SCiO

Building viable organisations

Viability Today

Editorial

Hello All,

Here we are again, perhaps a little further down the road towards understanding the place and function of this Newsletter within SCiO. In this issue we have a varied collection of updates from the organizational maturity model and developments on the website (if you haven't visited it yet, you must!). There is also a piece about communication within SCiO using the web and interest groups as well as items about the forthcoming open and development days. We are introducing a bookworm section with the intention of pointing out new books which are of potential interest to the SCiO audience.

Finally, I would like to point out that one of the pieces of feedback from the recent survey of members was a general "enthusiasm for the idea of a regular newsletter". Well, let's see how we can translate this enthusiasm into content in 2010!

Gordon K.

Feedback from the SCiO survey

The recent SCiO survey drew a good response from members of the community. Altogether, 40 of you participated out of 152 who were sent the link, including a significant number who do not have much opportunity to attend SCiO meetings. We appreciate all the comments of those of you who did respond - these provided a mass of really useful information, which will be summarized and used for planning purposes within the community. And almost everyone who replied expressed enthusiasm for the idea of a regular newsletter!

If anyone has any further thoughts on SCiO or missed the deadline date (and I know there are one or two that did), it's not too late to contact me and I will incorporate any further comments into the summary which will be circulated in the New Year.

Sally Bean.

Update on The SCiO Organisational Maturity Model

The Organisational Maturity Model group are continuing their work and are nearing a point where a first release will be made. This first OMM release will be an individual version, suitable as a introductory taster, utilising a small sub set of the potential questions. We believe it will provide a good introduction for people new to the concepts and also a learning basis for SCiO to test out the OMM principles in practice.

Jane Searles.

A new Intermediate Level Workshop will be run for the first time on the 29th January 2010.

VSM skills training

2009 has seen three runs of the beginners' VSM modeling workshop. All were well attended and the feedback from participants has been very encouraging. We therefore plan to run these courses roughly every 3 months from now on. In January 2010 we will be introducing the new Intermediate Course.

The first run of the new **intermediate** level **VSM modeling** workshops will be held on **Friday the 29th January** 2010 at Manchester business School

The beginners' course addressed the static structure of the VSM. The new intermediate course will focus on the "dynamics" of VSM. **The** course participants

will analyse complexity balances using amplifiers and attenuators. They will look at how Ashby's law affects the organisation, and work through how specific complexity imbalances drive instability in the organisation, its operations, strategy and relationships and how these three drive one another. The course will develop the skills needed to take normal organisational information, show how that relates to the VSM and how the VSM can then in turn provide a set of new insights into the company.

Participation in this course is limited to those who have already taken part in the beginners' course. If you haven't attended the

beginners' course yet, we plan to have another run in April, so please let me know if you would like to participate in this.

Can you **please let me know** as soon as possible if you would like to participate in the intermediate course on 29th January. For those who have already flagged their intention to participate, please confirm that the date of the first run is OK for you.

Jane Searles.

Elections to the Board

The Board is elected each year at the AGM (planned for 19th April 2010). All board positions are up for election so if you would stand for a role on the

board, or nominate someone else, please get in touch. Currently the positions are:

Chair: Membership Secre-

tary: Meetings Secretary: Treasurer: Commercial: Website: Newsletter:

Education & Learning: And 3 additional non-executive directors.

Bookworm

Future Ready
How to Master Business forecasting (1st Edition)

by Steve Morlidge and Steve Player.

Currently, managers are facing an unprecedented level of instability in their businesses. Future Ready improves managers' ability to anticipate and manage the future with tools to 'go

beyond budgeting.' This non-technical guidebook offers techniques on developing an effective management process. Through an accessible approach, this book discusses the connections between business challenges and everyday situations in relation to biological and systems sciences. Including illustrations, cases, examples,

and optional 'panels' with further technical explanations, this book is essential for managers who are interested in integrating forecasting processes with their business processes.

Nov. 2009; 328 pages, Hardcover, ISBN-10: 0-470-74705-6; ISBN-13: 978-0-470-74705-6

John Wiley & Sons

Website update

The new SCiO website went live in early November. Like the old site it is built in a 'Content Management System' (CMS) called Drupal. We are currently building and maintaining this in house – it was built by Rob Lever with help from John Waters and guidance (?) from me and the SCiO web team. If funds become available we want to use some professional input to enhance the functionality and possible refine the design

The forum has temporarily been removed but will re-

turn in enhanced and hopefully more usable mode in a couple of months. We also want to make full use of the CMS aspects of Drupal to include other functionality – better presentation of events including online reservations (& perhaps payment), online payment of subscriptions, linked book recommendations, integration of the newsletter, easy updating of components by the committee members responsible. All this is in the future, but we will get there.

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The first significant new

component will be the Organisational Maturity Model that the OMM team have been developing and Alex Hough has built in an online interactive form. This is currently going through final testing.

Please send comments, ideas, wish-lists to me and we will take all your views into consideration. I will forward them on appropriately.

Steve Hales.

We have a new-look website based on a Drupal content management system.

Communication with SCiO members using the web and interest groups

Following the 2009 AGM a number of mailings lists were set up to encourage communication between members.

General interest members group

SCiO has a current membership of 30 and so far this year over 100 messages have been posted. The purpose of the group is to, "Facilitate connections between members of SCiO 1:1 and 1:n, and n:n. It is optional for members of SCiO to join up or to opt out, but by joining they are implying that they are happy for other members to contact them directly.

The Google Group can be found at http://groups.google.com/group/

scio-members-group/about

The Website group

This is for communicating with the website by e-mail - website@scio.org.uk

Privacy

As agreed at the AGM, all the lists are private; so that you need to receive a mail from the admin of each group before you can post or view the content.

Although these facilities are available they are not widely used at the present time and it seems that SCiO members prefer to communicate to other members through Jane rather than use these direct channels. Clearly, for an organisation like SCiO (and for Jane) there are clear benefits of making

the best use of the available channels.

Twitter

Five members have accounts on Twitter.

For more information or help with this or with any of the communication links please contact me at r.a.hough@googlemail.com

Alex Hough

SCiO brings together a disparate community and needs good communication tools to help cohesion.

Forthcoming Meetings

SCiO Open Meeting – all welcome (£10): 10-4.30pm MBS - Room 3.74

Speaker 1: Steve Morlidge – Business Forecasting

Steve has just authored a book in Nov.'09 on Business Forecasting. Steve will explore the cybernetic provenance underpinning business forecasting approaches. He may also return to a previous topic giving insights into plan-

Speaker 2: Jane Searles – Circles of Need ®

A tool for introducing systems thinking into Local Area Partnerships

Jane has used an approach which attempts to map the various customer needs within complex public sector services for several client organisations. Jane will describe how an organisational diagnosis and design using a Circles of Need® approach has transformed the client understanding to such an extent that radical re-design has been feasible. In addition, she will reflect on the role and power of systems thinking and relate it to the roles in the VSM.

Workshop: Challenges from Russell Ackoff

This workshop will be a small mark of appreciation to Russell Ackoff, who died recently. First we will listen to a brilliant Peter Day interview given by Russ (23 minutes) and then debate some questions from his challenges …

"The worst type of mistake is not *making errors in something you do* (errors of commission), but *not doing something you should have done* (errors of omission!)"

"Schools should be built around *learning* and not *teaching.* In the workplace, it is estimated that 95% of expertise is learnt on the job."

Speaker 3: Steve Brewis – Modelling Complex Organisations

The key issues discussed will look at the design & development of a 'methodology' to diagnose and improve organisational structure. Steve's approach has been to incorporate an 'enterprise ontology' and an associated knowledge acquisition engine' to capture and critique current organisational structure. He will demonstrate his methodology seeking to elucidate some of the key principles involved and linked management issues.

"Taking a question from left-field" - SCiO in action at the Open Day, Monday 12th October 2009 at MBS

SCiO Development Workshops

"In deep debate". Steve, Trevor, Patrick and Denis (Development Day 11th October 2009 at MBS)

If you are a member of SCiO and haven't been to a SCiO development day before, how about giving it a try? Our next one is on **Sunday 17th January** at Manchester Business School. Members are welcome to attend without contributing a workshop item. **If you plan to attend, please let me know by Friday 9th January.**

There are clearly a wide range of purposes and differing views amongst members on how best to run development days, so I propose we approach this next session in a flexible way.

Topics for the day

Items can be placed on the agenda by sending an e-mail to Jane Searles by 9th Jan.

Please provide a title and briefly describe what you would like to get out of the discussion.

On the day an agenda will be handed out with the people and items listed. Where possible, please bring a short 'hard copy' briefing to introduce your item. After each discussion, the person whose item it is, should summaris what has been discussed in a way that they are happy to have circulated to other members and this summary is captured at the time and circulated directly after the event.

Confidentiality and publication

Any participant can require their topic to be treated confidentially. A list of the non-confidential topics will be published in the following SCiO newsletter. Any participant who chooses can provide a write-up of their topic after the session and these write-ups will contribute to our ongoing development materials on the SCiO website.

So, I am looking forward to an interesting set of discussions on the 17th and hope that these arrangements will enable everyone who participates to take part in useful interactions.

Jane Searles

Topics discussed on the last Development Day (11th October 2009):

Success stories

Capturing Enterprise knowledge (Goldfish)

CIPD Case Study Music for Business School

Pattern Language

Viability of outsourcing

VSM community

Cult

Modelling multiple value streams

History of wealth creation

OMM where next?

The Next One:

Development Day,

Sunday 17th January,

members only

10am to 4pm

MBS 'Penthouse' Room

Mandelbulbs

> "The buds are growing smaller buds.....These in turn contain smaller buds, which themselves contain yet further buds"

A cunning plan by the Dark Lord of British politics to get us to abandon incandescent light-bulbs in favour of something more eco-friendly? No not really. The other week as I was perusing *New Scientist*, I couldn't help noticing a report about some work on representing fractals in *three* dimensions and in the spirit of the season, I'd like to share this.

Fractal images are pretty much ubiquitous these days. I even spotted one on a colleague's computer desktop the other day although he couldn't tell me what it was. It just looked nice he said. Fine. We are used to seeing the Mandelbrot equations represented in many different ways in flat images and it is easy to see the recursion as we zoom in and discover the repeating (but different) patterns which illustrate the scale-free nature of the behavior of the curve, but this article described the end of a quest to take this into three dimensions ie generate scale-free fractal *volumes*.

I point interested readers to the original website by fractal artist Daniel White which shows the path taken to arrive at true three-dimensional recursion. The results are to say the least strange, perhaps unnerving and somehow oddly familiar. I am sure that I've seen that ornamental broccoli before somewhere!

Daniel White: http://www.skytopia.com/project/fractal/mandelbulb.html

NS gallery Images at http://www.newscientist.com/gallery/mandelbrot-fractals-in-3d/9

SCiO

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Open Meetings

Doug Haynes

Development Days

Jane Searles

Calendar 2010

Upcoming Workshops

29th January: Intermediate VSM Workshop

1Q10 (date to be finalised) - "The Systems Minefield"- An Overview of Systems Thinking and Practice": a 2 day systems thinking workshop for public sector purchasers

Open Meetings (Mondays, open to all)

18th January

19th April (AGM)

5th July

11th October

Development Meetings (Sundays, members only)

17th January

18th April

4th July

10th October