

to ensure that all the bureaucratic strictures are met on time is paramount. The term 'feeding the beast' is used to separate the handling of imposed bureaucratic work from meaningful work. However if it has to be done, then it has to be done well and on time. Meeting deadlines is very important. At the same time there is a wish that UBHT could exert more influence over the centre to rid itself of many of the rules imposed. The feeling seems to be that the centre creates meaningless work - work that deflects effort from patient care.

The desire to be proactive is tempered by a realistic fatalism that 'things will not change' and that the rules imposed have to be adhered to, rather than argued with. The best defence in strategic alignment is to 'feed the beast', but not let that drive the internal workings of the organisation. Hence two organisations are in place - the externally driven one and the internally created and managed one. To be successful it is imperative that the organisation conforms and excels in meeting externally driven needs however unrealistic.

UBHT sees itself as a 'family or club', you are either a UBHT type of person or you are not. Thus people who fit may do very well and progress rapidly on merit, those who do not either move sideways, down or out. Movement is an important construct in understanding power and 'fit' in the organisation. Where and how people move is a key indicator of their ability, presence and status. However the 'in' / 'out' distinction is not a lifelong category and it is possible for anyone to 'shoot themselves in the foot' through incompetence, failure to follow the cultural imperatives, or by breaking an unwritten rule of cultural conduct. Such people may be initially 'helped' and 'supported' if they 'deserve it' but whatever happens 'out people are dealt with quickly so they don't suffer long'. There is a mixed view about the way people are treated in the organisation. On the one hand there is a view that 'people have to change themselves. We encourage and support them, but if they cannot go along then they have to be removed.' Others feel that 'some people are badly treated', however they would never say that publicly - recognising it is 'counter cultural' to the stated value position and therefore disloyal. Being counter cultural and challenging the cultural message is viewed in the Executive Group as 'disloyal'. The senior group are deemed to be those with most responsibility for making it work, implementing the culture. It is not appropriate to challenge the message and strategy publicly because it is translated as questioning loyalty. Loyalty to the Chief Executive is a critical cultural attribute - hence disloyalty is viewed with severe disapprobation.

Two issues emanate from this perspective - the role of conflict and the desire to do the 'right thing'. Conflict is rarely discussed, public discord and attacks occur at the ED group and are most likely to occur between executives or CE and Execs or 'invited attendees'. As expressions of conflict are not encouraged it is important to understand where these feelings go and where they are expressed. Some 'discussion and argument' takes place informally in offices, in twos or threes, but rarely within the whole group. The 'expression of reality' is that conflict does not exist, but maintaining this can be stressful for some people. Feelings of discontent can also be projected onto groups and individuals to vent discontent.

The desire to 'do the right thing' is not as easy as it sounds. It can be difficult if the 'message has not been understood' or because 'jobs are so varied and changes so great, that what was right yesterday is not right today'. Constant reinforcement and reinterpretation is required to keep in touch with what 'the right thing' means.