Organisation Clarity

Organisations are complex things. Combine large teams (often made up of people in different locations), intricate projects and a matrix of functional, product, line and regional management structures and it is a wonder anything ever gets done!

Historians talk about the "fog of war" to describe the uncertainty of what happens during battles and conflicts. Perhaps we should talk about the "mist of organisations" to describe the confusion and conflicting efforts that arise in most companies from time to time.

Some of the outcomes we typically see arising from this confusion include
- An absence of personal accountability for outcomes – "Don't blame me, I was just one person on the team working on it"
- Things being missed and falling through the cracks – "I thought the regions were preparing the role-out plan for that product"
- Struggles over power and influence – "The Site Manager and the Head of Procurement are fighting again about whether we can order from someone outside the preferred supplier list"
- Unfair expectations – "I am held accountable for the quality of staff but others can transfer people on and off the project without my approval"
- Management "teams" that spend more time struggling with each other than working together

We all find ways to work around these problems, usually by asking for heroic efforts from our best people, but everyone knows it isn't optimal and is soaking up effort that could be used on something more productive.

Often the reaction is to change the organisation structure - but we then find that the same problems crop up again in slightly different forms or places.

In fact there is usually more than one structure that will "work" for an organisation, but none will be effective if people are not clear and agreed about how to work with each other.

Understanding these issues requires more than the publication of an organisation chart where the only information available is the size and position of the "box" with a name in it and whether it is connected to another box by a solid or dotted line.

In my work with a number of organisations I have found that in order to achieve real clarity people need to know (and their peers need to understand and agree on) two key things:

1. *What they will be held personally accountable for.*
   This is best expressed as 4 or 5 key outcomes they personally need to make sure happen (with support and input from others). These accountabilities can be supported by a list of key tasks i.e. the actions they take to make those outcomes come about.

2. *What authority they are granted – and that it is properly matched to their accountabilities.*
   When people are made accountable for an outcome they need to be given matching authority over the key decisions which impact on that outcome - otherwise they will naturally become dispirited and disinterested in their work. On the other hand authority

which exceeds accountability can lead to tyranny and decisions which are made without any accountability. Authority can be of 3 main types - "determines", "must be consulted" or "can veto" and the same authority cannot be held by two different people. The fields in which these authorities operate can usually be defined as one of 3 or 4 areas - "people", "commercial/financial", "operational" and "business processes".

DGHR Services has developed a process to lead teams and organisations through discussing and reaching agreement on how to define accountability and distribute authority to best support achieving shared organisational goals.

Once people are clear and agreed on these issues you (and they) will be amazed at how much can get done and how well they can work together.

If you would like to find out more about the *Organisational Clarity Process* then give me a call.