

How we wire our organizations dictates whom we interact with, what we interact about, when we interact, and how we are allowed to interact. In an ideal situation, to get what we need done, we are talking to only the right people, on the right teams, at the right time, in the right way, about the right things.

However, all too often, organizations have flawed wiring (Layer 3), which means we spend all our time and energy talking to the wrong people, at the wrong time, in the wrong way, and often about the wrong things. Under these conditions, it is no wonder that doing even small things requires heroics.

Our organizational wiring also dictates the type of feedback that is generated. Ideally, everyone gets direct and fast feedback on the work they do, so they can see the effects of their actions, which can be used to stabilize systems and improve. After all, in any complex, adaptive system, there are unexpected events and a general tendency toward entropy. We need fast and frequent feedback to keep our systems under control.

As a leader, you are responsible for the achievement of your organization's goals and for creating the organizational and management systems that everyone in that organization uses to contribute to those goals. Thus, it is your professional and moral responsibility to create the conditions so that people can contribute to those organizational goals and create value for both the customers that depend on your organization and the colleagues who depend on them. In particular, this requires you to adopt a developmental mindset, one oriented around designing, sustaining, and improving the social circuitry that lets people do great work easily and well. This, as we show throughout this book, is antithetical to a transactional mindset, reflecting an assumption that leadership is largely a matter of giving instructions and determining who is doing what, when, where, and with what resources.

Building Your Model Line

Through creating great management systems, leadership creates great value. However, when done poorly, leadership destroys value or, at least, squanders it. Exercised well, leadership can be the reason work is mean-

ingful to those who do it. It can be the reason why products and services are a source of delight for those who receive them. In turn, work is done well because the conditions in which it is performed are managed well. This results in excellent financial and operational metrics that reflect how effectively or efficiently resources were utilized.

Success is enabled by changing the structure (i.e., organizational wiring) and the resulting dynamics of the processes by which people's efforts are integrated through collective action toward a common purpose. Those structures and dynamics are brought into effect through slowification, simplification, and amplification.

This is where the *model line* as a transformative tool comes in, which is a segment of the larger enterprise where new approaches can be tested, tried, and "modeled." It's an opportunity for people to feel what it is like to change their behaviors, which is a precursor for changing their beliefs.

The very first thing a leader has to do to make that transformation is to literally carve out a piece of their larger enterprise and learn to manage it using the mechanisms of slowification, simplification, and amplification. They and their colleagues use this platform to learn while doing, and their colleagues can use the platform to teach others to do the same.

In the moving-and-painting vignette, a model-line approach might have designated one room or a small set of rooms as the platform for the model-line team. However, in that case, the undertaking was such an abject failure, time pressures were so great, and the scale of the work was small enough that transitioning through a model line might not have been a reasonable approach.

The model line is a microcosmic set of processes relative to the enterprise as a whole. While model lines are small, they are still coherent. There's a natural boundary around these model lines with natural beginnings and ends and obvious starts and stops. It's in the model line that people can practice applying and mastering slowification, simplification, and amplification.

A model line usually starts with relatively few people. With fewer people, you can accelerate learning through faster problem-solving because you're concerned with a smaller set of activities. Likewise, the development of capabilities is accelerated because the people dedicated to the model line

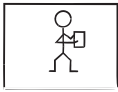
have the chance to test ideas and practice new concepts with frequent and fast iterations.

After all, when we talk about rewiring the organization, we're really talking about rewiring people's behaviors and beliefs. Dr. Jerry Sternin, of the Harvard Business School, explained how important it was to focus on changing behaviors in order to change beliefs: "It's easier to act your way into a new way of thinking than think your way into a new way of acting."¹

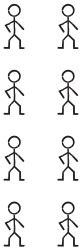
The model line is a small, unobtrusive, "safe" environment to introduce and reinforce new behaviors, the positive results of which convince people to believe in a new way of managing the situations for which they are responsible.

Implementation of a Model Line

**NORMAL
"IMPLEMENTATION"**

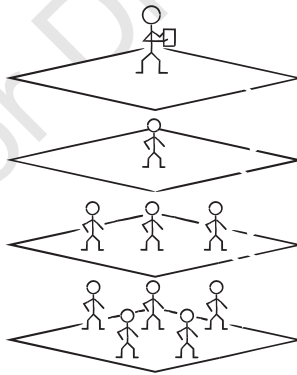


Leaders delegate, but don't engage.



Shop floor

**MODEL-LINE APPROACH
"IMPLEMENTATION"**



- 1. **CAPABILITY CASCADE**
- 2. **CAPABILITY SPREAD**

Leaders develop their own skills of slowification, simplification, and amplification by leading practical problem-solving and teaching others the same.

Creating a model line creates the conditions in which everyone, including leaders, learn to behave differently in order to get different outcomes. Within the model line, everyone performs experiments together, learning what works and what doesn't, and the causal mechanisms that result from those outcomes.

Of course, once the model line is up and running, the chance for spreading greatness is created. Other colleagues can experience firsthand what it feels like to work in slowified, simplified, and amplified conditions. Those who've learned how to slowify, simplify, and amplify can be envoys into adjacent areas, meaning that everyone can be less overburdened on coordination problems (Layer 3) and can be more engaged with practical problems (Layers 1 and 2). We will be revisiting the model-line concept throughout the book to demonstrate how it can be used effectively in an organization to practice slowification, simplification, and amplification.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we described the three mechanisms of slowification, simplification, and amplification that leaders can use to rewire their organization so they are configured to win, albeit in the simplified example of refurbishing an old Victorian hotel. In the following chapters, we will describe each of these mechanisms in more detail, providing more information about the underpinning theories on which they are based, as well as case studies of their usage in examples far more complex and consequential.

QUESTIONS FOR THE READER

The three mechanisms of well-wired organizations move us from the *danger zone* to the *winning zone*. Slowification makes problem-solving easier, simplification makes the problems themselves easier to solve, and amplification makes it more obvious when there are problems so they can be seen and solved.

As a leader, consider a challenging situation for which you have responsibility: it could be the design of something novel and complex, or it could be the operations of something complex and dynamic. Then rate yourself on the following: