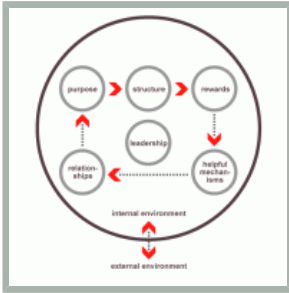


## six boxes



### characteristics

author:	Weisbord, Marvin R.
country:	United States
period:	1978
type:	model
role:	consultant and manager
activity:	analyse, design and reflect
topic:	org. design & development and change management
abstr. level:	environment
perspective:	sociopolitical
status:	final
module:	classics I
comments:	1

### description:

In the mid 1970's, Marvin Weisbord, an organisational design consultant, created his six boxes model as a diagnostics tool of organisational effectiveness. He identified six key areas in which *'things must go right'* and be internally consistent for an organisation to be successful. The result of the diagnosis is a prioritised list of ready to be implemented interventions that can drive a change process.

The diagnosis involved a ten step process during which the consultant or manager builds a profile of the organisation:

#### PHASE I: PRODUCE A HIGH-LEVEL SCAN

1. Draw the boundary between organisation and its environment
2. Draw the organisation's input/output system by listing
  - inputs;
  - outputs;
  - transformation processes;
  - feedback mechanisms.
3. Establish issues for the most important output using a satisfaction congruity matrix.
4. Establish issues for the stakeholders of the organisation based on their satisfaction level.

#### PHASE II: FOCUS ON IDENTIFIED KEY ISSUES

##### 5. Purposes

- goal fit: how appropriate is the organisation's goal given its environment?
- goal clarity: are purposes clear enough to provide guidance to organisation members?
- goal agreement: to what extent do organisation members share the organisation's goals?

##### 6. Structure

- draw the organisation chart;
- determine the dominant design archetype (functional, product/project/program or hybrid);
- assess the rate of change of the environment, technology and departments;
- list issues of the formal and informal systems;
- discover the rationale of past reorganisations to identify continuous symptoms.

##### 7. Relationships

assess the quality of relationships between:

- organisation members (peers and manager/staff);
- units executing different tasks;
- people and their technologies
- systems, equipment and methods.

The diagnosis takes into account two factors:

- the level of interdependence;
- the degree of built-in conflict in relationships.

When interdependence is high and quality of relations is poor, no mode of conflict management suffices, members are required to experiment with new communication styles.

##### 8. Rewards

- what the organisation needs to reward;
- what the organisation pays, both in real terms and psychologically;
- what circumstances make the organisation members feel rewarded or punished.

Weisbord used Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's two factor theory to diagnose the fit between the formal reward system and perceived reward system.

##### 9. Leadership

For managers to act effectively, the leadership style needs to fit the informal organisation's behaviour. Leadership's main tasks are to scan the environment, set goals and align the internal organisation to fulfil the defined objectives.

##### 10. Helpful mechanisms

Mechanisms are helpful when they:

- assist in the coordination or integration of work;
- assist in monitoring the organisation's work;
- help deal with issues from scanning and diagnostics activities.

Mechanism cuts across the other five boxes. Mechanisms are formal and informal, helpful and unhelpful.

Classes of mechanisms are:

- policies, procedures, agenda's, meetings;
- informal devices, ad hoc solutions to add to the formal structure;
- planning, budgeting, control and measurement.

#### assets:



##### conflict management classification

ProvenModels • editor PM • version 0.5 • 30 KB



##### organisational readiness table

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##### satisfaction scale

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##### six boxes

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##### six boxes quick scan

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#### pros:

- The Six Boxes model is relatively uncomplicated, easy to understand and to visualize by clients. It reflects the essential activities and key variables in an organisation, and has been successfully implemented to assist clients in their change programs.
- Since Weisbord was interested in change processes, he included politics as an integral part of the delivery's phase design process. For the organisation to be able to adopt the change, individuals and departments must have the power to realise the change. Weisbord's assumption that conflict is part of any organisation was more realistic than the authors of the McKinsey 7S model held.
- Although other consultants have not used Weisbord's model extensively, writers, such as Nadler and Tushman, Burke and Litwin developed their approaches based on this model.
- The model draws from a number of management theory schools -- organisation design, behavioural, psychology and organisational learning.

#### cons:

- The model offers superficial strategic and financial analysis. After an initial check of the organisation's fit with its environment, the strategy is assumed constant. The interventions required to rebalance the six boxes are not financially validated.
- No empirical data has validated Weisbord's classification of an organisation into six components. The model is based on logic.
- Weisbord adopted a "forms follows function" rationale without fully taking into account that the current organisation structure limits the range of objectives an organisation can pursue.
- The model is based on goal setting theory that supports the notion that agreement on goals and objectives between employers and employees leads to greater organisational effectiveness and performance. Other organisational effectiveness theories are systems theory, shared value theory and stakeholder theory.
- Weisbord made a clear distinction between the formal and informal organisation. The formal organisation is the way the organisation ought to work. The informal organisation is the way the organisation really works. This analytical differentiation is usually too artificial in reality.

#### references:

- Diagnosing Your Organization: A "Six-Box" Learning Exercise  
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