



Scientific article

Chain approach, innovation and leadership

R.V. De Mulder

Journal of Chain-computerisation
Information Exchange for Chain Co-operation

2011 – Volume 2, Art. #8

Received: 1 March 2011
Accepted: 1 April 2011
Published: 14 April 2011
Translation: Sandra R. Reijnhart

2011 – Volume 2, Art. #8
URN: NBN: NL: UI: 10-1-101413
ISSN: 1879-9523
URL: <http://jcc.library.uu.nl/>

Publisher: Igitur publishing in co-operation with the Department of Information and Computing Sciences

Copyright: this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Licence

Chain approach, innovation and leadership

R.V. De Mulder

Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands

E-mail: demulder@frg.eur.nl

Abstract: This contribution deals with a new paradigm of performance, how it promotes innovation and is consistent with the chain approach developed by Jan Grijpink and his research team. The new paradigm of performance will be explained and the parallels with the chain approach will be discussed. The background of both approaches is the frequent failure of the prevailing views, on the one hand, and the importance of innovative intervention in the difficult and often chaotic reality, on the other.

Keywords: Leadership, chain approach

1 Introduction

Chain problems are the order of the day (Grijpink, 1997; 2009; 2010). Often, the problem consists of a lack of information at the right place. In the case of a social injustice or a non-functioning situation, there are many -- often more or less autonomous -- organisations involved that may not or will not exchange their information with each other. Organisations in the chain have no power to force others to work together effectively. The result is ineffectiveness that -- when it concerns a company or a government organisation -- would be considered totally unacceptable, but in chains is considered to be inevitable -- sort of like bad weather.

The education system in The Netherlands is one example. Educational institutions are under financial pressure to produce as many graduates as possible. The result is that the knowledge and skills of the graduates are no longer geared to the customers, such as the future employers of the graduates. Within the educational system, the attention for achievements is waning and there is increasing carelessness when it comes to dealing with thesis and exam fraud. The banking sector is also displaying signs of chain problems. The supervising institutions had insufficient insight in and control of what was going on in the banks so that, at a certain point, the system could only continue to function with large-scale financial contributions from the State.

2 Chain approach and leadership

The chain approach by Jan Grijpink and the chain laws he proposed display a striking parallelism with the new paradigm of performance, although there are also clear differences in basic principles and focus. This contribution is an attempt to explain the new paradigm of performance and to discuss the parallels with the chain approach. The background of both approaches is the frequent failure of the prevailing views, on the one hand, and the importance of innovative intervention in the difficult and often chaotic reality, on the other.

The new paradigm of performance is described in "the three laws of performance" (Zaffron & Logan, 2009):

1. How people perform correlates to how situations occur to them.
2. How a situation occurs in language.

3. Future-based language transforms how situations occur to people. Language shows how people think about reality. Language also has, however, the power to inspire and to shape a new reality. Leadership is essential here.

Hundreds -- if not thousands -- of books have been written on leadership. Nearly all of these books have the same approach. They analyse the characteristics and behaviour of successful leaders and try to distil these into pointers for effective leadership. This is a rather ineffective approach because it gives no access to the being and the action of a leader or to the effective exercise of leadership. The new paradigm aspires to do just that.

The first 'law of performance' is related to what in the chain approach is termed the 'dominant chain problem.' From the way in which the problem in a certain area -- for example, the area of education or the care chain -- is discussed, it emerges how those involved lock themselves into the problem. The dominant chain problem is not characterised by assessing the missing efficiency or by an imbalance in the costs and benefits, but by conversations about incidents, chances of escalation, reputation damage, etc. This is how a situation occurs to those involved. The expected, most probable future resulting from this is not a desirable one.

A second element of the chain approach is the differentiation among several analysis levels. At the chain level, the chain issues are relevant, but at the base of the chain -- in the organisations involved and with the persons in question -- in the first place people's own interests and emotions determine their actions.

Thirdly, chain situations are, therefore, linked to chaos and irrationality. There is no managing agency and no basic principle; there are conflicting interests and a whole range of emotions. Together with the huge scale of many processes, the situation becomes unpredictable and unverifiable.

If I understand it correctly, then the chain approach -- and, in particular, Chain-computerisation -- consists of accepting these characteristics as facts and then making the best of the situation. This acceptance corresponds to the new paradigm of performance, but there is a possible difference in that, in the new paradigm, the actions are focused on getting the involved parties in line with each other and entering into a new, shared future.

Leadership consists of creating a future that would not have happened anyway; it provides a way to fulfill the concerns of the involved parties and gives them an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution. Conversely, in the chain approach, it is all about chain communication that, within the usual large-scale information practice, does not simply happen by itself, because, among other things, there are rules and practices that require that a conscious division must be made between the registration of data and the communication in the chain.

3 Innovation

What binds both approaches is, in any case, the interest in innovative solutions. Innovation benefits from ambitious objectives that are realised with integrity. The more ambitious the objectives, the more probable it would appear to be that these could not be realised with the existing, familiar tools. We then see a "breakdown." That is precisely when new solutions develop for products, services and systems. The basis of the new paradigm is, therefore, integrity: honouring one's word. This is: doing what you promised and/or agreed upon and, as soon as it appears that this is not possible or is not going to happen, reporting this loud and clear and then

indicating what you promise to do about it. Though the opposite might seem true, the emphasis on honouring your word -- thus, taking responsibility for not doing so -- is significantly more effective than always wanting or having to keep your word. In a world where everyone always keeps his word and where, therefore, few ambitious promises are made, there would be hardly any innovation!

In the new paradigm of performance, there are a number of elements that one does not find in the chain approach. This is also understandable because the paradigm seeks to relate to achievements in general, while the chain approach is more specifically focused on information exchange in large-scale problem areas, albeit that these are becoming increasingly frequent and important.

The following are some of these elements. In addition to integrity, the new paradigm is based on authenticity and on wanting to achieve something that is 'larger than you.' The new paradigm also provides a theoretical context that gives access to the action of a leader and the effective exercise of leadership as a natural form of self-expression. Finally, there is, in the new paradigm, explicit interest in the perceptual and functional constraints that people have (for example, the inability to listen to new information, being easily angered in certain situations, etc.).

There are innovative training programmes that deal with these elements. This "transformational technology" -- largely based on the work of Werner Erhard (Zaffron & Logan, 2009; Erhard, Jensen & Zaffron, 2010) -- makes it possible for university teachers to have an interaction with students such that their behaviour is the object of self-reflection and, thus, to help these students to create radically new possibilities in their performance. The academic staff functions here not as a supplier of diplomas but, once again, as an instructor and coach. Integrity, leadership and performance are explicitly addressed. How people occur to themselves and how their 'word' occurs to them are important elements here.

"The new paradigm of performance meets academia" is an interesting event. It can be a culture shock for both the existing, practical users of the new approach as well as for the universities. In The Netherlands alone there are around 30,000 people who have taken part in the so-called "Landmark Forum." Vanto Group, a consulting company that operates on the basis of the new paradigm, has produced striking results. Michael Jensen can be given credit for bringing the new paradigm to the university. Around 2004, the course "The Ontological Foundations of Leadership and Performance: Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership – A New Model" was given at the Simon Business School of the University of Rochester, New York for the first time. In 2009, the seminar was also given in Europe, at the Erasmus University Rotterdam. The ambition of the parties involved (such as the Barbados Group, <http://www.wernererhard.net/barbados.html>) is that leadership will become a new, empirical discipline at the universities (Scherr & Jensen, 2007).

In conclusion, the fact that the chain approach and the new paradigm of performance display certain parallels is, actually, not SO unexpected. There are a number of other new disciplines and/or approaches that display similarities. What comes to mind is "positive psychology" (Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005) and the approach that Eugen Oetinger supports for complex systems (<http://www.comdys.com/02/02/2011>). What these examples have in common is that they are all a reaction to the complex, technological, chaotic environment of modern times – at least as it occurs to many of us.



Biography: Professor Richard Victor De Mulder MBA, LL.M (1946) studied Dutch Law at the University of Amsterdam, got his PhD at the Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR) in Legal Informatics and, in 1988, was awarded an MBA cum laude in the Executive Development Program of the Simon School for Business Administration at the University of Rochester (N.Y.). Since 1971, he has been employed at the EUR, starting as a staff member in criminal law and later as a Professor of Computers and Law. He has held various managerial positions, including Scientific Director of the Research School of Safety and Security. Since 2007, he has been primarily involved in innovation, leadership and integrity. He is co-founder and, at present, chairman of the "International Association for a New Paradigm of Performance".

References

- Erhard, W., Jensen, M.C. & Zaffron, S. (2010). *Integrity: A Positive Model that Incorporates the Normative Phenomena of Morality, Ethics, and Legality - Abridged (English Language Version)*. Harvard Business School NOM Unit Working Paper No. 10-061; Barbados Group Working Paper No. 10-01; Simon School Working Paper No. 10-07. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1542759>.
- Grijpink, J.H.A.M. (1997). *Keteninformatisering. Met toepassing op de justitiële bedrijfsketen: Een informatie-infrastructurele aanpak voor de communicatie tussen zelfstandige organisaties [Chain-computerisation. Applied to the Criminal Law Enforcement Chain: An information-infrastructural approach to the communication between autonomous organisations]*. The Hague: Sdu Uitgevers.
- Grijpink, J.H.A.M. (2009). Ketenvisie [Chain Perspective]. In J.H.A.M. Grijpink & M.G.A. Plomp (Eds.), *Kijk op ketens: Het ketenlandschap van Nederland [Perspective on Chains: The Chain Landscape of the Netherlands]* (pp. 29-49). The Hague: Center for Chain-computerisation.
- Grijpink, J.H.A.M. (2010). *Keteninformatisering in kort bestek: Theorie en praktijk van grootschalige informatie-uitwisseling [Chain-computerisation in brief: Theory and Practice of large-scale information exchange]*. The Hague: Boom/Lemma Uitgevers.
- Scherr, A.L. & Jensen, M.C. (2007). *A New Model of Leadership*. Harvard NOM Working Paper No. 920623; Barbados Group Working Paper No. 06-02. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=920623>.
- Seligman, M.E.P., Steen, T.A., Park, N. & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive Psychology Progress: Empirical Validation of Interventions. *American Psychologist*, 60(5), 410–421.
- Zaffron, S. & Logan, D. (2009). *The Three Laws of Performance: rewriting the future of your organization and your life*. San Francisco: Warren Bennis Books.