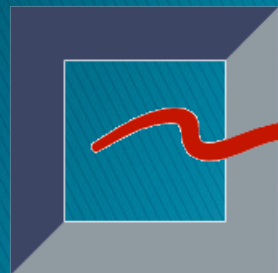


# Hacking Your Organization

Lloyd Taylor

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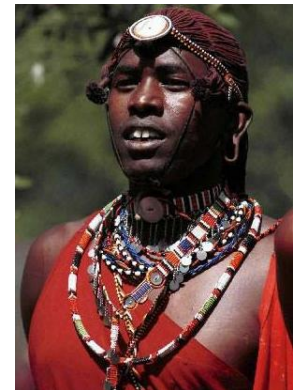
# Outline

- ▶ Culture as Operating System
- ▶ People as BIOS
- ▶ Departments as Tribes
- ▶ Putting it Together



# Culture as Operating System

- ▶ A culture is a set of rules on how things are to be done.
  - Some are explicit
    - printf();
    - Coding Standards
  - Most are implicit, and often hidden
    - Social customs & dress
    - Leaders of a group will tend to hide the rules as a way of reinforcing the group's identity.



# Sociability/Solidarity



- ▶ One way to map company culture is by identifying the levels of *sociability* and *solidarity*.
  - *Sociability*: level of friendliness within group
    - People relate to each other in a friendly, caring way
  - *Solidarity*: level of focus on group goals
    - Strong focus on joint effort to accomplish common goal



# Positive and Negative Forms

## ▶ Sociability

- Positive: Fun place to work, supportive environment, socialize with coworkers
- Negative: Tolerate poor performance, slow decision making, cliques, hidden decisions

## ▶ Solidarity

- Positive: Clear goals and objectives, strong team spirit
- Negative: Repress individual needs, intolerant of those who don't fit, poor work/life balance

# Culture Matrix

Sociability	High	Networked	Communal
	Low	Fragmented	Mercenary
		Low	High
		Solidarity	

Source: *The Character of a Corporation*

# Communal

- ▶ Open plan & shared space, decorated with company-related stuff
- ▶ Lots of informal communication, often with private company language
- ▶ People live at work. Social group *is* work group
- ▶ Company attracts fierce loyalty
- ▶ Work identity defines private life

# Networked

- ▶ Offices / cubes decorated with personal items
- ▶ Lots of informal communication
- ▶ Social activities are common
- ▶ Lots of MBWA
- ▶ How you communicate is as important as what you communicate



# Mercenary

- ▶ Offices / cubes decorated with awards, certificates, degrees, photos of famous people
- ▶ Communication is direct, swift, and work-focused
- ▶ Long hours, little socialization
- ▶ Winning is everything
- ▶ Today's ally is tomorrow's enemy

# Fragmented

- ▶ Office doors closed – interruptions unwelcome
- ▶ Communication mostly 1:1. Few meetings
- ▶ Office is generally empty – people work outside
- ▶ Allegiance is professional, not organizational
- ▶ People work *at* the organization, but *for* themselves

# Thriving in a Communal Culture

- ▶ Join the family
- ▶ Love the product
- ▶ Live the credo
- ▶ Follow the leader
- ▶ Fight the good fight
- ▶ Don't worry about the competition



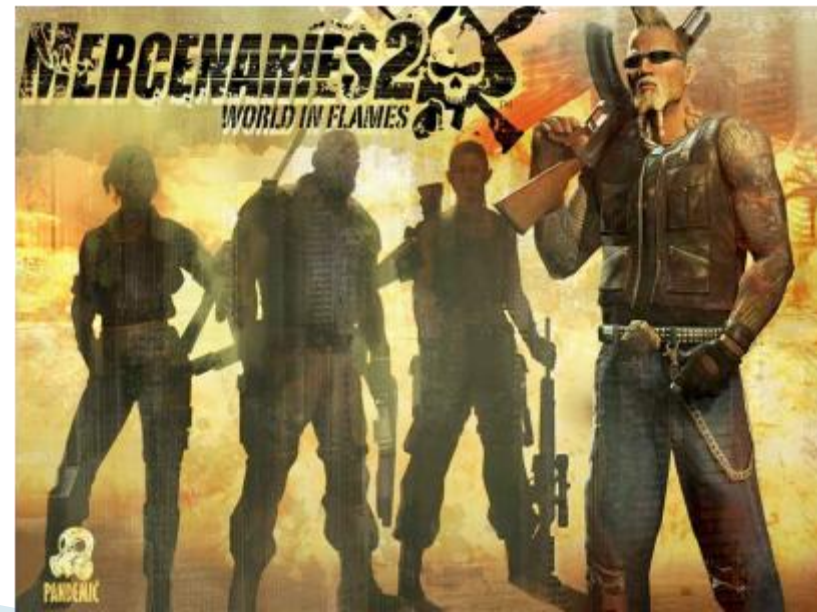
# Thriving in a Networked Culture

- ▶ Make friends all over the organization
- ▶ Help others when they need it
- ▶ Rules are meant for interpreting
- ▶ Your career belongs to you



# Thriving in a Mercenary Culture

- ▶ Personal life is subordinate to professional
- ▶ Work weekends
- ▶ Make things happen
- ▶ Destroy the competition – within and without
- ▶ Hit your targets
- ▶ Don't over-think – act!



# Thriving in a Fragmented Culture

- ▶ Make yourself valuable
- ▶ Keep your eyes on the prize – outside the company
- ▶ Honor ideas and outcomes, not individuals
- ▶ Hire brilliantly
- ▶ Show up occasionally
- ▶ Learn to manage prima-donnas



# Choosing a Culture

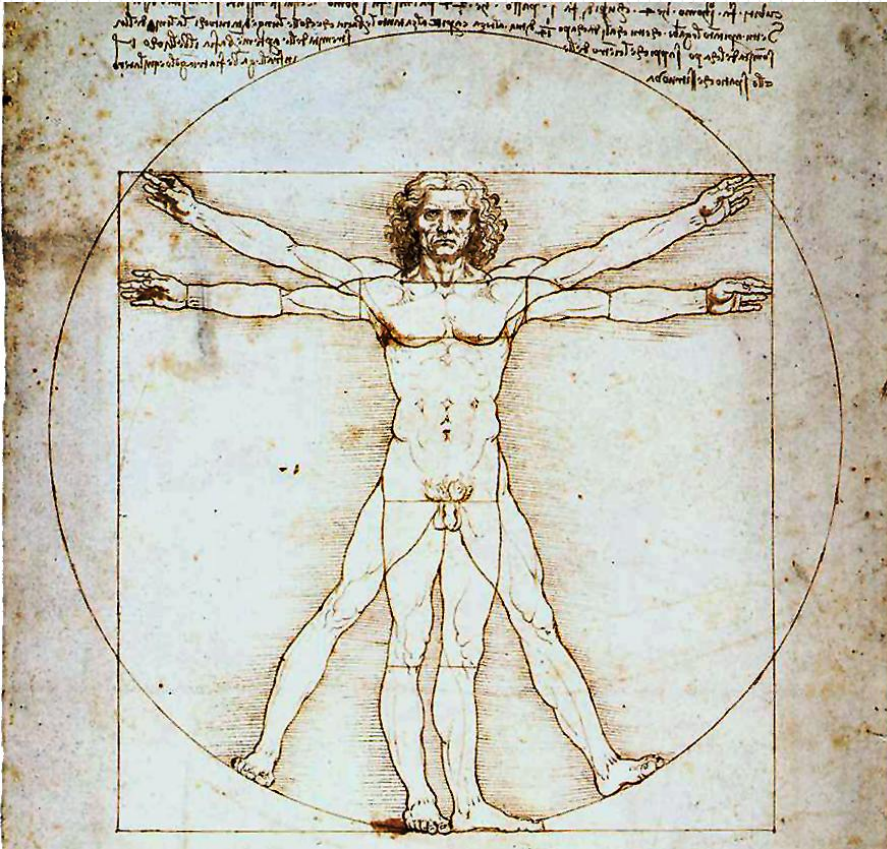
- ▶ Ensure that Implicit and Explicit cultures are in sync
  - Otherwise people will perceive and resent hypocrisy
- ▶ The Founders' personalities largely define culture
  - A mercenary founder is unlikely to create a communal culture
- ▶ Hire *only* leaders who will thrive in the selected culture

# Cultural Shifts

- ▶ Small companies often start as Communal
  - Intense communal effort to launch
- ▶ Communal → Networked is common growth path
  - Must maintain high sociability
- ▶ Communal → Mercenary also possible
  - Where results matter more than individuals
- ▶ Communal → Fragmented when company suffers trauma (leader leaves, acquisition)



# People as BIOS



- People (and hardware) are complex
- But there are ways to simplify the interface
- We use *abstractions* to help hide complexity, and make things easier to work with
- *Abstractions are inherently false!*

# Motivation

- ▶ Why do we act as we do?
- ▶ What makes us who we are?

*Each of us act in our own  
perceived self-interest*

# Conflict

- ▶ When we observe the action of another
  - we impute a motivation for that action
  - and react emotionally to that imputed motivation.
- ▶ This *Imputation process* is the core of most conflict.

# Incentive Conflict

- ▶ Incentive Conflict is when two people (or organizations) are striving to achieve mutually exclusive goals
  - Classic example: Dev and Ops
- ▶ Understanding the *implicit and explicit* incentives of your co-workers is key.
- ▶ It's critical to understand your *own* incentives as well

# Tribes

- ▶ Groups of people always form tribes
  - Can belong to multiple tribes.
  - What tribes do you belong to?
- ▶ Each tribe has it's own set of axiomatic beliefs, and will resist the beliefs of other tribes.
- ▶ Tribes behave in predictable ways as they get larger

# Dunbar's Number

- ▶ Anthropologist Robin Dunbar developed model relating primate brain volume to number of individuals we can related to
- ▶ Humans rated roughly 150
  - But only with heavy 'social grooming' behavior
- ▶ Common cultural shift points at ~15, 50, and 150 employees
  - 15 – Max number where each can keep track of what everyone else is doing
  - 50 – Max number where each can be generally aware of what everyone else is doing
  - 150 – Max number for even knowing each other

# Putting It All Together – 1

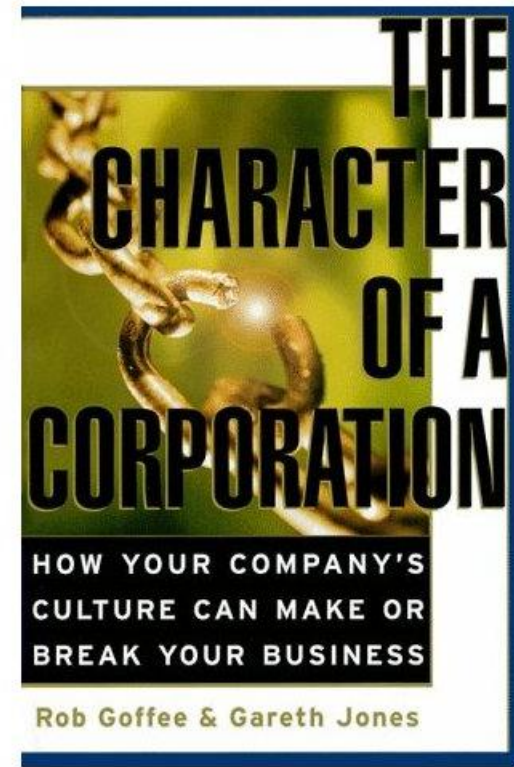
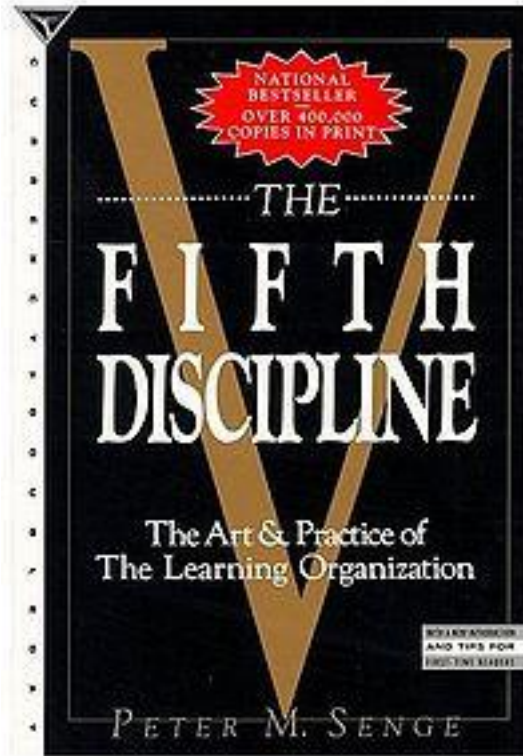
- ▶ Diagnose the culture of your organization, department, team. Remember that leader's style largely defines culture.
  - Watch out for differences between *stated* culture and *actual* culture. Observe behaviors, not words.
- ▶ Diagnose your own motivations & incentives

# Putting It All Together -2

- ▶ Pick two or three people who most affect your job and diagnose their motivations & incentives
- ▶ Find ways to help them accomplish their desires
- ▶ Profit!



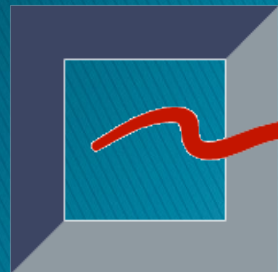
# Further Reading



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