

Chapter 6

Managing Managerial Mosaic: The Evolute Methodology

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the authors address a new management methodology that attempts to enhance understanding of organizational resources to all stakeholders thereby making management more systematic and efficient. By clarifying the conceptual structures of organizational resources to all stakeholders, decisions are based on the proper and relevant concepts. This new ontology-based management approach aids understanding and managing the whole in more human-centred way than previous methods. Also, the change becomes transparent and easy to visualize. Such transparent and visualized change enables the use of meta-knowledge to direct the management mosaic towards the desired outcome.

INTRODUCTION

Managerial work serves to lead and coordinate knowledge, people, materials, and technological and financial resources required by an organization to achieve its goals (c.f. Hess and Siciliano, 1996). In this article, these organizational resources are referred as Management Objects (MOs). MOs are vague entities that individuals perceive differently from their own viewpoints. Each individual has a unique life experience and therefore has a unique base to understand the meaning of MOs.

The meaning of objects is biased by the mind's personal, varied, and unique knowledge structures. The present work situation coupled with personal circumstances has an effect on how one perceives and understands a MO. People can also envisage the future of MOs – including themselves.

Conceptual structures of MOs are not typically available to people who are working with the MOs. Therefore, it seems that people have to work with a very incomplete picture of the world around them (c.f. Ford et al., 1998). This is a big problem, since the literature supports the fact that many managerial solutions often fail due to an

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-61520-623-0.ch006

incomplete perception of the situation requiring a solution (c.f. Jackson, 2004).

Measurement aids good decision-making. This is true for tangible assets, but in the case of abstract MOs, it is impossible to measure them directly or quantitatively. The quantitative information regarding MOs would not even deliver a holistic picture required for justifiable decisions. The concepts of MOs are not numerical but rather are abstract by nature. MO concepts are interrelated in many ways. Instead of trying to measure MOs numerically we can ask people who have knowledge of MOs to evaluate them using natural language. To achieve this, a holistic conceptual structure of MOs is needed. Zadeh claims that human ability to make precise and meaningful statements about a system's behaviour decreases as the complexity of a system increases (Zadeh, 1973). Taking into account a systems perspective, MOs are systems with interrelated parts.

The wide range of MOs forms a very difficult field for the management. An illustrative metaphor for this problem is a Mosaic. The mosaic is fragmented at the detail level, making it difficult to see the whole. Different pieces are inter-related and together they form the whole picture when viewed holistically. If a detailed, in-depth view is taken, the meaning of the whole is not apparent. An even greater difficulty arises if we assume a dynamic mosaic making it that more difficult to know to which direction the mosaic is moving and how its parts should be developed in order to achieve its goals. Today, it is common that business is made far from management. Business is moving abroad, becoming global, and therefore disconnected somewhat from management hubs. This means additional strain on management activities as there are separations in geography and time. Global business means the involvement of several cultures as well. Cultural differences cause MOs to be understood very differently. Clearly, new methods are needed; as a collective involvement of stakeholders is necessary to actuate the business and change. What is needed to view mosaic at the

correct level of abstraction, seeing its meaning without focusing on individual details?

Linguistic (language-based) methods are becoming helpful in understanding the whole. Language-based methods can be made as on-line software applications. The goal is to make the management easier and more accurate, while allowing informed and justifiable decisions to be made. Managing the mosaic is becoming a new way to succeed in business.

In this article, we present the Evolute methodology (Kantola, 2005) that attempts to enhance understanding of MOs to all stakeholders thereby making management more systematic and efficient. By clarifying the conceptual structures of MOs to all stakeholders, decisions are based on the proper and relevant concepts. This ontology-based approach aids understanding and managing the whole clearer than previous methods. Also, the change becomes transparent easy to visualize. Such transparent and visualized change enables the use of meta-knowledge to direct the mosaic towards the desired outcome.

Employing this method, workers can operate (manage, work, learn, co-operate, etc.) with a more complete picture of their situation than the managerial methods employed currently. The proposed method can be used for management, development, and co-operational activities as well as for teaching and training purposes. The Evolute methodology is already being successfully used in several countries in academic and business organizations. The following chapters describe the theory and practise of the Evolute methodology.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE EVOLUTE METHODOLOGY

Ontologies

Ontology is defined as the specification of the conceptualisation of a domain (Gruber, 1993). Conceptualisation is an idea regarding an ele-

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