

Towards realism in understanding organisational behaviour - Ian Hall

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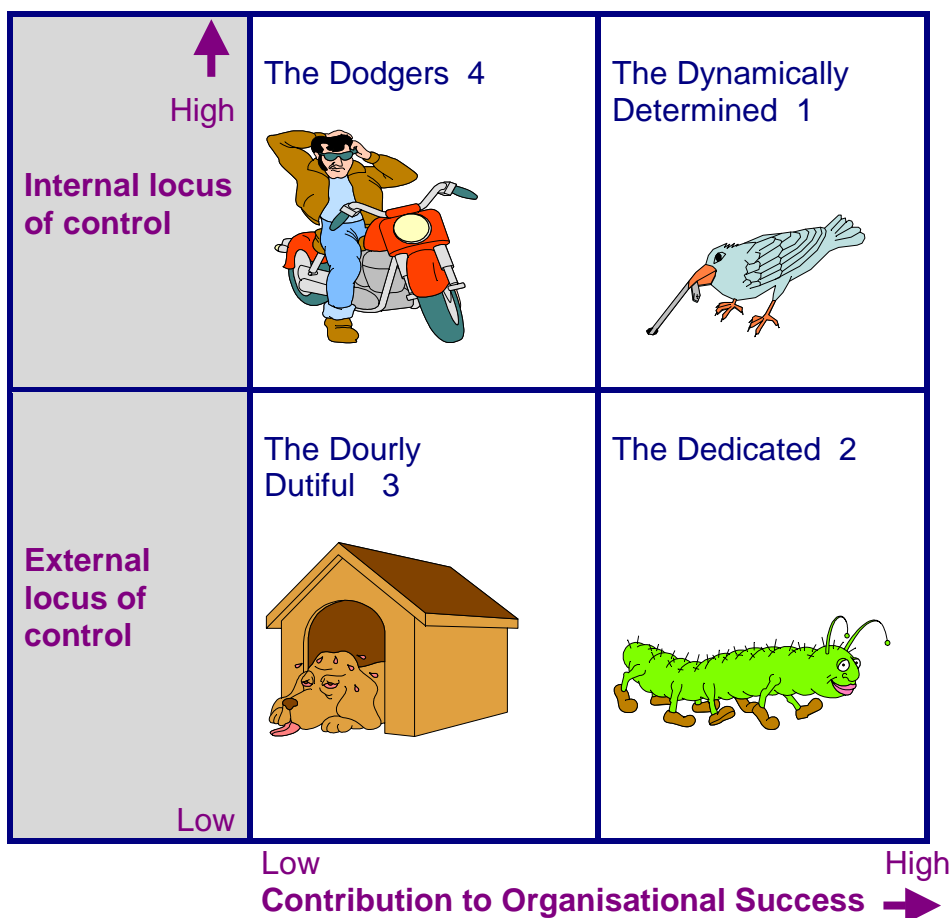
Introduction

I've often wondered why the various frameworks for understanding how people in organisations "tick" seem to work in the text book case studies but don't always help in the actual situations I observe. Is it that I don't understand the theories adequately? Have I come across the few exceptions that prove the rule? Am I "reading" the situation I'm observing incorrectly?

I suspect that I'm not alone in facing these dilemmas and so I will set out my own way of mapping some of the complex interactions which make up organisational life. The "theory" that follows does not come from a detailed research study. Nor is it a collation of the theories I have come across. Rather it is a reflection on nearly 30 years of experience working in and with organisations.

Theory in use

My observations have led me to believe that there are 4 different types of people to be found in organisations. What better way to represent these than a 2 x 2 matrix!!



1 *The Dynamically Determined*

These are self-motivated people. They will make things happen. They are often intolerant of rules and they don't suffer fools gladly.

2 *The Dedicated*

These are people who need to be given direction and operating guidelines. If these are clear they will willingly accept responsibility. They live to work and see it as a "calling". Their dedication is often exemplary.

3 *The Dourly Dutiful*

These are people who work to live. They are reluctant to take responsibility. They are ambivalent about rulesThey espouse strict adherence but in practice don't always follow them. They need a juicy carrot to go beyond what is required!

4 *The Dodgers*

These are frustrated geniuses! They have a clear "calling" to avoid work at all costs. They are extremely skilful at side-stepping regulations and see this as a challenge. They are brilliant at winning arguments!

Analysis

So where does this leave us? Certainly with some interesting dilemmas! Consider the issue of "control" in the organisation. Rules and regulations tend to emanate from "The Dedicated". They (after all) are the back-bone of the organisation! Unfortunately, "The Dodgers" really get up their nose! In consequence "The Dedicated" set out on a determined crusade to curtail their activities by introducing detailed rules to cover most organisational activities.

For "The Dourly Dutiful" these are espoused but not always followed to the letter! Unfortunately the rules drive "The Dynamically Determined" to distraction since they totally fail to see how they help to move the organisation towards the objectives "they" hold so dear. And what of "The Dodgers"? Their eyes light up with glee since they now have yet another set of rules to which they can utilise their undoubted talent in successful avoidance.

Conclusion

Surely you may say, this is merely a caricature! Well "yes" and "no". I've tried to write this article with a sense of humour and with my tongue firmly in my cheek!! However, I do have a serious intent since the categories I have portrayed reflect a genuine observational analysis over a long period of time and I also passionately believe in the development potential of everyone.

Let me leave you then with a question. If, my analysis "holds water", what does this have to say to us about the way we attempt to "empower" people in organisations? Perhaps the "artful dodger" may yet have something to say!!

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