

**DEVELOPING BUSINESSES
THROUGH DEVELOPING
INDIVIDUALS**

**A Study of the
CRANFIELD MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMMES**

by

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We would like to thank all the managers who participated in this study, kindly giving up their time, to share with us their experiences.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. BACKGROUND ARGUMENT

1.1 Forces in the contemporary business environment and the consequent emergence of new organisational forms strongly imply that individual (management) development needs to be the starting point for organisational development.

Organisational development is now more important than ever to organisational performance and, indeed, survival. However, most interventions start at the 'organisation level', based on the belief that the process will filter down to individuals. The reality is somewhat different; and the difficulty in engaging individuals through corporate-wide, top down initiatives has led to much scepticism about organisational change programmes and the so-called 'learning organisation'.

At the same time, environmental pressures have given rise to new forms of organisations in which individual, particularly managerial, contribution is primary. The 'information age' is characterised by greater scope for individual responsibility and performance. Furthermore, organisational life has become more dynamic and complex than previously, and the role of managers has fundamentally changed. It is management which must create an enabling context for performance, in the midst of competing interests, scarce resources, and conflicting demands.

1.2 Management development relies on improving 'meta-abilities'.

In this complex environment, management development cannot be based on a particle breakdown of managerial skills and knowledge, which are then acquired through training. The flexible and appropriate use of knowledge and skills is enabled by more fundamental, generic competencies, or 'meta-abilities'. A meta-ability is an underlying learned ability which plays an important role in enabling a wider range of management knowledge and skills to be used effectively. There are four meta-abilities of particular relevance to managers. These are:

- *cognitive skills*: cognitive complexity and flexibility; visionary ability, gaining clarity, and perceptual acuity;
- *self knowledge*: self-understanding and awareness which allows managers to deal flexibly with diverse and complex managerial situations;
- *emotional resilience*: exerting self-control and discipline; managing emotions appropriately, having personal resilience and a balanced self-view;

- *personal drive*: having a personal achievement orientation and ambition for responsibility, being able to motivate self and others, and taking personal risks.

The development process which is needed to improve meta-abilities is more demanding than training or education - it necessitates sufficient challenge through which self-insights are gained, and old habits 'unlearned'. It is a process of personal transition which can include painful and confusing phases before clarity, confidence and new skills are achieved.

Consequently, meta-abilities are difficult to develop in the workplace because, although opportunities abound, the required level of guided challenge and support is rarely provided. Public or open management development programmes offer a unique forum for this development. The delivery of education through a process built on personal performance, social learning and skilful tutorship results in the integration of knowledge and skills through the development of meta-abilities. However, not all public programmes recognise or live up to this potential.

1.3 Through the development of meta-abilities, as well as key knowledge and influencing skills, individuals develop their organisations.

This type of development enables managers to navigate effectively and influence within an organisational reality which is not logical, controllable or clear. They understand and can operate within a complex organisational influencing process. In this context, change is characterised by individual initiatives which succeed in creating pockets of good practice, even at times in the face of resistance or apathy.

2. THE RESEARCH PROJECT

2.1 Aim and Format

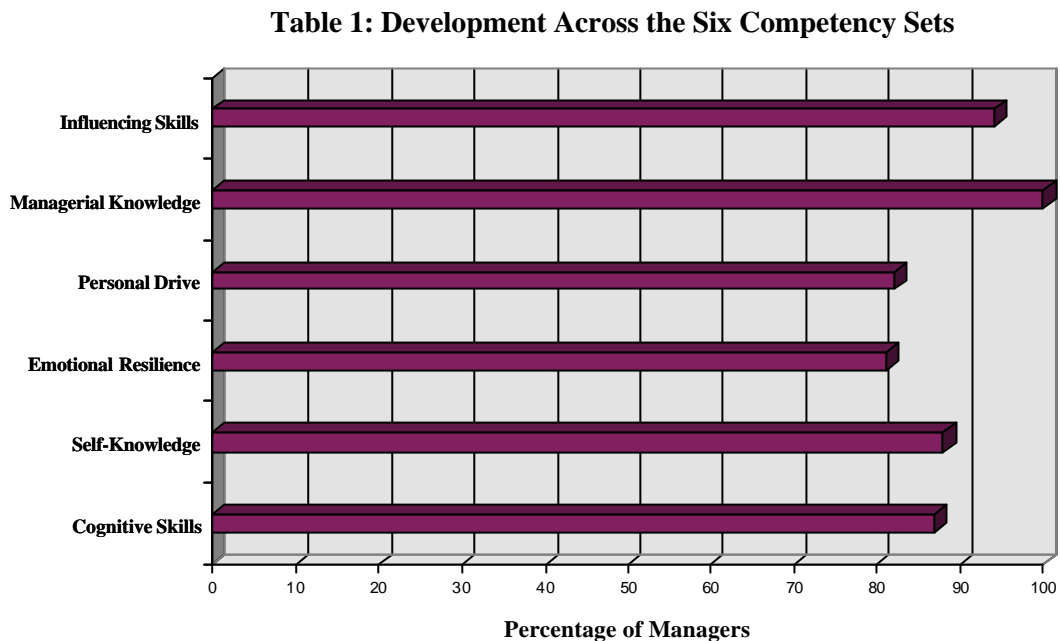
The study aimed to validate the ideas expressed above by evaluating the four Cranfield Management Development Programmes. These programmes share a developmental approach which takes individual development as the starting point for organisational development, and particularly focuses on improving meta-abilities. The study investigated both the development of individuals and the subsequent impact on their organisations.

During an 18 month period, a sample of 267 managers, spread across the four programmes, was monitored.

2.2 Findings at the Individual Level

The study charted individual development across six competency sets: managerial knowledge, influencing skills, and the four meta-abilities. There were a significant percentage of managers describing development across all six competency sets, as shown in

Table 1.



Managers reported that, as a result of this development, they felt more confident and influential. They were more aware of the dynamics of managerial situations, more aware of their own impact, and more flexible in making judgments about approaches. They were better able to manage diverse views in the context of team management, decision-making, and gaining commitment from others. They reported being able to think more clearly, and more strategically, which allowed them to focus their energies and those of others more effectively. Additionally, managers described being more proactive and willing to challenge and question assumptions in the organisation.

2.2.1 Implementation of Action Plans

Individual action plans play an important role in providing focus for the outcomes of the programmes. Action plans have two levels, personal and organisational. At the personal level, over 80% of managers reported significant success in implementing their plan. Some managers received support in doing this from their managers, colleagues or HR departments. The great majority, however, received little support and this was an issue of concern to them. Factors for success in implementation were largely personal ones, such as self-discipline, commitment, stepping back, developing confidence, and using increased awareness. In those cases where individuals were less successful, the key factors were

personal choice about development, low level of organisational support, and distractions such as job changes, mergers and increasing workload demands.

At the organisational level, significant success was achieved by over 70% of managers. Factors affecting success included workload demands, operational issues, attitudes of senior managers, organisational commitment, and organisational or job changes. Changes acted as both hindrance and help; to some they were distractions while for others they provided opportunities to drive through specific initiatives or increase personal visibility and influence.

A finding of particular significance was a link between success at the personal and organisational levels. This strongly suggests that development at the individual level is crucial to successful organisational impact.

In general, evidence from the study indicates a lack of organisational support for the individual development process. In addition to the problems described by managers in implementing their action plans, the involvement of sponsors in the research project brought to light several difficulties:

- ◆ It was not always clear that there was someone who could take a developmental role with managers.
- ◆ Sponsors who were designated varied significantly in the level of interest they took in delegates, and in the extent to which they were in a position to view a delegate's performance.
- ◆ The rate of changing jobs and roles at times prevented the necessary continuity of relationship between delegate and sponsor over time.
- ◆ Relationships between delegates and appointed sponsors were not always conducive to development.

Taken together, these indications about the lack of organisational support reinforce the role of individual responsibility in successful development, and highlight the potential opportunities for organisations who can actively support the development of individuals.

2.3 Findings at the Organisational Level

Initially, individual development resulted in improved personal influencing skills, such as communication, assertiveness, persuasion, managing politics and developing others. However, the development of meta-abilities in particular did more than just improve skills. It contributed in important ways to managers being more astute and insightful, able to make better judgments and to see more alternative actions. As such they felt better equipped to navigate dynamic organisational environments and influence effectively within them.

Individual impact on the organisation happened, in the first instance, at three different levels:

- ◆ *Improving personal practice* (reported by 93% of managers), such as delegation, empowerment, contributing to cross-functional decisions, and improving important working relationships;
- ◆ *Extending personal sphere of influence* (reported by 83% of managers), which involved becoming more visible, initiating ideas with a wider impact, and being able to influence key people. As managers increased their influence, they effectively served as role models to others and so began to influence the wider organisational culture;
- ◆ *Providing a critical perspective* (reported by 63% of managers) through being more challenging, having higher expectations and being more discerning. Such a perspective acts as a spur to organisational development, and is of increasing importance in the contemporary business environment where old assumptions no longer hold, and radical approaches may be required.

In the longer term, individual managers effected changes in their organisations. Over 70% of managers in the study described specific changes. Changes had the result of significantly improving the focus and effectiveness of the individual's own team or department, reorganising the business and aligning it more closely with the customer, and involving other functions and departments in the solving of pan-organisational problems. Managers felt that the initiatives they implemented contributed to changing the culture, style and direction of their organisations. The nature of these changes was that they were individually driven, at times fragmented actions, which succeeded in creating subcultures, demonstrating new approaches, and thus establishing 'pockets of good practice'.

3. CONCLUSIONS

◆ *The Development of Meta-Abilities*

The results of the study strongly indicate that meta-abilities can be developed, and that the developmental approach of the Cranfield Management Development Programmes can be successful in developing them.

◆ *Individual (Management) Development as Organisational Development*

As a result of the individual development process based on improving meta-abilities, managers were able to significantly contribute to the development of their organisations. Success at the individual level was related to success at the organisational level.

◆ *Organisational Support for the Development Process*

While some managers described getting support from their line managers and other colleagues, indications are that for the majority of managers there is little organisational support for the development process. Although this may reflect the individualistic nature of contemporary organisations as well as the relentless pressures on business performance, it is a cause of concern. Organisations are missing the opportunity to capitalise on the powerful effect of successful individual development.

◆ *Broader Implications*

We are in the midst of a transformation of the organisational world. New challenges and pressures driving the emergence of new organisational forms are consequently changing the nature of organisational development. The appropriateness of development as corporately controlled, organisation-wide change is in question. The reality appears to be that change is created through the establishment of 'pockets of good practice', achieved through individual vision, commitment and enthusiasm. Developing individuals who are capable of doing this relies on the development of individual meta-abilities.

Our findings indicate a stronger than ever role for management development. The selection, development and support of managers whose competence will represent a competitive advantage, and who will significantly contribute to the long term survival and success of their organisation, is of paramount importance.

Interventions focused on meta-ability development are therefore more relevant than ever before. For this reason, public management development programmes can potentially play a greater role in management development than they have historically done, due to the uniqueness of their process in the development of meta-abilities. Those capable of delivering this effectively represent a powerful vehicle by which organisational development can be achieved through the development of individuals.

DEVELOPING BUSINESSES THROUGH DEVELOPING INDIVIDUALS

PART I: SETTING THE SCENE

1. Organisational Development Has to Start With the Individual

“Organisations need to be adaptable to compete in the future.” “Organisations who are fleet-footed athletes - fit, flexible and ready to develop in new ways - will win the competitive stakes.”

“Organisations must constantly seek to innovate and reinvent themselves in line with their changing competitive environments.” Such exhortations abound in management magazines and journals, and in the media, whilst managers themselves are not above adopting similar phrases. It is said that such language bears witness to the times we live in - constant change, greater pressures on performance, more complex issues to be grappled with, greater interdependence across the globe. Greater opportunities than ever, but also greater threats. An organisation’s very survival is at stake.

It is also apparent in this same language that a shift in the way we think of organisations has taken place. Organisations are no longer ‘machines to be fixed’. Instead they are credited with intelligence, with the ability to respond, evolving and developing to ensure their own well-being and survival - ‘learning’ organisations, in a phrase.

In the true learning organisation there would be perfect ‘double loop learning’ - strategies for survival and growth would be informed by the judicious use of accumulated experience. No intervention would be required. However, ‘organisational development’ has long been an industry in its own right, so somewhere the double loops get snagged. The practical reality of organisational life is that many managers have considerable scepticism about the learning organisation and can be deeply pessimistic about the ability of an organisation to haul itself up by its own bootstraps (learn in a double loop way, in other words).

Despite the strong evidence to suggest that the learning organisation is a fiction, much organisational development intervenes at the ‘organisation’ level - corporate campaigns and initiatives, captured in the management speak of customer care, quality programmes, JIT, business process re-engineering and the like. Most often the results are mixed because of the many barriers which prevent the intervention filtering down from the organisation level to the individual level. Yet ultimately it is the extent to which these initiatives actively engage individuals which determines their success.

Many organisations fail to recognise and capitalise on the critical role that individual development plays in organisational development. Individual development if it happens at all, is a latter stage part of the process of organisational development. But what if that individual development were *the starting point* for organisational development? We would have to believe that individuals do make a difference, and crucially so. In some ways this is a notion with a strong precedent. Senior managers have always justified their salaries and bonuses with reference to the impact that they have personally on organisational performance. We should also remind ourselves that managers

frequently ascribe the success and failure of organisational change initiatives to the enabling or disabling role that particular individuals play. Moreover, organisations can spend a great deal of time and money providing incentives for those deemed unsuitable for the 'new order' to go elsewhere. And the fundamental changes in organisational life of recent years underline more strongly than ever the impact of the individual across all levels. Five years ago, taking a view into the future, Naisbitt and Aburdene forecast 'the triumph of the individual'.¹ This theme has been echoed by a number of management writers to the present day.² They have argued that the advent of new and more accessible technology, the layering of organisations, and the painful process of empowerment, all serve to elevate the relevance of individual contribution, whilst at the same time putting pressure on organisations to harness effectively the abilities and potential of each of their members.

In practice the primacy of individual impact has been increasingly recognised in organisational life. Human resource systems have been developed to reward individual performance and initiative and to tailor employment contracts to individual circumstances. Individual managers are being asked to take responsibility for their own career management, whilst the organisation undertakes to provide them with opportunities to improve their employability. The reduction of management layers has led to the expansion of discretion and responsibility. Consequently individuals and what they do are much more visible. And the increasingly widespread use of teams underlines the critical role of individual performance, since the success of teams to surpass individual ability and effort is paradoxically founded upon the abilities of individuals to create that synergy. This is all the more true as the membership of teams becomes more transient and there is no longer the luxury of 'bonding' and developing over time. Indeed, the transient team scenario requires that we challenge the notion of teams as primary units of organisational intervention. When teams form and reform depending on the task and business activities to be undertaken, and where individuals take on a wider range of roles and responsibilities simultaneously in a number of teams, the development of individual team membership skills is rather more relevant than team development.

So far this growing significance of individual contribution to organisations has had little impact on organisational development. We would argue that this is primarily because organisational development is still understood to be an intervention largely focused at the organisational level. By contrast, the starting point of individual management development as organisational development requires explicit recognition and acceptance of a particular organisational reality; one which is anything but neat, holistic, corporate or easily controllable. It is a reality which many managers experience, because it is one that they often see happening about them. It is organisational change created by individuals taking initiatives, sometimes uninvited, with political consequences, and which create good practice, often in isolated pockets to begin with. It is not top down organisational development, and it does not take the organisation as its direct starting point.

In many respects this notion is entirely consistent with the requirement on managers operating in the complexity of new and emerging organisational forms. That being so, management development as

¹ Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1990.

² Morgan, 1989; Drucker, 1995; Naisbitt, 1995.

organisational development could be described as a natural evolution because it is a form of intervention appropriate to the contemporary organisational order.

In order to explore this idea more fully, the remainder of this first part of the report will seek to outline the changing role of managers in the light of new organisational forms, and discuss in some depth the nature of the development process needed to use individual as organisational development effectively. In this context, the Cranfield Management Development Programmes will be presented. Part II describes the research study undertaken using the programmes to investigate this development process and its effectiveness in creating organisational change through individuals.

2. What is Required of Managers in Contemporary Organisations?

In the industrially developed world we are in the continuing process of fundamentally redefining how we work. One outcome is that the managerial role is now truly seen as critical to organisations; and management competence itself can be a distinct competitive advantage.³ The advantage does not rest on the nature of these competencies themselves, as they are not inherently core competencies, nor are they unique to specific organisations. The advantage comes from actually achieving managerial competence because it is so hard won.

One key reason it is so difficult to achieve is because the way in which managers add value has fundamentally changed. Management is no longer there primarily to control resources and act as an information channel. Its role is to focus and release the energies of people inside the organisation, to create an enabling context for performance. We no longer have the luxury of managing organisations in terms of simple control, simple order, or simple logic. Organisation theorists recognised this long ago, but the changing organisational order is compelling management finally to accept it. Organisations, more than ever contemporary organisations, represent a world in which individuals continually make choices about how they behave, where they focus their energies, who they align themselves with. Different coalitions of individuals, particularly managers, form and reform around common aims, activities, preferences, etc. In the midst of competing demands for resources it is incumbent upon managers to 'fight their corners', to create protected space for others, to manage the political dimensions of initiatives and projects.

This changing role has clear implications for the required competencies of managers. Organisations have put much effort into describing the managerial competencies that they require, now and in the future. No 'master list' has been universally accepted, but there are consistent themes coming through both from management writers and the many organisational initiatives. These are summarised in Table 2.⁴

That said, the debate about management competence has been characterised by a lack of clarity and coherence. There is a certain tendency for each organisation to 're-invent the wheel' in an attempt to define management competencies unique to themselves. The results are frequently abstract

³ Drucker, 1992.

⁴ Barham & Rassam, 1989; Schroder, 1989; Morgan, 1989; Drucker, 1992.

descriptions of mental processes or personal ‘qualities’. These ‘lists’ of managerial competencies also have a tendency to be remarkably similar from organisation to organisation. Probably the most useful outcome so far of competency programmes has been the raising of managerial awareness of the imperatives to perform - there is sparse evidence of effective development of the competencies themselves.

Table 2: Summary of Themes in Management Competence

1. **The ability to manage turbulence:** to have flexibility of thinking and action, as well as tolerance of ambiguity and differences.
2. **The ability to read the environment and take a very broad focus:** understanding the business, relationships with others in the business and the outside world, in the broadest sense; scanning and anticipating change; being able to see the impact of decisions on others; being able to play an integrative role.
3. **The ability to manage complexity of relationships and roles:** vertical and horizontal, different functions and business units, customers, supplies, alliance partners, etc. without formal authority; having clarity of objectives, roles and responsibilities.
4. **Being receptive to the ideas of others and adept at consensus-building:** openness and ability to see things from others’ points of view, especially with other cultures; being able to work in a variety of team situations effectively.
5. **Demonstrating leadership based on responsibility and personal integrity:** broadening the leadership process by giving power to others; creating and communicating a shared vision and values; embodying those values in behaviour.
6. **Being able to handle information flows within the organisation:** managing knowledge, understanding the technological tools available to process and disseminate it, using IT as a transformative force.
7. **Being able to manage self-development and the development of others:** taking a role of teacher, facilitator, coach; the ability to “reframe”; the ability to foster attitudes of openness, self-questioning and optimism toward learning and change; the ability to live with mistakes and failures of self and others.
8. **Having a proactive mindset that leads to action:** taking responsibility and initiative, being motivated by achievement, taking decisions rapidly with “real time” information.

One of the great impediments to progress is the lack of clarity about the nature of competence.⁵ It is extremely difficult to capture the essence of effective management through interminably detailed lists of behaviour and skills, or through poorly defined general labels such as 'leadership' or 'influencing'. It is also clear that just training individuals in specific skills is no guarantee that those skills will be used appropriately. Many things keep us from using our skills - lack of confidence, unwillingness, being carried away by strong feelings, and other distractions. These inhibit our learning capability, and keep us from recognising when we need to learn new skills.

Where does all this lead? We are driven towards the conclusion that managerial competencies required in contemporary organisations are generic rather than organisation specific, and that they cannot be usefully specified in terms of neatly identifiable, observable, or measurable behaviours. Managerial competencies cannot, therefore, be usefully understood primarily in terms of acquiring and deploying more knowledge and skills.

Many managers recognise this conclusion. They often express a healthy scepticism about the development of competencies, but then much of their experience is of training for new skills and knowledge, which they subsequently do not use. Understandably, they do not recognise the crucial distinction between training and development, that development is much more demanding because it involves increasing self-knowledge and improving what we would call 'meta-abilities' - those personal, acquired abilities which underpin and determine how and when knowledge and skills will be used.

Our concept of meta-ability builds on the ideas of several writers. It is grounded in the notion that managerial performance is a function of the manager as a whole, complex human being acting in a dynamic environment with other complex human beings.⁶ Schroder, for example, describes underlying characteristics of effective managers which include a high level of awareness of themselves, others and their environment; trust and self-control. Similarly, Pedler et al describe "meta-qualities" in their model of effective management which include creativity, mental agility, balanced learning habits, and self-knowledge. They also focus on managing the "inner processes" of thinking, feeling and willing. Burgoyne describes "meta-competencies" which allow managers to create and adapt specific competencies for specific situations. These include aptitudes for learning, changing and adapting. Goleman describes his concept of "emotional intelligence" as a "meta-ability" which acts as a master aptitude, supporting or interfering with the use of other kinds of intelligence and skills.

We define a meta-ability as an underlying learned ability which plays an important role in enabling a wider range of management knowledge and skills to be used effectively. For example, the meta-ability of 'cognitive complexity' is essential to reading the broad business environment, understanding one's impact on others, managing complex roles and relationships, seeing things from others' points of view and managing diverse information flows within the organisation.

⁵ Collin, 1989; Pye, 1991.

⁶ Burgoyne, 1988; Schroder, 1989; Pedler et al, 1994; Goleman, 1995.

The concept of meta-abilities is inextricably linked to the idea that a manager's underlying psychological development is essential to effective performance. Meta-abilities such as personal strength, emotional resilience, self-discipline, confidence and self-awareness all form part of the required managerial profile. It is but a small step to recognise that this has significant implications for the process by which managers are developed. But there is a further implication still. If the requirements now on managers demand far more of them organisationally, demand that they become responsible for creating pockets of good practice in (at best) loosely governed organisations, then management development becomes critical, and the development of meta-abilities the point of departure.

3. Implications for Management Development

The need for development of meta-abilities has important implications for management development, for it questions the very boundary of the discipline and necessitates a very particular development process. There are those who would argue that this kind of development is either impossible or inappropriate for management development to address. Impossible, because personality is fixed by adulthood and no attempt should be made to change it. Inappropriate, because 'fundamental change' of this nature belongs in the realm of therapy and should not be applied to healthy managers in the normal course of development. Our experience, based on over ten years of working with individual managers at the meta-ability level, is that this is not the case. Meta-abilities are not personality traits, nor do they require therapy in order to be improved. What they do require is a process of development which is distinct from the acquisition of knowledge and skills, and which goes beyond traditional experiential learning.

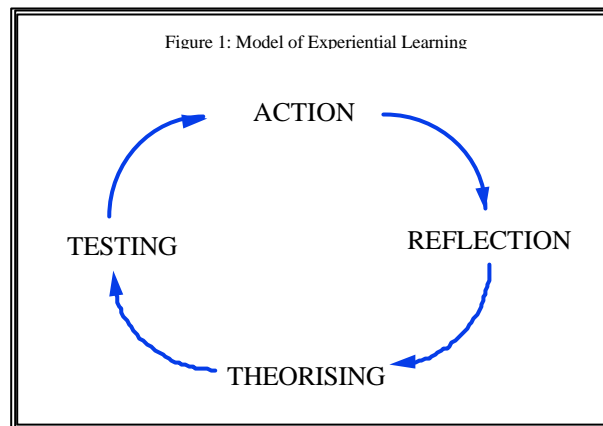
The Concepts of Experiential Learning and Developmental Change

Managers, as do most adults, tend to approach learning as a cumulative or incremental process, each new experience or new piece of information building on what has come before. Models of experiential learning, such as that developed by Kolb (Figure 1),⁷ describe a cycle of learning based on action, reflection, formulation of theories, and testing, which describes one particular way that the learning process can be understood. Learning of this type happens a good deal of the time. The focus of this type of learning is incremental development through experience. To make sense of that experience, it has to be integrated into the individual's existing understanding of themselves and the environment in which they operate. Without this ability, individuals would constantly be rearranging and questioning everything, rarely achieving consistency and coherence, and thus unable to function in any productive way.

As a result of this fundamental requirement for consistency, managers build up stable views of themselves and the environment around them, into which most experience can be integrated and new experiences explained and dealt with. This stability allows individuals to build up and refine behavioural strategies - ways to achieve the desired effect which they know generally succeed.

⁷ Kolb & Wolfe, 1979.

Over time, these strategies become habitual rather than consciously practised, allowing more complex situations to be encountered and reserving conscious judgment for unfamiliar and unclear circumstances. It is of course often the successful application of these strategies that leads to achievement in a technical or functional role and hence promotion into a managerial position.



It is also precisely these habits which need to be challenged and changed in the face of new and more demanding situations. Such a major developmental step commonly involves changes in meta-abilities. In such change, individuals' understanding of themselves and their environment is of necessity called into question and has been defined as "a discontinuity in a person's life space".⁸ It implies a position where an individual's habitual pattern of behaviours, based on current skills and outlook, are inadequate for a new situation. Old habits and their rationale need to be let go of and *unlearned*, and replaced by a different way of interpreting and dealing with the world and its relation to oneself. A transition of this nature inevitably impacts on an individual's sense of stability and thus, sense of self.

Developing Meta-abilities: The Transition Curve

The idea of transition has been developed by several writers, many of whom agree that it is characterised by different stages. Our experience concurs with the 'Transition Curve' model originally proposed by Adams et al (Figure 2),⁹ which implies seven generic stages which will typify the experience of most: immobilisation; denial (or minimisation); depression; acceptance of reality; testing; search for meaning; and integration. These stages involve both the emotional and behavioural reactions to the change during the period of adjustment.

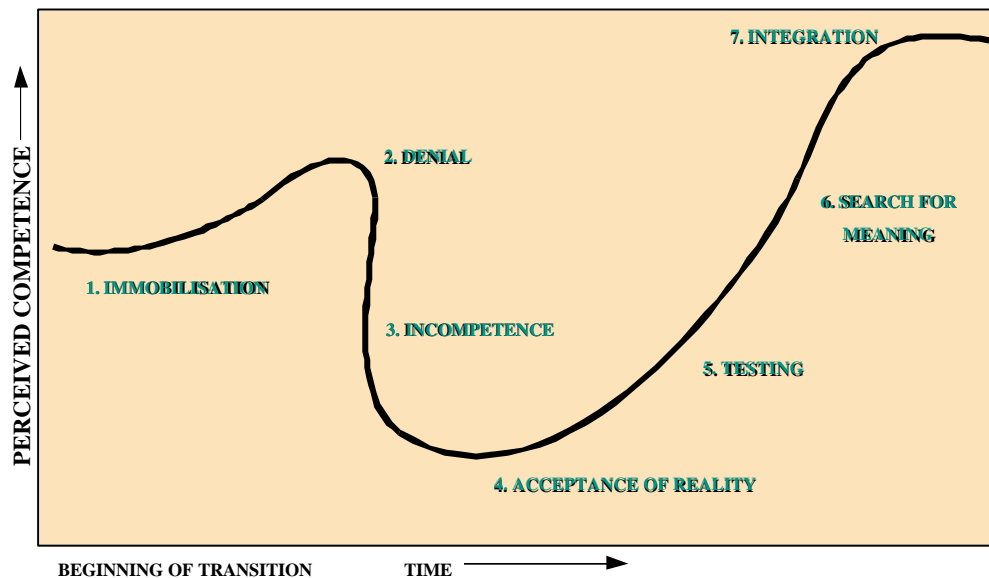
In stages one and two, the need for change will most likely be triggered by a surprise or 'crisis' which alerts the individual to the possibility of the need for change. The individual then prepares to

⁸ Adams et al, 1976.

⁹ Adams et al, 1976.

adjust to the change, often minimising its perceived impact through a process of denial that it is indeed required. Some, for whom the adaptation process appears too threatening, will fiercely resist all further moves to change, preferring to direct their energy to providing confirmatory evidence that the current state is adequate, or asserting that the perceived need to change was, in fact, mistaken.

Figure 2: THE TRANSITION CURVE



Those who do not get ‘stuck’ by such tactics will then experience a phase of encountering the reality of the change, where such reality can no longer be denied and some acknowledgement of the need to change is recognised (stage three). There is at this stage, however, no understanding of the new behaviours required or any psychological commitment to them. The individual naturally experiences this phase as uncomfortable, as the self starts to adjust emotionally to the consequences of losing the security of old habits, without the confidence in the new habits to be developed. Once acceptance has truly been reached (stage four), then the individual begins to ‘let go’ of or ‘unlearn’ past habits and the psychological/emotional attachments to them, and to accept the new reality with positive feelings. They will start to consider new scenarios, looking forward to what is positive, rather than lamenting a loss. It is at this point that the ‘reshuffling’ of the self and self-views is able to happen.

From the time that the individual has reached such an underlying emotional acceptance of the change they can start to rebuild actively their views of themselves through a process of behavioural testing, using the cycle of experiential learning and feedback. During this fifth stage they may well continue to experience frustration and anger in trialling new behaviours which feel uncomfortable and unfamiliar. Gradually, through the experience of behaving differently and seeing new results, the

individual starts consciously to integrate the new learned behaviours with his view of himself (stage six). At the final stage, the new behaviours and self-views are fully integrated into the individual's own identity, so that they mesh with important attitudes and values and become part of that individual's habitual repertoire of approaches.

The process of transition described here is integral to the development of meta-abilities. It will undoubtedly affect a manager's sense of self and view of the world, personal resilience, and underlying motivations. It can open up new ways of thinking, increase flexibility, and give new clarity. The development of meta-abilities is a critical part of the realisation of 'new potential' often associated with this kind of personal transition.

Key Characteristics of the Transition Process

There are four key characteristics of this process of transition which it is important to stress here. Firstly, it is by nature a discontinuous, sporadic process, that cannot be seen in clear, logical steps. There are periods when development remains at an unconscious level, or consists of dealing with emotional issues, so that no overt behavioural change will occur for some time. At times, an individual will seem to be surging forward, and at others resisting the discontinuity of performance that development implies.

Secondly, the trigger to achieve the cycle of transition appears to be some sort of crisis or surprise, whereby the individual is confronted with a disconfirming view of themselves, such that there is no going back once development has taken place. Thus the role of anyone aiming to facilitate development is multi-faceted, being at once able to trigger such a transition and then provide the required support to allow the individual to progress through the transition. Although the crisis can be engineered through carefully managed environments, in order for the individual to achieve transition it has to become an experience of personal insight which has meaning and relevance for the individual in their own terms.

This need for crisis leads on to the third point - that the unlearning phase of the process will necessitate a destabilising effect on the individual's sense of self and comfort. One main reason for resistance to the developmental process is the natural resistance of a self-perceived 'mature' person to experience this effect. Individuals are, of course, only able to function effectively because they have built up stable patterns of attitudes, habits and knowledge. Attempts to change this stability, however well intentioned, can make people feel vulnerable and therefore defensive, which can then block further progress.

The fourth aspect relates to the emotional response to development, linked to the notion of personal insight or discovery. In order to have insights into behavioural potential, individuals must be prepared to experience a level of discomfort, to see themselves in a painfully different light. Whilst passing through this phase of development, however, it is not uncommon for the individual to question the very process itself, as the response demands an emotional release. Indeed, our experience is that in the majority of cases, there must be an emotional response at some level in order for an enduring change to be achieved.

Developing Meta-abilities in the Workplace

In summary, the development of meta-abilities goes far beyond the learning process inherent in acquiring new skills and knowledge. It is founded on the process of gaining self insight. Some might even describe it as the development of character. It can potentially involve a process of personal transition in which individuals call into question aspects of themselves or the way they go about doing things which are no longer appropriate. In order to change and to release new potential, individuals must let go of attitudes or ways of thinking which have served them well up to this point. There is a significant emotional dimension to the experience, and the process needs to be managed with the appropriate balance of challenge and support.

This has important implications for the manager, mentor or facilitator who is helping an individual develop at work. It appears to be extremely rare in organisational life to find individuals capable of providing this impetus and support. To develop, individuals need high quality guidance, help and challenge from line managers and colleagues. How many people (apart from the lucky few) feel they can speak frankly and openly with their manager about their performance? How many managers find the time to think effectively about their role in someone else's development? Even with the best intentions, there is often not the time or continuity of relationship to help individuals make significant progress. The very limited success of most 'mentoring' schemes sharply illustrate this. And of course, there is the constant pressure to perform, so that expectations for short term results create a low tolerance for personal reflection time and experimentation.

The consequence is that, whilst a manager's job can offer myriad opportunities for this potential development to take place - there is no lack of sufficient challenges - those opportunities are rarely used effectively.

Using Public Programmes to Develop Meta-abilities

In practice therefore, there are limited ways in which these meta-abilities can be developed internally to the organisation in an effective and systematic manner. Given this, organisations understandably turn to external intervention to provide that development experience, most commonly, open or public management development programmes. These programmes potentially offer a unique environment which can be used to strong effect in development of the individual manager. They offer the opportunity for a vivid social comparison process which can be actively used in the development process in a way which would be very difficult in the workplace or on company specific management programmes. Managers rub shoulders with a wide range of other individuals with different experience and perspectives. They can benchmark themselves, perhaps for the first time, against this diverse group and they are often curious about how they compare with their fellow delegates. Public programmes also create scope for managers to be much more open with each other about how they experience working together. Unlike at work, there are less likely to be hidden agendas or jealousies, or simply a reluctance to be frank with each other because of the personal stakes involved. Managers are often eager to get relevant, honest feedback about how they work, as it is so difficult to get inside their organisations. When managed well, an open programme creates an environment in which individuals both learn from and stretch each other, and

serve as models for others' approaches and styles. Above all, public programmes offer challenging, critical thinking which is essential in order for managers to look at themselves and their organisations objectively. It is important that they learn to question and challenge themselves and what they see going on around them; that they develop their own critical judgment in assessing people and situations.

Having said all this, it appears rare that the full potential for individual development is realised in many public programmes. This probably accounts for the criticism often levelled at such programmes that material is irrelevant, the designs inflexible, and that managers do not do anything differently having attended them. To achieve a high quality of development puts heavy demands on both the design of programmes and the role that the tutors play. Not only must the content be highly relevant, presentations engaging, and debate critical, but the learning process has to be a highly personal one, reflecting a transition in meta-abilities. Tutors must be prepared to refrain from offering pat solutions, to provide 'open' and much less predictable experiential learning, and to generate frustration or even anger on the part of the delegates if necessary, for it is only in so doing that they will challenge individuals sufficiently to examine themselves and their practice in a more critical way. It is far more difficult, yet essential, to accompany and guide individuals in the development of their meta-abilities than it is to present 'state of the art' thinking or teach specific techniques. It is an ambitious undertaking.

4. Development of Meta-abilities Through Public Programmes: The Cranfield Management Development Programmes

What are the Cranfield Programmes?

For some ten years now, the Cranfield Management Development Programmes have sought to deliver this level of development ambition. They consist of a suite of four general management programmes reflecting different managerial career stages, each with the objective of creating the potential for organisation development through the development of meta-abilities.

The Developing Managerial Competence Programme is aimed at high potential managers making the initial transition into a management role. The Advanced Development Programme is for those already in management roles, but who are on an accelerated development path and expected to make a significant move into senior management within the next two to three years. The General Management Programme for Specialists is for those managers established in senior roles, responsible for specialist or functional contribution to their organisation. The Senior Managers Programme is for those who are currently moving into or already in, senior general management roles with a strategic emphasis.

Because of the highly developmental nature of the programmes the numbers on each are restricted to a maximum of 24 participants. In this way each delegate is able to receive the high degree of personal attention necessary in the development of managerial meta-abilities.

Key Assumptions Underpinning the Process of the Programmes

The development process which provides the foundation for the Cranfield programmes reflects the process needed for meta-ability development described in the preceding section. It is based on the acquisition of knowledge about the self, through making inferences from direct behavioural feedback. Data gathered through interpersonal management interaction is presented to the individual by both peer members and tutors in explicit verbal form, in the context of understanding the impact of behaviour on others and increasing managerial influence. The aim is to give the individual a unique opportunity to receive what has been described as “a tantalising glimpse”¹⁰ of one’s behaviour as seen by others, in the absence of distorting processes such as self-serving biases. A fundamental assumption is that, through gaining a more complex understanding of the self and behavioural impact, and through augmenting existing self-knowledge, individuals will have the desire to change their behavioural strategies in those cases where the outcomes are not desired or required.

A second assumption concerns the use of an external event to foster a developmental process.¹¹ The unique environment calls upon powerful social learning processes of peer and group ‘benchmarking’ and modelling in order to trigger development. In our experience, delegates are rarely faced with insights that are completely new and ‘out of the blue’. What is different is that they are able to understand the extent of their inability to influence, and to contextualise previous behavioural feedback in a clearer and more meaningful way. It allows the creation of a healthy and ambitious developmental climate, free from the normal cultural and political constraints of the workplace. Thus delegates are able to place themselves in positions of potential vulnerability and experimentation, safe in the knowledge that by the end of the programme they will have sufficient opportunity to test and practise new strategies, and that the personal risks of trying untested behaviours on the return to work are greatly reduced.

A third assumption is that the role of the programme tutor as facilitator is the critical factor in relating the programme design to an individual development process. The facilitator, through both observation and intervention, carefully monitors individuals, coaching, challenging and supporting as needed. The role is complex, with the tutor at times being prepared to help the individual trigger a developmental ‘crisis’ through the disconfirmation of a self-view, but also fostering experimentation and rebuilding. The duality of this relationship has been described as ‘friends who act as enemies’.¹² The facilitator also ensures the setting of clear boundaries. This is particularly important in focused developmental experiences such as management development. The facilitator can, both through direct intervention and personal example, set the tone and depth of discussions.

Lastly, we clearly see the process of development as development, not therapy. The experiences and behavioural inferences are clearly grounded in the context of increasing managerial effectiveness. We assume psychological ‘health’. Painful disclosure of past experiences which might be appropriate in a therapeutic setting we regard as largely unnecessary and unhelpful in a management

¹⁰ Hampson, 1988.

¹¹ Temporal, 1981.

¹² Pedler, 1985.

development context. The implication here is that if a therapeutic intervention is necessary to help an individual manager, because of his or her current state of mind, then this must take place outside the context of the programmes.

The Cranfield Model: Development Across Six Competency Sets

The four Cranfield programmes, each having a particular focus, seek to develop different and very *specific competencies*, for example ‘strategic thinking’ on the Senior Managers Programme. However, all of the programmes are underpinned by six broad competency sets, four of which are meta-abilities.

The six competency sets are: managerial knowledge, influencing skills, cognitive skills, self-knowledge, emotional resilience and personal drive. The first two sets are groupings of specific competencies which are pertinent to the managerial role. The remaining four are what we would term meta-abilities, and so capture important underlying psychological factors which are essential to the performance of more specific competencies:

Managerial knowledge: Most management development programmes focus primarily on the acquisition of knowledge and so this is a well trodden path. The areas of knowledge which managers require obviously shift in line with changes in the business environment, but there is always a fundamental need for managers to keep abreast of current developments in ‘best practice’ methods and principles. They need to develop and maintain an integrated view of their organisation and its external environment, understand organisational change processes, and have a ‘tool kit’ of techniques for analysing, problem solving and decision making.

Influencing skills: Since knowledge alone is of little use without the ability to use it in working with others and to influence situations, this competency set refers to the specific skills of overt managerial effectiveness. These are grouped as follows:

- core communication skills (which essentially underpin all the skill groups)
- assertiveness and dealing with conflict
- persuading others and managing organisational politics
- developing others (delegating, coaching, counselling)

Cognitive skills: This competency set consists of the key thought processes required to ‘read’ situations and which can be used to understand and resolve problems or issues. They include but are not solely defined by intellectual capacity. The range of cognitive skills are:

- cognitive complexity - the ability to take multiple and integrated perspectives; to recognise and hold conflicting concepts in mind;
- cognitive flexibility - the ability to shift perspectives, remain open-minded and consider possibilities
- visionary ability - thinking in a long term perspective and envisaging a strategic direction
- gaining clarity - using information effectively; the ability to sort, prioritise and analyse data

- perceptual acuity - the ability to notice and interpret what is happening in interpersonal interactions

Self-knowledge: This includes self-knowledge, self-awareness, and the awareness of one's impact on others. Managers who bring a high level of self-knowledge into a situation are better positioned to use their skills and knowledge flexibly, make better judgments about what needs to happen, and are more ready to see a range of behavioural options for themselves. It is only through the acquisition of knowledge about how the self acts towards itself and others that behavioural habits, often long-standing and subconscious, can be revealed. Furthermore, the individual can gain an understanding of the impact of these habits, particularly where they limit effectiveness. This is the first step towards developing flexibility in dealing with diverse and complex managerial situations.

Emotional resilience: This competency set is made up of

- self-control and self-discipline,
- the ability to manage emotions appropriately,
- personal resilience (coping with pressure and adversity, 'bouncing back')
- a balanced view of the self (both positive and critical; ideal and realistic)

These qualities are inevitably more important in a business world where turbulence and change exact demanding levels of performance over extended periods of time. Often called upon to deal with the results of pressure and stress on others, the manager requires the resilience to be able to retain an objective view of his or herself. Furthermore, empowerment and development of staff necessitates the ability to trust and value others as well as oneself, especially difficult for those who have developed a strong need to retain control.

Personal drive: This competency set refers to personal achievement orientation and motivation. It addresses the area of personal ambition for responsibility and implies an ability to motivate self and others as well as to take personal risks.

5. Summary of Part I

Top down, corporate wide organisation development is becoming less consistent with contemporary organisation forms. The requirement on managers to deal effectively with more complex organisations and environments places a greater premium on individual contribution, which in turn relies on the development of meta-abilities. This strongly implies that individual (management) development is becoming a more appropriate starting point for organisation development.

The development of meta-abilities, by definition, cannot be addressed through management training. Training focuses on the acquisition of skills and knowledge, whilst meta-abilities are those competencies which make possible the assimilation and appropriate use of skills and knowledge. Meta-abilities are very difficult to develop, particularly within the context of an organisation, and open (public) management development programmes represent a significant alternative intervention.

However, these programmes are often used as training events, because organisations do not understand well their development potential. Equally, such programmes themselves are frequently unambitious in development terms.

The Cranfield Management Development Programmes seek to make management development the point of departure for organisation development by focusing on key knowledge, influencing skills and, above all, meta-abilities. Their aim is to develop managers so that those individuals, especially when well chosen by their organisations, will personally come to influence those organisations.

The research described in the following pages has sought to assess the validity of the case for individual (management) development as organisational development. The Cranfield programmes are taken as a model of meta-ability development. The study investigates the development of meta-abilities and their role in creating organisational change through individuals.

DEVELOPING BUSINESSES THROUGH DEVELOPING INDIVIDUALS

PART II: THE RESEARCH PROJECT

6. Description of the Project

As outlined in the preceding section, the research project was designed to explore the impact of the four Cranfield Management Development Programmes as a way of testing the development of meta-abilities, and investigating their role in creating organisational change. The question posed was:

“Given that the programmes expressly set out to develop meta-abilities, to what extent do they enable individuals to add value to their organisations?”

‘Value’ was defined on two levels. Firstly, it was seen as being based on increased personal effectiveness (the model of six competency sets). Secondly, it was based on personal impact on the organisation. Outcomes were potentially expected at four levels:

- *Improving Personal Managerial Practice*: Impacting the organisation through improved personal effectiveness as a manager, particularly in the context of managing within one’s own team or department;
- *Extending Personal Sphere of Influence*: raising the level of individual impact within the organisation;
- *Providing a Critical Perspective*: Being challenging of the organisation; encouraging the exploration of multiple and wider perspectives; offering insight and critical judgment;
- *Changing the Organisation*: Putting into practice ideas from the programme which aimed to improve organisational performance. This could include improving teamwork in the department, improving communication with other departments, restructuring, putting in place improved systems or procedures, and initiating or supporting wider change programmes. In essence, establishing pockets of good practice which play a critical part in changing the organisation.

The design adopted was a follow-up approach, using self-report questionnaires (Appendix A) and interviews. The data from the questionnaires were from two areas:

1. Open questions focusing on individual impact, such as gain in knowledge, change in organisational perspective; ability to remain objective under pressure; and changes to personal managerial approach.
2. Open questions focusing on organisational impact, such as implementation of action plans; personal impact on the organisation; and the value to the organisation of attendance on the programme.

Lastly, post-programme interviews were conducted on a random basis in order to add detail and richness to the understanding of the post-programme experience. This was valuable in gaining information particularly about organisational outcomes. Selected follow-ups to post-programme responses were also undertaken where more specific detail was needed. The project involved 267 managers across all four management development programmes, over an 18 month period. Within this group, more focused, detailed follow-up involved 96 managers.

The project focuses solely on qualitative data. This decision was taken for a number of reasons:

- Firstly, there is recognised difficulty in attempting to ‘objectively’ measure an adult development process. While a pre-post-test measurement approach can be valuable in the evaluation of training, i.e. the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills, it is not applicable to the personal transition described as underpinning the development process. This is because the process is a uniquely individual one and can involve change in varying combinations of underlying personal factors.
- Secondly, there were a number of practical constraints inhibiting the application of a detailed measurement approach. Measurement of meta-abilities, where possible, would have required a range of separate psychological instruments. It would have been necessary to subject managers to a battery of psychological tests before and after the programme. We viewed this as an unacceptable imposition, both for the individual and for the process of the programmes.
- Thirdly, part of the development process is characterised by changes in individual perception, reasoning and judgment. The best way to access these changes is through individuals describing how they view, analyse and make decisions about situations. These descriptions would have been lost in more conventional quantitative data collection techniques.
- Lastly, the project was considered to have an exploratory nature to it. It was therefore appropriate to seek the richness and individual diversity which qualitative data would provide.

The questionnaire uses rating scales at the beginning as a mechanism for helping managers enter into the self-evaluation asked of them and to provide a structure to discussions. These were not viewed, however, as ‘accurate’ measures because, most often, the view that individuals had about what the scales were measuring changed as a result of the attending programme. Additionally, semantic interpretation of a scale would vary from individual to individual.

During the course of the project data was also collected from sponsors, who were most often line managers to the delegates. While in some cases this was helpful, in the great majority of cases collecting data from sponsors had a number of inherent problems:

- It was not always apparent that there was someone who could act as sponsor. Senior managers, for example, did not always have a line manager above them, or someone else with development responsibility for them.

- The quality and consistency of responses varied greatly. This may well be an indication of variable levels of interest. While some sponsors obviously took a developmental responsibility with regard to delegates, others saw their role as more of an administrative one, or were just happy to ‘go through the mechanics’ without much thought.
- Sponsors were not always in a position to have a clear view about a delegate’s performance or needs. In many cases they did not work enough *with* the delegate to be able to comment; or indeed had just started in the role which gave them responsibility for the delegate and even with the best of intentions were not in a position to comment usefully on their performance.
- In some cases, the relationship between delegate and sponsor was not a good one. This created further tensions when we involved the sponsor in the pre-programme assessment, and cast doubt upon the quality of the data.
- It was common for managers to change roles in the six months subsequent to the programme. This meant that sponsors would need to be different, and new sponsors rarely felt in a position to ‘make a comparison’ for research purposes. Nor were delegates necessarily comfortable with this.

We were familiar with many of these issues because we seek to involve organisational sponsors in the development of delegates as a matter of course. However, the systematic nature of the research project highlighted these problems very strongly. As will be seen later in discussing the data, the difficulties encountered with sponsors reflect the same reality described by delegates in implementing their action plans, which was characterised by a lack of organisational support. Furthermore, the literature on evaluation of training and development indicates that others have encountered these same issues.¹³

There is also some strong support for the validity of self-report, particularly when it is obtained through a thinking process which reflects the ‘scientific method’, in that it uses descriptions of examples and evidence.¹⁴ It was therefore decided to focus on self-report, but that particular vigilance would be applied to asking for examples to support individual assessments, including feedback from bosses or colleagues.

¹³ Hogarth, 1979.

¹⁴ Burgoyne, 1988.

7. Discussion of the Data

Introduction

As outlined in section 4, the view of individual as organisational development can be described through six dimensions which influence the impact that individuals can have on their organisations: managerial knowledge, the meta-abilities of cognitive skills, self-knowledge, emotional resilience and personal drive, and influencing skills. The way in which these dimensions relate to each other are illustrated in Figure 3.

The Relationship Between Individual and Organisational Development

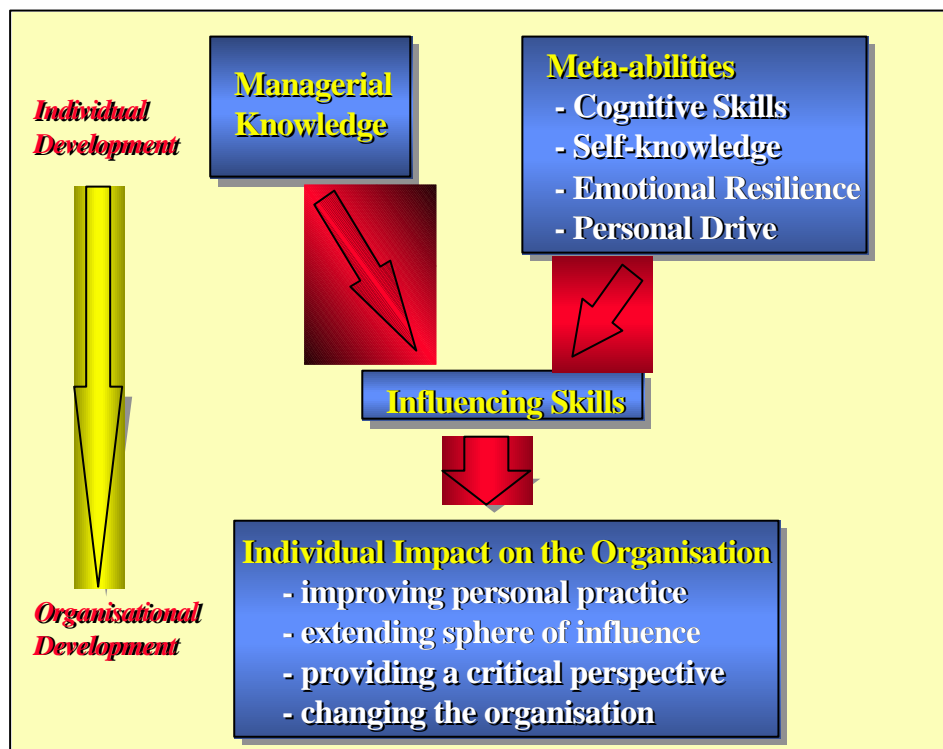


Figure 3

As shown in the diagram, knowledge and meta-abilities strongly influence the way in which an individual interprets, analyses and makes judgments about a given situation. They equally influence the range of behavioural strategies that the individual will consider, and the actions he or she ultimately decides to take. The level and range of influencing skills an individual can call upon will determine how well or in what way these actions are taken. It is these individual actions which, by influencing the attitudes and behaviour of others, ultimately impact on the organisation and determine its development.

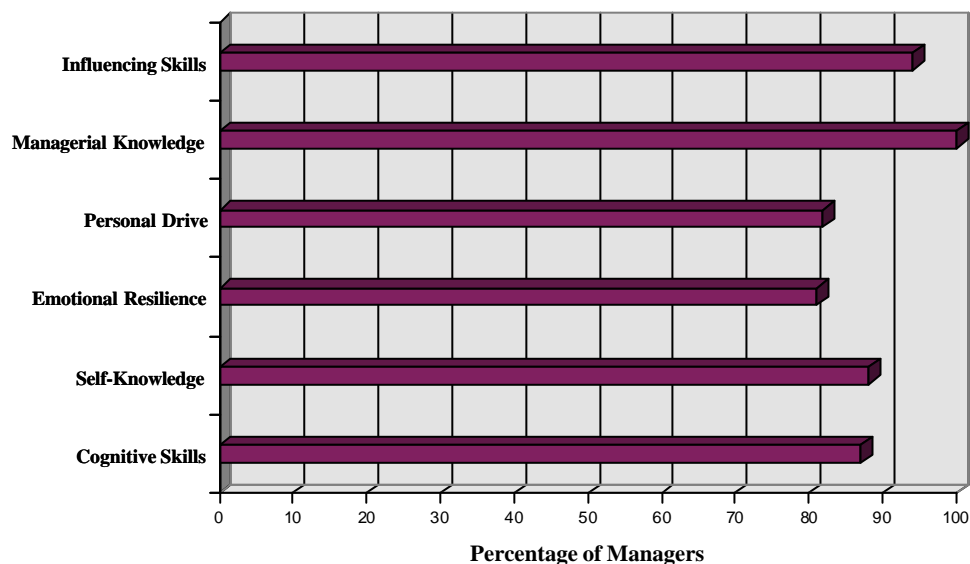
In the research project, we were interested in building a picture of both of these levels of development: how the six individual dimensions were affected by the programme, and what this development then allowed individuals to do within their organisations.

The description of the data will reflect these two levels of interest, and follow the structure of the diagram in Figure 3. Firstly, data concerned with the individual development process will be described, looking at knowledge, meta-abilities, and influencing skills. Following this, data relating to the implementation of action plans will be discussed. The latter part of this section will then focus on organisational development: the impact that individuals were able to have through improving their personal managerial practice, extending their sphere of influence, providing a critical perspective, and creating change within their organisation.

7.1 Individual Development

An overview of the responses indicates change across all six sets of the individual development process, as shown in Table 3:

Table 3: Development Across the Six Competency Sets



There is enough evidence to indicate that the programmes can and do affect the development of individuals across all four meta-abilities and, indeed, across all six dimensions. Whether they do, or even need to, at the individual level depends on variation in individual levels of development and the objectives of each programme. Not every individual would be expected to cite examples across all six dimensions. Some, for example, would already have a high level of self-awareness, or a strong

personal drive, but need to increase their cognitive flexibility. For others, the focus may need to be primarily in developing resilience in order to better use their existing cognitive skills. The improvement of one area can greatly improve the use of the other dimensions. Managers high in personal drive, for example, can better apply their energy and motivate others when they are much more aware of what is happening around them. Or clear thinkers who have very little impact can, through the development of self-insight and resilience, use their clarity to influence organisational decisions.

What is significant is that the design of the programmes are capable of facilitating development across the full range of dimensions, and that tutors are skilled at using that design effectively to target individual needs.

7.1.1 *Managerial Knowledge*

Not surprisingly, every manager described acquiring new knowledge as a result of the programme. Gaining knowledge is most often the driving force for individuals to attend management development programmes of this type.

The most common impact of the increase in knowledge is a feeling of being ‘broadened’. 93% of managers described this as an outcome. Exposure to the full range of functional disciplines provides an overall understanding which helps managers feel more comfortable working outside their specialism, and builds their sense of confidence. It can spur interest in broader issues. For example:

“From the programme I have gained a better insight into how businesses are run and what kind of pressures there are from the marketplace, etc. This has given me more of an interest in issues outside of HR and given me the confidence to question more in business meetings.”

“I now have a much better understanding of the structure and processes of other departments within my company, and I feel better able to place the company within the global business environment.”

“I am more confident than before in having a foundation for my views and have more tools to examine situations and implement decisions.”

An enlarged knowledge base also leads to managers being able to contribute more effectively outside of their department or group, and to make a better quality contribution to broader organisational discussions. 62% of managers specifically cited gaining a greater understanding of business disciplines which helped them to make better decisions or participate in a wider organisational domain, for example:

“Since attending the programme I have become more involved with wider business issues by attending business management meetings and have been able to contribute more fully on issues outside my own function.”

“I continue to be at the centre of my operation’s decision making. Therefore I am called upon to make contributions outside my immediate specialism. Due to the expanded knowledge base and experience I gained on the programme, I feel these contributions are much more effective.”

“I now have a much better understanding of business strategy, finance and marketing which I have been able to use in the formulation of strategies for my organisation to deal with new entrants in the Kenya beer market.”

7.1.2 *Meta-abilities: Cognitive Skills*

As outlined in section 4, the dimension of *cognitive skills* is made up of five elements:

- cognitive complexity - the ability to take multiple and integrated perspectives; to recognise and hold conflicting concepts in mind;
- cognitive flexibility - the ability to shift perspectives, remain open-minded and consider possibilities;
- visionary ability - the ability to think in a long term perspective and to envision a strategic direction;
- gaining clarity - using information effectively, the ability to sort, prioritise and analyse data;
- perceptual acuity - the ability to notice and interpret what is happening in interpersonal interactions.

Development in cognitive complexity contributes to managers moving beyond ‘black and white’ or ‘right or wrong’ thinking to appreciating the complexities of organisational life and managerial problems. They are able to understand and not react defensively to ideas which are in conflict with their own. They become better at seeing both ‘parts and wholes’ - for example, understanding personal and departmental agendas in the light of the bigger organisational picture. They can deal with competing tensions and priorities, such as the cost/quality trade-off, in more sophisticated ways. They see more angles to problems, and have a more complex understanding of issues involved in organisational performance.

On the programmes, the development of cognitive complexity is fostered through a variety of ways. Tutors, through class discussion, help delegates to explore the complexities of business issues. Case studies are used to surface and debate issues, not to provide prescriptive answers. Models are used to identify and analyse issues, to help provide clarity and aid a manager’s judgment. They are not presented as a substitute for the individual decision-making process. Many examples from business life are used to demonstrate how different organisations approach similar problems, in order to widen managers’ perspectives.

On an interpersonal level, as part of the process of working with each other, managers are helped by tutors to see people and their behaviour in more complex terms. They are helped to analyse managerial situations so that they can approach them from a variety of perspectives. In addition, the experience of working with and getting to know a wide range of managers who are not necessarily ‘cut from the same mould’ as oneself can greatly enhance the ability to appreciate multiple perspectives. Conversations go on throughout the programme which ‘open managers’ eyes’ to other views and experiences. The composition of course groups is very rich in diverse functions,

industry sectors, regional and national cultures, and background. The sharing of personal experience is a potent factor in developing cognitive complexity.

72% of managers indicated improvements in cognitive complexity, such as:

“I am more aware of other people’s contribution to the business. I offer and solicit ideas, and value other opinions, even when directly opposed to my own. Before the programme I had never really taken the time to consider different perspectives - I was very goal-driven and a bit competitive. The programme, and particularly working with the wide range of other managers on the programme, helped me to see and appreciate other views.”

“The programme has helped me in managing teamwork, the recognition and use of personal agendas, and dealing with conflicts and differences. It has helped me to focus on outcomes and gain commitment from people with diverse interests or agendas.”

“The SMP has changed my thinking from being black/white, right/wrong to recognising relativity - there is not necessarily right or wrong answers, and you may never know what the ‘right’ decision or course of action is. It is more important to use your best judgment after considering all perspectives and then focus your energies on implementation.”

“The programme has helped me to understand and appreciate the complexity of interpersonal relationships. I spend more time trying to identify common ground and seeking consensus for important decisions.”

Cognitive flexibility is closely related to cognitive complexity, but whereas complexity refers to the nature of the underlying cognitive structures, flexibility says more about how those structures are actively used. Although an individual may be very capable of building up a complex view of a situation, if their thinking is rigid it implies they are less capable of *shifting* between these complex perspectives - for example between strategic and operational views, personal and other views, marketing and production views, etc. They can come across as narrow-minded, quick to judge, or tending to get ‘stuck’ in a view. As managers develop greater cognitive flexibility they are more ready to call into question their own view, they can more easily put themselves in others’ positions; they are seen as being more flexible and adaptable in discussions.

Both cognitive complexity and flexibility underpin the development of a critical perspective, which will be discussed more fully later on.

Many of the elements of programme design used to develop cognitive complexity also contribute to the development of cognitive flexibility. In addition, managers are given opportunities and encouraged to actively take perspectives which are different from their own, or that they are less comfortable with. In case studies and simulations, for example, individuals can take a functional perspective which is outside their experience - an engineer can take a marketing perspective, an accountant a production perspective, etc. Similarly, individuals who become aware of a strong task focus can take ‘executive’ roles where the focus is strategic, and vice versa. The personal experience of ‘living’ an alternate role in a simulation can be very powerful - managers very quickly make links to the way they approach colleagues and staff in their own organisations; or begin to understand why a department is acting as it is.

Additionally, tutors use discussions, on both the group and individual level, to help managers become more fluid in shifting perspectives. Individuals are encouraged to 'put themselves in the places' of other delegates in order to understand their perspectives. Managers are asked to carefully examine the judgments they are making in the light of a whole range of data, and encouraged to explore situations from a variety of angles.

62% of managers described changes related to the development of cognitive flexibility:

"I am more open with people and will listen to their points of view."

"I am better able to shift into strategic thinking when I need to, and be operationally-minded when I need to be."

"As a result of the programme I recognised that I was often trying to structure things too much, and once I went down my chosen route it was very difficult to shift me! I have fundamentally changed the way I use structure with my team - it has to support what we're doing, and I need to stay flexible with it. I have been amazed at how much more creative we can be."

"I am far more aware of reacting differently to different situations. One size doesn't fit all. Before the programme I had some really preconceived ideas about what managing and leading was all about. I now realise how important flexibility is in the way you approach things."

Visionary ability builds on both cognitive complexity and flexibility, in allowing managers to 'think strategically'. It is particularly applicable to being able to create, maintain and communicate a wider or longer term vision.

Visionary ability is developed by helping managers to be able to stand back, consider the bigger picture, and think more long term. Some of the knowledge content of the programmes focuses on wider trends in the political, economic and social environment and considers the managerial role in the context of this broad perspective. Frameworks for strategic thinking are used. In case study discussions, managers are helped to keep a wider perspective in mind while still being able to consider specific issues.

In group exercises, individuals are always encouraged to consider their own impact and that of others in a wider context. They are helped to 'see the wood for the trees', so to speak, even as they are occupied in detailed work. They are encouraged to find, work out and express what they see as possible - the exercises are not 'closed' in the sense of requiring a single or limited range of 'answers' (as many team exercises can be). Managers need to create together a 'vision' of how they are going to tackle particular tasks - whether the overall focus is operational or strategic.

Managers with visionary ability can maintain their focus on longer term goals in the midst of short term pressures. They can use the 'big picture' to focus others' attention on what is important, and mediate conflicts of interest through the consideration of common goals. They anticipate events, and their understanding of the external environment allows them to develop with others a realistic vision for their organisation or department.

87% of managers commented on the development of visionary ability; for example:

“I am now starting to anticipate change in our environment. It can have a big impact on others when you show you have thought through strategies for dealing with things that *might* happen.”

“The programme changed my focus from tactical to strategic. It has made me look ahead and rather than just worrying, to think about the next decision in terms of where were trying to be...we then based our objectives on that. It’s made things a lot easier.”

“It has without doubt made me more proactive rather than reactive, focusing on issues that will give long term benefits to the business rather than firefighting the day to day issues.”

“Whilst still maintaining a wide perspective on my company, I examine external drivers more actively and have more scope to use external examples to influence decisions.”

The last two groups of cognitive skills have to do with taking in and using information well, whether it is ‘hard’ data in the form of financial figures, reports, policies, etc., or ‘soft’ data such as the subjective perceptions and judgments of an interpersonal situation. The first, *perceptual acuity*, describes the extent to which managers see and register what goes on around them. This means “seeing” in a variety of ways - not only reading the surface content, but picking up emotional undercurrents, assumptions and motivations, keeping a wide focus, noticing interpersonal signals, and continuously scanning their environment. It includes being aware of the impact that their behaviour is having on others. *Gaining clarity* refers to the ability to make sense of this wide range of information, to be able to sort it in a meaningful way, analyse it appropriately and focus on what is most important. Managers who have both of these skills are seen as perceptive and insightful. They are better informed in choosing and adapting their approach to situations, rather than just reacting, and more astute in reading political implications in an organisational situation.

These skills are developed on the programmes in a number of ways. *Perceptual acuity* is fostered through much of the process work that takes place throughout the programme. A group dynamic forms which is inevitably seen by some managers and not others - and will, of course, be viewed in different ways. Process debriefs of group exercises are used by tutors to make the group process more visible, and help individuals to increase their awareness. Through the sharing of perceptions, managers start to appreciate their relative ‘blindness’ and become subsequently much more curious and observant. Tutors model a high level of awareness in conversations with delegates and in their behaviour, and delegates also start to appreciate and seek to emulate those among them who are more perceptive.

Increased awareness helps managers to make better judgments about what actions to take. They can see whether a given approach is working, and change it if need be. It allows them to take into account factors which are less obvious, but critical to success. Awareness is essential to effective influencing - gaining understanding and commitment from others, and using the political process in organisations.

89% of managers described becoming more aware, both of people and events around them and of their impact on others:

“I am always aware of my behaviour and input now. I feel that I have a more considered approach and am less likely to “leap in” for the sake of it!”

“I am surprised by how much more I see, going back into my organisation. The programme definitely increased my awareness of others’ behaviour and got me to think more about ‘what is really going on’. It has helped me to stop making snap judgments based on superficial impressions.”

“The programme has helped me get out of the ‘task-focus’ I tend to adopt under pressure, and helped me to see and understand other people’s behaviour. I feel much more aware - and this helps me to be able to bring people along with me.”

“The major factor in what the programme has done for me is being more able to see and understand the impact I can and do have. It has given me insight into how my colleagues above and below me might perceive my behaviour. I have also become more adept at spotting political foxes!”

“Since the programme, I am more aware of events around me and don’t now tend to get sucked down a path or arguments that weren’t part of the brief or agenda. I tend to think before I open my mouth better than before.”

Gaining clarity is developed through the analytical process used throughout the programme - whether it be during business discussions, case studies, simulations, group work or personal reflections. Tutors are very active in helping individuals see more, but also to sift and prioritise this information so that it is meaningful and helps the individual focus on what is important. This process is modelled in many different ways, so that delegates quickly begin to help coach each other in this regard. The action planning process which results in an ambitious but focused personal action plan by the end of the programme is a case in point. Individuals leave with a clear idea of what they personally need to do to develop further, and of what they want to accomplish in their organisations and how they are going to do it.

Managers who develop this ability are seen as clear thinkers who help others direct their energies. ‘Clarity’ may mean a clear view of one’s role; having the appropriate level of information and knowing how to organise it; or knowing what needs to happen when.

73% of managers described gaining greater clarity as a result of the programme:

“I now find it easier to concentrate on what I believe are the priorities and reject/delegate the less important matters. This has enabled me to ‘rid myself of clutter’. I feel much more effective in directing my department.”

“Attendance on the programme has greatly helped me to have a clearer perspective on my role. I now don’t let myself get sucked into things I shouldn’t get involved with; and I push myself to do those things I don’t like but need to do.”

“I think that the overall impact of the programme has been to help me see things more clearly. I realised during the programme that I had very little impact because I was often confused by the level of detail I was trying to maintain. I now find it easier to think about where I should be focusing my attention and this has helped me to see clearly where we should be going.”

“The programme has helped give me a much clearer perspective on what I am doing. I now better apply my time, better use the information available to me, and better use others (i.e. delegation). I need less, but better selected, information in order to get an overview. I feel that I am controlling things the way that I should be.”

7.1.3 *Meta-abilities: Self-knowledge*

Research has shown that a high level of self-knowledge and self-awareness is important to managerial effectiveness¹⁵, and this self-knowledge is the powerful complement to the cognitive skills we have just described. After all, managers need first and foremost to manage themselves. If they can couple their complex understanding of others, the world around them, and their impact with an equally clear knowledge of themselves and why they react the way they do, they are extremely well-placed to navigate and strongly influence the complicated organisational situations they are faced with every day.

Self-knowledge is gained on the programmes through personal reflection and feedback. Personal reflection can take the form, for example, of analysing one’s role and evaluating one’s performance; or of becoming clearer about the personal values and motivations which drive certain types of behaviour. Feedback can be through formalised instruments or questionnaires, such as personality or leadership inventories. These are often used as a first step to gaining an objective view about oneself.

However, the most potent factor in increasing self-knowledge as it relates to managerial effectiveness is through the use of personal feedback, which is a key feature of all of the programmes. The programme is presented as a managerial process, where individuals perform in a wide range of ways. Individuals are asked to relate to 15-20 other managers and to work with them effectively. Inevitably, a manager’s characteristic approaches become very visible. In the first part of each programme, managers’ curiosity about their impact and how others might view them is raised; at the same time, the group develops to a level where they can give each other frank and honest feedback. Tutors play a key role in managing the feedback process, and providing their own view as appropriate.

As the programme progresses, group activities are debriefed in a way which allows time for personal feedback and reflection. This is the cornerstone of the personal development process, and through it managers begin to understand the nature of the transition they need to make, as well as a clear view of how they want to experiment in order to develop new skills. As the picture becomes

¹⁵ Boyatzis, 1989.

clearer, they discover insights about themselves and gain a deeper understanding of why they behave the way they do in given situations. They can then use the activities and process of the programme to experiment, and get further feedback. This process helps individuals to experience themselves in new ways, tapping into new potential, and expanding their view of themselves.

88% of managers described increased self-knowledge as an outcome of the programme. This increase in self-knowledge helped them in a number of ways. Self-knowledge improves managers' judgments about how to approach different situations by helping them to distinguish between their personal needs and the needs of the situation and of other people. This can enable them to see how to change their approach, or even push them into action when they would have otherwise done nothing. For example:

“Following the programme I now have a better understanding of myself and what causes me to act the way I do. Armed with this knowledge I now have the ability to understand the impact my actions have on others and in doing so I am able to make a conscious decision about whether I am happy with this outcome. If not, I now have the opportunity to do something about it.”

“I have a clearer view of myself and the impact I have on others. People saw me as closed, with a tendency to get wrapped up in what I was doing and have no time for other people. As a consequence back at work I have made more time available to my staff and become more open with colleagues.”

“The programme has made me more self-aware. I am more able to stand back, think about what I am doing, and catch myself when I'm getting pulled inappropriately into technical detail or losing my perspective.”

“By understanding what drives me, and what that looks like to other people in my behaviour, I have been able to 'let go' of needing to compete all the time. I recognise why I do it, and that it is actually counter-productive. I don't feel so driven to prove myself now, I am happy and confident in what I can do. This has helped enormously in building relationships with other departments and gaining the trust of my colleagues.”

“The course helped me to gain a better understanding of my character and how to be more effective. Attendance has resulted in a greater self-awareness which prompts me into action more than in the past.”

“I feel a lot more laid back and confident, and more self-aware. I am not trying to impress as much as previously, I've stopped wasting time in seeking reassurance and I just get on with the job.”

Increased self-knowledge also helps managers to value critical self-examination, to continue to evaluate themselves back at work in order to maintain a current picture of their strengths and weaknesses. It can help them value and use the skills of their staff and colleagues in more complementary ways:

“I focus more on evaluating myself and my performance. Since the course I have devised a structure for evaluating my performance in meetings - a checklist of categories - which I then use to make judgments based on the responses I have had from other managers and the outcomes of the meeting. I am now more effective and less impulsive.”

“The self-awareness I have now got has helped me to understand that to get the most out, you need to have back-up. I am creative, impactful, inspirational. I need people to finish things off, who can deploy other resources. It has helped me set up complementary teams - and to appraise them differently.”

“The programme has given me the opportunity to critically examine myself and I feel that as a result it has opened up my mind. I know myself better, I feel more confident, and I know my reactions to stressful situations.”

“An important consequence of the programme is that I am now more honest with myself - mainly through having the **ability** to make self-assessments more easily.”

Understanding one’s reactions to pressure was, not surprisingly, a recurrent theme. Organisational life creates many stressful situations for managers and it is important for them to understand their own reactions and find alternative approaches which help them remain effective:

“The programme has helped me recognise my personal traits under pressure or when I’m facing new situations, and the impact of these on others. This is really helpful in making sure I don’t fall into the same traps. I now know very clearly what it feels like when I am overcome by my frustration, or get into ‘tunnel vision’.”

“I know I manage conflict better, I’m not so gung-ho. The large self-image I had would have made me steam into things. Now I am more focused on trying to make the outcomes positive.”

“I now realise how controlling I can get when under pressure and how this really switches people off. I have worked hard at ‘letting go’ when I most want to keep things to myself and it has been paying off.”

“The programme gave me a much better understanding of how I feel and why I act as I do when facing new situations. The ‘transition curve’ has particularly helped me cope with the new responsibilities I have taken on since.”

Self-knowledge also includes being clear about personal goals:

“The programme gave me the inputs and, importantly, the time and environment, to establish my own personal objectives. It also brought home to me my position as a senior manager and my impact on others.”

“The programme helped me to clarify my medium/long term ambition to lead a department within my organisation.”

“I have a good idea of what I would like to do in the future and the programme made me think about this and discuss this with my employer. I am certainly more confident and proactive than before the programme.”

7.1.4 *Meta-abilities: Emotional Resilience*

Emotional resilience is made up of four elements:

- self-control and self-discipline,
- the ability to manage emotions appropriately, and maintain objectivity,

- personal resilience (coping with pressure and adversity, “bouncing back”)
- a balanced view of the self (both positive and critical; ideal and realistic, consisting of a healthy confidence),

Emotional resilience is essential to effective management. Managers by definition are in a role where they act both as buffers to external pressure and as focal points for conflicts and tensions. They need to have the personal strength to deal with conflicts without personalising them, to be challenging of their staff and colleagues, and to maintain a healthy confidence which prevents defensive, self-seeking behaviour. They need to be capable of objectivity and discipline even in highly charged circumstances, lest they allow themselves or their staff to be distracted or manipulated. Resilience also allows managers to cope effectively with mistakes and failures - both their own and others' - and to know when to let go of the past in order to concentrate on the future. Emotional resilience is often associated with some sense of ‘maturity’, and the self-objectivity which allows critical feedback and self-examination.

Many of the design elements already described also contribute to the development of emotional resilience. Objectivity is built up through the taking of different and wider perspectives and through critical analysis. Self-examination in the light of feedback, as well as coping with and understanding emotional reactions during exercises or other activities, help individuals to appreciate how to manage emotions appropriately.

Feelings that individuals have about their own performance and contribution are often a strong catalyst in the development of discipline, and in building their sense of confidence. This can be the case whether the performance is good or bad. Despite the potential for uncomfortable or even painful self-insights, the development process usually results over time in a tremendous building of confidence. In the case of disappointments, individuals are spurred to make important changes which can unleash potential and improve effectiveness considerably. As success, even in subtle ways, is experienced, confidence is built. On the other hand, it can also be a very powerful experience for managers to realise the regard in which they are held by other, previously unknown, managers who have worked closely with them in a very concentrated environment. They themselves start to appreciate strengths which others have seen in them, but of which they have been unaware.

The overall experience of stretching themselves in a demanding environment often helps managers to ‘grow’ in resilience. They become more confident in their ability to cope with new environments, difficult individuals, conflicting demands, limited resources, etc. They have often used the safety of the programme to take personal risks - to experiment with styles or approaches which feel uncomfortable, for example - and have seen the results. This increases their confidence in taking calculated risks.

84% of managers described increases in emotional resilience as a result of the programmes. For some, the focus was on self-discipline:

“I feel my self-discipline has improved and I recognise the need to prepare better and not to sell myself short at meetings, presentations, etc.”

“I am more aware of the effect my attitudes and lack of self-discipline have on people, and this has spurred me to improve. I now enjoy the feeling of being more disciplined, and I don’t feel like I am letting people down.”

“I tend to be more in control of myself and others. I feel like I ‘carry more weight’ and my colleagues respect me more.”

For other managers, the impact was on how they managed their feelings. Feelings, when appropriately managed, are an important part of engaging other people, energising situations, and taking action. “Appropriate management” was, in some cases, a matter of reducing the volatility and dominance of emotion in behaviour while, in other cases it was more about learning to express feelings rather than suppressing them:

“The programme has helped me to be much less emotive, but still committed! I find that others respond much better now, whereas before I think I tended to put people on the defensive or frighten them.”

“I lose my temper later now! When I do, it is more considered and I don’t just fly off the handle. I do it to make a point. Although, if I’m honest, I do still sometimes lose it when I shouldn’t.”

“I have found channels through which I could express my anger instead of keeping it under a tight lead and feeling worthless. It is not easy for me, but as long as I do not keep it at a personal level, I find that I can remain objective and self-disciplined. In these circumstances I am at my most creative.”

“I am able to contain my emotions and remain calm. This has made a big difference in thinking clearly and not letting my ‘buttons be pressed’ by other people.”

“Since the programme, I can now stay more calm, delegate more effectively, and feel more able to stand back and not dive in. I don’t let my emotions run away with me, and as a result I feel much more competent and influential at senior level management.”

Many managers described being able to remain objective and self-disciplined under pressure as a result of the programme:

“Learning to remain objective and self-disciplined under pressure has been the main benefit for me. I always thought I *was* objective and could handle the pressure of meetings. I did not understand until the programme how bad I really was at it! Since the programme I have had a number of comments about the change that I have shown.”

“The programme has definitely helped me remain objective under pressure - I feel much better able to deal with the stress of an impossible schedule, work backlog and instituting new initiatives - all of which I faced immediately after the programme.”

“I work in an extremely pressurised environment, but I have found it easier to retain a sensible and realistic perspective on life since attending the DMC. What is also important is now recognising that it is not advisable to dump the pressures on those below you.”

By far the most dominant theme in responses about emotional resilience concerned personal confidence. Managers felt a great deal more confident as a result of the programmes. As described

earlier, during the programmes individuals are considerably challenged and encouraged to take personal risks. It was clear from the responses that this hard-won progress provided a significant boost in confidence which helped managers to face and deal with difficult situations more effectively, and to be more able to apply their skills and knowledge at these times:

“The biggest impact of the course was on my overall confidence level, which rose significantly. Previously I had been very nervous of treading into the unknown and getting out of my comfort zone. I was intolerant of criticism and a very poor listener. Now I openly invite criticism and do not find it so difficult to deal with - I don't take it personally and feel I can keep a more balanced perspective. The stress session on the course I also found very helpful.”

“The main impact on my personal approach to management has been on my confidence. The development part of the programme was very important. You learn that you have the resources yourself to try different things and think laterally. I learned to become more flexible and take more risks.”

“I feel less stressed than before because of the gain in confidence. My presentation skills have improved and meetings where I have to present do not fill me with so much dread now!”

“I don't think the programme changed my *ability* to remain objective as such, but it has certainly enhanced my confidence in my ability, which means that I use it more.”

“The biggest improvement I have felt is in my level of confidence. This has increased considerably. I respect my own views now - and as such it has allowed me to more fully respect other views. People are seeking out my opinion/advice more - especially the senior management team. I have now accepted a promotion that I declined 6 months ago. All in all I find it hard to believe that so much personal progress can be made in so short a time - but there it is!”

“I have more confidence to speak out and make decisions...but equally have more confidence to be more consultative. In fact, I pay more attention to people who work for me than I ever did. I understand what leading by example is about. I was never as aware as I am now that people watch you!”

“I have increased personal confidence in my own abilities. Coming back to a difficult boss and a demoralised work situation, I was able to defend apparent poor performance, get to the root causes, and demonstrate what my team was doing about it. I was in effect able to turn the situation around and take the initiative, with impressive results.”

“After returning from the programme I was given a new role with substantial responsibilities. There was a major reaction of surprise to my appointment which, prior to the course, would have frightened me to death. However, with what I learned on the course I was able to turn it to my benefit.”

7.1.5 *Meta-abilities: Personal Drive*

Personal drive refers to a manager's determination and drive toward action, and his willingness to take personal risks. It helps managers to be challenging of themselves and to be proactive. Managers who have well-developed personal drive are able and willing to use their personal impact actively and ambitiously to influence the way things happen in their organisations. They do not shrink from visibility, they can lay themselves on the line when appropriate, and they act as role models to others.

Personal drive is developed on the programmes in a number of ways. The design of the programmes are challenging in terms of both content and process. There is, of course, intellectual challenge; but managers are also given opportunities in working with each other to stretch themselves. Tutors play a key role in challenging delegates - through the use of insightful questions, pointed feedback, role modelling, and the examples of other delegates. Taking individual responsibility and making a valuable contribution are important themes which are highlighted again and again on the programmes. There is little tolerance for “coasting” or self-indulgence. Although this may sound harsh, it is an important way to help managers realise where they are setting their own boundaries, and come to realise the strength and impact that they are capable of.

81% of managers described changes equated with personal drive. The development of personal drive was evident in managers’ responses in two ways: in how they viewed their personal approach to management; and in what they were able to achieve in their organisations. The latter will be discussed more fully later. In terms of personal approach, managers felt more able to make a difference. Underpinned by the new sense of confidence that most spoke of, managers felt much more able to take control, be proactive, get outside of their comfort zone when needed, and be more challenging and visible to others:

“I have more personal impact than I thought I had, and I have become more comfortable with that fact. I actively seek to have the impact, whereas before I was afraid to take the risk. I feel I have become ‘bolder’ - more willing and able to push things through at key points.”

“I have become more demanding of my managers and less receptive to their willingness to ‘dump’ on me.”

I have become more aware and accepting of my position as a senior manager. I am a much more vociferous advocate of the importance of management behaviours, particularly at a senior level. I have taken more of a lead role in projects, volunteering rather than waiting to be asked.”

“I used to be essentially reactive; as a consequence of the programme I am becoming more proactive. I am more prepared to experiment now and certainly don’t rely in the way that I did on having lots of analytical backup before I do anything.”

“I am able to move out of the safety zone, and be more outward looking with a greater ability to influence others to perform better what I have delegated. Being a team leader I now act as a role model, and I am more able to ask others what they think about my performance.”

7.1.6 *Influencing Skills*

The specific skills are:

- communication skills (which essentially underpin all the skill groups)
- assertiveness and dealing with conflict
- persuading others and managing organisational politics
- developing others (delegating, coaching, counselling)

Improvements in communication skills relating to all four of these areas were widely reported by all managers. 92% reported changes in general communication skills; 86% improvements in assertiveness and dealing with conflict; 87% changes in persuading others and managing organisational politics; and 73% improvements in their skills of developing others. These can be linked to improvements in the meta-abilities just discussed. Improvements in cognitive skills helped managers to formulate their ideas and inputs more clearly, while being much more aware of how these related to others. Keener awareness of the interpersonal processes of communication and organisational situations helped to inform judgments about style, timing and emphasis. Improvements in emotional resilience and personal drive helped managers to be more assertive, more able to deal with conflict, and more objective yet empathic in coaching and counselling.

Influencing skills will be further evident in discussing at more length what managers have been able to do in their organisations. However, the following examples give a flavour of the improvements described by managers:

“My behaviour was being marginalised at meetings. I then decided to behave more strategically in meetings, I listened more intently, thought about my timing, and made my contributions more relevant to the thinking of others. This has definitely improved my performance.”

“I feel I have significantly improved my communication skills - I now work harder to get a clearer message across, and I make more of a point of sharing the thought processes and reasoning which are behind what I am saying.”

“I feel I listen a lot more now and give better feedback. I’ll also approach things more tactfully and ask myself, ‘Am I actually getting through?’ Now I have learned to ‘get through’ in a variety of different ways. It’s more about letting people get on with it - I used to bombard them, now I carry on listening and let them come to me when they need me.”

“When I have decided on a course of action, I am more assertive and less likely to back down in the face of objections (unless they add to the decision). I am now far more able to resist ‘manipulation’ now that I am no longer trying to accommodate everyone at my own expense.”

“Before the course I didn’t deal with conflict well. I often took things very personally. Since the course I can control that tendency far more. David (*the course tutor*) pushed me hard on it during the course and now I can say there is a definite change. I feel much better within myself. I can take more distance, sit back and look at things more objectively. I don’t get defensive, I can assert my ideas, and I can listen more readily to others’ points of view. It has helped me to use conflict productively.”

“Because of the course I now realise how crucial the informal network is. Before, I felt it was ‘all politics’ and tried to avoid it. Now I understand that if you want to introduce something, you’ve got to do the groundwork first. I am now much more aware of stakeholders and their motivations, and this has helped me to introduce potentially controversial projects as joint proposals with others through bringing them in earlier, discussing it and being open to their concerns and ideas.”

“I now feel I am much better at coaching my staff. I don’t bombard them like I used to, but allow them to get on with things and come to me when they need me. I listen much better, and I have been told they now find me more approachable and receptive to their problems.”

“On returning from Cranfield, I insisted that my number one report come in, sit down, and thought about what he was trying to achieve. He has now started delegating more and has worked hard at improving communication and skill levels in his team. *He appears to have gained as much from my visit to Cranfield as I did.*”

7.2 Action Plans: Focusing Development Over the Long Term

Every manager leaves the programme with a personal action plan, which outlines what he or she wants to accomplish, both personally and organisationally, as a result of the programme. The action plan provides a critical focus over the longer term for continuing personal progress and, of primary importance, being able to translate that progress into organisational changes.

87% of managers felt they had been between 70% and 100% successful in implementing the personal level of their action plan. This part of the action plan was seen as easier to accomplish in many ways because, although it may require perseverance and courage, it was within their own control. Although there were still difficulties of maintaining focus and discipline, and getting support, by and large managers felt successful at making the changes to their personal style and approach that they wanted to make.

One of the issues of greatest concern was getting and maintaining support, and getting feedback on performance. In some cases, individuals received a high level of support from colleagues or supervisors, for example:

“What has been key in helping is that some of my peers and my immediate supervisor have attended the same or similar programmes, and therefore understand the process I have been going through.”

“Helping factors have been: tremendous support and encouragement from my manager; increasing willingness of my team to challenge and discuss issues; a new MD who is open to my challenges regarding organisational structure and strategy.”

However, it was much more common for managers to feel very little support from their organisations, particularly from their own managers. As we had found when trying to involve sponsors, comments indicated that for most managers the norm is not to have developmental support from their managers, or enjoy much organisational interest in what they have done. It was also very difficult for people to obtain the quality of feedback that they would have liked. For example:

“The feedback from colleagues was very helpful even though they were unaware of my action plan. I would have liked to have been able to confide in someone who I worked closely with so I could have some support. Although my functional HR manager has been good at giving me positive feedback, my boss does not seem to be that interested and has made no comments.”

“I have had support from two colleagues in terms of them providing “a good example” and good feedback, although one of these is unaware of my action plan. The organisation (Personnel Department) has been very poor at doing anything to create follow-up to my attendance on the programme. It is sad that the organisation (apart from my own department) has not shown interest in the value I have gained from the programme. I have to conclude that it is still very much my own responsibility to develop myself.”

“Implementation of my action plan is ongoing. However, the ability to obtain more relevant feedback has been more difficult than anticipated.”

“The attitude of my superiors has made implementation of my action plan more difficult. The success I have achieved has been due to my go-ahead, self-driven approach. Although I have been assigned a mentor, he has no understanding of or interest in the development process. It is a waste of time for both of us.”

A very clear message coming across was that individuals had to take the responsibility themselves for achieving their action plan goals and could expect little organisational support. Factors for success, therefore, largely consisted of personal factors such as personal confidence, self-discipline, personal commitment, stepping back and planning, using increased awareness effectively to understand one’s impact, and achieving success in making changes.

Most managers found implementing the organisational level of their action plan more difficult, although many also acknowledged that their goals were very ambitious. 73% of managers indicated between 70-100% success; and 17% indicated between 50-70% success. Organisational factors played a key role in determining success, not surprisingly. Demands of workload and operational issues were a major hindering factor, as were attitudes of senior managers, lack of organisational commitment, and organisational or job changes. Conversely, changes were also seen by many as a beneficial factor; they provided opportunities to drive through specific changes or to increase visibility and influence. Some comments include:

“In terms of the organisation, hindrance is easier to describe than help. The organisation, by nature, is difficult to change as it is very unresponsive to change, being a very traditional merchant bank.”

“Organisational barriers, and the lack of commitment and continuity from other Directors have been a major problem.”

“The time to implement changes and put into practice new skills is very limited in such a busy organisation.”

“A change of role and a new boss provided the opportunity to implement my ideas. I now have more responsibility and visibility - this has helped in achieving my action plan goals.”

A small percentage of managers had little success with their action plans, on both personal and organisational levels. At the personal level, 7% felt they had achieved between 50-70% success; and 6% felt they had achieved less than 50% success with their action plan. This was due to several reasons:

- *Personal choice about development:* Maintaining the momentum of a personal development process requires perseverance. For some managers, the effort was too great, or they saw the development step as too daunting. For others, it was too easy to revert back to a formula or approach which in their eyes was responsible for their success to date. Despite gaining an understanding of the limitations of their style, once back in the workplace it was often more than they wanted to do to risk changing. The discomfiture of following through with the change was too great.

- *Low level of organisational support:* As described earlier, on average organisational support was not very high for managers returning from the programmes. While some managers responded to this by persevering at any rate, finding other support mechanisms, and growing stronger through the experience, others struggled to maintain their focus. Lack of interest from line managers or senior managers was often cited as a reason for losing momentum and motivation.
- *Distractions:* Workload demands, job changes, mergers or take-overs and general organisational changes were all cited as factors which hindered the implementation of action plans. While for some managers, these factors represented opportunities to be used in their development, for those who had less success these things distracted them, causing them to lose sight of their development goals.

At the organisational level, 10% of managers felt they had achieved a success rate of less than 50%. This is due, in part, to the level of ambition demonstrated in the goals they set for themselves, as well as the factors outlined above. However, one finding that was very clear is that those managers who had difficulty implementing their personal goals also had little success in achieving their organisational goals. At the same time, many of those managers who were successful at the organisational level emphasised successes in making personal changes as essential to achieving their organisational goals. This finding is significant in that it reinforces the crucial relationship between development at the individual level and successful organisational impact.

7.3 The Impact of Individuals on Their Organisations

Through the development of individuals, the programmes aim to contribute significantly to the development of client organisations. This is done through the impact that these individuals are able to have on their organisations following attendance on the programmes, due to the development of the six dimensions just described. The ways in which individuals then impact on their organisations are through: *improving personal managerial practice, extending their personal sphere of influence, providing a critical perspective, and changing the organisation..*

7.3.1 Organisational Impact: Improving Personal Managerial Practice

Due to improvements in the individual development dimensions outlined in the preceding section, managers felt able to make important changes to their own managerial approach. 93% of managers described improvements in their personal approach to management. In many instances, this consisted of a combination of managing their time better, delegating more effectively, and empowering their own teams or staff:

“I have delegated and coached team members and therefore become detached from day to day issues which are dealt with by my team without reference back to me. They in turn feel valued, trusted and have enhanced performance but enjoy their work much more also. I am quite prepared to let my team members take a leading role and not only influence but make key

decisions. We meet as a team frequently to discuss our operating relationships and jointly criticise what we do badly but put in place actions for improvements. Equally we celebrate when we do well!"

"I have reduced my project work to approximately 50% of my time, giving more time for management; I have delegated certain routine management functions giving more time for forward planning; I am encouraging longer term business planning; and I make better use of my secretary and the senior staff in my team."

"I can now contribute to cross-functional meetings and projects; I have restructured my own area to create a more balanced team; I delegate more and more effectively, and I'm willing to give my team more responsibility. The result is a more effective team who value their own responsibility."

"I have more involvement with my work. I feel I am able to direct my staff's activity to a more productive result. I am better able to manage staff performance through an objective approach. I am better able to explain how and why things need to be done a certain way."

For many managers, personal improvement was strongly linked to improvements in their relationships with their boss or other important colleagues. These improvements resulted from delegates targeting these relationships in their action plan and outlining specific actions they were going to take to improve them:

"Upon returning from the programme I had a frank exchange with my boss, and now have a 100% improved relationship based on more openness and information flow. I have produced and had accepted a strategic plan for each of the areas under my responsibility. I have redefined responsibilities/accountabilities of an able but difficult subordinate. This working relationship has also improved 100%. I have also taken time to show a general interest in non-work issues and allowed more levity!"

"My staff have noticed changes - I am much clearer and not so interested in petty issues. I am able to cope better with my seniors and have tried to react more positively to criticism, which has led to much better working relationships."

"I have improved relationships with the primary workforce even though I have taken a stronger stance on issues. This has mainly been achieved by spending significantly more time in the plant talking to people. A less structured approach to problems has led to better and more effective solutions being delivered and greater buy-in from my team.."

"I have without doubt improved 100% in my ability to discuss and understand my staff's perspective and as a result of this they have commented that they find me far more approachable. I also feel far more confident in my own abilities, which has prompted both my boss and my colleagues to say that they have noticed a change in me, which has contributed to better working relationships."

7.3.2 *Organisational Impact: Extending Personal Influence*

One of the themes of the programmes is helping managers to think about how they can extend their personal sphere of influence within their organisation. This can include understanding organisational politics, stakeholder analysis, networking, raising one's profile, extending one's knowledge base and

building key relationships. It requires managers to draw on their development across all the dimensions previously discussed - in fact, it demonstrates the effective use of meta-abilities.

83% of managers commented on having extended their personal sphere of influence. This could involve raising their profile and visibility, taking a lead in important organisational initiatives, creating wider discussion forums, and influencing key groups or individuals outside of their own department:

“The programme has had a high impact on what I have been able to do in the organisation. Some examples are:

- ~ I have arranged fortnightly departmental meetings which have been very well received as a forum for business and strategy discussions;
- ~ I am increasingly being asked to comment on issues of a company-wide nature and my comments/advice are well received;
- ~ I took a lead role in a major IR dispute and felt able to do this powerfully and sensitively and have been commended on this by my peers and by the Board;
- ~ My boss had named me as her successor.”

“Attendance on the programme gave me some personal credibility and I have used this to gain an understanding of areas previously not understood, and to influence more in these areas.”

“I have increased success in influencing among my peer group - in my recent performance review my boss commented that peers saw me as a leader and looked to me for input and direction. I have been asked to contribute to a number of major company initiatives, e.g. customer service initiative. I have been commended personally by my Executive Director for a report produced for the Executive Board and accepted by them. I am now looking to extend the level of influence I have with my peers to Divisional Director level, in order to be better able to drive real change through the organisation.”

“My increased level of self-confidence has allowed me to ‘participate more’ with senior and middle management. I have been able to use positive influence to help our cultural change programmes - and work on a one-to-one basis with senior management. In the Operations Committee I have been told I add a dimension outside of my functional HR remit - this is very encouraging.”

“The programme has definitely impacted my ability to influence effectively. I have been able to be much more compelling in influencing the Senior Group of the need for change. I planned out my approach and went in with a clear strategy.”

7.3.3 *Organisational Impact: Providing a Critical Perspective*

The third area in which the programmes specifically aim to help managers contribute to their organisations is through *providing a critical perspective*. We feel this is of increasing importance in the current and future business environment. In order to ensure the quality of their own development, organisations need individuals who are willing and able to move outside of the current way of doing things and the assumptions upon which that is based; who can grasp the bigger picture, look for new angles, and challenge the status quo. They also need individuals who can ‘see through’ much of what goes on in organisational life which clouds important issues or distracts important resources and energy. Managers are in fact driven by most of the organisational realities around them to only focus on those things that will contribute directly to performance, such as the achievement of targets, or the winning of business. The role of critical thought is rarely recognised,

much less valued. Individuals who ask the awkward questions, make explicit hidden processes or agendas, or criticise the current approach can be seen as mavericks.

However, the business world is facing phenomena it has never faced before, at an unparalleled rate of change. Just as with products, the life cycles of organisational approaches are shortening. Competitive advantages are becoming less and less sustainable over the long term. Organisations need continually to question their ways of doing things. Developing managers who are comfortable with and capable of providing a critical perspective is crucial.

This critical perspective is fostered on the programme largely through the role of the tutors, who demonstrate awareness and insight which is often very striking to delegates; and who encourage critical thought through the use of questioning. Delegates practice taking a more critical approach in their discussions, group work, and personal reflections.

63% of managers described changes related to developing a critical perspective. These consisted of being more challenging, having higher expectations of colleagues, being more discerning and being willing to be controversial:

“My relationship with my HR peers has changed - I am more challenging now. Before the programme I would usually just go along with them and allow them to take the lead.”

“I am less in awe of certain business colleagues and have refused to drop a particularly controversial issue from my agenda - a requirement to address the organisational and business process implications of a specific product strategy.”

“Mainly I am more focused on important issues - I used to try to have a go at most things. I am more critical. I am looking at improving standards throughout the company - there are too many things going on.”

“I have gained an appreciation that things are not always as they may at first appear. Different people/functions all have their own agendas and often these conflict with your own. By understanding these agendas it is often possible to find mutually successful outcomes - win win solutions.”

“I have developed a better understanding of what I can only describe as ‘organisational dynamics’, which influence one’s ability to ‘operate’ at any level. I am more committed to the battle for resources - and more aware of the forces involved.”

“I have been noticeably outspoken in driving change through the business. In recent steering committee meetings I have had the courage to openly disagree with senior management when convinced of my team’s position.”

7.3.4 Organisational Impact: Creating Change

Individuals who have developed in the ways we describe are crucial to changing their organisations. The development process they have experienced, often with little or no support from their organisations, provides a personal strength and level of influence which can be used to great effect in accomplishing organisational changes.

71% of managers described outcomes which exceeded the areas of personal improvement described above, and consisted of a wider impact on the organisation. The scale of these changes varied from the implementation of specific ideas or projects (inside their department or across functions) to fundamental changes in the focus of business, organisational structure and organisational culture.

Two key themes running through the responses are the application of strategic thinking, and the general improvement of communication and relationships across the organisation. The wider perspective gained on the programmes helped managers to view problems and issues from an organisational viewpoint.

Examples of specific projects, ideas or decisions which resulted from the programme are:

“The programme has definitely helped me have a greater impact back at work. A CD-ROM project is now under development because I argued the importance of electronic publishing for some of our products. New procedures in production of the Basin Analysis Group have resulted from my analysis - lowering costs and leading to fully digital products in the future.”

“Because of the programme, I have been able to successfully implement the Swiss Reinsurance Asian Trainee programme and the blending of traditional/non-traditional reinsurance products to gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace.”

“The Product Support Operation is something I have been able to move forward, and it is breaking new ground. It was an idea I had had for some time, but the course helped me to realise how to push it on and get organisational support.”

“One of the outcomes of my action plan was the timely completion of one of our engine lines through effective project management in 1996, for which I have been responsible. This will enable the plant to commence its £360 million investment on time.”

“As a result of the programme and my new promotion, I was in charge of managing the release of a major computer system, in which the software alone was worth over £8 million to the company. We achieved the project on time and on budget - it was the first time we achieved both of these things.”

“One of my action points from the programme related to the management of information systems. I and my team have been able to develop computer systems to extract valuable marketing data and establish a database; and I have been able to re-organise my area of the business in order to use the information appropriately.”

Many examples related to what managers had been able to do in their own teams or departments, such as:

“Since the programme, I have tried to increase strategic awareness in my team. This has helped significantly and the results have improved. We have our goals set way out from when we used to - it used to be all about the next deal. Now we think more long term. There have been a number of projects that I have started that have been rolled out. For example, the BPR project that we have done, I piloted in my area. I also started the move to a culture of continuous improvement.”

“The programme gave me lots of ideas and the confidence to implement them in my department. Communication has been a big thing - so I have made some improvements. For example we now have our PCs networked, with internal mail, voicemail messages and all diaries on computer. Also we are starting to measure and trace our building maintenance efficiency on PC.

I’ve also started “staff time” on a Monday afternoon to help sort problems out. It gives me an open door and stops me being interrupted all the time in the week. I’ve managed to get lots of personal issues sorted out. I also now circulate a quarterly report to all Heads of Departments so that they know what is going on in other parts of the Estate. I have worked hard to integrate what we do with other areas.

The management restructuring has been important. Both the Assistant Agent and I are ‘flat out’ with just keeping our heads above water in day to day management. We need more time for longer term thinking. I have been successful in persuading my boss to have a new property manager. As a direct result of my Cranfield experience we have looked in detail at every part of the Estate and drawn up a strategy document. Analysis has helped improve maintenance, staff morale, and financial returns.”

One of the managers, a Finance Director in a retail organisation, faxed a ‘mini-case study’ to us in lieu of a telephone interview:

Team Working Within Accounts Department - 60 People

This was a typical Accounts Department, with an autocratic style of management, with information compartmentalised and the attitude that information was power and that the more you keep to yourself then the less likely you were to be fired.

On return from Cranfield, I mandated that the department had to change and that we would be moving to a more open style of management. This caused a fair degree of “suppressed” panic in the senior people.

The specific actions taken were:

- The two senior people devolved tasks down the line.
- They were both sent on week long team management development courses.
- An “open” day was held for the department facilitated by the HR department, where people were encouraged to speak their mind about the workings of the department.

The outcome has been:

- Weekly team meetings are held to discuss issues.
- The teams now understand the department priorities and are focused on improving cash resources by speedier clearing of credit claims on suppliers.
- They are now making suggestions on how to improve the workings of the department and the division.
- Work processes and problems with the computer system have been identified by the teams, with suggestions on how to fix (one system has been running for eight years and no one had thought to point out how much time it wasted due to poor screen handling techniques).
- New employees are picked by the team. To replace our Financial Accountant, the three candidates had to spend time in the department, going around the staff and discussing the company/specific tasks. The staff’s recommendations on which person to recruit were implemented.

One of the side effects of the process has been that the confidence level within the department has risen considerably. The staff from junior to Chief Accountant seem to have recognised their worth and are less fearful about the “big bad world out there”. (If they all start to leave for better jobs I may have to reverse the process!)

Apart from initiating the process, I have had little to do with the day to day implementation. The teams have simply got on with it and seem to be building on the initial success.

Other examples demonstrate the application of strategic thinking and improved organisational focus:

“The thinking and tools used on the programme helped me to decide to exit some bad business (approximately 15% of my turnover). This has created opportunities for my team to utilise capacity for more profitable work. Future strategic projects have been put in place with the opportunity to reshape my business completely in 5 years to double turnover and return on sales. Action plans are in place and significant progress made in a short period of time.”

“The strategic thinking and marketing that I did on the programme has led to a refocussing of the business. I am much more receptive to customer needs. An understanding of marketing concepts and especially the impact of competition in the beer market in the country has led to a re-appraisal of our service level to our customers. We are re-engineering our sales systems to be more responsive to customer needs, customer image of the company and service level in terms of order processing, quality and speed. The response of our customers has been positive and our employees are realising a more satisfying relationship with the customers.”

“I have been able to restructure my group effectively. The structure is more customer-focused and has encouraged communication between groups.”

There are examples of involving other groups or departments across the organisation in solving problems, improving pan-organisational communication, and making better use of organisational resources.:

“We took ideas from Cliff’s book (*the strategy text on the course*), but approached it from the standpoint of how can we compete with other departments? For example there was a hotline group set up which operated in a rather grey area with ourselves. I said that we ought to be able to work more collaboratively. We put all the factors together and got the whole picture. I realised that we have a lot of engineering resource here. I presented this to senior management, that we needed to sell ourselves more and be proactive about supporting the strategy. As part of this I said that the engineering resources could be better used. That got their attention and got them thinking about the group and me positively. In fact they were very keen - it seemed to bring out their own needs and concerns. We have now set up the Engineering Council Group, of which I am a member, to manage these resources better (one in six of the staff here is an engineer).”

“The programme has had a big impact on what I have been able to do inside the organisation. I make better decisions now, and am more aware of the relationship of my business to the Group. I have developed personal networks - before I didn’t have much of a profile. Our business was looked at a bit suspiciously. I now try to identify win-win situations. The strong culture of the Group has affiliation benefits. Greater interaction has helped the business overall. For example, one company was having difficulty acquiring sites. We sat down with them and worked out a financial framework that would give them an acceptable position for the Group and allowed them to have an advantage in the market. Without doing that, they wouldn’t have

been able to achieve that advantage.”

“As a result of the programme and my action plan, I have lead an initiative to change and standardise our business planning process. The business planning process we designed was devolved down to all the Directorates, and it was widely recognised that the whole process worked much better this year. The format has become more meaningful, is more enthusiastically used. We spend much less time in putting together and considering business plans, yet the quality is better.”

Many managers described taking part in or leading wider organisational change initiatives as a result of attending the programme. These are examples of effecting the style, culture and/or overall focus of the organisation:

“Apart from the review of IS competencies which was part of my Action Plan, I have instigated or become involved in a number of other significant change initiatives, e.g. a review of models of IS management which is having organisational impacts; the Customer Service Initiative and business process modelling which has resulted from this. The course helped me to realise that I can take a lead role in such change initiatives.”

“Subsequent to my attendance on the programme, I was promoted to MD, and changing the culture and style of the company has been my main project. As a result of the programme I feel I have a much heightened awareness of interaction around me, and of the impact that I can have. I have been more active in using images and symbolism in what I am trying to do. One way I did this was to put forward a case at group level for a major training initiative. The symbolism of this was strong as a way to demonstrate valuing staff, building trust, and modelling the new culture based on a flatter organisation. Another example was to put forward a case at group level for improved communications, which was implemented in the form of a director’s conference which brought together 80 senior managers from across the group in a relaxed forum where we could discuss strategy. It was very well received and conveyed a strong message of encouraging dialogue between levels.

“Since the programme my involvement in divisional initiatives has become more active, more open, easier and of a higher quality. I have participated in a project to gain ISO 9000 approval, and in a BPR initiative. I reorganised the division and created one group dedicated to improving both information systems and quality. I feel I have been successful at creating a subculture of autonomy and responsibility in my division. I have taken a development approach, improving HR practices and increasing the training budget. I have been successful in maintaining a mental attitude myself and fostering it in others which makes coping with change easier - including tolerating mistakes and encouraging the learning and experimentation process. I have also found a support network with other managers in the company who have attended Cranfield programmes. My relations with them have become more supportive and tolerant, with much more open conversations and a higher level of trust. I have continued to use Cranfield for the development of other staff in order to maintain the quality and continuity of approach.”

“I have been very active in driving forward a strategic project which has fundamental implications for the way that we do business. As a result of its implementation, our main operational focus will change to helping our customers manage their workload in order to maximise the use of the legal allocation of noise levels to the airport while coping with large and growing volumes of traffic. I have key responsibility for the process of educating our departments about the issue, and in creating a common vision for the future of the airport. It is my strong belief that the programme, as a result of its strengths and my personal ambition to learn from it, has contributed significantly to the success of my department in managing the

change initiative. We have managed to turn the threat of capacity constraints at Schipol around and make it an organisational success, both for ourselves and the other stakeholders.”

In summary, we found that individuals had immense impact on their organisations. They were able to establish ‘pockets of good practice’ within their organisations; to initiate and lead projects which were responsible for improving organisational performance and achieving more strategically beneficial positioning; and to be instrumental in the success of major cultural and strategic change initiatives. Moreover, it is clear that the quality of individual performance in this regard is linked by delegates time and time again to the development of meta-abilities, which underpin their confidence, flexibility, perseverance, open-mindedness, and ability to challenge the organisation; in short - their personal power.

8. Conclusion

We have set out the case here for dismantling organisation development as a top down, corporate wide endeavour. We have argued the case vigorously, and make no apologies for that. It seems to us that so much experience of organisational life is anything but corporately rational - organisational forms are evolving increasingly towards decentralised, business unit political arenas; managers are actively encouraged to create culture pockets within their spheres of influence; and organisational boundaries themselves are becoming blurred by customer - supplier alliances. All of this is driven by one simple rationale - the survival imperative - and organisational survival is the rationale for all interventions. So if a form of intervention itself is found wanting it seems to us that strong statements become necessary to redress this shortfall.

The alternative is to reconstitute organisational development, not abandon it. We have argued that if emerging organisational forms are creating a fundamental shift in emphasis towards the contribution of individuals, above all individual managers, then that must be recognised for interventions to be worthwhile. The starting point for organisational development becomes individual development. However, this may be a difficult shift of viewpoint to make, not just because of its inherent 'anti corporatism', but also because much that falls within the framework of individual (management) development is best described as training for knowledge and skills.

We have argued here that the key factor in individual development as organisational development is the development of meta-abilities: underlying, learned abilities which underpin the use of other managerial knowledge and skills. These meta-abilities are *cognitive skills*, *emotional resilience*, *self-knowledge* and *personal drive*. By definition, these elements cannot be developed through the acquisition of new knowledge and skills; they develop through a process of personal transition which involves gaining self-insights and unlearning old habits in the face of new challenges.

This study has investigated the development of meta-abilities through the Cranfield Management Development Programmes, and sought evidence of organisational development as an outcome of the development process.

It is clear from the study that the programmes can and do develop managers' meta-abilities. Over 80% of managers described changes in one or more of the four meta-abilities. Developments in *cognitive abilities*, reported by 88% of managers, were broadly spread between the six subsets of cognitive complexity, cognitive flexibility, visionary ability, awareness and clarity.

Developments in these areas resulted in managers being much more sophisticated and flexible in their approach. They valued multiple, and even conflicting, perspectives, and were more able to shift appropriately between perspectives themselves. This helped them in team management, decision-making, and gaining commitment from individuals with diverse interests. They were better able to see and take into account the complexities of organisational life. They reported being able to think more clearly, and more strategically, which allowed them to focus their energies and those of others more effectively. A high percentage of managers described being much more aware of their impact and of the dynamics of situations, which improved their judgement in making choices about how to manage those situations.

Increases in *self-knowledge* were described by 88% of managers in the study. This knowledge was important in helping individuals to understand ways in which they were limiting or undermining their own effectiveness. It helped them distinguish between their own needs and the needs of a given situation or other people, thereby clarifying alternative approaches and improving their flexibility. Together with the awareness of impact described above, self-knowledge helped managers remain effective under pressure, and continue to critically examine their own performance back at the workplace.

Developing *emotional resilience* was described as an outcome of the programmes by 84% of managers. This included improving self-discipline, managing emotions appropriately, building resilience and becoming more confident. Changes in these areas led to managers feeling more balanced, developing 'gravitas', and feeling more 'competent and influential'. Developing *personal drive* was reported by 81% of managers in the study. As a result, individuals felt more able to be proactive, to take the initiative even when it required taking personal risks, to be more visible, and to be more challenging of their staff, colleagues or bosses.

The second key finding of the study is that, once development has been initiated, individual delegates influence their organisations in significant ways. Initially, the development of meta-abilities results in improved personal influencing skills. Over 90% of managers reported developing their general communication skills. Between 70% and 90% of participants described improvements in assertiveness and dealing with conflict, persuasion and managing politics, and developing others.

However, the development of meta-abilities does more than just improve skills. It contributes in important ways to managers being more astute and insightful, able to make better judgements and to see more alternative actions. As such, they are better equipped to navigate dynamic organisational environments and influence effectively within them.

One way in which individuals influenced their organisations was through improving their own *personal practice* as managers. This was described by 93% of managers in the study. They reported being able to delegate, empower their staff, contribute to cross-functional decisions and improve important working relationships.

The second sense in which individuals had an important impact on their organisations was through *extending their personal sphere of influence*. This was reported by 83% of participants. These managers were successful in raising their profiles and initiating ideas which involved others outside of their department. They reported being more able to influence key people across the organisation. As managers increased their influence, they effectively served as role models to others and so began to influence the wider organisational culture.

Thirdly, managers contributed to organisational direction through *providing a critical perspective*. 63% of managers described being more challenging of their organisations, having higher expectations of colleagues and being more discerning. Such a perspective acts as a spur to organisational development - questioning implicit assumptions, exploring new possibilities, and directing energies toward higher standards.

Lastly, managers *changed their organisations*. As a result of the Cranfield programmes, 71% of managers described being able to make specific changes to their organisations. These changes were the result of individual initiative and action - for example, the creation of new products, the introduction of new processes, the better use of information systems, improvements to organisational structure and focus, and the achievement of higher standards of service. Impact on the organisation also consisted of significantly improving the focus and effectiveness of the individual's own team or department, reorganising the business and aligning it more closely to the customer, and involving other functions and departments in the solving of pan-organisational problems. Managers felt that the initiatives they implemented contributed to influencing and changing the culture, style and direction of their organisations. The nature of these changes was that they were individually driven, at times fragmented actions, which succeeded in creating subcultures, demonstrating new approaches, and influencing attitudes within the organisation. They were underpinned, not by corporate control or widespread campaigns, but by an understanding of the complexity and political nature of the organisational influencing process. Above all, they were driven by individual belief, commitment, enthusiasm and perseverance.

The nature of these changes strongly emphasises the third key finding of the study related to individuals being able to implement change in their organisations: **managers do it on their own.**

The evidence indicates overwhelmingly that managers get very little developmental support from their organisations. This idea is strongly reinforced by two findings of the study. The first is that the experience of getting high quality data from sponsors was an extremely difficult one. There was in many cases no clear sponsor, that is, someone taking developmental responsibility for a delegate. Where there were designated sponsors, their interest varied, they were not in a position to have a clear view, the relationship with the delegate was not a good one, or there was no continuity of relationship over time. The second finding was that managers described taking sole responsibility for the implementation of their action plans at both the personal and organisational levels. Taking action, in many cases, involved overcoming the resistance of bosses and colleagues. Delegates felt little support and found it difficult to get valuable and meaningful feedback about what they were trying to do. Their comments echoed our own experience - sponsor interest varied or was non-existent, developmental relationships were rare. Factors for success were personal ones: commitment, perseverance, awareness and discipline.

Moreover, success at the personal level - the development of individual meta-abilities - was inextricably linked to success in changing the organisation. This relationship was cited invariably by managers themselves in describing their success. Those who did not succeed in having the desired impact on their organisations also struggled with their individual development. It would appear that the very process of having to take responsibility and persevere in one's own development in an environment full of distractions and resistance contributes significantly to success in the pursuit of organisational change.

What are the implications of these findings? First and foremost, organisational development is about the creation of pockets of good practice. The findings of the study reflect the emergence of organisational forms in which the responsibility and actions of individuals are becoming primary.

This trend should, in any case, be calling into question 'corporately driven' views of organisational development and draw us toward the more dynamic and less homogeneous 'pockets of good practice' model.

Secondly, pockets of good practice are established through the commitment and capabilities of individuals and are therefore founded on the growth of individual meta-abilities. These meta-abilities are difficult to develop within the work environment. Despite a wealth of opportunities, the challenging role of facilitating this development is rarely provided in work situations. Our findings indicate that public programmes such as the Cranfield Management Development Programmes have a much more important role than they have been credited with historically. They are capable of providing a unique environment in which individual development, as organisational development, can be the focus. Not all public programmes do this, and the extent to which they add value should be judged by the successful development of individual meta-abilities. Sponsoring organisations would help themselves enormously in the value adding process by careful selection of attendees on such programmes. Frequently they do not, and that must be taken as further evidence of the same issue - the lack of understanding of how individual development can constitute the core of an organisation development strategy.

With this in mind we would end on a note which is paradoxically deeply pessimistic and highly optimistic. A lack of understanding of the power of individual development must in part explain the apparent lack of value placed on it. Much to the incomprehension of management there is always a sizeable number of individuals in many organisations who are of the view that 'people do not matter'. They are referring not to their own beliefs, but those of management. 'People are our most valuable resource' is a hollow statement to them - a managerial myth. It must follow that any organisation which can find the time, money and above all managerial commitment and energy, to make individual development central to its aims, will have huge advantage. The development of meta-abilities would be seen to contribute directly to the organisation, its 'bottom line', its continued existence. And the vibrance of organisational experience, normally reserved for limited periods of intense growth in the organisational lifecycle, might become a more enduring feature of day to day work.

APPENDIX A: Questionnaire Used in the Research

Identical questionnaires were used for all four programmes. The sample below comes from the Senior Manager's Programme. There was also a pre-programme questionnaire used in which delegates were asked to rate themselves in areas of skills and knowledge and talk about what they wanted to gain from the programme. This was solely used as a reference point for the post-programme questionnaire and interviews. As the relevant parts of the pre-programme questionnaire are identical to the post-programme in format, it is not included here.

POST-PROGRAMME QUESTIONNAIRE

Senior Managers Programme: 17 - 29 June 1996

Name:

Organisation:

This questionnaire is designed to help you describe the impact that attendance on the Senior Managers Programme (SMP) has had on you and your organisation. In some cases, you will be referred back to the pre-programme questionnaire you filled out, and asked to comment on any changes which may have resulted. We recognise that these measurements are not absolute by any means. They are designed to serve as a benchmark to you in making judgements about your own performance. It is your judgement that we are interested in.

- Before coming onto the programme, you rated your level of knowledge in the following business areas. Can you please rate yourself again according to your current level of knowledge, based on what you learned on the programme as well as any further learning which has been stimulated by interest or understanding gained on the programme. Please use the back of this sheet to comment on any changes you feel have taken place:

	Limited	Fair	Satisfactory	Excellent
Business Strategy	1	2	3	4
Finance/Accounting	1	2	3	4
Operations Management	1	2	3	4

Marketing	1	2	3	4
Information Systems	1	2	3	4
Human Resource Management	1	2	3	4
Organisational Change	1	2	3	4
Team Management	1	2	3	4

- 2. Similarly, you rated your skill level in the following areas prior to attendance on the programme. Can you please rate yourself again, taking into account what you learned on the programme and your development back at work as a result of the programme. Again, please use the back of this sheet to comment on any changes:**

	Limited	Fair	Satisfactory	Excellent
Delegating	1	2	3	4
Coaching	1	2	3	4
Dealing with Conflict	1	2	3	4
Influencing	1	2	3	4
Seeing problems from a range of perspectives	1	2	3	4
Analysing information	1	2	3	4
Communicating information to others	1	2	3	4
Problem solving with others	1	2	3	4
Sifting and prioritising relevant information	1	2	3	4
Decision-making	1	2	3	4

Being able to grasp complex problems	1	2	3	4
Organising information appropriately	1	2	3	4
Managing your time	1	2	3	4
Being able to shift your own perspective	1	2	3	4
Leading a team	1	2	3	4

3. Below is a series of statements. Please rate the extent that you feel they apply to you, according to the following scale:

- a) the statement is *definitely not true* of you; in other words you *never behave or feel* the way indicated by the statement.
- b) the statement is *sometimes true* of you; in other words you *sometimes behave or feel* the way indicated by the statement.
- c) the statement is *generally true* of you; in other words you *quite often behave or feel* the way indicated by the statement.
- d) the statement is *always, or very nearly always*, true of you; in other words you *usually or always behave or feel* the way indicated by the statement.

___ I am better at implementing well-trying solutions than experimenting with new ones.

___ My medium- and long-term ambitions are not clear.

___ If I feel uncomfortable in a meeting I will tend not to voice my opinion, even if I feel I have an important point.

___ I find it difficult to persevere when things aren't going well.

___ I need to balance initiative with caution.

___ I actively seek to behave as a role model to my staff and colleagues.

___ When working with others, I take responsibility for what should happen, even if it is not part of my own area of activity.

___ I tend to be reactive rather than proactive.

___ I am the kind of person who takes a high level of personal responsibility for my actions in everything I do.

___ I prefer to follow established plans and procedures rather than rely on my own initiative.

In what way (if any) has attendance on the programme had an impact on the way you respond to these statements? (Please comment on individual statements, if appropriate).

4. Which of these statements best describes your own organisational viewpoint since attending the programme?

- My focus is both on operations and issues within my own organisation and the external influences which are important in my business (i.e. markets, competitors, legislation, economic trends, etc.).
- I am very aware of other functions and departments as well as my own and I tend to view problems from an organisation-wide perspective.
- My attention is mostly directed toward my own department or function and the problems or issues which arise within it.

In what way (if any) has your perspective changed as a result of your attendance on the programme? (Continue on the back if needed)

5. Has attendance on the programme had any impact on your ability to remain objective and self-disciplined even under high levels of pressure? If so, please describe.

6. What impact has attendance on the programme had on your personal approach to management?

7. Looking back over the last six months, what overall impact do you feel attendance on the programme has had on your personal effectiveness as a manager?

- No impact
- Marginal impact
- Medium impact
- High impact

Can you describe any improvements you have experienced, drawing on work examples and feedback from your boss, colleagues and staff?

8. To what extent do you feel you have been able to implement your action plan successfully?

What factors (personal and organisation) have been key in helping or hindering the implementation of the plan?

9. In your view, what impact have you been able to have on your organisation as a result of your attendance on the programme? (Please use specific examples, or refer to above examples).
10. From your organisation's point of view, what value has been gained to justify your attendance on the programme?

Thank you very much for taking the time to respond. Please return the questionnaire in the pre-paid envelope provided. Alternatively, if you would prefer to express your responses verbally, please contact Penny Harvey or Sally Atkinson on (01234) 751122.

APPENDIX B**LIST OF ORGANISATIONS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME:**

3M Healthcare Ltd
ABB Vecto Gray UK Ltd
Addenbrookes NHS Trust
ADM1 Consultancy
Akwa Ibom State Water Corporation
Amsterdam Schiphol Airport
Artex Ltd
Aspect IMTC Room 201
Aurora Forgings Ltd
BAA PLC
Bank of Ireland Corporate Banking
Bank of Ireland International Finance Ltd
Barbados Agricultural Management Co Ltd
Barclays Bank Plc
Baxter Healthcare SA
Bayer Diagnostics Manufacturing Ltd
Beneficial Bank PLC
Berger Paints Jamaica Ltd
Berger Paints Trinidad Ltd
Bond Helicopters Ltd
Booker Tate Ltd
British Steel Engineering
British Telecom
BT
Cable & Wireless PLC
Carlsberg-Tetley Brewing Ltd
Cellular Communications Network (M)
Chevron UK Ltd
CMC Consultants Ltd
Compair Reavell Ltd
Courage West
Cranfield Conference Centre Ltd
Cranfield School of Management
Cranfield University

CSO Valuations AG

CTC Eagle Star Insurance Company Ltd

Dallas Systems PLC

Datapaq Ltd

De Beers Industrial Diamond Division (Pty) Ltd

Department of Defence Industry

Department of Petroleum Resources

Department of Petroleum Resources Personnel

DHL International Kenya Ltd

Disctronics Manufacturing (UK) Ltd

Don & Low Ltd

Dunn and Bradstreet Ltd

Eagle Star Life Assurance Co Ltd

Eastern Electricity

Ecophon Pilkington Ltd

Education Review Office

Electricity Supply Board

Elf Petroleum Nigeria Ltd

Employers Reassurance International Ltd

Eveready Batteries Ltd

Federal Ministry of Petroleum

Federation of Family Planning Associations

Fenchurch International

Fenchurch PLC

Firmenich SA

First Bank of Nigeria PLC

Ford Motor Co Ltd

Greenham Construction Materials Ltd

Greenham Paving

Greenham Trading Ltd

Guinness Brewing Worldwide Ltd

Hampstead & Highgate Express

Hero Cycles Ltd

Home Counties Newspapers

Howegarden

Hoya Lens UK Ltd

Hunting Aviation Ltd

I.M. Properties PLC

ICL

ICL Enterprises

IM Properties PLC

IMI Yorkshire Fittings

Institute for International Research Holdings Ltd

Insurance Corporation of Barbados
Intel Corporation Iberia
Intermortgage
International Factors Ltd
John Heathcoat & Co Ltd
John Menzies (UK) Ltd
Kenya Breweries Ltd
Kleinwort Benson Investment Management Ltd
Korea Electronic Power Corporation
KPN-Vastgoed
Kvaerner John Brown
Life & Pensions Assurance Co
Lloyds Bank PLC
Lloyds Bowmaker Finance Group
Lloyds of London
Lloyds TSB
Lombard Business Equipment Leasing
Lucent Technologies Wireless Ltd
Lydmet Ltd
Magnox Electric
Manor Bakeries Ltd
Marbo Ltd
Marine Harvest McConnell Chile
Matthew Gloag & Son Ltd
MD Foods
Merita Bank Ltd
Miles Ltd
Ministry of Finance of Brunei
ML Electro Optics Ltd
Mobil Oil Corporation
Mobil Producing Nigeria Administration
Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited
More O'Ferrall Plc
National Westminster Bank PLC
New Zealand Embassy
Nichols Associates Ltd
Nigerian Agip Oil Company Limited
Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation
Novamedix Services Ltd
NPI
Origin
Osborn Steel Extrusions Ltd
Owens Corning Fibreglas (GB) Ltd

Pandrol International Ltd
Petroconsultants SA
Philip Morris Europe SA (EEMA)
Pioneer Concrete Holdings PLC
Plateau State Water Board
Polarcup UK Ltd
Port of Tyne Authority
Pro-Bel Ltd
PTT Telecom
PTT Telecomdistrict s-Gravenhage
Qatar Liquefied Gas Company Ltd
Railfreight Distribution Ltd
Reckitt & Colman Products
Redpath Engineering Services
Richmond Twickenham & Roehampton Healthcare
Roffe Swayne
Rolls Royce Motor Cars Ltd
Royal Flight Oman
Sandvik Saws & Tools
Santa Cruz Operation
Schindler SPA
Scottish Daily Record & Sunday Mail Ltd
Scottish Hydro-Electric PLC
Scottish Nuclear Ltd
Sedgwick BV
Sims Food Group PLC
Sir William Halcrow & Partners Ltd
South Essex Recorders Ltd
Staveley Industries Plc
Sun Microsystems Ltd
Sunley Inc
Sunservice UK Ltd
Sunservice-NE IT Operations
SWALEC Plc
Swiss Reinsurance Company (UK) Ltd
Talfab Building Products Ltd
Taylor Woodrow Civil Engineering Ltd
Taylor Woodrow Construction Southern Ltd
Taylor Woodrow Facilities Management
Taylor Woodrow International
Taylor Woodrow Management Engineering Ltd
Taylor Woodrow Management Ltd
Taylor Woodrow PLC

Taylor Woodrow Property Management Co Ltd
Taylor Woodrow Services Ltd
Taywood Homes Ltd
Tetley Group Ltd
Texaco Ltd
Textured Jersey UK Development
The Advertising Company Ltd
The Audit Commission
The Benfield Group Ltd
The Hulton Getty Picture Collection
The National Trust
The Rainbird Group
Total
Total South Africa
UAP Provincial Insurance Company Ltd
Urban Land Authority
Vanderlande Industries Nederland BV
W.S. Atkins (Services) Ltd
Welmed Ltd
Worldwide Petroleum Services Ltd
Yorkshire Electricity Group PLC
Zeneca Agrochemicals

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