The Social Process Model: Strategize At the Personal Level

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Abstract

The work ecosystem is becoming more connected at the personal level, allowing each person's work to be managed socially. This means mapping the relevant connections or work: impacts, processes and assumptions. The Social Process Model solves this in a 5-step framework that follows the natural flow of work: we receive to transform, we change the beneficiary's life for the better and we depend on other peoples work to achieve success. Just like the current management models emerged when the amount of data and connections in the organization needed a common language to make sense of it, the new management mindsets will raise focusing how people are connected to coworkers and the organization. If you want to discover how irreplaceable your role is for the team, this article is for you! If you want to demonstrate you are the reason why your boss or clients are happy, this article is for you! If you think you can play the risks to your and your client's favor, this article is for you! This is a 5-step social management model at the personal level.

Introduction

Most management models focus on the organization, or its processes. When they where published, the average organization had sufficient data and connections for these systems to work. For example, activity based costing and IT systems lead the way for the *balanced score card.* As we are becoming more and more connected we have the opportunity to strategize at the personal level. The signals are emerging everywhere: crowdsourcing, holacracy, specialization, mobility… I see the trend going to the personal level and the challenge being to work with the relevant connections.

The purpose of this this paper is to go beyond the job description in managing work at the personal level. I recognize some people already have organized their work in a personal framework, and still this article will provide a common framework for working better with colleagues. The model also complements existing management frameworks at the organizational level, like the Balanced Scorecard, The Business Model Generation Canvas, The Logical Framework Approach and more.

Three situations result from the use of this model. First, it's possible to connect personal goals with the organizational ones. Second, take the customer centric approach to a personal level. And third, include assumptions in personal work decisions.

Method

The natural flow of work is that we receive to transform, we deliver to change and we depend on others people work. I call these the three dimensions of work: process, impacts and assumptions. When we transform something or someone for the better we are experiencing a process. Later we expect to see a change for the better occur in the beneficiaries of our work, and then we are experiencing the impacts of our work. During processes and impacts we interact with other people to "make it happen" as planned, and those experiences relate to assumptions of our work. The three dimensions make up the Social Process Model (Figure 1). Process and Impacts contain the core 5-steps of work: inputs, method, outputs, impacts and contributions. Assumptions are the complements to each of the core parts of the model, or the work of others we depend on.

The model is has a circular flow because you can start working on it anywhere, and that design allows to see connections to other models more easily (like nature: planets, cells...). When a cycle is completed we could say the client of the work is satisfied and a contribution to the organization has been made. All with the expected integration of other people's work.

Results and Conclusion

Connecting personal and organizational goals

In contrast with organizational models that focus on common goals, we're focusing on the personal ones and their contribution to the organizational ones. This is the first achievement of the model: linking
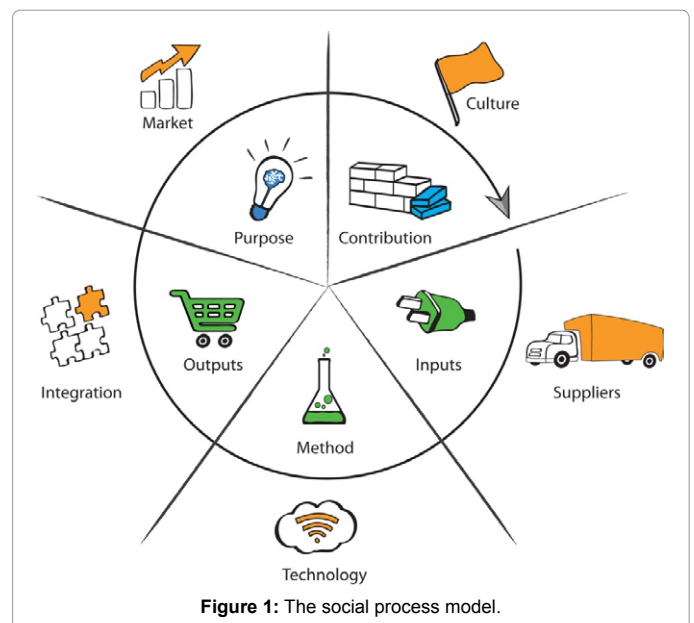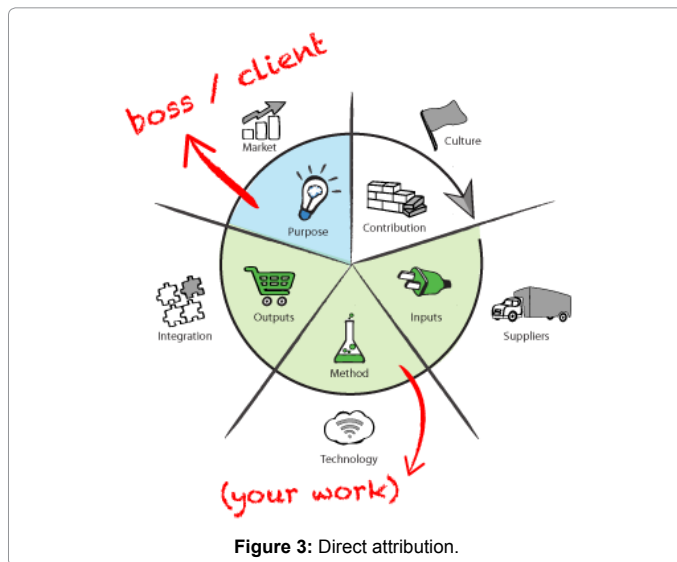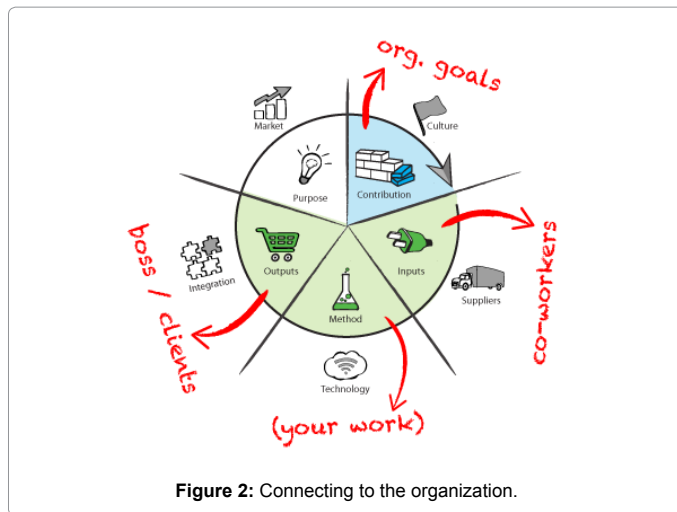

Figure 1: The social process model.

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Figure 2: Connecting to the organization.

Figure 3: Direct attribution.

personal goals to those of the organization, through the contribution step. We know this can be done with other systems, but so far we haven't seen any of these systems focus on the person. It is possible to contribute to multiple organizational goals, the underlying logic is that by satisfying the client (purpose), we're contributing to those goals. (Figure 2).

With the inputs, method, outputs section of the model we could map everyone's work in the organization from beginning to end (delivering value). The boss's or clients request become the model's outputs, and everything needed to complete that work becomes the inputs from either more people inside the organization or external suppliers. For people participating in multiple projects or work processes, multiple models could suffice. The limiting factor would be the available time and energy to do work.

If the model would focus only on the tasks being done we would use the traditional process model (inputs, method, outputs). By focusing the model on the person doing the work we add the reason why work is needed (purpose), and how it adds up to the organizational goals (contribution). For instance, values based management makes sure employees live the company values and what better way than by aligning their work to the organizational goals in their personal scorecard.

A customer centric person

Client and boss requests originate work, or sustain it if you like. That becomes the purpose of work. From a personal perspective of work, it's not enough to deliver on time and as needed, but to understand what makes my client or boss happy, so that on the next iteration work is still relevant. Where the contribution was the indirect personal goal, the purpose is the direct goal each person wants to be 100% attributed for (Figure 3).

Now that we all know what a customer centric organization is, we can start talking about what a customer centric person is: one who experiments the output – purpose relationship of work. The combination of purpose and contribution describe the impact of one's work, the reason why it's needed and more important at the personal level: why me? Using a circular flow allows for understanding how solving a situation allows for repeating the cycle on solving a new situation

Assumptions in daily work

We've focused at the basic unit of work: a person, and so far explained that it all depends on the work being done by that one person. Because working today means depending on other people, either inside or outside of the organization, it makes sense to include their work as assumptions at every level of the model. This means that to move from one step of the model to the next, we depend on other peoples work, for example if the industry standards change next year we need to know how we're going to adapt, or else (Figure 4).

Including these assumptions means tackling murphy down in every step of your work. Not only when you're processing work, but also anticipating the assumptions your client or boss will need to be happy. For instance, if your client is expecting an economic recession next year, you can prepare to offer modifications to the current agreement so that they (your client) still use your service as desired. Either build your model or use the Social Process Model, but always make the tool fit the hand, which in this case is the person doing the work.

Figure 4: Assumptions.