

1. Understanding Culture

Culture in this research is seen as living and dynamic, created and sustained by the people within the organisation, particularly the senior management group. The operational definition of culture embraces the 'core of the organisation' operating in a taken for granted reality at a range of levels from the conscious visible to the unconscious collective understanding.

One of the important issues is whether 'culture can be changed by top down methods', or whether changing culture is far more difficult to consciously manage.

2. Cultural Change

Changing the culture means changing the cognitive, symbolic and affective elements of the organisation. Changing how people think of the organisation and how they behave within it. New thoughts, new feelings and new behaviours are usually sought to provide 'support' that the change has taken place. Invariably structural, personnel, and other 'technological' or market changes accompany or drive the cultural changes. At UBHT it was presented as a joint force for change - the pressures of the external environment combined with the desires of the Chairman and District General Manager.

The organisation has gone through a number of phases since I first 'landed' in September 1989. It is probably most helpful but simplistic to place them into four eras:

ERA 1: COMING INTO BEING - A CLOUDY VISION

Sept 89 - April 90: Redefining the District and setting up the project group to produce a Trust application. Here the focus was on the creation of a new style organisation from the corpse of the old. Senior managers had three roles (District, provider and project) and there was terrible confusion about what was happening. This was reinforced by the DOH's continual changing of the 'rules'. A major period of unfreezing in the organisation and a time of many moves, considerable anxiety and stress.

ERA 2: RESISTANCE AND DISSOLUTION

April 90 - Sept 90: A full provider role and shadow contracting with the purchasers was overshadowed by the appointment of the new Chairman of the DHA. Whilst the Trust application was formally submitted this was the key period for consultation and an unexpected era of resistance - BMA, politicians (Labour Party members on the DHA raised the profile of resistance). Insecurity, and anxiety increased but solidarity of the Trust group was reinforced by identifying a common enemy. Workloads increased through managing the conflict and attention was deflected from the primary aim.

Sept 90 : Chairman resigns and opposition becomes far more manageable - attention switches to the support of clinicians and the work of the 'provider board' and the search for non-executives.

ERA 3: TRUST INTO BEING: MOVING AHEAD

Dec 90 - April 91: Trust announced and non-executives and executives in place. Comfort factor of previous DHA Chairman and some common non-executives made