has come to clearly analyse TML’s identity as a company, to objectively look at intra/inter-departmental, small team and interpersonal relationships, as well as the individual’s identity.

The relationship mapping procedure was explained to each member of the TML team one week before the executive workshop. The mapping was explained as a method of depicting your perception of each person in the team, the feelings you perceive they have towards you, and the feelings you perceive to exist between other people in the team. Triangles are used to depict men and circles to depict women.

Feelings are shown following three levels:

Acceptance—positive (for those you like to work with)  
Rejection—negative (you dislike working with them)  
Indifference—neutral (no liking or dislike involved)

The relationship between two people consists of two lines. The first is drawn halfway to the other person, which depicts how you feel about the person. The line that completes the connection describes how you think the person feels about you.
People are encouraged to complete the graph for each relationship using their basic emotions—this is not a deep-feeling exercise—and to assess each relationship as it currently stands, not as how you think it should be.

Note that this description of relationship mapping, and other tools described in this book, is for a general business audience. For a more in-depth discussion of this technique, visit www.playoflife.com/srmm for training courses and links.

The results of each person’s analysis of their relationships (acceptance, rejection or indifference) were collated and mapped by the coach. The final map was sent to each person for review before the combined workshop, and the opportunity was given to talk through the results with the coach. Some managers felt distressed at seeing the final result and requested private talks with the coach. The coach explained that these responses are how people perceive our relationships, and that people will respond to each other as they perceive each other. They have an opportunity to assess these perceptions and to make amends, clarify situations and reshape relationships for better efficiency. The coach encouraged them to attend the workshop not in a defensive mood, but open to clarification, explanation and change.

The final map shown to all workshop participants indicates three levels of social atom (see Figure 9.3).

The graph presented to the group showed average choices given by participants. It is divided into three levels to depict different levels of social atom (lines in level 3 were only directed from managers towards other management levels and not counted in the tally).

**The shapes of relationships**

A relationship map shows the open lines of communication as well as blocks in communication. The resulting shapes can give us some light into relational dynamics.

*Angle—the position of stress*

Rolf is in an ‘angle’ between Michelle and Henry, and in another angle between Tim and Henry. There is stress in the person in the angle. Being in the angle gives power, information and responsibility, but can also be a heavy load. This is what children from separated parents in conflict can feel. On one hand they can control communication, as their parents do not talk to each other; it gives power as there is always information about the other parent that can be shared for personal benefit. On the other hand, it can be a heavy load being a communication bridge. This is why Rolf feels so drained and occupied with conflict in the office. He cares for Henry and Michelle and he has been unable to
identify the pressure and to find ways of dealing with this problem. His low spontaneity has produced great levels of tension and anxiety.

Triangle—strong but risky
This is a strong but risky relational dynamic. The risk is that a triangle can create an ‘island’ in an organisation where nobody else can enter. Rolf, Michelle and Tim all have access to one another but when Rolf is with Michelle, Tim is unable to participate. They can easily talk about Tim to support him but also to denigrate him. A triangle is a shape where trust is the major factor.

Wheel—paranoia and manipulation
Demagogic leaders do not encourage triangles of trust, but a wheel system where every person relates to them but they reject or are indifferent to each person. This is the shape used by cult leaders and manipulating politicians who do not encourage one-to-one associations, as they don’t trust people. I remember a very successful religious leader who forbade everyone from spending time alone with another person. Every meeting had to be in groups and they couldn’t talk about their problems to anyone. A wheel system is the sum of many angle relationships.

Chain—‘pass it along’
This is a standard communication line. If information has to go from Tim to Henry, what is the shortest and most efficient way of reaching him? At TML it is definitely through Rolf.

Broken chain—communicating top to bottom
Flow of information is one of the basic aims in SRM, where the most junior employee should know the objective of the organisation, and the MD and senior management should know the work performance and work/life satisfaction of the most junior employee. In TML’s graph we can clearly see that in the operations department the relational lines are broken from the national manager down, and in sales/marketing just after the director, but in finance it is a clear flow.

How can we expect different departments to communicate if the managers and supervisors, who are the key people in the communication flow, cannot?

The future of TML
The TML group spent two hours analysing the relationship map, commenting on the findings and making recommendations. There were also small group
Figure 9.3: Relationship map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Rolf</th>
<th>Lynnette</th>
<th>Tim</th>
<th>Jennifer</th>
<th>Michelle</th>
<th>Leanne</th>
<th>Henry</th>
<th>Lisa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>A–A</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A–R</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>A–I</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I–I</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I–R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R–R</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
discussions formed by people from different departments to warm-up to the next teamwork on inter-department communication. The analysis showed that despite the high number of ‘acceptance–acceptance’ relationships, the number of non-complementary relationships was too high to allow the group to work as a team and to flow as well as to face difficulties in a unified spirit.

**Sales/marketing**

The diagram showed fragmented communication in the sales/marketing department: ‘rejection–rejection’ from the director to the operations director; indifference–acceptance between sales managers.

Michelle accepted that the indifference was not something personal but rather resentment for not having more experienced staff. The rejection was not of the people but of the company as a whole as she felt so unsupported. However she recognised that they could create a strong team. Michelle’s behaviour is described in psychoanalysis as ‘displacement’, a defence mechanism that transfers emotional feelings from their original object to another one, thus disguising their real nature.

In the three months after the workshop, three of the salespeople resigned—they felt hurt by Michelle and couldn’t restore their trust in her. Michelle subsequently reshaped her ‘new’ department, making a ‘sales/marketing management team’ to report to her as a team instead of as individuals, with the chair of the team alternating every three months. Ten months after the workshop Michelle saw the effective results of her new style of leadership. Following regular coaching from a practitioner in SRMM, Michelle took long-service leave to enjoy the fruit of her work and the trust placed in her new team. She said it was the first time she was able to trust—not without hesitation and some days with butterflies in her stomach—but she could do it.

Michelle’s PA, Leanne, was shocked at hearing how she was perceived, but she understood that she was too protective of Michelle and committed herself to change. Michelle took responsibility for Leanne’s behaviour saying to her that she had placed major weight on Leanne that didn’t belong to her. She and Lisa, Henry’s PA, had the opportunity to work together productively for the first time since they started work at TML.

**Operations**

The operations department accepted, with some embarrassment, that they were disconnected from other members of the team. The only avenue for communication was through the MD. Without making excuses, they said that the workload had been so high that they just became introverted as a team with no idea of how others perceived them. They felt pressured to perform
by the MD, restricted by finance, pushed and bullied by sales/marketing, and hassled by employees and supervisors. The only way to protect themselves was to ‘stick together’.

This is a good example of how acceptance relationships and an apparent peaceful social atom is not an assurance of effectiveness. TML’s operations department is a peaceful and friendly environment, within their little office, but they were unproductive and inefficient, and perceived as arrogant by some, and as weak by others.

Henry, the head of operations, is a good man, dedicated to processes and systems but without team awareness and with no people skills. He’s an industrial engineer, like Rolf, and an academic. He has trusted James, his national operations manager, with everything related to other managers. He would avoid conflict at any cost and would not confront anyone. Both Henry and James have the same personality profile as ‘detailist’—accommodating, reserved, objective, methodical, loyal, process-oriented, tactful and cautious. But they can be unassertive, timid, passive, and may lack strategic vision.11

After the workshop, new KPIs were drawn up and accountability focus teams were formed. Henry resigned four months later; he was offered a position of a research industrial engineer at TML HQ in Atlanta, but did not accept it as a full-time job but as a locum consultant visiting other factories. James accepted his lack of communication with the factories and mills and presented his resignation after the workshop. He considered it would be impossible for him to perform as expected in his KPIs, as he was unable to re-establish the communication with the other managers who didn’t trust him. Due to his great knowledge about TML, he subsequently consulted to the company on TQM issues.

Lisa accepted that she did not have a problem with other people in the company, but that every time the phone rang it was about a problem, and she became defensive of Henry and James.

A new operations director was appointed who created a national management team instead of a national manager, chaired for two months at a time by each factory and mill manager. The national management team regularly invites more junior managers and supervisors to their meetings to give direct and personalised information about issues facing the company. The money saved by not having a national manager allowed the managers and their partners to travel to meet by rotation in different factories, mills and head office.

**Finance**

Tim was very proud of his department. When asked why his staff were so happy in his department, with the lowest staff turnover in the company, he simply
said: ‘I don’t know, it may be that we just talk.’ Even though his department looked the more hierarchical in the organisational chart, the reality was that they spent time together and, as normal practice, they shared ‘how are we?’ discussions in their meetings every Wednesday to see how things were in the office. The coach asked him where he learned this efficient and relational management style, and Tim traced the approach back to his many years in Boys Scouts, where he learned to sit around a campfire at night and talk about the day just passed and plans for the next day. Work left him and his team tired but never short of energy! Tim became the ‘relationship mentor’ at TML. He coached young supervisors and managers in the art of ‘campfires’ with great success.

**Personal assistants**
Lynnette, in one of the workshop breaks, bought from the gift-shop at the hotel a T-shirt with the name of the resort for each of the other personal assistants, and for each of the partners of the managers. This was her idea, and Rolf and Tim happily agreed to carry the expense. Lynnette had a short chat with her colleagues and took the role of convener to make sure they would meet regularly to find better ways of helping the directors in their tasks.

**Managing director**
Noticing all the acceptance–acceptance relationships connected to his position in the Relationship Map, Rolf commented that people were very generous and tolerant with him, despite his intolerance and lack of leadership in the last years. When he saw the dynamics described in the Relationship Mapping he was able to understand why he felt so overwhelmed. After Rolf was so abrupt with the team and then recognised his behaviour, he became more settled. Instead of pushing people to perform he was able to sit back, sometimes with difficulty, and look at the relationships in his company, and even make some jokes.

He couldn’t believe what had happened in the operations department for so long, and that he was unable to put his finger on what was happening. The coach reminded him of his first coaching session where they had talked about the famished dog in the room with bars (tense field). That is the result of living in stress.

Rolf positioned himself in a more reflective mood, and drew many parallels between what he was seeing at TML and what had been happening at home. He was very touched by Tim’s descriptions of the campfires and thought of the time he had lost with his children and Inge. He had tears in his eyes and on the second night of the workshop he rang her to say sorry.
for the life he had given her. She was affectionate and supportive—‘let’s just look ahead, although we must look also to the past so as not to repeat it again’.

The workshop finished late in the afternoon, and the coach suggested Rolf should invite the three directors for dinner just by themselves. They had all felt touched by the weekend, with a sense of going in the right direction together. Rolf agreed and the group invited the coach to join them for dinner, but he declined, saying that it was a private moment for the heads of the organisation. Instead they all shared coffee, and the coach thanked them for the trust they had given and the commitment they had made to make TML and their personal lives succeed.

To recap
The future of TML is now based on a foundation of greater trust. There is a more objective mapping of who is who, and what occurs between and among the players.

Tim’s simple but efficient campfire style of meeting has shown that relating and talking with purpose (not just for the sake of it) has produced effective results. The SRMM has its focal point in the objectives of the organisation, the department, and the individual. These objectives can only be achieved if basic relationships are mapped, analysed and worked through.

Strategy Consultant Peter Hooker clearly conveys:

_There is a parallel evolution of organisations from the hierarchical command and control structure (which restricts and devalues individual contribution) to the best practice of open, flat structures with freer cross-communication and self-directed teams. The latter structure places more value on the individual by facilitating his or her interaction with other organisational members, or externally. However, the reality of many large organisations is still towards the former rather than the latter. And increasing individual freedoms can be counter-productive if people are not prepared for change, or skilled in decision-making. TML has understood that the time has come for a new concept of organisational capital to be recognised—relationship capital._


4 Adapted by the author from Monica L. Callahan, PhD, Edited by Jane Taylor, PhD and Margaret Rosen, ACSW
Psychodrama. For more information about Organisational Sociodrama—Sociometry and Psychodrama see
www.playoflife.com/psychodrama.

5 Bally, G. 1973, El Juego como Expresion de Libertad, Fondo de cultura economic, Mexico.


8 Hale, A. 1982, Conducting Clinical Sociometric Explorations, Royal Publishing Company, Virginia, USA.

9 Hale, op.cit.

Publishers, Fort Worth.

11 For ‘rightpath inventory’ see www.rightpath.com.au.
The Strategic Relationship Management Model (SRMM) developed by the author is the template the coach has been using as a referential framework for work at TML. The objective of the SRMM is to provide a practical, visual and dynamic structure to identify the elements needed in the formation, maintenance and success of almost any endeavour in life. As it is an outcome-focused model, it can be used to assess the present situation and then predict future outcomes, and highlight areas that need specific remedial attention.

A relational model

The SRMM is a graphic, visual representation of the interaction and fit between the basic elements needed to achieve an objective, while providing life satisfaction and true prosperity. Interaction and relationship is the core of the SRMM. It is not based on ‘me’, the self, but in what happens ‘between me and others’, people, things and concepts.

In past decades we have seen courses and programs that mostly stimulate the ‘me’—everything centres on how ‘I’ feel, how ‘I’ think, what ‘I’ want, what ‘I’ deserve. This ‘I’ as experienced by an individual has been replaced in modern psychology with the notion of the self, which has also replaced earlier conceptions of the soul. The study of the self has been the focus of many personality theories, including those of Freud, Adler, Jung, Allport, Horney, Rogers, May and Maslow, who mostly based their theories on Freud’s psychoanalytic model. According to Carl Jung, the self is a totality consisting of conscious and unconscious contents that dwarfs the ‘ego’ in scope and intensity. Rogers theorised that a person’s self consists of all ideas, perceptions and values that
characterise ‘I’ or ‘me’, including the awareness of ‘what I am’ and ‘what I can do’. Moreno sees such theories of the ‘I’ or ‘self’ as the substance of laboratory analysis, isolated from the real interactions of life.

Strategic relationship management, based on Moreno’s sociometry, suggests an ‘analytical actor method’ (as he or she ‘acts together’ with the protagonist ‘beyond’ the analysis of the situation) in contrast to the ‘analytical observer method’. This is a substantial philosophical difference—a different perspective where the analysis of the ‘self’ can only be done in the domain of relationships. This does not exclude the individual; rather it extends the real meaning of individuality.

This ‘I or Me’ focused life is projected into what ‘I’ expect from life, what ‘I’ deserve, what ‘I’ want, what’s in it for ‘me’. Victor Frankl suggests that this attitude to life produces great anxiety and a neurosis that he called noögenic neurosis with the following symptoms:

- a planless, day-to-day attitude towards life.
- a fatalist attitude towards life, where people know deep inside that they will soon realise that there is more to life than just what ‘I’ need.
- a collective thinking; a submersion into the idea that what society, trends and others have is what I deserve and must have.
- fanaticism, ‘while the collectivist ignores his own personality, the fanatic ignores that of the other person, the person who thinks differently. Only their own opinion is valid. In reality, their opinions are those of the group and they do not really have them, their opinions have them’.

Frankl says of the question ‘what is the meaning of my life’: ‘it is not that a man should ask what he may expect from life, but should rather understand that life expects something of him’. It is not that we question life but that we are questioned by life.

**The ‘I’ in relationships**

Following this thinking process, we say that the ‘I am’ is not just a reductionist concept but the ‘I am’ includes the other.

Martin Büber in his masterpiece ‘I and Thou’ explored relationships in a very practical and creative way. He identified them as ‘I–I’, ‘I–You (Thou)’, and ‘I–It’ relationships. For Büber, from his Jewish Hasidic viewpoint, the model relationship is the ‘I–You’ of God relating to ‘Thou’ (me), with total respect for my own self and only being fully myself in the meeting with ‘Thou’.

The ‘I–Thou’ meeting is the ability to relate to someone else who is like me, a person, yet different, with dissimilar ideas, points of view and even a different world view. The ability to relate with this person, respect them and
challenge them, as well as give space to the challenged other, creates life expansion, growth, faith, hope and delight even though we may often walk in unknown territory feeling uneasiness and even fear. It is not just what ‘I’ want, think or believe, the other as a distinctive ‘thou’ exists to expand my existence.

Buber describes the ‘I–I’ relationship where the other ‘I’ is somebody who thinks, believes and feels like me, with very similar values and beliefs. There is homogeneity in the relationship. Relating with another ‘I’ creates a commonplace ease and predictability, and as the other person is ‘like’ me, ‘I’ may not really grow or extend in life. Choosing relationships like that creates ease but not necessarily challenge or growth.

The other alternative is relating as ‘I–It’. This relationship is with an object, thought or thing; making decisions, choices and developing behaviours with the practical belief that the other is a thing. When we project that into everyday life we get oppression, misery and despotism. In the film Braveheart starring Mel Gibson, the English King during battle says, ‘Send in the Irish, arrows cost money.’ Don’t we see this attitude around us every day? This is the essence of lack of social justice.

The other side of the coin is feeling that ‘I’ am the ‘it’, the thing, responding from an extremely weak sense of identity and purpose in life. There are many ‘successful’ entrepreneurs who, to silence the internal voice that says they are an ‘it’, overcompensate to gain recognition, money and power. They are rich ‘its’ who are missing the joy of being an ‘I’ or a ‘Thou’.

Overcoming hopelessness

Many people feel extremely negative and hopeless in finding the ‘right person’ as they feel they have tried everything. ‘I related with somebody like me and it didn’t work—I treated people like things and it was not satisfactory—I chose people who were different from me and that didn’t work either—so now I must do it myself.’ This is one of the most common reasons for stress and loneliness in our society, where the individual suffers and impoverishes the world.

As I’ve mentioned, the ‘it’ relationship is depersonalising, treating the other person as a commodity. This can happen when:

- Someone has been hurt and doesn’t trust people. They prefer to relate to others without any affection or real link, as ‘they will leave or hurt me’.
- A person is egocentric and greedy—there is only ‘me’, and others are a function of me, even people who are very close.
- Someone has sociopathic (called ‘antisocial’) behaviour; and uses others for their own ambitions.
‘It’ relationships are common in every environment, the basic element being the lack of affection. ‘I care for you’ or even ‘I love you’ becomes totally meaningless and an offence. Being treated as an ‘it’ is the most humiliating experience. Changing the ‘I—it’ is not easy but it’s mandatory to develop sustainable wellbeing.

Solutions are close at hand

When we identify an issue in our life—whether it is business, personal or family—we find that:

- The problem has already created some damage or an expense.
- The longer the problem persists the more difficult it is to fix.
- There were previous clear signals that could have been assessed earlier.
- The signs or symptoms which allow us to identify the issue can be used to predict the future or the outcome.

I found in my practice—and I must say in my personal life—that the solution, or at least important components of the steps needed for a solution, are available to us, existing within our own skills and abilities, or in people very close to us. What happens is that we fail to assess the warning signs, and this is often because we are not clear about our goals and objectives, and because we lack guidelines for life.

Looking at parents facing difficulties with their adolescent children, we find that there are clear signals of difficulties in childhood, which may include the relationship between parents and child that were not seen, or if seen not given the right importance. Sometimes they could not be addressed. Such parents often find with surprise that they:

- Didn’t have a clear model of the family they would like to mould, create and nurture. Sometimes one parent had the ideal picture, but they were not able to communicate it clearly to the other partner. Or maybe they have different ideas due to different cultural backgrounds (race, religion and ideologies), and are unable to address the issues, due to lack of communication skills or being too busy.

- Have been living in prolonged stress that made them focus on the urgencies of life, leaving the important issues to be addressed later. This stress could be produced by external pressures (such as retrenchment, illness, accidents); self-inflicted, unwise or badly-timed decisions (such as buying a new house that needs extra work, not leaving time for the family or for looking for the signs); or choices based on fear, greed (wanting more and more of physical things), or unrealistic aspirations (such as having a demanding full-time job, doing a PhD and enjoying a family).
Have relationships in which at least one partner suffers insecurities, a history of abuse or neglect, low self-esteem, a poor background, unhappiness or lack of peace.

Are solo parents, where simply surviving is overwhelming, leaving little or nothing for themselves and the children.

This is not an exhaustive list, but highlights some common issues. Whatever the issue facing a family, it can be spotted and clearly identified, and solutions could be found at hand—often closer than we think.

The following approach can give some light, helping parents identify what they can resolve and what to leave until later:

STOP—not easy to do

REFLECT—difficult to do without practical templates or a framework

ASSESS RELATIONSHIPS—with practical tools

CHOOSE—wisely.

Stopping is even more difficult for people who live in stress, tension and permanently unpredictable situations. Making ‘any’ choice just to continue being active—‘I must do something, this is something, therefore I must do this’—creates a false sense of control and power. It’s like living on a tightrope where the person must keep equilibrium by balancing, by moving. This is when we may need to find somebody to trust and take our hand so as not to fall off. To stop is a must and if we cannot do it by ourselves, why not ask for help from a partner (if they are not on the same tightrope)? This is where a coach, counsellor, or a wise friend could play a remarkable role. Despite the choices that may create pain, it will definitely open an opportunity for life change, a life worth living for ourselves and the people around us.

Building a family

Looking at the formation of a family, we basically need:

- An overall life/world view, a set of value systems for the family. I have found in many years as a supervisor, trainer and psychotherapist that many people spend more time in preparing for the wedding than preparing for the marriage. I’m talking here about people who get married due to pressures such as an unplanned pregnancy. Others may have a wonderful ideal of marriage but their paradigms and values are not in tune with the idea of family.

- An objective for the family. In our story, we have seen Rolf and Inge’s vision for their family. This must include the formation of a common purpose we call ‘a child’. I believe that a couple without a child will perish; I am not talking about biological children, but something that has been conceived
and attracts the focus of both the parents. There are parents with children but they are not a ‘child’ in this sense—there is no common interest beyond the biological and mechanical commitment. A child can be an idea, a project, a lifestyle, or a common interest.

A context where this family will take place; we call it a ‘field’. It includes wishes, desires, dreams and aspirations. It also comprises where ‘I’ would like to live, such as city or country, and the intention of ‘I’ to soon become ‘we’.

Agreed plans (strategies) to achieve the goal.
Communication skills in the partnership or family.
Communication systems to relate outside the partnership.
Resources, including an income, shelter (house), food, transport and friends.
Space (including time) to develop individually.

I must reinforce the first point, about the need for value systems, using a personal story, the story of my father. He had a wonderful family of origin and a girlfriend, my mother, whom he really loved, but this love and desire to be happy with her was not enough, as he didn’t have a world view and a set of values that he could use as an ideological platform. He was a good professional, a doctor, a good provider, a good friend and a good son, but as he didn’t have a firm or a wise value system everything was fragmented, without cohesion and the one who suffered the most was my mother. It was only after he was able to dramatically change his values and find truth and internal freedom that he was able to build his roles as a husband, father, professional, friend and son. (For my father’s full story, see www.playoflife.com/selfhelp).

Everything we do, think or plan in life is no more than a portion, small or big, within the overall picture of life, and we must also accept, like it or not, that whatever ‘I’ plan will directly or indirectly affect ‘others’. A solid and clear value system is needed as a foundation or platform for everything we do in life. To assess if our value foundation is correct we must pass it through the test of time and relationships: time, as it must show consistency through many seasons, not just for occasional experiences; and relationships, as it must show that it contributes to the wellbeing of ‘me’ and others around me, and therefore the whole of society too.

Building a business

The elements necessary for the family are also needed to develop a successful business:
Overall personal values (1.a in Figure 10.1). We often forget that every aspect and choice will, directly or indirectly, impact our lives. Vocational tests and personality profiles are created to look at what areas of work I’m good at, but not necessarily at what kind of life, job or activity would give me satisfaction. New trends in management and vocational choice focus directly on identifying personal values. A values-based objective will most likely provide satisfaction and true success.

Business objectives (1.b in Figure 10.1)—organisational objectives must be clear and aligned within the overall value systems. Many business and/or personal failures occur not because something is wrong, but because the business, profession or work is far away from the values the person holds, and this creates big tension.

Business environment or ‘the field’ (1.c in Figure 10.1).

Work, study, relationships and family are part of the big picture, and in making choices you must not ignore the overall purpose of your life. Of course, this purpose will be read through the language of your paradigms. Therefore assessing paradigms is an essential part of a values-based objective setting.

Identifying your values

Here is a simple exercise to assess the relationship between values and work. This exercise is only possible when you can identify your principles. There are moments in life when you can find it difficult to identify these internal values, which is when a coach or counsellor could be of help.
Take a blank piece of paper and write your name in the middle.

Frame your name with a rectangle and an arrow facing forward; this is what you’ll be looking at, in this case ‘work’.

Looking at the space behind your name, write the values that support you. They are behind you because they symbolise your support system, what is guiding you.

Choose relevant values, no less than three if possible, and write them closer or further from your name according to their importance to you. The closest represents the most important or basic value to you.

After you finish, look at the graph and place yourself in the middle.

Feel what is behind you, all your values, and look at work. Imagine yourself going to work in the morning, finishing a day of work, being there in the middle of your obligations, talking to others about it. What is the relationship you feel between your values and your actual work?

Look at each individual value. Write it again, in front of your name, close to you if you experienced this value at work, or far away if this value is not relevant.

If you are closely surrounded by your key values you are contained and supported and life will definitely flow easily through you.

If the space between your name and the values in the front side is bigger than the one in the back this represents a vacuum of unfulfilled needs. As nobody can live with this emptiness, this is will be filled with something and each person will use different mechanisms—such as money, business, tension, overwork, anxiety, depression. The point is that there cannot be space; it must be filled with something.

When you have finished this exercise, look at your life and be grateful if you are surrounded by important values. If not, be grateful too! It is important that you took this opportunity to assess, think, stop, reflect and choose what to do.

You can use the Play of Life technique in this exercise: it will provide a three-dimensional and dynamic experience for this technique; see www.playoflife.com/resources.

This exercise is a practical tool for human resource managers who would like to assess and provide clarity to employees or managers in an organisation regarding their ‘fit’ into the job. It could reveal areas of interest in people that could be stimulated by career change or development, courses, or just change of duties at work. This is also a creative topic for a workshop. The closer work is to our personal values, the more satisfied, loyal, committed and happy we will be. There is no secret in this!
Partners in business or family can also play separately with this diagram and later share them with each other. This will definitely clarify who is who, and will open possibilities in the relationship as well as highlighting areas of difference. This simple exercise can also be very powerful and revealing as it brings to the surface a parallel view of what the person aspires to in their reality.

**Setting business objectives**

*An institution exists for a specific purpose and mission, a specific social function. In the business enterprise this means economic performance.*

Drucker

In business enterprises, economic performance must be translated into a specific objective for the organisation, to be able to identify clear ways to make the objective possible.

As this is not a book about setting objectives, I will just mention the key, basic elements. The objective must be:

- **Well defined:**
  
  *The reason most people never reach their goals is that they don’t define them, or ever seriously consider them as believable or achievable. Winners can tell you where they are going, what they plan to do along the way, and who will be sharing the adventure with them.*

  Denis Watley

- **Easily understood**—you won’t need a PhD to understand it. Some people say that it has to be understood by a child.

- **Measurable**—there must be some way of assessing the achievement, or failure, of the objective. Everything can be measured, even emotional or intangible things. We can not measure commitment as it is an emotional feeling, but we can measure attendance at work in times of difficulty or extremely bad weather, and find that one of the common elements shared in the working force was commitment to the company.

- **Achievable**—goals have to be within the realities of the capital, people and resources of the organisation. But sometimes the figures and resources are not a guide—some people have goals beyond their own realities, goals that look unachievable at that moment, like Mandela who could see South Africa free while physically trapped behind bars. His eyes were able to see freedom.

- **Time-limited**—with a specific time frame, planning a time for the end of a project helps to create specific expectations regarding time, even though it may not mean the end of the project.
Open to future development—today’s businesses have the means to create a new business or an expansion: ‘Making itself into a new business’ (Drucker). This is like being a parent, where the job never ends but roles and responsibilities change.

Known—not just intellectually, but understood by the whole organisation or team members. As part of my MBA I studied the vision of Bob Joss as managing director of Westpac Bank in Australia. The research showed that his vision was clearly understood—not necessarily accepted—by senior levels of management, but looking at ‘inferior’ levels of the organisation I found that his vision was either not clear or totally unknown.

**The business environment**

*Business enterprises—and public services institutions as well—are organs of society.*

Drucker

This is where the business will ‘specifically’ take place, the environment and the target focus. This is where the prospects and clients, employees and management staff will come from, the wider society where the objectives will be based. It’s the environment where individuals and groups will obtain what they need and want through creating, offering and exchanging goods and services.

Peter Drucker clearly says:

> Organisations do not exist for their own sake, but to fulfil a specific social purpose and to satisfy a specific need of society, community, or individual. They are not ends in themselves, but means. The right question to ask in respect to them is not ‘What are they?’ but ‘What are they supposed to be doing and what are their tasks?’

It is management who must have this picture clear and be humble enough to understand that the world is not revolving around their organisation—they are not the sun nor should they attempt to go too close to it. Arrogance and greed make businesses grow like a rocket and fall like Icarus. Management is a function of the institution, the place where they serve. Management who believe that the organisation they manage is unique and vital to society, create systems and bureaucracy to serve themselves with a fascist attitude of ‘serve me’
towards employees and customers. While adopting this position they may be successful, but at the expense of employees.

Filling the gap — people and resources

We have looked at personal values, the objective of the business or project we have ahead, and the environment where this will take place. Now we should look to achieving the objective or goal proposed. We need two basic elements — people and resources — that must be aligned with the objectives and environment. This is called ‘fit’.

People

*Business enterprise (or any other institution) has only one true resource: man and woman.*

Drucker

‘People are the most important part of an organisation’, is what books, managers and academics say, but it is often the most forgotten element in society. For example, we sometimes leave our children in childcare facilities without knowing basic information about the carers, and this often extends to the lack of care we often have for employees in an organisation.

I remember in my medical training that in every specialty the professor would start the course by saying ‘the patient is more important than the disease or the organ’. But they were only words, as we students rarely saw doctors or professors treating actual people, but just an organ or a disease. Attention to and interest in people or their families is rarely seen in medicine.

The ‘people’ cycle

The first ‘people’ issue in an organisation is the choice of partner or partners and first associates (2.a in Figure 10.1). After the management team is created, recruiting becomes a sensitive task — people have to be trained for the job, and given systems and procedures to allow them to effectively attempt the objectives.

It is now of paramount importance that leadership provides the right guidance to achieve the organisational goals, while enjoying work and life satisfaction. The well-managed employee will become a new associate, a partner (not in the legal sense) of the business. But sooner or later they will see that they are self-managed and that while their skills are of great value to the organisation, there are other places where they could receive a better job, position and salary. This stage must be predicted by wise management through strategic people-management, so that the employee can be offered growth opportunities. Flat
organisations may not be able to offer managers any choice of ‘growth’ in terms of new positions; another test for people-management is to develop attractive strategies to provide new challenges and goals within the role.

Looking at management of individuals, they should:

- Understand the objective and the environment
- Find the objective to be within their personal values
- Have clear, up-to-date and relevant job descriptions
- Have clear KPIs
- Be aptly skilled to attempt the goal
- Possess tools to quickly identify issues relating to work, and skills to present them to the right people
- Have adequate emotional balance
- Have appropriate communication skills, as the individual will need to ‘relate’ with other people within the team or associates, as well as others within the organisation, clients, suppliers and family and friends.

Intra-department communication

The individual relates with other people in the team or department (2.b in Figure 10.1). To achieve the objective the department must have:

- Clear team objectives
- Accountability lines
- Clear KPIs for the team as a whole and for each individual
- Clear interdepartmental communication mapping of other departments or teams that depend on their performance, or on which they depend
- Specifically defined forums at which to address individual, team and extra-team issues.

Inter-department communication

Communication is not just among people in the department; the team will have to exchange information and communicate with other departments, suppliers, customers and associated companies or organisations to fulfil its goals (2.c in Figure 10.1). To the points mentioned above we must add that they will need:

- Communication skills, systems and procedures to communicate with other departments
- Forums where team members can voice their thoughts and feelings regarding communication
- Practical assessment tools to maintain and describe a clear picture of how each department perceives other departments, and how they are perceived by others
Also, for ‘outside work’ communication, a balance between work/family/personal life is mandatory.

**Business resources**

I heard this from my father’s mouth every time he saw somebody blaming someone or something else for their mistakes. His point was that ultimately the tools or resources depend on the skill of the person who uses them. The choice and management of a resource is a ‘people’ problem, but as people we know that everything we do in life requires more than just ‘me’. Even if I just want to ‘think’, I need a place and a certain environment, such as silence, to be able to achieve it.

An analysis of business resources that ‘fit’ and are adequate for the business objective is essential (3 in Figure 10.1). The people too must be skilled in managing those resources. Included in these resources are such things as vehicles, real estate, computing systems, corporate systems and procedures, client base, database of suppliers and prospects. An appropriate and wise choice of resources will facilitate the achievement of goals. Managers should consider resources in other terms than just financial or budgetary. Resources must be aligned with the overall objective of the business, together with the wellbeing of the people, employees and customers.

I knew the medical director of an important hospital, a doctor who was fighting with the hospital director about the need for new cardio-vascular units. The hospital director, in proud ignorance, rejected the doctor’s request for something nobody would see, and chose to buy new seats for the front of the hospital, because although few people would use them they would be seen by many people so it would look as if the hospital was ‘doing something’ for people.

In my own consulting work for a bank, the bank’s share price, employee morale and customer satisfaction were all down. Managers felt stressed and not able to cope. The bank’s management made a choice to renovate bank branches in key locations, in order to be seen as responding to the needs of people. I must tell you, it didn’t work!

Resources must be at the service of the people who are at the service of the business and personal objectives. Somehow it’s easier to spend a few hours choosing a new computer system than to spend a few minutes listening to people’s needs.
An overview of SRMM

Every organisation is a novel creation. Once created, it then develops and grows through interactions between human resources and business resources, with reference to business objectives. A good solid fit between each resource ensures the sustained success of the business, together with the maintained wellbeing of the people involved. A good fit also ensures effective management of all financial, technological and operational resources.

Bad fit results in damage to business, the outcome of which is further expense and, while business success may be possible with a deficiency in fit, it certainly cannot be sustained in coexistence with human wellbeing. The welfare of damaged people is a threefold concept: it includes the lack of fit between organisational objectives and staff; the lack of fit with or between business associates; and the lack of balance between work and personal life.

Hurt people and damaged relationships tend to result in a misuse of time and technology and, subsequently, an increase in financial outlay. Organisations often overwork their people or overspend on investments or technology, thinking this will magically solve their problems. Unfortunately, however, often the people involved are not considered, and further damage and costs result from mismanagement of interpersonal relationships. While many businesses enjoy growth and global supremacy, many executives and a great number of people across all organisational levels suffer in powerless despair.

This lack of fit generally threatens business performance, often creating nervous shareholders who subsequently withdraw support from boards. Extra pressure creates extra stress and burnout. Further, limited accountability, responsibility and trust weakens communication, inevitably leading to both inter- and intra-departmental ineffectiveness.

Damage control is of paramount importance. Time must be allocated for attention and repair to both the human and business resources. What is needed is a corporate overhaul and cultural change towards cohesion. I have found that organisations often withhold addressing overall fit and balance issues, fearing these issues are far too big to solve.

I believe that a balance can be struck between corporate effectiveness, sustained bottom-line performance and job and life satisfaction. It simply requires skill, focus and time. Solutions become apparent only when we choose to STOP, SEE, REFLECT, and then PROCEED appropriately to deal with the issues at hand.

When to use the SRMM

The SRMM is for times of fat cows and for times of gaunt cows. The biblical Joseph interpreted a dream for the king of Egypt that said that the country
would have seven years of great plenty followed by seven years of famine. And that the good years would be forgotten because the famine would ruin the country. The king also listened\textsuperscript{12} to Joseph making recommendations including: ‘Now [that is, not later], you should choose some man with wisdom and insight and put him in charge of the country.’ The clever king said, ‘We will never find a better man than Joseph’, and put him in charge of the whole country, and all the people were to obey his orders. ‘Your authority will be second only to mine. I now appoint you governor over all Egypt.’

What an executive, quick and timely decision! The good management of resources made Egypt the only place in a vast area that had food despite famine. The SRMM focuses on this wisdom and provides tools for insight—the wisdom part must come from management, from people. Prosperous organisations often believe that the times of the fat cows will be forever and they miss the opportunity to assess what they have and how to maintain and even improve it. The SRMM model also provides a template to assess areas of strength to maintain healthy dynamics and effective outcomes.

\textbf{SRMM at work}

The successful outcomes in the TML process belonged to the capacity and wisdom of its members and the practical tools they employed. These included:

\begin{itemize}
\item The Relationship Management Survey (see page 201)
\item Job satisfaction survey
\item Setting up the business objectives
\item The ‘Let’s talk about it and deal with it’ form (see Chapter 9)
\item Internal mapping
\item Relationship mapping (sociometric analysis) (see page 174).
\end{itemize}

Some of these tools were used before the Executive workshop (see Chapter 9) as a warm-up to the workshop as well as to gather information from the organisation.

\textbf{The benefits of using SRMM}

\textit{Benefits for the whole organisation}

The whole organisation will benefit by:

\begin{itemize}
\item Being a more desirable place to work
\item Increasing productivity
\item Increasing loyalty
\item Reducing stress and burnout
\item Reducing absenteeism
\end{itemize}
Minimising accidents
- Reducing the risk of malpractice and legal claims
- Minimising consultancy expenses by in-house training
- Identifying key people suitable for promotion to senior positions.

**Benefits for management**
Managers will be able to successfully lead the team based on objective data provided by team members during the workshops. A manager will be able to:
- Maintain a more motivated work force
- Manage under constrained conditions
- Effectively encourage employees towards better results
- Identify the management style each employee needs to operate successfully
- Be aware of unspoken feelings in the team
- Identify what natural support systems exist within the organisation
- Have the practical information on how to intervene successfully
- Have a team that is aligned to the business goals and priorities, thus increasing both the individual and the team’s ability to deliver results.

**Benefits for the individual, team or business unit**
With professional and personal development, employees will make more effective team members. Increased job satisfaction will also translate to better performance. Individuals and team units will benefit from:
- Identifying with their job objectives
- Understanding the elements that could support them in reaching those objectives
- Identifying the elements that could hinder the achievement of their goals
- Identifying the key team members who offer support and camaraderie
- Increased satisfaction of being associated with the growth of the organisation.

**SRMM survey**
As part of the pre-meeting activities, participants are given a survey to be completed and given to the coach. During the workshop after the SRMM presentation they are invited to say what they wrote in their own survey. The coach compiles the reports previously completed by the managers. During this time participants are trained to perform this survey across the organisation, and to manage the information collected and present it to the executive. The results below are those related to the workshop participants.
### Chapter 10 Strategic Relationship Management Model

**Figure 10.1: SRMM survey results**

Assessed by: ............................................ Date: ..................................

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 About objectives</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Overall life objectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.1 Identify your own key values, your overall life objectives</td>
<td>Think of them and make a note of these on your private notebook. NOTE: Due to the tension and lack of trust existing in the team, the coach chooses not to ask them to write about any private issues in an open survey. This can be adapted to each situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Organisational objectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1 Does the organisation have a clear and well-defined objective/s?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.2 Does ‘your’ department have a clear and well-defined objective?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.3 Do people ‘clearly’ understand that objective?</td>
<td>% 20-40-60-80-100 If &lt;80%: Managing by Design Workshop recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 20-40-60-80-100 If &gt;80%: ‘Let’s talk about it and deal with it’ Workshop recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.4 Has the objective been meet?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 The field</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Do you have a clear picture of the environment and areas in which the company intends to have commercial influence?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Do you believe people in the organisation have a clear understanding of the environment in which the company wants to have commercial influence?</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Inter-personal relationship capital (I-P-C)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Are the people appropriately skilled to attempt the objective?</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Are people accomplishing business objectives?</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Are people communicating well among themselves?</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Are departments communicating well among themselves?</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Is talent recognised and rewarded in the company?</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Does TML recognise different skills?</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Are people achieving their tasks within the time expected for the job?</td>
<td>135%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Managing by Design Workshop recommended.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>% 20-40-60-80-100</th>
<th>% 20-40-60-80-100</th>
<th>% 20-40-60-80-100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.8 Are the people enjoying job satisfaction (JS)? [Data from the employee satisfaction survey]</td>
<td></td>
<td>45%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Business resources (BR)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Are the resources appropriate to fulfil the objectives?</td>
<td>% 20-40-60-80-100</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Are the business resources within budget?</td>
<td>% 20-40-60-80-100</td>
<td>125%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Is the performance of business resources in accordance with the business objective?</td>
<td>% 20-40-60-80-100</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Family/personal life—life satisfaction (LS)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Is your family and personal life structure potentially able to provide life satisfaction?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This is an issue for personal consideration and doesn’t need to be answered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Does TML consider a balanced life (work/personal/family) as an asset, a benefit to the organisation?</td>
<td>% 20-40-60-80-100</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Are people enjoying life satisfaction?</td>
<td>% 20-40-60-80-100</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Are people enjoying good health?</td>
<td>% 20-40-60-80-100</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some comments about the TML results are as follows:

- There is a high level of skill but low effectiveness or performance.
- High ratings are given to business resources but there is low performance or utilisation of those resources.
- There is a lack of recognised objectives and poor performance in meeting objectives.

The objective of this survey is to quickly gather information about the basic issues in an organisation. These questions, based on the SRMM, are what people managers must have in mind every time they meet with any employee of the company, as the issues people face are most likely within that framework. It gives tips to management to be permanently aware of people’s perceptions and therefore make informed decisions. It also gives clear information about the use of resources. For example, Michelle recognised that she rated her team highly but she didn’t give them the trust needed to do the job properly.

The survey also revealed the lack of knowledge of work objectives. Rolf was extremely surprised and upset that people said that they didn’t have a clear objective for the company and their departments, when their regular work appraisals clearly set work objectives. It was agreed that staff didn’t make a link between objectives written on paper, in job descriptions and KPIs, and their daily goals at work. The papers went into filing cabinets, never to be seen again until the next appraisal or job change.

The TML directors decided to change this. Personal assistants were asked to highlight objectives as they were set, collate them, and give them to managers to be used as working documents, as clear landmarks of performance when setting KPIs. Managers took on the challenge of making job descriptions relevant to everyday work objectives.

Managing for results

Peter Drucker points out three basic elements in the dimensions of management. The first is that business management is an economic organ:

> Every decision, every deliberation of management, has economic performance as its first dimension.\(^{13}\)

Looking at the much-used metaphor of the body, we find that growth can and must be achieved while the normal functioning of all the physiological systems continues. A balanced and timely release of hormones makes the systems flow. The function of organs will also depend on the effectiveness of tissues and cells. Each cell is genetically coded since its genesis to ‘be part’ of the whole system. The result is a healthy body that grows while
maintaining homeostasis (balance) and harmony. The key for this successful biological system is clear: to make every living being, and more specifically men and women, an active part of the overall design of the universe.

_The second task of management is to make work productive and the worker achieving._¹⁴

People are the ultimate true resource in the organisation. One of the arts in management is to make the human resources more ‘human’, productive and efficient. This productivity is gained through work.

Looking again at biology we find that cell, tissue or organ efficiency depends also on the overall environment. Making work suitable for people is an essential part of this art.

_The third task of management is managing the social impacts and the social responsibilities of the enterprise._¹⁵

This is Relationship Management Theory. Organisations are an organ of society and exist because of society. Corporate citizenship is the aim of proactive and progressive organisations that understand their place and the mutual dependency in the social system. One cannot exist without the other—organisations must be part of society.

The aim of organisations is to provide goods and services to society as Drucker strongly highlights; it’s not for the sake of management, employees or shareholders. Hospitals are for patients, not for doctors, and universities are for students and research, not to benefit academics. ‘For management to forget this is mismanagement.’¹⁶

There is not only a social responsibility relating to a macro society, but also a social responsibility of management that sees the employees and associates as part of a micro society, providing balanced work/personal and family balance, space and ‘life’ to share with friends, family and social activities, sports or religious responsibilities. Management methods that don’t take this into account will impoverish society by producing burnt-out people and damaged families, and any dream for sustainable growth and achievement of objectives will be, sooner or later, jeopardised.

**Productivity and achievement**

As previously mentioned: ‘The second task of management is to make work productive and the worker achieving.’ Not wanting just to give lip service to this core issue we must understand that an effective employee is someone who has a high level of skills, tools to utilise those skills, motivation and ownership
of the task to be fulfilled. They should have an appropriate work environment and a balanced work and personal life. Job security, knowledge of their rights and obligations and a career path are some of the key elements that will facilitate their sustainable effectiveness.

Overall information about the big picture (‘where are we going?’) is necessary to allow someone to place their contribution within the overall vision and objectives of the organisation. A specific objective for the job with clear strategies to accomplish the tasks, together with measurable key performance indicators will provide the employee a frame of reference by which to measure their performance. The result expected is commitment, effectiveness, increased performance, a predictable environment (even in the reality of unpredictable businesses), and ownership in the task and vision of the organisation. Financial information about the performance of the organisation will also provide knowledge about ‘our’ company.

James, TML’s national operations manager who reports to Henry, operational director, has been in the dark about the real financial situation at TML. He never really asked, as he believed it was not his business, but he was never involved in discussions regarding the severity of the situation. He just did his job without the challenge of being a ‘manager’, of looking at the company as ‘our company’. With more information we may assume that the directors would recognise the level of his ability in managing information and training him according to his needs, or place him in a job were he could perform better for personal and organisational benefit.

The informed employee is more an associate than a worker. Associates are those whom the executive could name as part of the ‘we’, a synergy where the sum of one plus one is definitely more than two. Investing in the intellectual, emotional and spiritual capital of an organisation is the wisest investment of management.

The Situational Leadership Model (adapted from Reframing Organisations, Bolman and Deal) provides some practical templates to assess the effectiveness of an employee. It assesses two basic variables: ability, and willingness or motivation.

The manager should know the performance (measurable KPIs) and the motivation or morale of employees (from sources such as the Job Satisfaction Survey). The manager would assess where each employee fits in the following four quadrants:
1 ‘Competent’—‘skilled’ to do the job but ‘unwilling’ or ‘insecure’ in their job.
The leadership objective is to make the person part of the ‘business’, the team and the group. The focus must be on the relationship between manager and employee. Spend time on the interpersonal relationship, sharing information about the company, making the person more involved in decision-making and providing space for them to contribute ideas. This will soon show if the person feels part of the organisation or not. As the person needs to focus more on ‘relationships’ it may be ideal to take away some pressures at work and make it less demanding, to free some mental focus for thinking about involvement in the organisation. Management type: High Relationship–Low Task; leadership through sharing.

2 ‘Incompetent’—‘unskilled’ but ‘willing’ or ‘motivated’.
New employees, or people who have been promoted, may often feel committed and motivated to do the job but not skilled (yet) to appropriately perform in the new position. Leadership based on developing relationships with management as well as giving clear and supportive directions to perform new tasks will provide the skills needed. This is the place for growth. It’s important that the employee doesn’t feel ‘dropped’ in a new position. In that case the demands may be higher than the skill and may create high stress and strain (see page 89). Management type: High Relationship–High Task; leadership through direction.

3 ‘Competent’—‘skilled’ and ‘willing’ or ‘motivated’.
These are people who feel secure in the job—they are skilled and feel in control, and a manager can trust them while delegating responsibilities. There is no need for supervision or follow-up. People in this situation may be ready for the ‘next step’ in the organisation, for personal–professional development, or to acquire new skills. Management type: Low Relationship–Low Task; leadership through delegation.

4 ‘Incompetent’—‘unskilled’ and ‘unwilling’ or ‘insecure’.
Trainees or untrained new employees often find themselves in this category. Leaders who have great vision may discover in such people hidden treasures, and through training, interpersonal relationships and guidance they may gain security and skill. Management type: High Relationship–Low task.
Some people may never be able to find skills or motivation in a job. Management should consider what kind of responsibilities and what, if any, place in the organisation suit such people. Management type: Low relationship–High Task; leadership through telling.
The employees in these categories can then be mapped as shown in Figure 10.2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Relationship–Low Task</th>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Names</th>
<th>High Relationship–High Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership through participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership through coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use when followers are ‘able’ but ‘unwilling’ or ‘insecure’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Use when followers are ‘unable’ ‘willing’ or ‘motivated’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Relationship–Low Task</th>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Low Relationship–High Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership through delegating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership through telling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use when followers are ‘able’ and ‘willing’ or ‘motivated’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Use when followers are ‘unable’ ‘unwilling’ or ‘insecure’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10.2: Relationship/task graph

To recap

The art of managing people must include the person and their relationships. Relationships are what make the human human.

The models in this book are tools for HRM to make an organisation flow. The best place to start is with yourself and with those who manage people issues in your organisation, such as line management and your HRM department. Often the most difficult interpersonal relationship issues remain unresolved. The SRMM provides tools to help management fit the objectives of the individual as well as those of the team and the whole organisation, moving towards sustained organisational growth.

The essence of management is leadership. The SRMM provides a simple template to make the task of management not just possible but satisfying. As a manager, you must not forget that at the end of the year, and when looking back on life, you will see more than a bank account as the signs of business achievement—your mind will check if your achievements in life really did ‘fit’ with your most fundamental desires.
This is the time to pause and reflect, assess your relationships and truly believe that you can enjoy work and life satisfaction—the solution is near!

8 Drucker, op. cit.
10 Drucker, op. cit, p. 39.
11 Drucker, op. cit, p. 39.
13 Drucker, op. cit.
14 Drucker, op. cit.
15 Drucker, op. cit.
16 Drucker, op. cit.
Chapter 11
Towards success

It is necessary to engage in a campaign of gentleness and knowledge, and give the peasants a brigade—not yet in existence—of missionary teachers.

Jose Marti

Where to start?
The basic argument in this book has been that prosperity, which includes effectiveness, performance and happiness, is not far but near: that it’s not ‘over there’ but within us and that it’s not only within individuals but between and among us, as a collective experience.

True success ultimately lies in the way we relate, the roles we play with another person, or with many people; how we relate with ourselves including what we think about ourselves, our dreams, fears, happiness and goals; how I relate to my past, present and future. Therefore looking at my relationships will definitely give me a clearer picture of who I am. I can also focus on what or whom I would like to be, and, without doubt, I know that working on my relationships will be a way ahead.

It is in the realm of relationships where we can enjoy the three virtues: love, faith and hope. It is also in relationships that we can experience hatred, unfaithfulness and hopelessness. Relationships are the channel of the virtues; they are also the bars that hinder satisfaction and peace. We can look at the bars in helplessness or we can look at them as conquerors knowing that freedom is near and available. Yes, we can win! Freedom is near. We have been created to be aligned with the freedom of nature for growth, enjoyment and immortality, to never die; that is, to leave behind us a legacy of true success (to our heirs) that will be the reminder of our existence on earth.
The things I’ve seen in people, which get in the way of joy, life and peace are:

- What we have done (or omitted to do), in relation to ourselves or others, that has been against the character of nature, where we have impeded, delayed or totally jeopardised growth and development. This is manifested in guilt.

- What others have done to us by mistake or on purpose that has hurt us, when the pain has not been resolved but has developed into resentment, hatred and confused self-esteem. It’s what others have done, shown in blurred self-esteem, bitterness and powerlessness.

- Lack of information or misinformation on what we can do about the previous issues; ignorance.

- Spirituality which is unhelpful or inaccessible in moments of need.

So many people suffer from those realities and the need to be free is great. The only way we can deal with it is through faith, but faith in what? We may have faith in:

- Ourselves—‘I must do it, nobody can help me’
- Work stability
- Financial security
- Having a family, as the basis of our spirituality and an ideal (although we may have no role models for it), not for the love and care it both provides and requires
- Humanity
- Fate
- Religions and cults
- Gurus and leaders
- Future plans.

But faith alone is not enough; faith in anything will always initially create a sense of security and wellbeing. Just the action of faith—trusting in something, believing something, or even thinking that you don’t believe in anything—will produce the false security of dopamine, as already explored in Chapter 7. But this security will not last long as it has to be permanently fed with new ‘experiences’. Cults and religions know that very well, but they cannot deliver what they promise—often it is the opposite. Many preach freedom but the price is slavery and service to their own cause. Their major power is guilt. It’s not very easy to govern a free individual and free society, but it’s easy to do it through guilt. It is only truth that sets people free. This is obtained by wisdom, and wisdom is available to everyone who searches for it. How do we know if we have found it?
There are a few parameters we could use to gauge wisdom. Wisdom:

- Moves us towards freedom and not guilt
- Produces peace
- Makes people grow in relationships
- Helps people to find meaning and purpose, vocation and life direction
- Provides rest to the mind, body and spirit
- Sets people free
- Clearly shows absolute parameters of behaviour and free will
- Accepts where you are, forgives the past and allows you to start again
- Costs nothing
- Motivates you to love
- Does not directly benefit an individual
- Provides key elements for conflict resolution and peace.

💖 Bottom line performance 💖

One of the struggles I have had as a consultant has been to answer a typical question of the company director, ‘How can this help our bottom-line performance?’

What bottom line are we talking about? The increase in sales and financial turnover, lower staff turnover, making clients satisfied, feeding the greed of shareholders? Or is the bottom line this manager is talking about, the success in their own life that they are so scared to look for.

Bottom-line performance cannot be at the expense of the human.

Do people know that the same person who’s giving a hard talk about success and achievement, who doesn’t want to talk about ‘soft’ issues but only facts, strategies and positive figures, the person who says ‘I only believe in “my” strength, in myself, in what “I can see”’, will later open their hearts to a counsellor or a friend, usually after few drinks, about their pains, hurts and frustrations in life, acknowledging all of their suffering regarding relationships? Yes, relationships—the place where the more hurtful failures occur, but also the platform of our true success.

Let’s be real and honest; let’s humble ourselves and accept that our wellbeing is tied up with the wellbeing of the people close to us. Yes, I depend on others as others depend on me; it’s not an issue of ‘me’ or ‘you’, it’s ‘me’ and ‘you’.

💖 Learning about relationships 💖

People spend more time preparing for the wedding than for the marriage.

This is because the wedding is concrete; a reception venue, invitation cards, guests lists, bride’s dress and honeymoon. But so many individuals
arrive at the ceremony thinking ‘What am I doing here? I’m not prepared for this. I don’t really want this, but it seems too late!’ Not enough time was given to prepare the couple’s hearts, build up their relationship, and check out the dynamics between them and the implications of this commitment.

The same happens in business, where ‘objective’ mediums such as curriculum vitae, detailed psychological profiles and business projections come ahead of the interpersonal dynamic that should exist between the parties. This is where Strategic Relationship Management provides practical tools to look at the interpersonal relationship.

Objective and concrete things often take over the world of relationships; this is because we have a language about acquiring things. Even countries which praise pride and honour need to make these objective in physical terms through financial reward, titles or concrete social recognition. There is not much teaching regarding relationships in our society. In my medical training and psychiatry I never had even five minutes of teaching on how to relate to a nurse, a colleague, or a patient and their family.

We don’t need to have a PhD in sociology to know that relationships must start at home, but if we spend more time in preparing for the wedding than for the marriage we will most likely have difficulties in making our house a home. Society provides great incentives, creative ideas and government grants to encourage us to have a home and create financial security. Financial counselling is readily available and there is no stigma against somebody looking for advice—those people are smart. But there is often shame for those looking for emotional advice—they are perceived as weak.

*Why can’t we aim our research at a broader view for the world, one that encompasses history, sociology, philosophy etc., earlier in our careers? Why not ask the meaningful questions at the start.*

Cyril Morong, Assistant Professor of Economics, San Antonio College

Strategic Relationship Management starts from the primary relationships and expands to different contexts as a child moves through their growing process. The choice of childcare, babysitters, kindergarten, as well as primary and secondary schools, is essential.

The world is changing and a new generation of parents are looking more for alternative schools that provide academic development together with human and relational development. People are looking for relevant spirituality, and religious organisations are focusing more in developing programs for today’s issues, not so much in reliving the past or preparing for eternity. This new generation is challenging the status quo, reengineering organisations...
so that they will allow them to have a life. We’re not there yet, but we’re in the process of succeeding in the battle to make organisations more humane. We are changing, and this change will be for good if we look at each other and treat each other with care and appreciation, if we do not change for the sake of change.

Open your house, invite people into your home, let people know that you like them, say it often and sincerely—‘I love you’, ‘I care for you’, ‘you are important to me’, ‘I missed you’, ‘your contribution is very important to me and the company’. You’ll later have a harvest of appreciation, care and love. Look for who is a drain and who is a gain around you; follow the exercise ‘demand and frequency’ from www.playoflife.com/selfhelp.

Treat people around you with care, and if you care for them you’ll treat yourself in the same way; look at nature and immerse yourself in the experience so that you are part of it. Choose well, and if you don’t know how to do it, don’t worry, you can learn—find a mentor.

Let’s end by saying that:

❖ True success is in relationships
❖ Life satisfaction is near
❖ We can find rest if we are tired and burdened
❖ The tasks of life that bind us together can be light and not heavy
❖ We can learn to be gentle and humble, and we can know that this is true strength.

We can have faith that if we look for truth and justice, everything else will be added. My father, in a moment of total collapse believed this; later my mother did too. They gave to the family a relational place from which so many people benefit. My father didn’t die; he left behind a legacy of life and true success. It is possible; the answer is near.

Share your thoughts at forum@playoflife.com.

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