Chapter 3

SUBJECTIVE DECISION STRUCTURES
Where the Decision-Maker Owns the Decision

3.1 DECISIONS THAT PEOPLE OWN PERSONALLY

This chapter considers the important special case where the decision is personally owned by the decision-maker in the sense that he or she does not feel a pull from anyone to decide in a particular way, or that there should be any guilt because of deciding differently to what someone else might want.

Chapter Two introduced the Planning/Putting and People/Place Dichotomies as the foundation of all decision processes in the mind, and the basis for all methodologies and systems. This means that generally in a company one should expect to see a lot of planning and putting, both in the place of the company and amongst its people. The Balance Axiom implies that the four general activities proposition, perception, pull and push should tend to appear equally often. From the point of view of decision-making in general there should be no essential difference between them.

An important group of exceptions arises where the people in the people/place dichotomy, whether as individuals or a group, have ownership of the decision themselves. Obvious cases are decisions about one’s career, or about relationships with others. It can apply more broadly to projects where the decision-makers must make judgements based on what they themselves think and feel, and not defer to the views of others. Others may offer advice or criticism, but not interfere, because they do not share ownership and responsibility for the decision.
Where an individual or group of decision-makers themselves have ownership over a decision, then guilt cannot arise because guilt arises only when the decision-makers are not pulling with the other people who have a valid reason to share ownership of the decision. In this case the decision-maker is also the “decision owner” and makes a “subjective” decision.

An “objective” decision is where people who are independent of the decision-maker have a valid vested interest in sharing control over its outcome. Take the case where I have just destroyed a painting I do not like. The subjective case is where I have completed the painting a few minutes ago, and feel unhappy with it. It was badly done and I am about to do a better job. It is my own affair, so I do not feel guilt about destroying it. The objective case could be that I have been paid already for doing the painting for a client who wants it immediately. Or maybe I work as a curator in an art gallery and I have destroyed a national treasure. In such cases I should feel guilt about destroying it because others are involved in its ownership.

The decision whether the decision-maker will be objectively or subjectively involved in the decision is made after considering the second dichotomy: place versus people. At this point it will be clear who are the relevant people in the decision and whether they correspond to the decision-maker(s) themselves. Also, the four phases of decision activity will have been considered with respect to the problem. Consequently, the four primary feelings will be evident, including guilt, which is the touchstone for determining if the decision-maker’s involvement is objective.

Axiom 9 “Who”: The third dichotomy relates to the question who possesses the problem. If the people in the second dichotomy that are central to the decision do not correspond to the decision-maker then his or her involvement will be primarily objective in character, in which case he or she can feel at some distance from the problem. If the decision-maker owns the problem then his or her involvement will be more subjective, in which case he or she cannot self-impose a feeling of guilt about not dealing with the problem.

This assertion is the most important discovery that I have made. The reason I use axioms and principles to present the frameworks in this book is because one cannot prove them. You can only assert them on the basis of how settled practice appears to consistently support the whole system and its individual parts. They must, of course, have intuitive appeal. At this point the reader should focus first on either one or the other, that is on following the logic presented here first and then looking at the methodologies and systems in practice, or alternatively, look at the cases and then return to the discussion.
If the decision-maker is *subjectively* involved, and consequently *guilt* is absent as a primary feeling in the decision process, then it follows that the associated attributes must also be missing. The appropriate response to *guilt* is *righteousness*. Acting *rightly* is *objective* in the sense that the decision-maker tries to take account of what he or she thinks is right in the eyes of the community. The maker of a *subjective* decision does not see a poor decision as a reason for having *guilt* in one’s relationship with the community. The decision-maker alone is the loser and carries the main consequences of any bad decision. The question of acting wrongly in someone else’s eyes does not arise. The decision-maker develops a *perception* about what to do and acts accordingly. Mistakes may be made, but usually these can be traced to an incorrect *perception* of what should be done. That does not mean that there are never regrets about a decision. It is just that the decision-maker will see it as no one else’s business and responsibility to make that decision.

The *subjective* decision-maker feels no *guilt* primarily because there is no group pulling him or her to implement the plan. The *pull* activity corresponds to building the motivation in someone else to *put* the *plan* into effect, or to taking account of the *pull* from others to do what they wish. Immediately one reaches the *pull* phase it vanishes because the decision-maker(s) and the people involved are one and the same. Literally one cannot simultaneously be the *subject* and object of a motivating or *pull* activity. When one has ownership of a decision there is no outside person looking over one’s shoulder trying to pull one in a particular direction to satisfy some particular community.

**Axiom 10 “Subjective”:** With *subjective* decision-making the *pull* activity becomes irrelevant.

There still will be the need for a *push* activity, but its focus will be on the *place* where the changes need to be made, and on building the energy to overcome the obstacles that exist in that *place*.

The Subjective Axiom is the most important in this book. It differentiates between the two most important branches of decision-making. The biggest mistake people make with decision structures is to confuse or mix the two. Having described many cases that have all four phases we finished Chapter Two by describing the main feelings and responses that are associated with each phase. People best identify which phase they are in through how they feel about the decision. We start this chapter by focusing on the feelings aspect. *Subjective* decision-making is characterised by being *guilt-free*. 
3.1.1 Fear-Anxiety-Resentment
Faith-Hope-Love

Dropping the pull activity in the context of subjective decision-making eliminates the primary feeling of guilt. Correspondingly the primary feelings drop to Fear, Anxiety and Resentment, and their associated responses to Faith, Hope and Love, which are well known to Christians. Initially there is a fear of failure, that the project is unmanageable. Then it relies on the decision-maker’s inner resources, to overcome his or her anxieties about it. Finally it depends on the commitment to bring the development to fruition.

3.1.2 Theory X-Theory Y

The difference between objective and subjective decision-making is characterised by the relative presence or absence of guilt. An example is Douglas McGregor’s [1] Theory X and Theory Y as differing management styles. “Theory X” is an authoritarian management style that relies too much on directing the employee, i.e. on the pull activity, and using guilt along with threats of punishment as a motivator. “Theory Y” is a participative management style in which ownership of the organisation’s objectives is shared with employees. “Theory Y” is now generally accepted as more successful at motivating employees’ commitment and interest in their work.

3.2 SUBJECTIVE LEVELS

Having ownership of the decision frees the decision-maker to focus more intensely on the phases of the decision and less on ensuring a there is a balance between them. This leads to the emphasis on completing one phase before progressing to the next.

In the context of developing a business or academic project, one’s career, or a relationship, what one proposes to do puts the focus first on what one needs to succeed, without which there would be the fear of failure. The attention then moves to perceptions about how to proceed, which, in the subjective case, are about one’s preferences. The final phase focuses on pushing to achieve whatever is consistent with one’s values, those aspects of ourselves that are most important.

Subjective decision-making is best described as a development process because it builds on what has already been established. The phases operate as levels, as each layer is completed another can commence.
3. Subjective Decision Structures

Axiom 11 “Levels”: With subjective decision-making the phases correspond to levels of a development process.

Development processes can apply to any kind of project that is subjectively “owned” by the decision-maker. It could be one’s business, or an academic project, one’s career, or a relationship. Often, the way that one knows them to be subjective is if they are built level by level.

The activities associated with the first level are about ensuring that one has the required resources. A business needs capital. An academic project is built on previous research. A career requires talents. Relationships need common interests to develop. Projects, whether they are houses or financial investments, must have secure foundations.

Having fulfilled one’s needs, I then must decide what I will do, and how they fit my preferences both for myself and for the project. In the final phase, in which one’s values are dominant, the activities focus on bringing the project into being, and putting one’s being into the project.

Corresponding to these activities is a set of aspirations. A new project involves getting the resources it needs or the person wants before starting. Then, with regard to preferences, will I like the proposed business, career or relationship? Would I enjoy doing this kind of work? Would I be able to contribute to this area of research? Would I be happy in such a relationship? Paying attention to one’s feelings is crucial to building successful businesses, careers and relationships. The aspirations associated with the final phase are one’s aims and goals. The subjective decision-maker tends to look within him or herself and ensure that these aims fit one’s values.

With each phase the commitment to the project increases. Initially the focus is on low-level issues such as needs and wants. Then it becomes a medium-level matter of working out feelings and preferences. Commitment is at its highest when pushing for a result that the decision-maker feels subjectively is very important. The decision-maker decides when each phase is completed and when to progress to the next phase.
Table 3.1. General Subjective Decision Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Push</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responses</td>
<td>Proposition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspirations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Terms Used</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in Marketing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-Factor Consumption</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Aspects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressions of Will</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Brien</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mintzberg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herzberg Two-Factor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alderfer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maslow-type Hierarchies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Compact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialectic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Push</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Resentment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs</td>
<td>Preferences</td>
<td>Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have / Having</td>
<td>Do / Doing</td>
<td>Be / Being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get / Want</td>
<td>Like / Feelings</td>
<td>Goals / Aims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is / Knowing</td>
<td>Feeling</td>
<td>Willing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognition</td>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>Conation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief</td>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>Behaviour / Intention / Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand Problem or Opportunity</td>
<td>Develop a Solution</td>
<td>Implement a Solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hygiene</td>
<td>Motivator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existence</td>
<td>Relatedness</td>
<td>Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiological / Safety</td>
<td>Belongingess / Social / Esteem</td>
<td>Self-Actualisation / Spiritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis</td>
<td>Antithesis</td>
<td>Synthesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2.1 Knowing-Feeling-Willing
Cognition-Affect-Conation

Philosophers in the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} Centuries wrestled with these ideas. The dominant philosophies were objective, with a great emphasis on right and wrong. Society was very hierarchical. People were generally under authority, whether in politics, the army, religion, business, or in families. There was less control over one’s lives, less personal ownership of one’s decisions. The idea that people should do what they felt like was treated with suspicion.

It is now quite common for people to discuss their decisions about a project in subjective terms as follows: first, do you know what you want, secondly, do you like it, and thirdly is it right.

The German philosopher Kant (1724 - 1804) \cite{2}\cite{3}\cite{4} is credited \cite{5} as the first to articulate this three levels-based system that has so influenced management theory and practice. He first made a distinction between the “Knowing” and “Willing” levels. These differentiated “What is” from
3. Subjective Decision Structures

“What ought to be” such as morality, ethics, will and values. Later he proposed that there was an intermediate “Feeling” level.

Use of the term “Cognition” for knowing is widespread. People comfortably use the terms “Cognitive Capacity” and “Cognitive Function” to describe the corresponding (subjective) aspect of a person in a more general way. In a similar way “Affect” is commonly used for subjective feelings as in “how did that experience “affect” you?” as distinct from what do you feel about some new product. “Affect” is generally used in consumer behaviour and marketing. It makes sense to use “Cognition” and “Affect” because “Knowing” and “Feeling” are very general words that could apply to objective as well as subjective decisions.

The earliest term used for the third level is “Conation”, meaning “Exertive” or “Willing” (REFERENCE, OED online reference to conative). “Conation” is rarely used outside academic circles. However, it does not make sense to use the words “Cognition” and “Affect” without a similar corresponding word for the third aspect. This requires an understanding that the full set “Cognitive”, “Affective” and “Conative” are three levels or phases of subjective decision-making. Morris et al.[6] show this understanding in their study of the interactions between the three corresponding kinds of attitude when predicting intentions to purchase. Generally in marketing there is confusion about the meaning of the terms and a tendency towards over-simplification and reductionism.

3.2.2 Poor Academic Practices

The following comments are more intended for academics and could be skipped by practitioners. The concepts in this chapter are the most complex and intangible in the book. In particular “Conation” is highly elusive. It is understandable that there has been confusion. But this has been exacerbated by poor academic practice, specifically reductionism, poor citing, chain referencing and concept mixing.

3.2.2.1 Reductionism of the Subjective Levels

The three subjective levels are part of a most fundamental thinking process that functions at a very deep level. Its relevance to simpler processes such as consumer purchasing has led to reductionism of the terms “Cognition”, “Affect” and “Conation” in marketing, i.e. over-simplifying them and reducing them to concepts that lose some of their meaning.

Park and Mittal[7] used “Belief” (cognition), “Attitude” (affect) and “Behaviour” (conation) in a hierarchy of effects model in consumer behaviour. Initially the match seems reasonable. However, as we have seen
above, there can be three kinds of attitude. The same could apply to behaviour. One could have cognitive behaviour or affective behaviour, not just conative.

Park and Mittal suggested that, for low involvement consumption, the sequence changes to “Belief–Behaviour–Attitude”. Certainly, when a consumer has a low involvement in a product the “Cognitive”, “Affective” and “Conative” attitudes to the decision to buy probably would be tentative, and difficult to measure. With a relatively inexpensive purchase that a consumer was considering adopting for regular consumption there might be very little subjective activity of any sort initially. The formation of attitudes might come later. Suggesting that the “Conative” aspect should precede the “Affective” or “Feelings” aspect within the consumer shows a lack of understanding of its “Willing” meaning.

3.2.2.2 Poor Citing

A researcher should be able to check the citations in an article to previous articles, and so on back either to original concepts or to proven research. But each depends on the quality of the citation. Examples of poor citing include the absence of references and statements such as “this is well-known” or “this comes from philosophy”. Another is crossover citing, where citations from one field are used in a different field.

Poor citation practices appear to have caused the dilution of the meaning of the word “Conation”. The use in marketing of the word “Behaviour” for “Conation” may be due to its introduction by Breckler[8] in an article on the components of attitudes to snakes, who cited its having been called “Policy” in an article about attitudes to Russia by Smith (1947)[9]

Scott et al.[10] claimed incorrectly and without reference that the “Cognition-Affect-Conation” structure came from Plato. Lavidge and Steiner[11] described it as a “classic psychological model”; but their article had no references at all.

3.2.2.3 Chain Referencing

Chain referencing is where articles take on ideas from previously cited articles, and these do the same from earlier ones, without a critical evaluation of each article cited. Each such generation can dilute the understanding of the concepts that might have been in the original references.

An example is Lavidge and Steiner’s article[11], which is referred to in an article by Smith and Swinyard[12], who concluded that, under different circumstances, purchase “Trial” can occur at different points in the
“Cognition-Affect-Conation” sequence. The problem with this is not the conclusion. Clearly people buy some products at any stage of developing a subjective commitment, and often after relatively little thought or feeling. The flaw was to conclude that the structure of the decision process should be modified.

Barry and Howard [13] cited Lavidge and Steiner[11], and then Vakratsas and Ambler[14] cited both in an article in which they replaced “Conation” by “Experience”. They concluded that “Cognition”, “Affect” and “Experience” do not operate as a hierarchy, i.e. are not three levels or stages in a process. This is true in the sense that word “Experience” does not complement “Cognition” and “Effect”. One could have cognitive and affective experiences.

3.2.2.4 Concept Mixing

Concept mixing is where people integrate different ideas under the flawed assumption that they are the same.

In both the Smith and Swinyard[12] and the Vakratsas and Ambler[14](1999) articles the authors cited the advertising model: “Attention-Interest-Desire-Action” (AIDA)[15], which was shown in Chapter Two to have an objective structure. This means that it was incompatible with the subjective structure, which was the main focus of these papers.

The only way that this could work would be as a combination of two dimensions, a subjective consideration of one’s thoughts and feelings about the purchase combined with an objective evaluation of the product itself. Vakratsas and Ambler[14] (1999) may have been thinking along such lines when they proposed that “Cognition”, “Affect”, and “Experience” should be studied as three dimensions. If this is the case it means that they were interpreting “experience” less as an aspect of “Conation” and more as an example of “action” from AIDA.

3.2.3 Utilitarian-Hedonic

The dilution of the meaning of “Conation” to the point of disappearance occurred in article by Hirschman and Holbrook[16], who cite the Scott et al.[10] structure as having come from Plato. They suggested that these constructs were “doubtless recognizable to most marketing researchers as … belief, affect and intention”[16]. They focused on the affect aspect and developed the idea of “Hedonic” as distinct from “Utilitarian” consumption.
Dhar and Wertenbroch (2000) (REFERENCE) and others have shown that “Hedonic” corresponds to “Affective” experience, and “Utilitarian” to consumption that is more cognitively driven.

It remains to be shown what would correspond to “Conative” in this context. The levels, aspirations and activities in Table 3-1 would suggest that it be about the **Values and Goals** that are associated with one’s **Being** as a person. Aspects that come to mind, and that are not covered by “Hedonic” or “Utilitarian” include ethics, environmentally friendly production methods, exploitative labour practices, and abusive political regimes. Other aspects might relate to one’s **being** in some way, such as personal or family commitments to the producers or retailers of the product.

The words “Utilitarian” and “Hedonistic” are very clear and complementary labels for two distinct approaches to consumption. The Natural Language Principle suggests that there should be a word corresponding to “Conative” consumption. The word **Altruistic** would fit the Similar Words, Specific Differences Principle to an extent. Normally **altruism** means looking out for others in an unselfish way such as choosing a career in a caring profession. For “Utilitarianism-Hedonism-Altruism” to work as a set would require that the meaning of **altruism** would extend to consumer purchasing, such as sacrificing one’s own needs or preferences to buy something for another person.

### 3.3 DEVELOPMENT FUNCTIONS IN THE PERSON

A century before Kant people were referring to the locations of the different subjective decision processes using terms other than **body, mind, soul** and **spirit**. (reference to de Back, see end of ch.) The Greek words **soma** (body), **psyche** (mind, soul or feelings) and **pneuma** (spirit) correspond to subjective entities that people possess, in the sense that people can feel “in their psyche” a dislike for a person, task or course of action. **Somatic, psychic** and **pneumatic** refer to the kinds of activities that take place at these levels. Words for their corresponding science or study are: **somatology, psychology** and **pneumatology** [5].

The parallel usage of **soma, psyche** and **pneuma** with **body, mind, soul** and **spirit**, has been confusing. We have applied the Similar Words, Specific Differences Principle to differentiate them based on whether they arose in a subjective or objective context. This is in line with the origins of these words and with their general usage. It also follows the Natural Language Principle, which tells us that, in any culture, there should be a natural language that incorporates the concepts of a nomological system.
3. Subjective Decision Structures

Language reflects the articulation of settled understanding about concepts. Some of this understanding is still in the process of development, particularly about subtle distinctions between entities such as psyche and soul. One of the purposes of this book is to use these principles to use an axiomatic approach to make the meanings of the terms we use more precise. Our working assumption is always that the definitions should satisfy the Simplicity Principle, that decision making processes, in general, are invariant and more likely to be simple than complex. Here this means that the relationship between both sets is based on the subjective / objective distinction.

3.3.1 Soma, Psyche and Pneuma Defined

The somatic aspects of a project broadly relate to what is “needed” for its success. These operate like a level in the sense that it refers to a set of external obstacles somewhat akin to material constraints that must be overcome or incorporated before proceeding to develop a project. It focuses on “what one has”, whereas on the psychic level the emphasis is on “what one would like to do”, i.e. the choices, design alternatives, etc. which, of course, are dependent on our perceptions of the task. The intention is to build sufficient psychological (psychic) energy to complete the project. Working through these activities is a developmental process. The completion of each level allows one to move onwards. There comes a point when one feels, psychically, that it is time to stop planning, to complete the project. The final phase is when the decision-maker’s “being”, or pneuma, is brought into play, when they push themselves to produce the best result they can deliver. Love for the project, career, whatever is being developed, feeds the core energies needed to push to complete the task.

3.3.2 The Growth of Psychology

The adjectives corresponding to these words should be somatic, psychic and pneumatic. The reason why this does not apply to the word psychic provides an example of an exception to the Similar Words, Specific Differences Principle.

The earliest interest in these subjects focused on the supernatural. This led to the word psyche being associated with “psychic powers”. Next came the development of “psychology”, the study of the psyche, as a consequence of the work of Kant and many others around the same time. To differentiate them both, the adjective “psychological” became commonly used to describe difficulties with the psyche, as in “psychological problems”.
3.3.3 Pneuma and Expressions of Human Will

During the development of psychology there was little interest in articulating soma and pneuma. The only popular usage of soma was in the context of a “psycho-somatic illness”, i.e. a psychological problem that manifests itself through physical symptoms. For a while pneuma was associated only with “pneumatic tyres” because of its linguistic derivation from air or wind. Recently it has been explored in a spiritual context by Jung [17] and Maslow [18], the latter in the context of the human rising beyond primal needs to the meta need of “Self-transcendence”.

Victor Frankl [19] appears to have used the idea of self-transcendence synonymously with pneuma and the idea of the human being. He developed “Logotherapy”, a form of psychotherapy that focuses on the meaning of human existence as well as on man’s search for such a meaning. He spoke of a “will to meaning” in contrast to the pleasure principle (“will to pleasure”) associated with Freudian psychoanalysis, and the “will to power” of Adler’s psychology[20] (p. 99). He suggested that love was “the only way to grasp another human being in the innermost core of his personality”.

3.4 PHASED DEVELOPMENT

The development process has been described above in terms of levels. An equally important version is as phases of development. The decision-maker decides subjectively if a phase has been completed properly, and when to move from one phase to the next. These occur in practice very frequently in project management. Because projects are usually done in companies it is important to clarify the subjective ownership issue. A manager gives responsibility for a project to an individual or team. Ownership of the project should go with the responsibility to develop the project. If not it remains an objective project, and follows the patterns described in Chapter 2.

The phases Analysis, Design and Implementation are standard practice in information systems development (see for example [21]). These correspond to levels of a process of project development that is linear, but not rigidly partitioned. One starts with an analysis of the needs or requirements of the project. Then one designs the system to take account of the preferences of the customer and other stake-holders, but staying within the specification that has been defined in the analysis phase. Finally the system is implemented, bringing the system into being.

Much has been written about good practice with regard to these phases, and about the benefits of flexibility. If the project environment changes, or
if new information comes to light, it can be beneficial to re-visit the earlier phases.

Another version of the same that is widely used is O'Brien's [22] “systems” approach to the construction of Management Information Systems. Its phases are: “Understand the Problem or Opportunity”, “Develop a Solution”, and “Implement a Solution”.

3.4.1 Intelligence-Design-Choice

Simon’s 1960 ?? (REFERENCE) three phases of a project: “Intelligence”, “Design” and “Choice” is famous and often cited. The terms “Intelligence” and “Choice” are not so appropriate although the phases are clearly those described in this chapter. “Intelligence” is meant to imply data-gathering as in the sense of military intelligence. Obviously we should make intelligent decisions in all three phases. “Choice” is included here as the third phase in the sense of implementing a solution. This is unfortunate because the choice between several solution alternatives is usually made as part of the second or design phase. Also, it implies that there is no more to do once the choice is made. Simon rectified this in 1977 [23] by including a fourth “Implementation” phase.

Unfortunately this still leaves the set out of balance. The problem is that these errors confuse the retailers of these systems. An example is their usage in a text-book for building Decision Support and Expert Systems. In an early edition [24] Turban suggested that modelling is carried out in the “Intelligence Phase”, construction during the “Design Phase”, and solution of the model during the “Choice Phase”. Turban and Aronson incorporated “Implementation” in a later edition[24], but kept the earlier model also, leaving a sense of confusion.

Mintzberg et al.[25] modified Simon’s model into “Identification”, “Development” and “Selection”. He described this as the structure of “unstructured” decision processes. This is widely used, and has the advantage of offering sub-stages, which will be discussed in a later chapter. “Identification” is a better description of a process than “Intelligence”. “Development” is too broad compared to “Design”. “Selection” is as bad as “Choice” in not giving the sense of implementation.

3.5 SUBJECTIVE OWNERSHIP OF WORK

The idea that employees should have some sense of ownership of their work is generally accepted in practice. Marx saw full worker control of the means of production as the only alternative to the inevitable alienation of the
worker brought about by Taylor’s Scientific Management[26] and the ‘Theory X’[27] view of the employee as an uninterested, unmotivated automaton. Maslow [28] and Argyris [29] focused the debate more on personality and on motivation. Maslow and Sartre linked it to ideas about the human as “being”. Neo-Marxism [30] synthesised these ideas with Marxism into a theory of radical humanism.

The debate is still between two extremes. One is to give employees a “sense” of ownership, but not real control. At one extreme the employee is told what to do and given responsibility to do it. The other extreme is where employees are not given direction because they are assumed to be self-motivated. A synthesis view would recognise that both employer and employee are subjectively involved in the company. Employees and managers all have their needs and associated feelings, and have a sense of “being” although in different ways. One employee might see a job purely in terms of needs, such as income, another as central to their sense of themselves. For a task force or department to succeed it may be critical that it be given ownership of the project so that its members can work through various feelings, reasons and choices to achieve a creative development. A project itself will not have feelings. However, the various owners of the project will have feelings about the direction of project reflecting the alternative courses it might take in its development. And whatever is being developed, whether a product or service, the group should have ownership of it and a sense of bringing it “into being”.

Any development in the work place can benefit from the combined commitment and creative resources of all its stakeholders. Ownership relates more to the decision processes than to the factors of production. The motivation of any group of people depends on its members. Every individual will have his or her own needs, but also a wish to participate in the development process, and to share in its rewards.

3.5.1 Motivation-Hygiene Theory

Herzberg’s[31] (1959) two-factor theory differentiated two factors. “Hygiene” or “Maintenance Needs” correspond to needs in this chapter, and are related to pay, supervision, company policies, and relationships with others in the company. His theory suggests that meeting these needs prevents us from becoming dissatisfied. “Motivators” correspond to preferences and values in this chapter, and are those aspects of work that give a good feeling, such as recognition of good work and the freedom and responsibility to develop oneself.
3. Subjective Decision Structures

3.5.2 Maslow-Type Hierarchies

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs [18] will be discussed in a later chapter in which the three-phase system discussed here is extended to nine. We describe here some of the many hierarchy-type systems that fit the somatic-psycho-pneumatic structure. The earliest of these, by James (1892)[32], is “Material-Social-Spiritual”. It shows that the somatic-psycho-pneumatic ideas were not confined to psychology or philosophy, but made the transition long before Maslow into general considerations about how to motivate people, particularly in work situations. This one is like many that do not satisfy the Similar Words, Specific Differences Principle. If they did it should be fairly obvious from seeing two of the constructs to guess what the third might be. On the other hand, in James’ system it is clear that the names support the general concept. “Material” does suggest somatic, “social” psychological aspects, and “spiritual” is similar to pneumatic.

The others systems discussed here came after Maslow and so should be considered in contrast with his. Alderfer (1969, 1972) saw these needs as falling into three categories: “Existence”, “Relatedness” and “Growth”. Sub-aspects of these categories will be considered later along with Maslow’s. These names are quite meaningful. Somatic / needs are reflected by the idea of what is needed for “existence”. “Growth” is about the pneumatic / being. “Relatedness” has only an indirect connection to the psychological. Maslow had a fairly strict hierarchy of five needs, whereas Alderfer does not see the hierarchy operating as strictly. This is more in keeping with the idea that these are phases or levels in a subjective decision-making process, over which the decision-maker has control. Any sorts of reasons might affect different people’s decisions when to move from one to another. The only thing one can say is that, in general, they usually follow a linear sequence.

Kano’s (1984)[33] system, “Basic-Performance-Excitement”, is a mixture of Maslow’s and Herzberg’s. “Basic” needs must be satisfied, or there will be dissatisfaction. “Performance” is what makes us happy (psychologically), but we come to expect these. His unexpected term is “Excitement” in the sense that it does not appear to have any content, other than it is different and unexpected and could be described as going beyond one’s needs or hedonistic expectations.

3.5.3 The Personal Compact

The Personal Compact[34] is a system that explains the motivational relationships that employees have with their organisations. The “Formal” dimension concerns the task and performance (somatic) requirements of the
job, which are typically defined in contracts and job specifications etc. The “Psychological” dimension covers aspects that are more implicit, such as how hard the person will have to work and the associated recognition that may help to provide motivation. The “Social” dimension is about the organisation’s culture and corporate values, how well they match the employees’, and about whether the employee is included in the share out of whatever of value that is produced by the company.

While it fits the phases well the terms “Formal” and “Social” are misleading. “Formal” has connotations of an objective set of requirements. “Social” corresponds to the atmosphere in the company, whereas what is intended is a characterisation of its value systems. To what extent is the company inclusive of employees and their values? Is it socially acceptable?

3.6 THE DIALECTIC

The reader interested mainly in management practice might happily skip this theoretical section. The philosopher Hegel (1770 – 1831) was the main disciple of Kant to formalise the three-phase structure described in this chapter. He developed the idea of the dialectic to explain how apparently opposite positions or contradictions are reconciled in a dynamic compromise or higher truth. These three “triadic” phases became “Thesis”, “Antithesis” and “Synthesis”[35](1983, p.294). They saw the struggle between a “Thesis” and its “Antithesis” in the minds of the decision-makers as producing a creative tension that is the key to understanding development. Somehow this process lifts the participants to a higher level, which is more than just a compromise. Hegel spent a lifetime exploring how a dichotomous tension between the “Thesis” and “Antithesis” emerges into a third aspect, trying to explain the dynamic of two becoming three.

This process is easier to understand in terms of the four general activities: proposition, perception, pull and push dropping down to three in subjective situations where the pull aspect becomes irrelevant.

3.6.1 Dialectical Materialism

Hegel used the dialectic to interpret history, the development of a person’s being, and mankind as aspiring to rise towards God. His disciples divided into two camps. On the right were traditional Hegelians, who were conservative, orthodox and religious. The “Young Hegelians” on the left contained critics such as Feuerbach who felt that Hegel was too idealistic and that there should be more emphasis on the lower levels. Another in that group, Karl Marx (1818 - 1883) extended this criticism into his own
“dialectic materialism” by giving priority as a goal to the somatic or materialist level. He criticised the way society did not provide for the needs of the poor, nor allow them to participate in its development. Communism focused on the needs of the working class and on their control over their own destiny. Marx saw capital and politics as dialectically opposing forces influencing the development of society. A way to speed up this development was through creating conflict between the classes, and taking control over capital and labour, the means of production.

3.6.2 Systems Dialectics

The dialectic interpretation of political development still applies as a system in the Peoples Republic of China. It retains two essential elements. One is the idea of political ownership of and control over the process of developing the economy, including resisting a return to feudal attitudes where private owners of wealth dictate state policy. The other is the idea that the dialectic is not a static process. The two opposing poles of public and private ownership are now being synthesised within “Systems Dialectics”. The current aim in China is reforms that increase the economic benefits of enterprises. [36]

3.7 ADJUSTMENT PROCESSES

Chapter Two introduced general decision structures and showed how they led to their being four general decision activities: proposition, perception, pull and push. In this chapter we considered the special case where the decision-maker owns the decision, in which case the pull activity loses its energy. We described this as making the decision-maker’s point of view subjective. Subjective decision-making is more concerned with dealing with each activity level-by-level, and phase-by-phase. This was seen to correspond to what is understood as development.

In line with the “Similar Words, Specific Differences” Principle there should be a similar and corresponding word that describes what is not development. In this case the pull activity has not disappeared, and the emphasis is more on ensuring that there is a balance between any pair of the four general phases of activity: proposition, perception, pull and push as instruments to help maintain that balance, as in Figure 2-3. It is also about discovering and resolving imbalances between planning and putting, and between place and people. This balance-finding activity is described as Adjusting. It applies when the decision-maker does not own the decision and, consequently, has an objective involvement in the process.
Axiom 12: With objective decision-making the activities and phases are parts of an adjustment process.

So, its distinguishing feature is that it is more about the motivations involved in one's interaction with the outside world, and with adjusting the world to oneself and oneself to it. This is in keeping with the idea that the possessor of the decision is on the outside. The decision-maker must be careful to not lose touch with the intentions of those who have concerns with the decision and its consequences, be constantly aware of the objectively based intentions of the project, and do everything possible to avoid bringing personal bias into decision-making judgements.

3.8 SUMMARY

Chapter Two introduced general decision structures and showed how two questions generate four general activities: proposition, perception, pull and push. Chapter Three showed how, under the unusual circumstance of the decision-owner also being the decision-maker the pull activity disappears and the remaining activities take on qualitatively very different tones. These described as adjusting and developing decision processes and provide the foundation for objective and subjective decision-making. The development system is different from the general or parent system in that it is more concerned with subjective aspects relating to one's own personal needs, preferences and values in one's inner world. All decision-making should fit into either category. In subsequent chapters we ask the same question to further refine both systems. Thus, though very different, they are parallels of one another.

In these first two chapters we showed systems that fit one or other. The reader may be surprised not to have seen some systems so far. The reason may be that they may fit one of the coming chapters, which are refinements of what have appeared to date.

Some of the principles, axioms, methods and ideas presented so far may have been difficult. Because later systems are refinements it may become easier from here, and there will be relatively few new axioms presented after this.

3. Subjective Decision Structures


Understanding Methodologies and Systems in Management