



# The Competitive Edge of Teamwork

**A**bstract: *Organisations exist because human beings can be more efficient and effective together than is possible individually. In other words, our organisations owe their competitive edge to the mass of internal linkages and relationships that make our people better than they could ever be on their own. However, while we have data which measure the outcome of all of these links and relationships, we have always struggled to measure the quality of the links themselves. New internet developments enable such measurements and open up the possibility of greater control of our competitive strengths.*

Why do organisations exist? The most common answer is that they economically and sustainably fulfil a need for their customers. But actually, that is the reason why businesses exist. It is the reason why charities and agencies exist. Each of these can exist either as individuals or as organisations. So why do they choose to exist as organisations? Why do organisations exist?

Organisations exist because human beings can be more efficient and effective together than is possible individually. If that were not the case, we would have lost our business or agency years ago to a sea of independent entrepreneurs. In other words, our organisations owe their competitive edge (over individuals and over each other) to the mass of internal linkages and relationships that make our people better than they could be on their own. Our continued strategic success depends on how well we continue to leverage those links and relationships.

**The true competitive edge of our organisations lie in measuring and managing their internal relationships**

*“The purpose of the organisation is to enable ordinary individuals to deliver extraordinary results”*

Peter Drucker

But herein lies a problem. Good strategies rely on data and insight, and while we have data which measures the outcome of all of these links and relationships (in terms of finance or throughput), we have very little measurement data on the quality of the links themselves. We measure our effectiveness as a business (or as a charity or agency) but we rarely measure our effectiveness as an organisation. We rarely measure how well our structures and relationships enable people to perform better together than they could individually; we rarely measure the quality of the linkages that inspire, engage, empower and harness our people.

There is a mass of evidence which shows us that sustainable performance subsists in those subtler aspects of leadership and organisation, so why don't we measure them to the same level as our business performance? Why are they consigned to infrequent surveys, and rarely reported in our management meetings? The answer concerns the difficulty of gathering such measures, and an underestimation of their value. And because of this difficulty (some might say impossibility), we do not imagine what might be possible if a practical solution was found.

Consider for a moment that there is a practical, economical, instantaneous system of metrics which enables qualitative intangibles to be accurately evaluated and their improvement measured. Such a system would make it possible to see the performance of the organisation itself in inspiring, equipping and motivating its workforce. Such a system would enable us to manage all the key qualities required to efficiently convert organisational inputs to

organisational outputs. We would be able to monitor and improve the very things that make our organisation competitive, and we would be able to do so in real time, well before the natural lag in our business metrics respond to quality issues (or advances). Our ability to measure and effectively manage aspects of our organisation such as creativity, commitment and cooperation would help us to better manage what our organisation is there to provide, and give further competitive edge to our business, or agency, or charity. Such a system would transform our performance.

Such systems are now entirely viable. Recent advances in cloud computing and mobile phone technology have combined to provide a simple and elegant solution which can measure the quality of these relationships and linkages, across the whole organisation, transaction by transaction, in real time.

Because these solutions are cloud based, they can be naturally extended to look at more complex organisations such as distributed and virtual organisations, or symbioses within alliances and partnerships, and even customer supplier relationships within value chains.

Tag-Check.com is an example of such a system. It uses visually encoded tags that enable smartphone users to immediately register their response to interactions, thereby updating the relevant performance metrics in real time. Individuals can instantly view and take ownership for growing their personal effectiveness in all different aspects of their work, in terms of how they are impacting their

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stakeholders, both internal and external. The Tag-Check system also enables management to analyse this data, but collated over particular areas of responsibility, to understand the effectiveness of their organisation in nurturing and supporting these areas.

The quality of your organisation in supporting your business performance is now entirely measurable, and because of this it is now objectively manageable, placing you in greater control of your success. Issues such as silos, politics, demotivation, inefficient meetings, entrenched attitudes and poor management can be observed directly and objectively; and the implications of your policies and practices can be evaluated immediately. The value of coaching and investing in people can be monitored through its impact on what is actually happening, making important cultural activities less vul-

nerable to cost-saving measures, because their results are now visible. Causality can be better understood, and executives of a slash-and-burn mentality can see (hopefully before it is too late) that their apparent improvements in business performance will be short-lived and unsustainable.

But most importantly of all, we can validate and justify that which sits at the core of successful organisational endeavour: our spirit and our humanity. The elements that empower us can stand squarely with the financial and material focus that has dominated our board rooms for decades, and can be an intrinsic and rational part of each debate on our organisation and its future.

Feedback in one click: 

### So what do you think?

Feedback in one click: 

For background on the research quoted in this article, or to understand more about the opportunities of web-based meetings and further develop your thinking in this area we would recommend the book: **Meeting by Design** ISBN: 978 0954 302146. [www.MeetingByDesign.org](http://www.MeetingByDesign.org)

Tools to measure and manage meeting effectiveness can be found at [Inspirometer.com](http://Inspirometer.com)



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