

The Social Organization

by Jon Ingham



Synopsis

The Social Organization describes a new approach to strategic management which businesses need to follow to be competitively successful in the new, relationship oriented world. The book is therefore a successor to others such as Michael Porter's *Competitive Strategy* and Gary Hamel's *Competing for the Future*. It is also a response to Rita McGrath who proposes the end of competitive advantage. Strategy has not ended, it has just moved to people and their relationships. The book provides strategic models such as the organization value triangle and the organization value chain which businesses can use to plot out a course for differentiating themselves by their people and their people's relationships.

Whilst *The Social Organization* does require businesses to understand the potential of social media and social activities, it focuses mainly on creating the right social outcomes: organizational capabilities, and in particular, social capital. Once an organization has identified the social outcomes which will drive its business forward it can use a tool called **the options identification process** to review which social activities it should undertake. These activities can be categorized into two sets: actions which aim to build an appropriate social architecture, and others which help to cultivate a dynamically aligned organization society. This is never an easy process, especially as relationships and therefore social organizations need to be treated as complex systems. However, the book provides guidance to make taking action as straight forward as possible.

In particular, the second part of the book presents a new organization model, **the organization prioritization model**, which can be used to create and improve a social architecture. This model outlines the core elements of an organization; options for its structure; and other enablers. One of these enablers, which is increasingly important, is the workplace. Workplace design needs to be seen as an integrated part of organization design in order for either to be fully effective. The book also provides another model, **the orientation / motivation model** which can help select whether work (including work to develop people's relationships) should be performed by teams or other types of group, including communities and networks.

The last part of the book outlines the development of an organization society - the people and relationships required to bring life to an organizational architecture. Developing this

starts with social HR processes (which can, but do not need to use social media). Traditional organization development interventions are also required to build trust and even love. These interventions are needed at different levels in a company from pairs all the way up to the whole organization. Social activities can increasingly be supported and enabled by technology and this is also providing new opportunities for social analytics. Tools such as social network analysis can also be used to identify social talent groups.

The Social Organization provides a basis for a new, truly strategic role for the HR function. A developing understanding of our social brains and of social networks shows that HR now needs to focus on social capital, or the value of people's connections, relationships and conversations, rather than just on individuals. HR also needs to work with other functions, including Recruitment, Learning, Internal Communication, Community Management, Organization Development, Organization Design, Workplace Design (Property / Facilities), IT / Digital etc, as well as other business leaders, line managers and organizational change agents in order to develop this new role.

The book contains a collection of case studies, ranging from well known, global businesses like IBM to relatively unknown, smaller companies such as Union Industries.

From the Foreword (by Dave Ulrich):

It is an honor to write a foreword to a book of outstanding ideas by my colleague Jon Ingham. One of Jon's obvious strengths is his eclectic thinking and ability to access an inordinate number of theories, frameworks, tools, and examples. I will only select a few that illustrate the quality of this work.

Organization understanding requires multidisciplinary views. To understand how organizations operate requires insights from many disciplines. Jon does an outstanding job drawing on theory and research from multiple disciplines to define an organization, including: psychology, sociology, anthropology, neuroscience, behavioural economics, and strategy. Each of these disciplines offers insights into how organizations operate by creating a social organization. This social organization can then be architected to deliver sustainable value.

Through his "organization prioritization model" (OPM), Jon evolves how to diagnose and improve social organizations. The OPM extends traditional organization diagnoses by including organization enablers, but also relationship elements, and key organization capability outcomes. He also suggests the innovative use of managing groups and technology and analytics to embed the organization. Again, the above are only a small set of the many ideas proposed in this book. Collectively, they evolve how various stakeholders define and improve organizations.

Because of Jon's deep background in HR, he is able to offer insights on the evolving HR profession in every chapter. He talks about how HR can link to strategy through capabilities, how to innovate HR practices in engagement, recruiting, careers, performance management, rewards, diversity, and development. He also shows how integration of these HR practices can be used to deliver the right organization capabilities required to win. He offers not only ideas, but tools and examples of leading companies like Zappos, HCL, IBM, Cisco, Xerox, Morning Star, Spotify, Whole Foods, and many others.

In particular, his ideas benefit Organization Development experts who operate at the intersection of business strategy, personal and organizational change, HR systems, and information. He extends traditional models of organization diagnosis (e.g., 7S, STAR) by focusing on delivering capabilities of innovation, talent, change, and collaboration. He also offers some innovative tools (e.g., gamification and hackathons) to perform organization diagnosis. His OPM model offers those charged with designing organizations a more robust framework for doing so.

This outstanding compendium of ideas evolves traditional thinking about organizations. It captures the latest thinking and articulates the next thinking on how people come together into social organizations to create value. For the last 100 years, organizations have been a primary producer of economic wealth and social well being. With thinkers like Jon, the next 100 years may be just as propitious.



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Taking action



Actions to develop *The Social Organization* may include:

1. Developing a social organization strategy / 1 - identifying social outcomes
2. Developing a social organization strategy / 2 - using the options identification process to compare and select social activities
3. Conducting analytics to identify specific high priority social opportunities - including social network analysis
4. Reviewing the existing organizational architecture for social fit - e.g. the use of communities and networks
5. Re-engineering HR processes to incorporate social HR
6. Aligning current practices in HR, OD&D, Property / Facilities, IT etc
7. Introducing social technology e.g. introducing an enterprise social network (as an organization development intervention vs an IT tool)
8. Identifying and developing social talent groups at the centre of social collaboration
9. Developing leaders, managers and others to use an effective approach to organizational networking
10. Facilitating organization development interventions to build trust and love
11. Conducting a diagnosis to identify specific actions appropriate for your organization
12. Building the strategic and social capabilities of HR and other practitioners

About the Author: Jon Ingham

Jon Ingham is a speaker, trainer and consultant focusing on *The Social Organization* as well as other aspects of strategic HR and organizational management.

Based in the UK but operating globally, he works with HR departments to increase the impact they have in their businesses and helps business leaders and HR teams develop their own strategic capabilities. He is a well-known HR blogger and has been recognized as a top global influencer in talent management.

