ORGANISATIONS THAT TRANSFORM

Singing CHORUS 1:
Holding Collaborative Promise Delivery Forums with Staff

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Abstract for Each of the MaCoTra Seven-CHORUS-Article CHAIN

This article has its genesis in my doctoral study with the University of South Africa’s (UNISA) School of Business Leadership (SBL) from 2001 to 2003. An electronic version of the thesis is available on the UNISA Institutional Repository. Twelve (12) books have since been self-published – four (4) in 2011, seven (7) in 2012 and one (1) in 2013. Seventeen (17) articles, derived from the study, are available on the University of Zimbabwe Institutional Repository since 2013.

The overarching lens for all works is the Madzivire Collaborative Transformation (MaCoTra) model developed during my UNISA study. The MaCoTra model is based on the metaphor of seven (7) CHORUSES. Each of the model CHORUSES constitutes one (1) book of the MaCoTra Seven-CHORUS-Book CHAIN, self-published in 2012, and an article forming the MaCoTra Seven-CHORUS-Article CHAIN. The structure of each of the 7 articles is meant to ease referencing across the Seven-CHORUS-Article CHAIN. Article 1 covers new insights on CHORUS 1, Article 2 on CHORUS 2, Article 3 on CHORUS 3, Article 4 on CHORUS 4, Article 5 on CHORUS 5, Article 6 on CHORUS 6 and Article 7 on CHORUS 7.

Having made a random selection of thirteen (13) private sector, eleven (11) public sector and eleven (11) civic sector organisations for inclusion in the Seven-CHORUS-Article CHAIN and Seven-CHORUS-Book CHAIN, I documented my experiences in applying each CHORUS in these organisations from 2003 to 2012. I relied heavily on documents that I accessed and/or created during my consulting assignments. After a sector based analysis, I have included major reflections that I consider relevant in understanding the dynamics at play for each CHORUS. In some cases, I have also leaned on ‘words of wisdom’ from thought leaders to spice the reflections.

I believe that the organisations sampled reflected polar types in the way they engaged in CHORUS 1. Of course, there have been discords particularly when some organisational members did not fully cuddle in CHOIR or CHORUS practice.

I trust that the Seven-CHORUS-Article CHAIN will energise those scholars/practitioners who have been questioning how to apply the MaCoTra model. This preface is a MODIFIED MELODY to suit each of the 7 articles, much like a CHORUS!!!

This article features new insights on; and a generic framework for SINGING; MaCoTra CHORUS 1: Holding Collaborative Promise Delivery Forums with Staff.

1.0 Introduction

The overarching frame for this article is the Madzivire Collaborative Transformation (MaCoTra) model (Exhibit 1). The MaCoTra model is also reflected in my 2011 book publication entitled MaCoTra Singing ORGANISATIONS THAT TRANSFORM: ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES in the Emerging Economy of Zimbabwe and each book of the Seven-CHORUS-Book CHAIN self-published in 2012.

Outlining the CHORUS-based MaCoTra model differentiating features, I indicate:

The MaCoTra model encapsulates the transformation song composed of seven CHORUSES for the organizational choir.

Each CHORUS may be sung on its own and also in combination with any one or more of the other CHORUSES. This means an organization may transform as a result of work on one or more CHORUSES.

Further, from a systems perspective, each CHORUS is a subsystem of suprasystem - the total MaCoTra model. In this regard, whatever is done to any one of the CHORUS subsystems affects the other subsystems and has an effect on the suprasystem.
What the MaCoTra model advocates is for each organizational member to go beyond singing individual CHORUSES. MaCoTra invites all organizational members to synchronize the CHORUSES resulting in a melodious overarching organizational choir – the transformation itself.

The MaCoTra colour coding stresses that diversity has to be celebrated as part of organizational transformation.

What a way to celebrate it through any combination of the seven MaCoTra song CHORUSES, and dance!

I also prescribe the MaCoTra Model for companies in Zimbabwe.

Sources: Madzivire (2003) & Madzivire (2011:76)

Exhibit 1: The Madzivire Collaborative Transformation (MaCoTra) Model

This article is the FIRST of a Seven-CHORUS-Article CHAIN (Exhibit 2), related to **MaCoTra CHORUS 1: HOLDING COLLABORATIVE PROMISE DELIVERY FORUMS WITH STAFF.**

Exhibit 2: The MaCoTra Seven-CHORUS-Article Chain

Source: Nyashadzaseh Benjamin Madzivire’s 2012 Artistic Impressions
The article is a ‘Symphony of the MaCoTra CHORUS 1 Experiences in the Three Sectors’ from 2003 to 2012’ in which I summarise the major experiences I had applying MaCoTra CHORUS 1. In this CHORUS 1 article, I provide further insights on this CHORUS given what I covered in my doctoral thesis and subsequent publications. Organisations, some places/features/products/services and participants have been code-named for anonymity. Where experiences have been drawn from the same organisation, its code name has been retained throughout the Seven-CHORUS-Article CHAIN. This is meant for those readers who are interested in appreciating the interfaces in experiences in that organisation across some or all of the seven (7) MaCoTra CHORUSES.

1.1 An Overview of MaCoTra CHORUS 1

MaCoTra CHORUS 1 involves, upfront, each employee clarifying personal values and sharing them in a forum. Such a forum also provides an opportunity for values alignment at team, unit, and organisational level. Where the organisation is a public entity, such values alignment would reflect a national, African and even a world view.

Capturing the values aligned should include expressing them in a song. Such singing deepens appreciation and ownership of the values. The values songs also energise individuals as they use these to develop destiny, cause, calling, vision and mission statements as well as strategies together with their supportive structures. This enhances LIVING the values.

In my earlier work, I summarised CHORUS 1 in two paragraphs:

Through the collaborative forums, there is a shift from sharing organisational values and an organisational vision to sharing values and visions. This lays a solid platform for exploring the burning issues as fear and anxiety will have been eliminated through the process. Staff are prepared to participate in the next CHORUSES as sacred contributors.

What is critically important is that staff be given an opportunity to indicate what they would wish to be given by the company for them to call it the best company. Each time a competitor catches up in terms of compensation packages, the company draws one item from the wish list and creates more value in terms of compensation systems. The wish list affords the company an opportunity to be distinctive by being one step ahead of competitors in terms of people care.


The most noteworthy issue across the three sectors was VALUES. Although they were drawn from individual uniqueness, the values would fall under Rubeinstein & Grundy’s (1999:157) broad observations and classification:

At the core of every organization are values. Values are the ideas, beliefs and ways of doing things that are universally considered important by people involved with the organization. They can be operational in nature such as efficiency, speed, quality. They can be moralistic in nature such as fair, honest, trustworthy. They can be forward looking such as futuristic or historically based such as traditional. They can be practical such as reliable and dependable.

Source: Rubeinstein & Grundy (1999:157)

The sector in which an organisation was may have had a great influence over what individuals espoused as personal values.
1.2 **Rhythm of the MaCoTra CHORUS 1 Experiences in Private Sector Organisations**

A good number of private sector organisations held collaborative forums before strategic planning sessions. Where there was total involvement, employees forged more trusting relationships. Others preferred to engage all staff after aligning a critical mass of top leaders, including workers’ committee representatives. The results were also positive.

Those organisations that established effective transformational strategy implementation teams and active human capital (HC) professionals have made employee engagement part of the HC agenda through the teams.

What was striking was how some leaders wanted to force in some values, arguing that values were industry specific. I had to warn them about RoseAnn Stevenson’s content analysis of values statements as highlighted by Kouzes & Posner’s (1995:216):

> Despite finding nineteen commonly identified values, Stevenson saw little agreement on the meaning of each of these values statements. She found, for example, that there were 185 different behavioural expectations around the value of integrity alone. Stevenson’s findings that specific interpretations of values vary by organization point out how necessary it is for leaders to engage their constituents in a dialogue about values. A common understanding of values comes about through that dialogue; it emerges from a process, not a pronouncement. After all, if there’s no agreement about values, then what exactly is the leader-and everyone else-going to model?

**Source:** Kouzes & Posner (1995:216)

Interestingly, integrity appeared with a high frequency in this sector. The description of this value varied from organisation to organisation based on the personal values that individuals had aligned to it. So was the case with any of the values.

Values in this sector showed a mixture of operational and moral orientations.

The perspectives in “organisation” were structured like in the military with a heavy blending of organisation development.

1.3 **Rhythm of the MaCoTra CHORUS 1 Experiences in Public Sector Organisations**

The level of collaborative engagement of staff in promise delivery forums ranged from minimal to total. In one case only two employee representatives were accommodated by managers and top leaders. At the very best, there was multi-stakeholder engagement after partial/total staff participation.

Of the three sectors, the public sector was most responsive to the demands in CHORUS 1.

In one organisation, department-based engagement of staff was followed by department representatives/technocrats interfacing with elected leaders. I experienced a hurling of insults from elected leaders directed at technocrats that were suggestive of irreconcilable differences between the two parties.
Follow-up conflict resolution sessions that were suggested never materialised as some of the concerned individuals entrenched their positions.

I had to rely on my knowledge of techniques of boundary spanning to manage such hostile situations. Management of conversations is critical in such events to avoid being side-tracked or sucked into dysfunctional conflicts.

The values in this sector were predominantly morally inclined with a sprinkling of some practical.

Generally, the slant taken in “organisation” was more sociological, in some cases legal.

1.4 Rhythm of the MaCoTra CHORUS 1 Experiences in Civic Sector Organisations

Most of the civic sector organisations infused employee engagement into CHORUS 7. What was apparent was that any form of employee alignment had to respect personal values. The values depicted more of moral positions.

Only one organisation had a national chapter that had time to engage in conversations related to my STOP/START/CONTINUE exercises. The rich data was used for environmental scanning as part of the strategic planning workshop.

The manner in which the entities were organised for employee engagement had more of either an organisational development or psychological orientation.

2.0 Singing MaCoTra CHORUS 1

The varied perceptions about the term “organisation” across sectors reminded me of a paragraph by Rubenstein & Grundy (1999:153) to the effect:

There are many definitions of an organization. The lawyer says that an organization is a series of contracts. The sociologist says that an organization is a system of behaviour governed by a distinct culture. The organizational development specialist says that an organization is a system of defined relationships with the participants working toward a common goal or set of goals. The psychologist says that an organization is a number of persons or groups with specific responsibilities and united for some purpose or work. The military commander says that an organization is an ordered, fixed set of relationships with specific roles, authorities and objectives. The linguist says that an organization is a set of purposeful conversations.

Source: Rubenstein & Grundy (1999:153)

Agreeing with what Rubenstein & Grundy (1999:153) further indicate that “the linguist wins”, I have come up with the MaCoTra CHORUS 1 Generic Framework (Exhibit 3) from my summary experiences.
For this CHORUS to take solid effect, internal and/or external consultants have to engage organisational members in purposeful/productive conversations in each area of the *MaCoTra CHORUS 1 Generic Framework*.

I have found that a good entry point is conversations to establish what an organisation should STOP/START/CONTINUE doing to remain relevant. This is more effective in focus groups/small groups during the engagement sessions. The data should be captured raw. An impression of the status of the brand is got from employees indicating the CAR representing the entity NOW and what they want it to become in some stated future, such as five years, and WHY.

Such raw data will constitute issues in the circle of concern. An interrogation of the issues will make entities relate to the concerns. Thus, conversations for relationships will have begun.

The conversations will be elevated to the next level – conversations for possibilities. The idea is to consciously isolate those issues the entities have influence over. When this is done, these issues will then have been dragged into the circle of influence.

A further digestion of these issues in the circle of influence becomes conversations for opportunities.
The opportunities need to be distilled further so that those falling in the centre of focus are acted on. Such purposeful cross-examination means that conversations for actions and conversations for results will be only for those issues that will have survived to land as focus areas.

The implication of Exhibit 3 is that there is need for organisations to take on values-based collaborative capacity and capability enhancement to apply this framework

This is where MaCoTra CHORUS 7 becomes handy.

MaCoTra (Pvt) Ltd avails this service!!!

REFERENCES


**FOR FURTHER READING**


