



RESEARCH REPORT

LIVING IN A MATRIX

Julia Wellbelove

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Executive Summary

Matrix organisations and matrix ways of working are seemingly on the increase. They present challenges and tensions for managers yet also provide organisations and teams with the ability to meet the demands of an increasingly global and complex business world. Effective matrix working goes beyond considerations of structure and embraces culture, leadership, organisational values, strategy and psychology. As Ford and Randolph^{vi} explain, a matrix organisation is:

“any organization that employs a multiple command system that includes not only a multiple command structure but also related support mechanisms and an associated organizational culture and behaviour pattern.” (p269)

In this research we share with you an enabler model for effective matrix working developed from conducting a literature review and interviews with senior managers working in matrix organisations. The model outlines the key organisational, leadership and individual characteristics that enable matrix working to succeed. We aim in the report to share our thinking and provide some tips and suggestions for leaders and HR professionals on how to live and thrive in a matrix.

ORGANISATIONAL ENABLERS

Our research supports the work of leading writers, such as Galbraith^{vii}, in suggesting that organisations that have successfully implemented matrix working haven't just changed reporting lines, they have focused on **aligning strategy, culture and HR processes** so that they lead, support, encourage and reward matrix working. They are also aware that matrix working is a way of thinking and behaving which needs to be reinforced by **strong collaborative values**, such as communication, team working, cooperation and supporting others.

“Collaborations has been one of the new organisational values that has been introduced, so they are trying to put all of these pieces in place so that collaboration is encouraged, enabled, supported etc.” HR Manager, IT Professional Services

These organisational enablers are strengthened by the organisation articulating a **clear vision** and common purpose which connects and engages staff across the organisation.

LEADERSHIP ENABLERS

Leaders have a challenging role within matrix structures. They need to be able to hold the many tensions associated with managing shared resources, joint accountability, competing agendas and collaborative decision making, take corrective actions when needed and provide support for their teams. The ability to

manage conflict and ambiguity is therefore a key leadership enabler, and whilst absolute clarity and certainty is unlikely to be achieved, strong peer group relationships and communication are critical for helping reduce role and expectation conflicts. **Developing stable and trusting teams** requires a significant investment from leaders, particularly in matrix teams which are typically more diverse, culturally and functionally. Creating a super-ordinate mission for the team which facilitates a common and shared objective, and taking steps to build a team climate of trust are encouraged. Our research found that leaders who take steps to **secure senior level support** and deliberately create senior champions for their projects are more likely to be effective working in a matrix, as are those who **exhibit strong communication skills** enabling the flow of information and ideas across the team, whilst also being able to make their goals resonate with others, generating engagement and support.

INDIVIDUAL ENABLERS

In a matrix environment the ability to **express personal conviction and ownership** of project goals is highly important due to the collaborative nature of the work and the need to secure the support and co-operation of others, over whom an individual may have little or no direct authority.

“You haven't got direct authority to ask people to do things, it seems like there has to be something that comes from your inner strength, your inner belief in what you're doing.” Senior Manager, Charity

In addition, an individual's ability to **harness sources of personal power and influence** is a core skill when operating in a matrix, where traditional authority and power are likely to have less currency. Traditional command and control forms of power such as position and hierarchy are less likely to be effective. Sources of power that create a positive form of engagement such as: demonstrating your beliefs and values; your expertise, skills and abilities; or building trust, respect and a sense of shared goals are likely to win hearts and minds. Finally, matrix working is fundamentally about creating the conditions which support collaborative working. People who are able to **build connections, collaborate and network** will thrive in these environments.

Background and research

We are clear from Roffey Park's work with organisations and the interviews conducted for this research that matrix working is very much a part of everyday organisational life. Organisations, their workforce, customers and supplier groups, are becoming more diverse and increasingly global. Teams need to be able to work routinely with colleagues across the world and across functions, which means that matrix working and matrix structures are becoming a necessity. Yet it is clear from the literature and from talking to leaders and staff working in matrix structures that they require a different way of working to that commonly found in a traditional, functionally structured, command and control organisation. As one senior manager explained:

"We've got four divisions and four group teams effectively. They all vary massively. They have a dotted line reporting to me and a hard line reporting to their divisional [director]. So it means virtually everything that we do in Group is done through influence." Senior Manager, Charity

In this research we explore the challenges and drivers for matrix and cross-functional working and we propose an **enabler model for effective matrix working** which outlines the key organisational, leadership and individual characteristics that enable matrix working to succeed. In the words of one senior manager, for matrix working to work

"you need strong factors at an organisational level, at a purpose level, at a peer group level and at an individual level." Director, Telecoms

It is worth noting at this point that this research has deliberately set out to focus on what makes matrix working work, but of course we recognise that having all the conditions we discuss may not always be possible. The aim of this report, therefore, is to share our thinking and provide some tips and suggestions for leaders and HR professionals for how to live and thrive in a matrix.

Research approach

We took a phased approach for this research. In order to develop the model we conducted a review of the matrix working literature, which included commercial training journals, psychology journals, Harvard Business Reviews, OD publications and the work of notable authors in this area, including Jay Galbraith^{vii} and Kevan Hall^{ix}. In addition to this we interviewed four senior managers who have, or are currently, 'living in a matrix' to understand their experiences and explore what factors lead to effective matrix working. Their experiences span the public (central government), private (retail, telecoms) and not-for-profit (charity) sectors.

The research has also been influenced by speakers at Roffey, notably Professor Ralph Stacey and Professor Cliff Oswick¹ and has incorporated the views of a number of our consultancy and research colleagues at Roffey, notably Andy Smith and Dan Lucy. We have also included quotes from senior managers who, following the completion of Roffey Park's annual Management Agenda survey 2015, were interviewed to explore their perceptions and responses to a set of matrix questions.

Our enabler model was then validated using a survey. 625 managers who work in a matrix team or organisation were asked to indicate which factors they thought were most important for working effectively in a matrix, at an organisational, leadership and individual level.

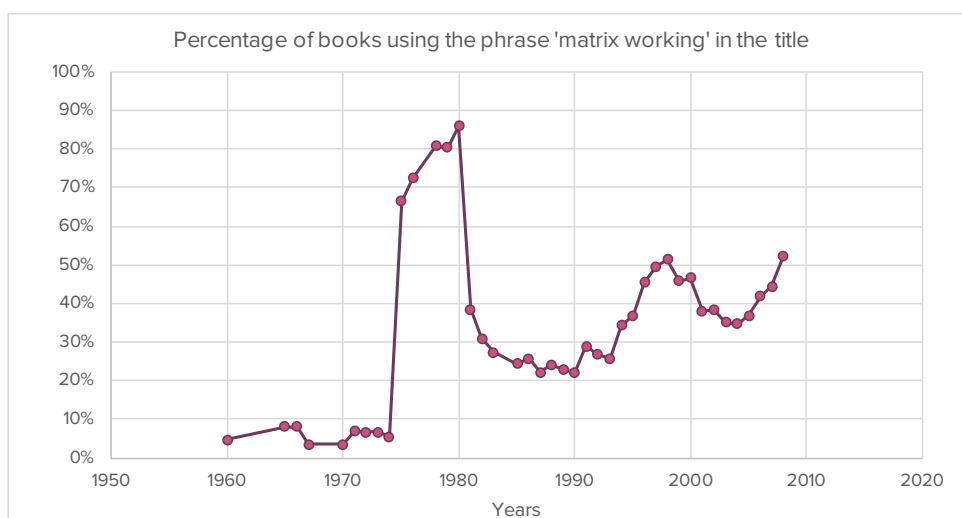
¹ Roffey Park Institute hosted the ODN Europe annual conference in 2014, where Ralph Stacey and Cliff Oswick were keynote speakers

Matrix working: the story so far

Organisations first became interested in matrix working in the 1970s. Davis and Lawrence^v writing in the late 1970s described it as being a relatively new organisational form which was gaining considerable popularity. They also said, 'Matrix is an exceedingly complex form that is not for everybody. To put it bluntly, if you do not really need it, leave it alone'. This was perhaps good advice for many organisations because in the 80s many organisations aborted their matrix programmes as they were deemed to have failed. The view became prevalent that matrix structures didn't work and the popularity of matrix organisations waned. However, this wasn't the full story, as Jay Galbraith^{vii} explains, in reality many organisations continued to 'covertly' use matrix structures:

"Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, companies continued to introduce matrix or matrix - like structures. To avoid questions from their bosses, the adopters used other names, such as "multidimensional structures" or even the old "line and staff" nomenclature."

The figure below plots the number of references made to 'matrix working' in book titles published since 1960 (Source: Google books Ngram Viewer). It is clear to see the surge in popularity in the mid to late 1970s followed by a rapid decline in the 1980s.



Back on the agenda

So even with the criticism in the 1980s and 1990s that matrix structures didn't work, organisations continued to use them in some form. As organisations continued to introduce matrix structures it became clear that in many cases it was not the structure that led to failure but the poor implementation of it.

Since the early 2000s support for well implemented matrix structures has been growing, mainly due to the prevailing view that adopting matrix working is the *only* way for an organisation to survive in this global, volatile and complex world. As Galbraith^{viii} explains, the matrix structure is no longer to be avoided "*instead it is a necessary form of organization in today's business environment.*" We take the view that when matrix organisations are successful it is because they have succeeded in developing a culture which supports and facilitates cross-functional working, collaboration and networking; it has processes that encourage dialogue and flexibility so the organisation can respond effectively to internal and external changes or demands; and it has a management and leadership group that supports decision making and innovation within teams and across functions, and are able to manage the tensions that occur when working in a matrix way. So, we argue that, the focus should not be on structure, but on taking a holistic view of collaborative working and seeing it as a philosophy and a way of working. It is this approach that will ensure an organisation is equipped to survive today's challenges, regardless of structure.

What is matrix working?

UNDERSTANDING A MATRIX

A defining characteristic of a matrix organisational structure is multiple reporting lines. Typically a team member will have two managers, and a matrix manager will share authority, responsibility and accountability with another manager for team members' delivery of objectives and performance. The dual reporting lines are often referred to as 'solid' or 'dotted' lines to denote the strength of the reporting relationship.

However, it is wrong to assume that matrix working is solely about structure. As Ford and Randolph^{vi} show in their definition of a matrix organisation below, it is also about the culture and human behaviour that is needed to support it. A matrix organisation is:

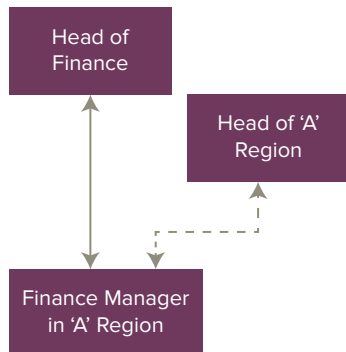
"any organization that employs a multiple command system that includes not only a multiple command structure but also related support mechanisms and an associated organizational culture and behaviour pattern." (p269)

Other definitions highlight cross-functional or horizontal ways of working, decision making and communicating that are embraced in matrix organisations, which are typically required to sit, often uncomfortably, over the traditional vertical functional hierarchy.

What forms does matrix working take?

Whole organisations can be structured using matrix working, or specific teams can be formed temporarily or permanently to work across functions.

Figure 1: example of a regional team matrix structure .

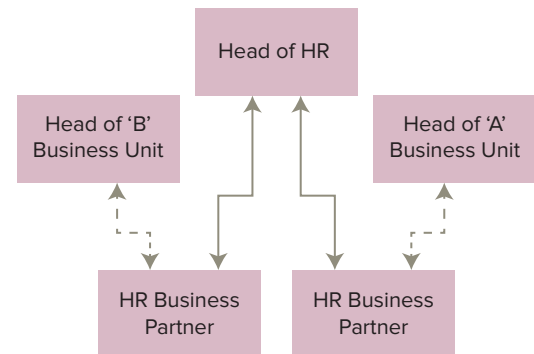


Regional teams: In many organisations matrix working grows out of an organisation entering a new region or country. This drives the need for the head of region as well as the functional head to have an involvement in the objectives of the staff member (Figure 1).

Centralising, devolution or Centres of Expertise: Financial drivers, a need for consistency across divisions or a strategy to create centres of excellence (for example HR) are some of the reasons why organisations turn to the matrix structure shown in Figure 2. One leader explained how it felt to have this matrix role:

"I provide professional advice into complex programmes of work, but I don't own any programme of work directly, you're sort of seen as part of the gang, but not really part of the gang."
Senior Leader, Health Service

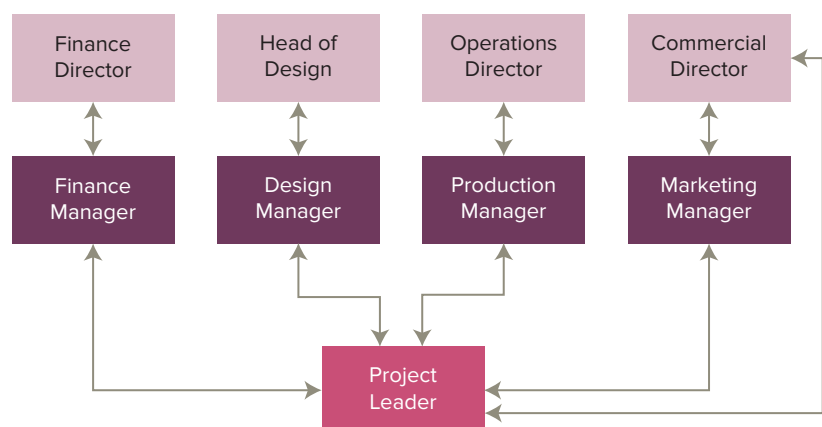
Figure 2: example of a centralised expertise matrix structure



Cross-functional teams: There are many drivers for organisations to develop teams that utilise and connect functional expertise from across the organisation. It could be

- to develop a new product
- as a response to changes in the market
- due to environmental changes,
- technological developments, or
- changing customer demands

Figure 3: example of a cross-functional project matrix team:



AN EXAMPLE OF A MOVE TOWARDS CROSS-FUNCTIONAL PROJECT TEAMS IN THE BBC

15 years ago the BBC recognised that audiences were changing. One fundamental difference was the demand from customers to receive programme content (not just to receive it, but to be engaged and be involved in co-creating it), at a time that suited them, on a variety of platforms - TV, radio and on-line. The days of audiences following programme schedules and demonstrating brand loyalty were numbered. In order to respond to customer demands the structure and culture of the BBC needed to shift dramatically. Programme teams evolved to include the expertise of TV, radio and digital experts, and the BBC embarked on a radical change programme to value collaboration over competition and flexibility over bureaucracy. The initial phases of the change programme elicited six values, one of which was the value: *We are one BBC; great things happen when we work together.*

We can see from Figures 1, 2 and 3 that matrix structures vary in their complexity and in the regional, functional and other boundaries they cross. The key message is that matrix working can take many forms, and as the Valve example below shows multiple reporting lines are not necessarily a prerequisite.

AN EXAMPLE OF FLUID MATRIX WORKING AT VALVE

A radical example of a matrix structure has been embraced by a US-based software company, Valve, with its 'fluid' form of matrix working. Fluid because teams form and disband to meet project requirements. They have also taken the bold step of removing hierarchy, job titles and job descriptions. In their staff handbook^{xxii} they ask employees to be driven by the question 'how can I add value?', and to make decisions on *what* to work on and *with whom*, on this basis. They describe their team structures (cabals) below:

"Cabals are really just multidisciplinary project teams. We've self-organized into these largely temporary groups since the early days of Valve. They exist to get a product shipped. Like any other group or effort at the company, they form organically. People decide to join the group based on their own belief that the group's work is important enough for them to work on."

What are the organisational drivers for matrix working?

A response to complexity

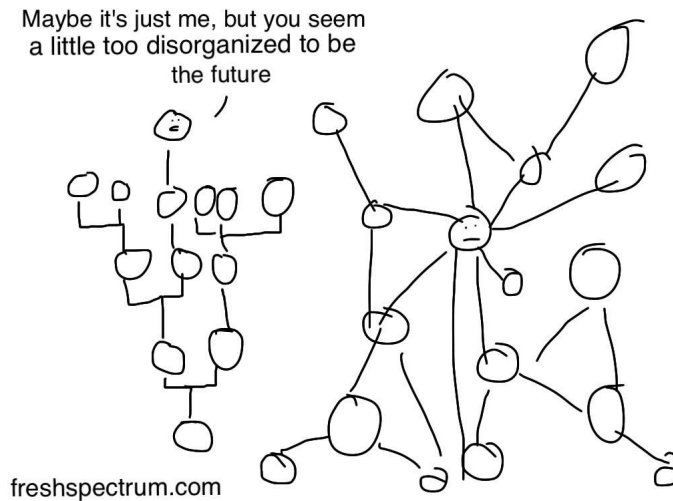
It is a well-rehearsed argument; we live in complex, constantly changing, uncertain times and traditional, hierarchical, vertical command and control structures are no longer fit for purpose. Complex environments are characterized by a large number of diverse, dynamic elements and high uncertainty. With increased complexity comes an increased amount of information the organisation must process. Matrix working is one possible response to this challenge. It offers the potential for a greater degree of collaboration, adaptability and dialogue, leading to a more dynamic and flexible organisation. One senior manager explained:

"The more recent ways of looking at organisations as continuing patterns of dynamic dialogue and conversation, anybody who can effect a little bit of change can be influential. But people have forgotten the complexity of that reality. Have people's actual understanding of their rights and roles at work kept pace with organisational complexity?" Senior Manager, Media Organisation

From complexity science comes the notion of organisations as complex adaptive systems: an ensemble of independent agents which interact and act based on some system of rules, who self-organize in nonlinear ways to produce emergent results, who exhibit characteristics of both order and chaos, and evolve over time. This view of organisations highlights the difficulties associated with the top down introduction of matrix working structures, supported by the assumption of linear causality –if we change the structure, *then* we will be more flexible, collaborative etc. This approach fails to take account of the unknowns and unpredictable outcomes to any given action.

Organisations therefore need to embrace bottom-up processes and provide the conditions for patterns of collaborative working to emerge from people taking certain actions and *not* taking others. These combined approaches are more likely to be successful. As Linda Holbeche and Mee-Yan Cheung-Judgeⁱⁱⁱ explain employees owning the change is key:

"While strategists and senior leaders generally prefer to take a planned approach to change, OD recognises that in human systems, logical planning alone rarely determines what actually happens and that change 'emerges' when people are actively engaged in the change process."



A response to globalisation

Organisations are now competing on an international stage, for customers, raw materials, suppliers, talent, and so much more. We are interconnected in so many ways; what happens across the planet quickly has an impact on us. Sirkin and colleagues^{xix} describe the organisational landscape:

"We call it globality, a different kind of environment, in which business flows in every direction. Companies have no centres. The idea of foreignness is foreign. Commerce swirls and market dominance shifts. Western business orthodoxy entwines with Eastern business philosophy and creates a whole new mindset that embraces profit and competition as well as sustainability and collaboration".

To respond to the global competition many organisations have set up localized business units around the world which typically consist of individuals with a diverse set of functional skills brought together to meet the needs of the customer in that specific location. Individuals within the teams are likely to have reporting lines to the local business unit manager and dotted lines to a central function manager often hundreds or thousands of miles away. This is a matrix that not only spans the organisational functions but also the world.

The constant drive for change

The organisational environment is constantly adapting to respond to internal and external pressures, with unpredictable and uncertain results. Pressure for change can come from the introduction of new performance management processes, the departure or arrival of a new senior leader, new product development, process re-engineering, or to help improve the customer experience or relationships. Increasingly organisations are finding that greater collaboration across the organisation is a critical requirement of making any change process successful. So matrix working can be the desired outcome and one of the processes of change.

Managing the tensions of matrix working

Managers and leaders operating in a matrix organisation are highly likely to face many tensions. The tensions can be the result of the traditionally structured organisation blending with the 'new' matrix structure. Typically, organisations maintain the functional 'pillars' of the organisation and overlay the interconnecting matrix structures and relationships. The tensions arise when the drivers for clear accountability and control rub against the opposing drivers of shared responsibility and collaborative decision making. In order to manage and respond effectively when faced with these conditions it is important for managers and leaders to be able to access the positives of both structures. A good way of thinking about this is an approach based on polarity principles, which Barry Johnson (leading author on Polarity Management) describes as 'both-and' thinking.

In Kevan Hall's^{ix} figure, reproduced below, we can see the potential positives and negatives of both structures. Polarity principles propose that if leaders overly focus on one side, for example cooperation and communication across functions, then there is more certainty that there will be a move to the downside, perhaps slow decision making or meeting overload. The key is to ensure leaders are aware of and alert to the early warning signs of over-focus on one pole and are ready and capable to take balancing actions, in this example it would be perhaps focusing on obtaining clearer levels of accountability and authority.

"We need to be alert to the potential negatives, and prevent them by giving people the skills and capabilities to create the right level of clarity on structure within the matrix." Kevan Hall^{ix}

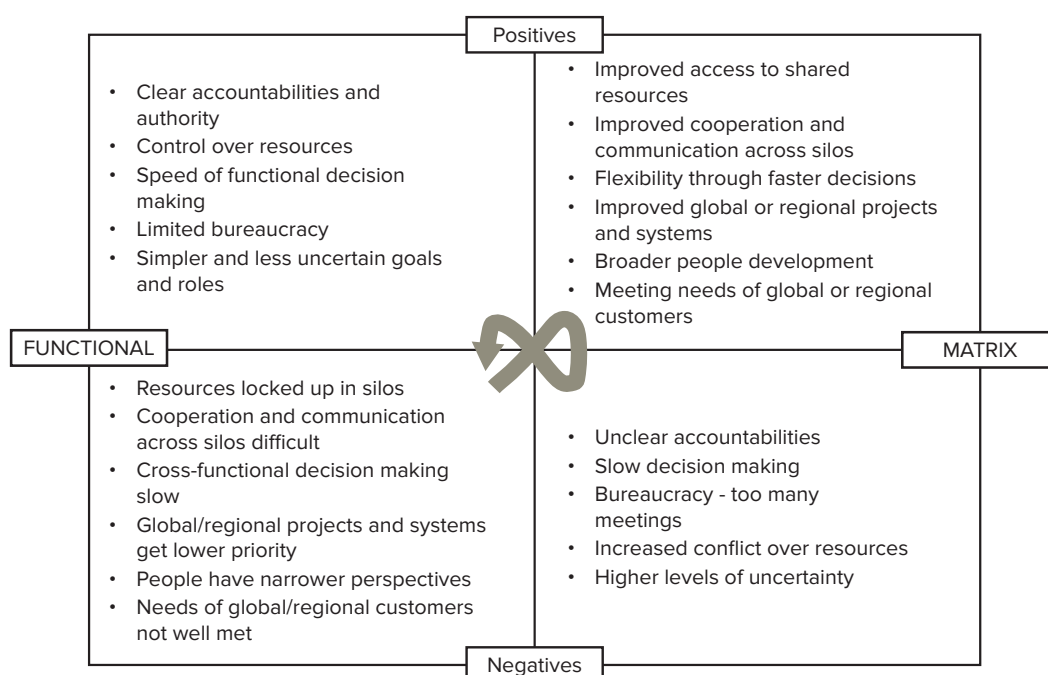


Figure 7.2 Summary of the matrix/functional journey, p86 in Kevan Hall (2013) 'Making the Matrix Work: How Matrix Managers Engage People and Cut Through Complexity ISBN 9781904838425, first published by Nicholas Brealey Publishing in 2013. © Greystones Trust 2013.

Competition for power and resources, which are also areas of tension typically experienced in matrix organisations, can be explained by looking at Boleman and Deal'sⁱⁱⁱ *political frame*. Their Four-Frame Model identifies four distinct perspectives or 'frames' from which people view organisations, they are:

- Structural frame – emphasises goals, specialised roles and formal relationships
- Human resource frame – tailored to people and meeting their needs
- Political frame – sees organisations as arenas where different interests compete for power and resources
- Symbolic frame – sees organisations as cultures, propelled by rituals and ceremonies rather than rules and policies

The metaphor that Boleman and Deal use for the political frame is 'a jungle'. We have no doubt that many people working in matrix organisations would relate to this metaphor.

"Conflict is rampant because of enduring differences in needs, perspectives and lifestyles among various individuals and groups. Bargaining, negotiation, coercion, and compromise are part of everyday life. Coalitions form around specific interests and change as issues come and go. Problems arise when power is concentrated in the wrong places or is so broadly dispersed that nothing gets done."

Managing the sometimes competing demands from individuals, teams and functions requires an alertness, resilience and skill to operate effectively under often conflicting and uncertain conditions.

The tensions associated with collaboration and decision making

Matrix working is well placed to increase levels of connectivity by utilising teams which work across functions, organisations and regions. Faster and more flexible decision making is possible within matrix teams when they have the authority to make decisions and have the key people involved in the team. However, matrix teams can be hampered by unnecessary bureaucracy and the perceived need to collaborate widely, requiring an increased number of meetings, calls and emails and resulting in slow decision making. Leaders need to be equally adept at recognising scenarios when co-operation and collaboration will not generate a better result or produce a better decision.

One leader in the pharmaceuticals business spoke about 'collaboration gone a bit mad':

"we have this collaboration culture and I think we may have gone too far down that line, so instead of inviting the people you need to a meeting,

you invite the people that you think you should be inviting, because if we leave out, for example, communications or whoever, politically that might not look very good."

In order to avoid this situation Morten Hansen^{xi} suggests individuals follow a three step conscious decision making process when considering when to collaborate and when to work independently, he calls this 'disciplined collaboration'.

Hansen's three steps to disciplined collaboration are:

Evaluate your opportunities for companywide collaboration across organizational units

Look at the four potential barriers which might arise to derail your collaborative efforts:

1. The "not-invented-here" barrier – we don't reach out to others
2. The "hoarding" barrier – we keep things to ourselves,
3. The "search" barrier – we can't find what we need anywhere,
4. The "transfer" barrier - we only work with people we know well

Tailor solutions to these barriers using a mix of the three collaborative levers

1. Unification lever – get everyone aiming at a lofty goal,
2. T-shape lever – work within and across units simultaneously,
3. Networks lever – get people to use their personal networks

The tensions associated with competing agendas

Clearly multiple stakeholders with competing priorities make the job of reaching agreement and making decisions in matrix teams more challenging. For successful collaboration teams need trust within the team and from senior managers above. It is not difficult to imagine a low trust environment where rather than individuals being driven to work co-operatively they are driven to protect their own interests and achieve results which benefit their own functions. This is why we are suggesting that organisations look at matrix working from a whole system perspective and ensure that culture, values, HR practices and leadership are all aligned to support collaborative working. It is clear that a structure which 'enforces' collaboration within a culture of low trust and silo working will at best not work and at worst create conflict, poor decision making and internal competition.

The tensions associated with overlapping accountabilities and complex lines of authority

Matrix organisations tend to be less hierarchical and flatter in structure, presenting reduced opportunities for the use of 'position power'. Sadly, however, this often results in individuals finding other ways to retain power and control, for example, withholding knowledge or resources. Alongside flatter structures, matrix organisations tend to have more complex lines of authority, overlapping accountabilities and a greater need to deliver work through collaboration. To manage the potential tensions and conflict that can arise from these conditions leaders need to be effective at influencing, negotiating and building alliances with peers. As far as possible they need to work to reach agreement on levels of accountability and authority.

"There is a strong human desire to have all of the levers under your control for things that matter to you, whether it's in terms of bonus or pay or prestige with the boss or whatever levers you feel you need. And where you cannot control these things, whenever you have matrix organisations, there's always tension and there's always a real desire to recreate it."

"So where you have very strong fiefdoms then you need a very strong matrix to be successful."

Director Telecom

Building strong relationships and alliances, and having the ability to persuade and negotiate are key to managing the tensions that arise from competing needs for control and power within a matrix.

Competing priorities and control of resources

Matrix structures require people skilled at managing competing priorities; the local and the global, the function and the business unit, the product and the market. Skilled matrix workers understand the need to constantly be discussing the importance of competing priorities and making agreements.

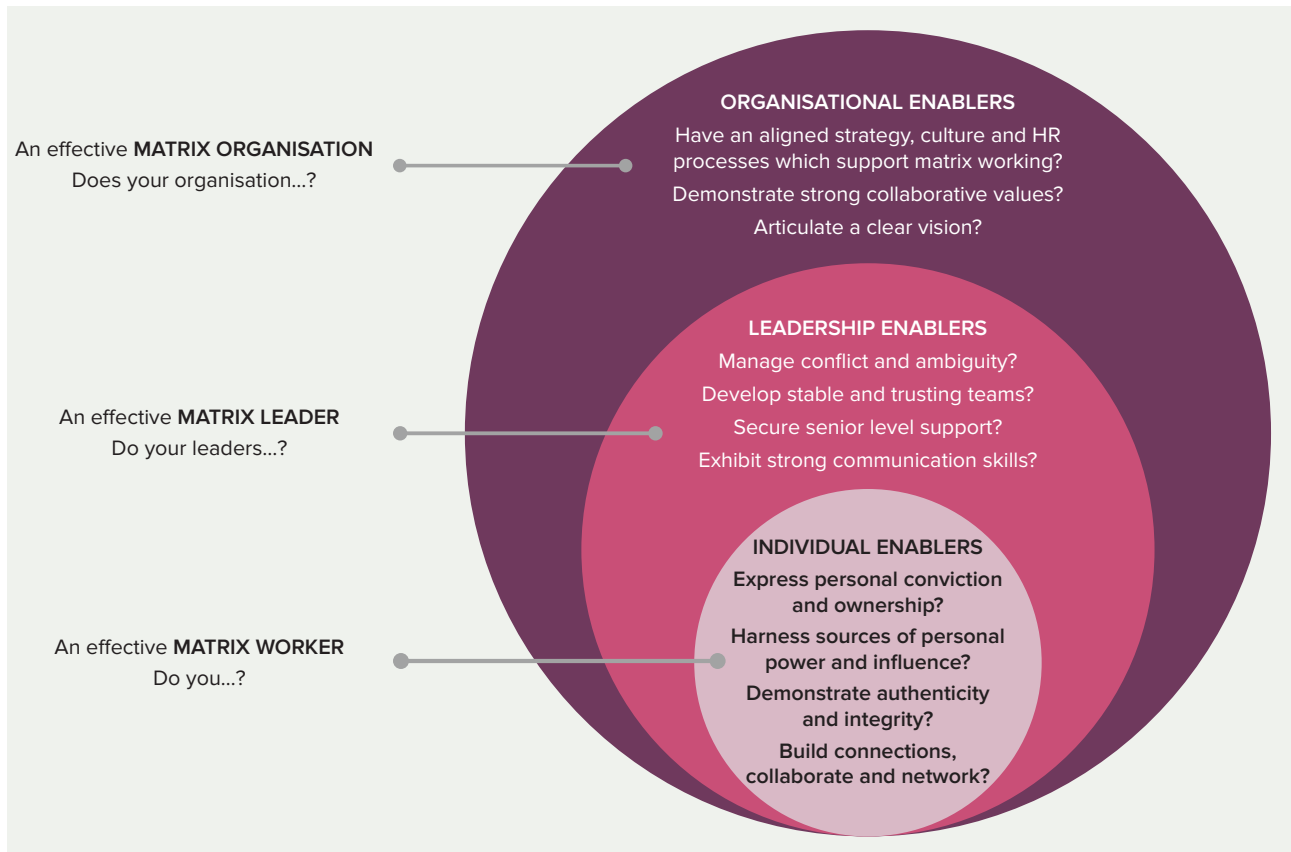
Well-functioning matrix structures effectively share resources and provide greater opportunities to share learning across the organisation. However, one consequence of sharing resources is that it can result in ambiguity over who has overall control of resources. A typical response to this situation is to seek clarity by attempting to make clear agreements with all stakeholders regarding resource requirements on competing projects. This approach is an attempt to hold onto the advantages of the functional structure (focusing on both poles) and keep control of resources. An alternative approach would be to build individual and organisational resilience²

to cope with ambiguity and uncertainty. We believe that equipping people to work effectively with uncertainty, or recruiting for these skills, as organisations are increasingly doing, is more likely to create a sustainable organisation.

It is clear to see that matrix working has the potential to create conflict and tension. In the following sections we argue that by having an awareness of the *enablers for effective matrix working*, that span the organisational, leadership and individual level, and leveraging them effectively, leaders will be better able to manage teams effectively within this environment.

² Roffey Park's research report: Building Resilience: five key capabilities (2014) by Dan Lucy, Meysam Poorkavoos and Arun Thompson can be downloaded at <http://www.roffeypark.com/expertise/building-resilience>

The enabler model for effective matrix working



The model

The enabler model for effective matrix working was developed from a literature review and interviews with matrix workers. It aims to highlight the characteristics that support matrix working from a whole system perspective, including strategy, values, HR processes, leadership, team dynamics and human behaviour. In this Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) world organisations need leaders who “have a holistic framework that encourages inquiry into a range of significant issues: people, power, structure and symbols”ⁱⁱⁱ. Our model encourages leaders within matrix organisations to pay attention to the various aspects of the organisational system, and to know how to leverage them effectively to create a collaborative culture.

Organisational enablers



Have an aligned strategy, culture and HR processes that support matrix working

83 per cent of managers surveyed³ selected 'having an aligned strategy, culture and HR process which support matrix working' as being important. There is strong support for this finding in the literature. For example, Galbraith^{vii} argues that there are five elements to organisational design (the Star Model™), which need to be aligned for an organisation to be effective. *Strategy* (direction), *structure* (the location of decision-making power), *processes* (how information flows), *rewards* (systems that influence the motivation of staff) and *people* (HR policies). For organisations to successfully implement a matrix structure, Galbraith argues the change in structure needs to be driven by strategy and aligned with the appropriate information processes and people policies which support the matrix way of working. One senior manager spoke about the positive impact of a clear organisational strategy:

"I think that's where I was successful because one of the things that we had absolutely clarity about was that this was our future, and the CEO was very clear about it and also my peer group." Director, Telecoms

Certain organisational cultures are more receptive to matrix working than others. Organisations with strong vertical lines, where functional leaders have a high need for control (for example Handy/Harrisons' *role* culture^x), often struggle to give cross-functional teams the authority they need to make decisions. They are also driven by the need for clear roles and responsibilities. By their very nature, matrix structures have more complex authority and accountability pathways which need a greater degree of collaboration, adaptability and flexibility to operationalise. Cultures which are more likely to be receptive to matrix working are those with a tradition of openness, connectedness, and experience of adapting to change and being flexible. Handy's *task* culture^x is typically associated with matrix organisations. The emphasis in such cultures is on getting the job done, and the culture seeks to bring together the appropriate resources and the right people at the right level in order to complete a particular project (of course there are also down sides to the task culture, for example burn out and wheel re-invention.) It is a team culture, where the outcome of the team's work takes precedence over individual objectives. Influence is less likely to be based on position or personal power, and is more widely dispersed than in other cultures.

Organisations that have successfully implemented matrix working haven't just changed reporting lines, they have focused on cultural alignment, and introduced reward and HR policies which engage and motivate staff to work collaboratively, resulting in the necessary behavioural shifts.

One senior manager explained why their organisation was struggling to successfully implement matrix working:

"Our CEO gets it in his head, but fundamentally doesn't get it with his heart." Senior Manager, Charity

Reflecting on your organisation:

- Are your culture, strategy and HR policies (reward, appraisals) aligned to matrix working?
- Do you have a Task culture, where team outcomes take precedence over individual objectives, or a Role culture, where functional leaders hold the decision making power?
- Do cross-functional teams have real authority to make key decisions?

³ Roffey Park's annual Management Agenda survey 2015 - see Appendix 1

Develop strong collaborative values



Matrix working is much more than multiple reporting lines and cross-functional working, it is a way of thinking and behaving. Organisations need to therefore ensure that collaborative values such as communication, team working, cooperation and supporting others are reinforced and integrated into the relevant HR policies and processes, such as competency and values frameworks, recruitment, promotion and appraisal processes. Our survey found strong agreement, with 68 per cent of matrix managers indicating that an organisation espousing strong collaborative values was important for effective matrix working. One senior manager who responded to the survey, and we spoke to about her experience in more depth, explained how collaborative values were key to their organisational matrix succeeding:

“The rationale for shifting the structure of the organisation so that it was more of a matrix was to enable that collaboration piece, because without it the matrix organisation isn’t effective. Collaboration has been one of the new organisational values that has been introduced, so they were trying to put all of these pieces in place so that collaboration is encouraged, enabled, supported etc.” HR Manager, IT Professional Services

Organisations need to give great consideration to the relationships that allow information to flow across the organisation, and reflect on whether the organisational norms, values and beliefs that shape the way people think and behave – the physiology and psychology of the organisation - are congruent with collaborative working.

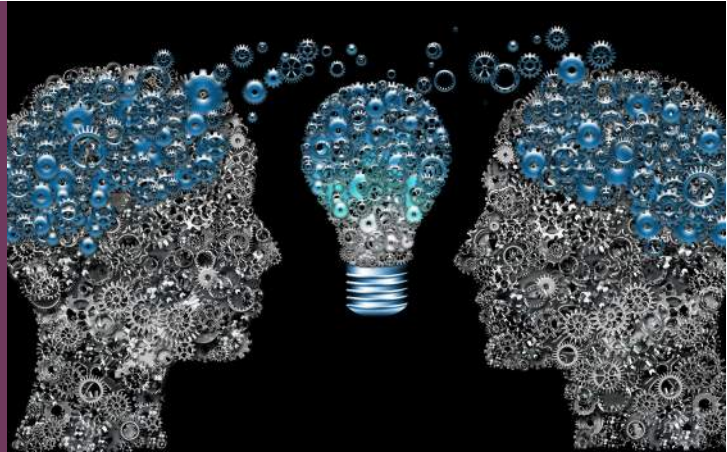
Organisational change takes time. Reaching a point where staff are ‘living’ the collaborative values can take a while, and even then some people may continue to struggle to work across the lines, as well as up and down. One senior manager spoke about the impact of senior managers who failed to role model collaborative and cross-functional working had on the organisation:

“If you have a lot of strong departments, and the strong departments have strong cultures, strong leaders, strong purpose, they may have been doing that for a long time and therefore are entrenched. There are lots of reasons why. But if you have strong verticals you need a strong horizontal because the antibodies in those organisations will fight you to the death and if you’re not strong enough it won’t work. It will not work.” Director, Telecoms

Reflecting on your organisation:

- Does collaborative working receive senior level support?
- Do senior managers role model collaborative ways of working?
- Is collaborative working adequately resourced, supported and recognised through formal processes and procedures?
- Are collaborative values represented strongly in your competency frameworks and performance management processes?

Articulate a clear vision



A clear organisational vision and purpose, which gives all employees a clear line of sight between their work and the success of the organisation, is important for all organisations. However, for matrix organisations it has an even greater role; a shared purpose and vision is the foundation stone of organisation-wide collaboration. Our surveyed managers agreed, 63 per cent indicated that articulating a clear organisational vision was important at an organisational level. In addition, 55 per cent indicated that it was also important for *leaders* to articulate a clear organisational vision. This is particularly true for matrix teams, where a clearly articulated and well understood common purpose is crucial for connecting and engaging staff from different departments and functions and providing the reason for collaboration. As Bartlett and Ghoshal¹ explain, matrix organisations need to:

“develop and communicate a clear sense of corporate purpose that extends into every corner of the company and gives context and meaning to each manager’s particular roles and responsibilities.”

Without a clear sense of corporate purpose competing agendas will drive interactions. A clear vision needs to translate to cross-functional projects creating clear goals and business drivers that motivate team members and are easily articulated across the organisation. One senior manager explained:

“We chose the customer as the common purpose. It had to be the customer because that was the only thing really that all the divisions couldn’t argue with.” Director, Telecoms

Reflecting on your organisation:

- Does it have a clear, galvanising vision?
- Are the company objectives understandable and meaningful?
- Is the vision consistently applied across all business units and geographical boundaries?

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE: HAVING A CLEAR BUSINESS DRIVER LEADS TO ‘SHARED POWER’

We interviewed ‘Cathy’, a senior manager in a large retail organisation, who spoke about how the centralising of centres of expertise had led to matrix working and put the need to influence across the organisation firmly in the spotlight. Cathy also spoke about the importance of having a clear strategic vision ‘that you’ve always got to fall back on’. The fact that her team’s goals were endorsed by the Board helped her in her negotiations with line managers across the business. Interestingly, Cathy talked about how having the clear organisational vision provided a ‘shared power’ in conversations between herself and other leaders in the business. It gave them a shared frame of reference that they were working together to deliver the same business aims, and that they were both in this for the best outcomes for the business.

Watch out for organisational derailers:

- ‘Strong verticals’ - functional leaders with a high need for control
- A lack of alignment between culture and structure
- Competing organisational goals
- A lack of clear behavioural indicators or values which support collaborative working

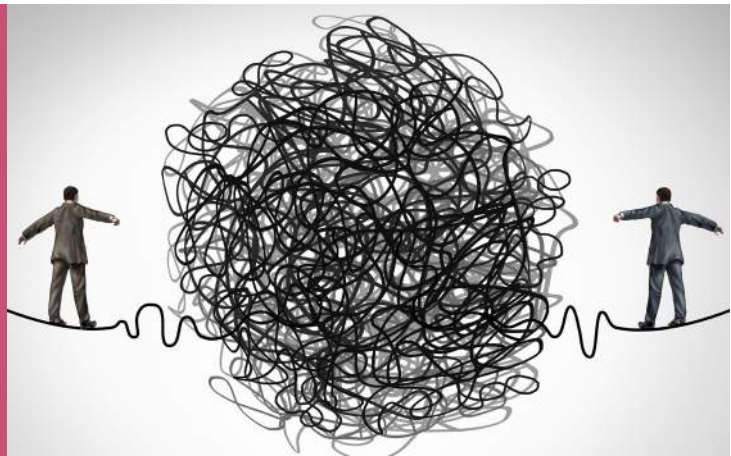


Leadership enablers

To build a successful population of matrix leaders, it is critical that they see their roles, not as authority figures, but as:

- **OD managers**, building strong, trusting teams and providing the conditions for effective collaboration
- **negotiators**, managing resource conflicts and creating clarity
- **networkers** and relationship managers
- **stakeholder managers**, ensuring their teams have the support of key people within the business, securing access to resources and protecting them from competing organisational priorities

Manage conflict and ambiguity



Individuals working in a matrix and dealing with the demands of managing multiple reporting lines typically experience greater role conflict, which, if left unmanaged, ambiguous and uncertain, can cause stress and anxiety. It is therefore not surprising that 65 per cent of survey respondents selected 'managing conflict and reducing ambiguity' as important for leaders to be skilled at in order to work effectively in a matrix. Matrix leaders should endeavour to clarify key deliverables, authority for decision making and access to resources. However, the flexible and adaptable nature of matrix structures means it is unlikely that absolute role or project clarity in many cases will be achieved, so it is important for leaders and team members to be flexible, to be able to hold a certain degree of ambiguity, work collaboratively to discuss and agree responsibilities and be explicit about relationships between project team members.

Multiple reporting lines create multiple demands on time, which can lead to situations of resource, deadline or priority conflicts. Matrix leaders therefore need to have frequent discussions with functional managers to negotiate expectations, regarding the time and commitment required from individual team members working on the project. Galbraith^{vii} asserts that typically the division of power can be divided between the matrix project leader deciding on *what* to do and *when* to do it, and the functional leader deciding on *how* to do the work. Having well developed negotiation skills, a clear business imperative and an open and collaborative style will help matrix leaders broker agreements and resolve disputes.

We recognise that in a world of hard and dotted lines that it is not unusual for staff to feel they have conflicting priorities, as one manager explained:

"I report into the US. I have my personal manager in the US yet I have a dotted line that puts me into the region. If the person in the US and the person in the region have different expectations, different aspirations about what my role is, and what I should be, then inevitably I'm stuck in the middle between a rock and a hard place." (Senior Manager, IT)

This reflection makes it really clear how important it is for two managers to maintain a strong relationship, so they understand each other's objectives. Equally we would argue that it is important for the staff member to take steps to ensure any conflicts in expectations are brought to the attention of the managers, as our senior manager continues to explain:

"Frankly, sometimes it is literally a case of getting them in the same conversation and saying, right tell me what you want and what I have to do differently to make sure that both of you are satisfied that you're getting what you need."

Reflecting on the leaders in your organisation:

- What training and support do your leaders receive to ensure they are skilled at resolving role and resource conflicts?
- Is it typical for matrix workers to discuss and resolve project conflicts in an open and transparent manner? What processes are in place to support this?
- How well developed are the communication pathways and relationships between managerial peer groups?



Develop stable and trusting teams

65 per cent of our surveyed managers working in a matrix identified 'developing stable and trusting teams' as being important for leaders to be effective in a matrix environment. To help build a cohesive and stable team, leaders need to create common goals and shared objectives for matrix team members, which have a clear link to the overall organisational vision and key business drivers. However, creating a sense of common purpose may not always be easy given that individuals working together in cross-functional teams may have different goals, agendas and values. Song^{xx} explains the conflict:

"In many organisations R&D is rewarded for creating new products, marketing is rewarded for creating and maintaining markets and satisfied customers, while manufacturing is charged with efficient utilization of resources. Therefore, marketing wants broad product lines, manufacturing wants narrower product lines and R&D wants to develop revolutionary new products."

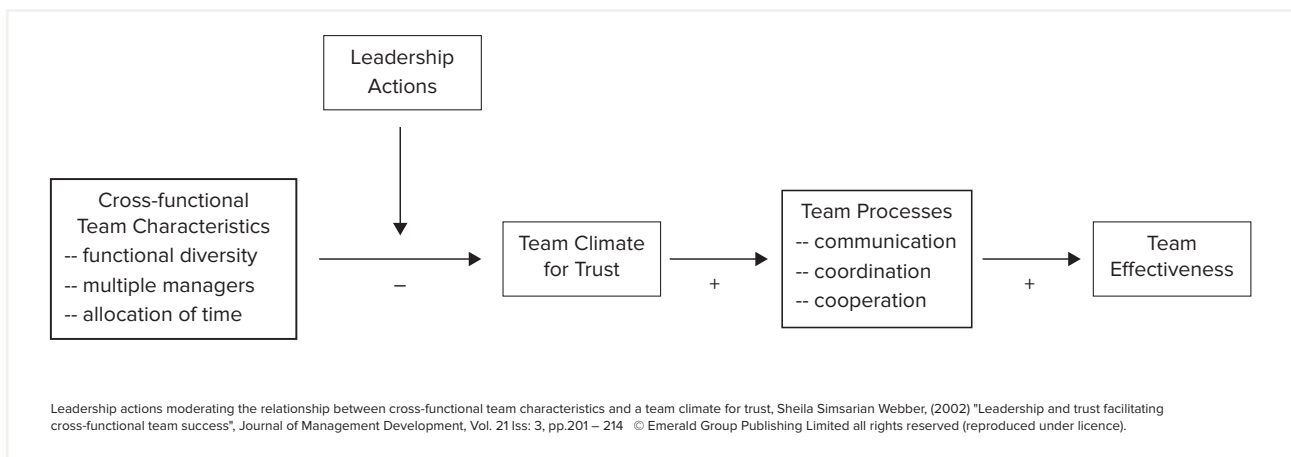
It is therefore key for leaders of cross-functional groups to create a 'super-ordinate mission' (Webber^{xxiii}) for the team which facilitates a common and shared objective by all team members.

Building trust in a newly formed team takes time and is often a challenge. For matrix teams the challenge is greater because the team members are typically more diverse. They are likely to have different functional backgrounds, perhaps come from different regions or countries, or even represent different organisations (suppliers, contractors, out-source company etc.). Triandis^{xxi} has found that value differences stemming from functional diversity, differences in the time commitment and in reporting structures result in lower trust within the team.

Northcraft and colleagues^{xvi} argue that greater diversity in the team slows down team integration. This means that matrix leaders need to invest time, resources and energy early on to create stable and effective group processes and develop team trust. Sheila Webber^{xxiii} agrees with this and has developed a model that links certain actions taken by a leader, when working with a cross-functional team, with greater trust within the team (see Figure 4). A strong climate of trust, Webber and others argue, in turn improves team effectiveness, by improving communication, co-operation and co-ordination. Webber defines a team climate of trust as:

"The shared perception by the majority of team members that individuals in the team will perform particular actions important to its members and that the individuals will recognize and protect the rights and interests of all the team members engaged in their joint endeavor."

Figure 4



Prior to team formation a matrix team leader should take certain steps to help build trust early on:

- Identify highly skilled and talented individuals with a strong reputation. Mayer^{xv} found high ability to be linked to high trust
- Securing the best people often depends on the profile of the project and the support of senior leaders, so matrix workers need to ensure both the profile of the team's project and the support of influential stakeholders are secured in order to increase the chances of building a highly competent team
- Select team members who work at similar levels in the organisation to facilitate similarity
- Where possible, select individuals who have worked successfully together in the past to capitalise on the mutual trust already existing.

During the formation of the team a matrix team leader should take the following steps to build trust:

- Manage the relationship with functional managers and focus on reducing any resource conflicts
- Negotiate expectations with functional leaders, promoting positive relationships between functional areas
- Build positive relationships with other matrix team leaders, sharing resources and information
- Identify ways in which the project will enhance team members' career, resulting in greater commitment
- Articulate a clear mission, or super-ordinate goal, for the project, linking together the unique contributions of each team member

Adapted from Webber (2002)^{xxiii}

Reflecting on the leaders in your organisation:

- Are they successful in achieving high profile and senior level support for their cross-functional project teams?
- Are matrix leaders involved in the formation of their teams?
- Are matrix leaders given support and resources to develop stable and effective group processes early on?
- Do matrix leaders ensure that the project teams provide opportunities for team members to learn and develop? Do they explicitly link participation in matrix teams to personal and career development?



Secure senior level support

Our research interviews identified that it was important for matrix leaders to take deliberate steps to gain the support of senior colleagues, in order to add 'weight' to their argument and ensure the success of their project team. However, in our survey only 50 per cent of matrix managers selected this as important for leaders. We suggest that this may be because it may be considered a form of political behaviour which is perhaps less positive when considered alongside 'demonstrating authenticity and integrity' and 'building networks'. However, as we see from the quotes below, creating champions is a deliberate approach taken by the managers in our research interviews in order to extend their reach.

Our senior manager explained a number of strategies for achieving this:

"You have to speak to every person individually beforehand, so they don't have any surprises when they get in to the room, and you also need to have the opportunity to influence them more individually to what their priorities or style is. I think that is probably one of the things you don't learn through 'HR School', when actually that's probably one of the main skills that you need to actually get anything done". HR Business Partner, Engineering organisation

"I needed to galvanise some support before going to [the Chief Executive] with a proposal, otherwise he would have said, you know very interesting proposal, what does everyone else think. I knew that beforehand, so I knew not to go to him with something that I hadn't tested out with other people." Senior Manager, Energy sector

The same senior manager also explained:

"I have the ear of the Chief Executive, a very senior guy ... and am able to leverage that relationship." Senior Manager, Energy sector

This was supported by another manager:

"You need a senior manager at least two levels above the working level to be visible and championing what you do. You also need to know that your boss' peers are also supportive and if they're not then you need to be able to rely on your boss to help you." Director, Telecoms

Reflecting on the leaders in your organisation:

- How would you describe the level of support provided by senior managers for cross-functional working?
- What have you found to be the most effective technique for gaining senior level support?
- For high profile cross-functional projects does your organisation identify senior level champions?

Exhibit strong communication skills



Developing effective channels of communication and keeping them open is critical to working in a matrix. Our survey of matrix managers supported this, with 65 per cent indicating that 'being a skilled communicator' was important for leaders to operate effectively in a matrix organisation. As Proehl^{xvii} explains:

'since members working in a cross-functional team are likely to be dispersed across the company, without the benefit of frequent contact and communication, clearly identified points of contact are essential to keep members informed, focused and involved.'

Matrix leaders need to ensure there are plenty of opportunities for the free-flow of ideas, thoughts and concerns and the development of collective sense making. To this end they are likely to benefit from less agenda-led discussions and more informal networking and collaborating opportunities. Providing too much structure for communication may not achieve the desired outcome. Technology needs to be harnessed to support ideas generation and information sharing, for example the use of social networking tools. Our survey also identified that individuals working in a matrix need to be skilled communicators (62 per cent) showing clearly the view that matrix team members need to work collaboratively with the team leader to share their ideas and to support the flow of information across the team and more widely across the organisation.

Matrix leaders also need to have the ability to make their goals resonate with others, and create a compelling story that engages others, conveys their values and garners support. They will need to be comfortable, and open to, having challenging discussions, having the language and skills to be robust and assertive when discussing their needs with others, for example, shared resources, priorities and deadlines.

Reflecting on the leaders in your organisation:

- How effective are your leaders at sharing information with others. How well informed are you?
- When convincing others to collaborate are your leaders able to present a compelling story?
- Do your leaders avoid challenging discussions about resources and priorities or are they open to discussing conflicting views?

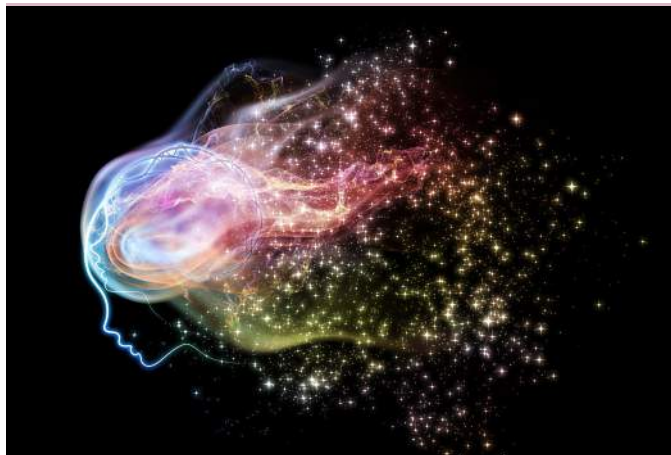
Watch out for leadership derailers:

- Drive for certainty and clarity, rather than building resilience to lead and manage in uncertainty
- Failure to pay attention to competing functional agendas in cross-functional teams
- Lack of attention given to the formation and group dynamics of new cross-functional teams
- Lack of senior level support for matrix teams and their objectives
- Failure to engage others or create a compelling story



Individual enablers

An individual's character, conviction, self-belief and ability to influence and communicate are key elements in discerning how effective they will be operating in a matrix.



Express personal conviction and ownership

48 per cent of our surveyed matrix managers identified 'expressing personal conviction and project ownership' as being important for individuals working in a matrix, a similar number (47%) indicated that it was important for leaders. These findings indicate that the matrix managers surveyed do not consider these behaviours to be as important as other behaviours, for example, building networks and demonstrating authenticity. However, the senior managers we interviewed as part of the research were clear in their view that a strong belief in what they were trying to achieve helped them influence and persuade others; an important skill in a matrix organisation because of the collaborative nature of the structure and the need to secure the support and cooperation of others. As one senior manager we spoke to demonstrated:

"My project within our business is the main factor behind growth and therefore naturally I have quite a lot of clout."
Senior Manager, Charity

This perspective is in stark contrast to the experience of another senior manager:

"I'm an operative and told to implement it: it becomes very difficult to influence, it becomes very difficult to be believable in terms of the words that come out of your mouth when you're pitching this to others." Senior Manager, Energy sector

In this statement we can see that a lack of agreement with the planned approach, in this case, a belief that it is not in the best interest of the business, created internal conflict and weakened the senior manager's ability to influence others.

Another senior manager we spoke to described how a strong belief in the business benefits of a project brought a clear focus:

"We always have the business at the heart of what we do. We go back and look at why we're doing this, what are the outcomes and what's the benefit to the business. And making sure you always go back to that, rather than just seeing it as, this is what I want to do and I'm going to do it, come hell or high water." Senior Manager, Retail

A strong personal belief in their skills, knowledge and abilities, and their ability to succeed also featured strongly in our discussions with the senior managers we spoke to. They identified self-belief as being crucial when convincing others to collaborate and offer support. This self-belief had many sources, from a strong professional or technical grounding, a strong track record with previous organisation or a strong knowledge and understanding of the history of the organisation.

"You haven't got direct authority to ask people to do things, it seems like there has to be something that comes from your inner strength, your inner belief in what you're doing. I'm very confident in my own capability"
Senior Manager, Charity

"I was doing something that was right, based on evidence that I had." Senior Manager, Energy sector

Reflecting on how you operate in your organisation:

- Which projects are easy to 'sell' to others and which projects are difficult?
- If the project is difficult to sell, do you lack personal belief or a clear line of sight to the business benefit?
- When collaborating, and seeking collaboration with others, are you certain how your effort brings clear business benefits?

Harness sources of personal power and influence



The ability to influence is a core skill when operating in a matrix, where traditional authority and power are likely to have less currency. Hall^{ix} argues that when individuals work in a matrix role their span of accountability tends to be broader than their span of control. This typically comes from the requirement to work across functional, geographical and sometimes organisational boundaries. In order to get things done matrix workers need to adopt a range of influencing techniques.

Traditional command and control forms of power, such as position and hierarchy are less likely to be effective in a matrix environment where relationships and collaboration are key. The sources of power that are most likely to create a positive form of engagement and therefore be effective in a matrix are approaches which:

- demonstrate an individual's beliefs and values
- demonstrate an individual's expertise, skills and abilities, building credibility
- build trust, respect and shared goals
- highlight the support received from other influential people

We found from our survey of matrix managers a lower support (46 per cent) for 'harnessing sources of personal power and influence' when operating in a matrix than for other behaviours. We suggest this view may be related to the variety of influence techniques that individuals can use, some of which may be considered manipulation rather than influence.

Cohen and Bradford^{iv} argue that there are many ways to categorise influence behaviour but all have exchange (give and take) at the heart of them because none of them succeed unless the receiver perceives a benefit of some kind. We have listed some of the key techniques below. When reading we ask you to consider the degree to which each approach is likely to build engagement, and the degree to which manipulation is being employed:

- consultation - building support by involving the person in the plan
- coalition - seeks the aid of others to persuade the person to do something, or uses the support of others as an argument
"It's about being able to say to them, what I've done is I've talked to X, Y and Z and run through it and they're comfortable with the approach we're taking. It's like you're taking three people in with you, rather than just yourself."
 Senior Manager, Retail
- rational persuasion - presenting a logical argument
"I took some findings, I delivered something and I launched it and I've implemented it and I'm getting feedback that it's making a difference. So it's hard then in terms of creating a compelling story for (the CEO) to be unhappy with that."
 Senior Manager, Energy sector

- inspirational appeal – aim to develop an emotional commitment by appealing to the person's values
- ingratiation - seeks to ensure the person thinks favourably of them before asking the person to do something
- personal appeal - selling something based on the effect it will have on the person emotionally
- coercive or pressure tactics - uses demands, threats, or intimidation to convince the person to comply. This is a less effective strategy as it tends to create unwilling compliance and resistance which is likely to be counter productive.

(adapted from Yukl and Falbe^{xiv})

Reflecting on how you operate in your organisation:

- What approaches do you typically use to influence others? Is it command and control or relationship and engagement? Which is the most effective?



Demonstrate
authenticity
and integrity

In the previous section we talked about the importance of influencing skills for individuals working in a matrix. Here we want to briefly consider the ethics of influence. Influence can be seen simply as 'communicating with a desired outcome' (Laborde^{xiii}). However, many see it differently, viewing it as behaving in a way which lacks transparency and openness, being underhand, playing politics or even manipulation. The senior managers we interviewed believed that individuals were most effective and influential in a matrix when they demonstrated personal authenticity and integrity, rather than being calculating. As one explained:

"If they feel you're doing the right thing and you have integrity, and [helping you] makes them feel good for a part of their day [because] they have done something for somebody else that they didn't need to. Director, Telecoms

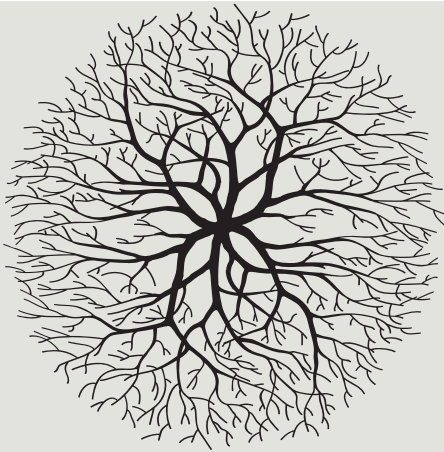
The senior managers we spoke to were clear, in order to persuade others to collaborate you need to demonstrate clear congruence between your thoughts and actions. The more 'Machiavellian', inauthentic approaches were mistrusted and were unlikely to gain the full support or investment of others. Our survey of matrix managers supported this finding with 53 per cent indicating that 'demonstrating authenticity and integrity' is important for individuals and 59 per cent indicating that it is important for leaders operating in a matrix. We believe that behaving with integrity is a highly important behaviour for managers to role model, but that equally it is not a quality that staff should seek from their managers at the expense of seeking it in themselves. This is the reason this behaviour has remained at the individual level in the enabler model.

This path is not always the easiest to follow and so our research identified that matrix workers also need courage. The courage to stand up for what they believe in and articulate their beliefs in an assertive manner.

"So it's that belief that what you're doing is the right thing. So having the imagination, having that courage, being able to call it out, being able to stand up and be counted." Senior Manager, Energy sector

Reflecting on how you operate in your organisation:

- Do you believe in what you are doing/delivering? Has this helped you achieve your goals?
- Do you know how others view your behaviour? Would others describe you as authentic, or highly political?



Build connections, collaborate and network

Matrix working is fundamentally about creating the conditions which support collaborative working. People who are able to build strong relationships will thrive in this environment. Our survey of matrix managers supported this view, with 64 per cent indicating that 'building connections, collaborating and networking' was important for individuals to work effectively in a matrix. 56 per cent also identified it as an important aspect of leadership in a matrix organisation.

One senior manager we interviewed spoke about the importance of matrix leaders identifying collaborators, stakeholders or influencers for their project, discovering what is important to them and clarifying their needs. Cohen and Bradford^{iv} support this approach and advise that:

'When you need something from someone who has no formal obligation to co-operate, begin by assessing whether you could form an alliance by discovering where there might be overlapping interests.'

As one senior manager explains, critical to any project discussion is understanding stakeholder drivers and agendas so you are able to identify potential areas of collaboration and conflict:

"It's all the time trying to think of it in that matrix, what does your stakeholder want? What will they think? Are they a supporter? Are they a derailer? Can they cause trouble? It's a very difficult space to operate in. You need to be mindful of people, position and power." Senior Manager, Energy Sector

Another explained the ground work required to gain the support of stakeholders:

You're constantly having to make what's massively important to you, someone else's priority, and quite often it isn't their priority. You spend a lot of your time influencing to get things done. It usually takes a hell of a lot of ground work and picking off stakeholders individually, before we even get a meeting to talk about something." HR Business Partner, Engineering organisation

Our research identified that it is also important to harness peer group support and develop advocates. Highly effective matrix workers have extensive networks which they can leverage to extend their sphere of influence. As one senior manager explains:

"[Jane] absolutely knows everybody, so I would use her to deliver that message, rather than try and go in myself. I think it is about knowing where you can utilise existing relationships, even if it is outside your own sphere, to actually get what you need done." Senior Manager, Retail

Talking further about building a wide network of influencers:

"It's about saying to people, it would be great if you could start having these conversations because it will start to generate interest. Therefore we are using these wider networks as contacts to start those conversations." Senior Manager, Retail

Another senior manager spoke about identifying managers who are likely to be most challenging and involving them in the project:

“because if you can convince them you’re doing a great job, and then if they become advocates their colleagues are more likely to listen to them because they know they’re the ones who normally pick up all the tiny little bits that are not quite right, and if they’re saying they are happy with it, then they are usually happy with it.” Senior Manager, Retail

Reflecting on collaboration in your organisation:

- What processes and resources exist to support networking across the organisation?
- Who are the people around you who could be effective advocates to extend your sphere of influence?
- Do you begin each project identifying key stakeholders and potential derailers to involve/influence?

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE: NETWORKING TO BUILD MARKET INTELLIGENCE

One senior manager spoke about a colleague, ‘Sarah’, who she described as someone who is very well networked and whose colleagues describe her as ‘knowing absolutely everybody’. She has built up her network because, in her role as head of a business unit, she has supported managers across the organisation. She makes it her business to gain a good insight into each function, the key players, their ambitions and challenges. This makes her well placed to support other managers working in the matrix to deliver key organisational messages. Sarah would know immediately who to talk to and whose support is required to ensure success of the project – this, the senior manager referred to, as market intelligence, being clear about your target audience, who is interested, who is not interested, who is on the fringes. At times this has meant them deliberately targeting the derailers to convince them to be involved, with the aim of them becoming highly persuasive advocates for the project.

Watch out for individual derailers:

- Lack of conviction or belief in what you are trying to achieve
- Inauthentic behaviour, or individuals lacking integrity
- Silo working
- The use of positional power or coercion tactics to achieve objectives rather than influence





Top Tips for Leading and Living in a Matrix

- Network, network, network. Build a wide and diverse peer group with whom you can discuss ideas and ask to influence on your behalf. Think of every work day activity as an opportunity to meet someone new, or develop a stronger relationship with a previous acquaintance. Use social media, formal and informal channels of communication to stay connected and informed.
- Be transparent in your motivations. Be authentic. Articulate clearly and confidently how and why your approach is the right one for the business as a whole. Make your goal and vision meaningful for others to share.
- Know your stakeholders, their ambitions and challenges. Have one-to-one conversations with senior and influential stakeholders to secure high level support. Create champions.
- Be clear about your objectives and map these to the needs of your stakeholders and peers.
- Regularly review project needs, resources, responsibilities and priorities to reduce ambiguity and conflict. Become skilled at having assertive, productive conversations with other managers.
- Harness your sources of power to engage others. Demonstrate expertise. Be values-driven and build trusting relationships.
- Role model lateral communication and collaborative working. Consciously create time to support others in different parts of the business.
- Develop your communication skills. Be informed and share information widely. Be engaging. Present a compelling reason for others to collaborate with you and be courageous when faced with opposition.
- Be an enabler. Champion the team successes and achievements, articulate clearly how the team's endeavours are making a difference to the business.
- Invest time supporting and building trust within your team. Where possible, personally select or recruit team members. Develop a super-ordinate goal that integrates the different perspectives, values, needs and expectations of team members. Focus on building a climate of trust, particularly at the early stages of team formation.
- Carefully select which projects to collaborate on (and which to not). Faster and more flexible decision making is possible within matrix teams when project teams have the authority to make decisions and have the key people involved in the team. Ensure unnecessary stakeholder involvement does not result in slow decision making.
- Create opportunities to move around the organisation, build cross-functional knowledge of the organisation and develop relationships.

Top Tips for OD & HR professionals building an effective matrix organisation

- Review organisational strategy, culture and processes to ensure they are aligned and support matrix working.
- Ensure organisational vision and values are shared across the organisation, and provide a common purpose which galvanizes, focuses and legitimises cross-functional working.
- Build a culture which supports project team working, informal networking and collaboration. Ensure there are strong lateral/horizontal communication channels.
- Ensure that staff are engaged and supportive of collaborative working, as are technology and physical working conditions. Explicitly value time spent (within the working day) networking and relationship building.
- Ensure reward systems:
 - value collaborative effort equally to individual success (team bonuses or gain-sharing systems)
 - value delivery of organisation-wide projects equally to functional responsibilities
 - value job roles which ‘manage’ stakeholders, peers and cross-functional teams equally to roles which have direct line management of staff
- Ensure competency frameworks:
 - define leadership as a collaborative and enabling activity
 - value diversity - functional, regional, cultural etc.
 - highlight the importance of being authentic and acting with integrity
 - explicitly acknowledge dual management responsibilities, including reducing ambiguity, allocating resources and agreeing areas of authority
 - ensure collaboration, communication and negotiation are core competencies at all levels and for all functions
- Assess, select and promote staff who demonstrate:
 - resilience
 - flexibility and adaptability
 - collaborative style
 - conflict management skills
 - influencing and negotiating skills
- Recognise the complex, uncertain and dynamic organisational environment and provide opportunities for informal networking, learning sharing and idea generation to allow bottom-up processes to emerge
- Review high potential leadership development schemes which offer job rotation, to ensure they explicitly value lateral career progression and provide opportunities to develop a breadth of knowledge outside an individual’s functional area of expertise. This will encourage cross-fertilisation of ideas, the development of informal networks of contacts and relationships, as well as flexibility and breadth of experience.
- Articulate the benefits of working cross functionally – they can be a win-win for the organisation and the individuals involved. Encourage managers to participate in organisation-wide projects as they are likely to become more knowledgeable about strategy and operations and therefore be able to contribute more effectively and productively. Equally, working in cross-functional teams typically provides opportunities for personal development, learning and growth, for innovation and, in some cases, career development.
- Invest in social technologies that help people interact, share information and find people with whom to collaborate.
- Invest in team development. Roffey Park’s 2014 Management Agenda^{xiv} research found that team development was a low priority for organisations, for example, only 6 per cent of HR managers reported that building high performance teams was a pressing OD issue. Similar levels of resources to those invested in leadership development⁴ should be spent on team development, with a priority focus on the initial forming stages of teams, building shared goals and trust.

4 The Financial Times in 2004 found leading European companies spent on average £3,336 per participant per year on executive education

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Appendix I

In our Management Agenda research 2015 we tested out Roffey Park's enabler model for effective matrix working. Of 1191 respondents just over half (625) said they worked in a matrix team or matrix organisation⁵. We presented our enabler factors in a random order and asked respondents to indicate which factors were the most important for working effectively in a matrix – at an organisational level, as a leader, and as an individual.

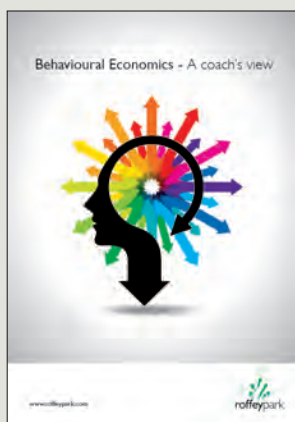
	Organisational Level	Leadership Level	Individual Level
Having an aligned strategy, culture and HR processes which support matrix working	82.6%	37.1%	28.5%
Managing conflict and reducing ambiguity	23.7%	64.7%	30.9%
Expressing personal conviction and project ownership	11.6%	47.4%	47.5%
The organisation espousing strong collaborative values	68.2%	31.4%	20.4%
Developing stable and trusting teams	32.5%	65.4%	29.3%
Harnessing sources of personal power and influence	13.0%	39.9%	46.2%
Articulating a clear organisational vision	63.4%	55.4%	17.5%
Building connections, collaborating and networking	30.8%	55.8%	64.3%
Demonstrating authenticity and integrity	31.1%	58.6%	53.2%
Securing senior level support	23.0%	49.6%	36.5%
Being a skilled communicator	29.5%	64.9%	62.2%
	Base: 569	Base: 561	Base: 543

⁵ A matrix structure was defined as "one where there are multiple reporting lines. It typically includes cross functional forms of working that cross the traditional vertical business units of function and geography".

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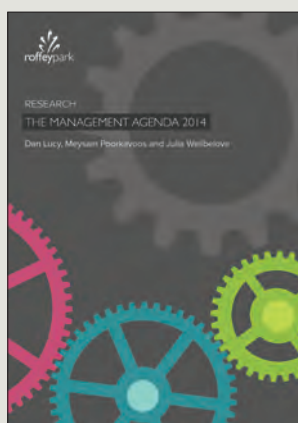
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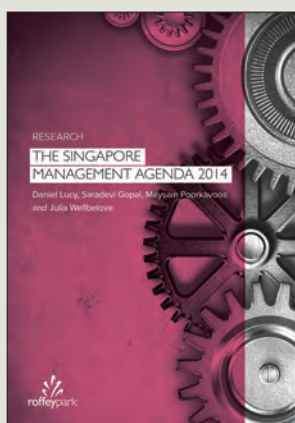
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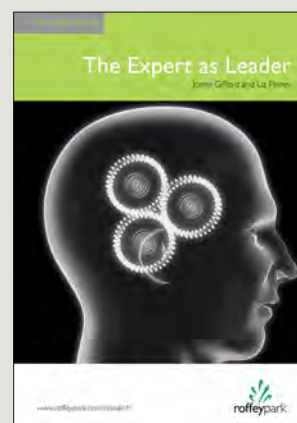
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Why are some organisations better at implementing a matrix way of working?

How are some leaders more effective at operating in a matrix environment than others?

What can you do, as a leader or as an HR/OD professional, to support matrix working in your organisation?

Matrix working is rapidly becoming part of everyday life for many professionals. Leaders are increasingly being required to work across regional and functional boundaries. Clear lines of authority and control are being replaced by the need to deliver projects collaboratively. The ability to be resilient, to network, influence, communicate and build alliances are some of the tools of the trade for today's leaders operating in a matrix.

In this research, we share with you an enabler model for effective matrix working which outlines the key organisational, leadership and individual characteristics that enable matrix working to succeed and we provide some top tips on how to live and thrive in a matrix.

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