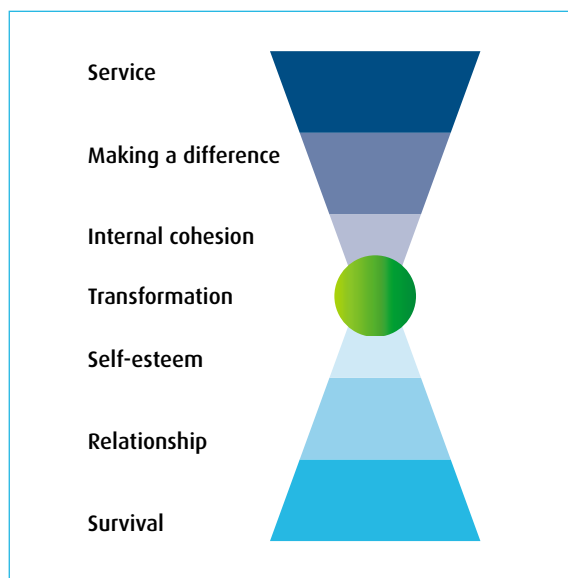


The 7 levels of organisational consciousness

Level 1: Survival consciousness

The first need for an organisation is financial survival. Without profits or access to a continuing stream of funds, organisations quickly perish. Every organisation needs to make financial health a primary concern. However, when companies become too entrenched in survival consciousness, they develop an exclusive preoccupation with the bottom line and a deep-seeded insecurity about the future. They attempt to allay their fears through excessive control and territorial behaviour. Businesses that operate from this level of consciousness are not interested in strategic alliances-takeovers are more their game. They will purchase a company and plunder its assets. They see people and the Earth as resources to be exploited for gain. When asked to conform to regulations, they do the minimum. They have an attitude of begrudging compliance. Organisations experience their deepest fears at this level of consciousness.



Level 2: Relationship consciousness

The second need for an organisation is harmonious interpersonal relationships and good communications. Without good relationships with employees, customers and suppliers, company survival is compromised.

However, when companies become too entrenched at this level of consciousness they place importance on relationships not for what they can give, but for what they can take. What they put into a relationship is purely based on what they think they will get back. Companies at this level tend to be strong on tradition and image, and weak on flexibility and entrepreneurship. Rules are important because there is little trust. They demand discipline and obedience from their employees. Family businesses tend to operate from relationship consciousness. This limits their ability to become successful because they are unable to trust outsiders in management positions.

Level 3: Self-esteem consciousness

The third need for an organisation is self-esteem. Self-esteem consciousness shows up in organisations as best practice and a desire for greatness. Organisations which operate from this level want to be the biggest or best at what they do. Consequently, they are very competitive and are constantly seeking ways to improve their cost effectiveness. Organisations at this level see management as a science. They focus on improving corporate fitness-productivity, efficiency, time management and quality control. They are ready to train their staff as long as the training can be seen to have a direct impact on the bottom line. Control is maintained through hierarchical power structures that often do little more than cater to the managers' needs for status, privilege and recognition. Companies that are predominantly focused at this level of consciousness can easily degenerate into bureaucracies. When this happens, failure or collapse will eventually occur unless the organisation is able to embrace transformation.

Level 4: Transformation consciousness

This is the bridge that companies must cross to create organisational cohesion and shift their belief systems from self-interest to the common good. The principal focus at this level of consciousness is self-knowledge and continuous-renewal. Organisations enter the process of transformation either because it is the next natural step in their evolution or because their viability is threatened. In either case the process begins with employee participation and involvement. Everyone is asked to take responsibility for making the business a success. Risk-taking is encouraged. During transformation, the culture of the organisation shifts from control to trust, from punishment to incentives, from exploitation to ownership, and from fear to truth.

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Mechanisms are put in place to promote innovation and learning. The tyranny of the financial bottom line begins to disappear as organisations start to measure their success against a broader set of indicators.

Level 5: Internal cohesion

The focus at this level of consciousness is internal connectedness. This is achieved through the development of a strong positive spirit with shared vision and values. By focusing on the needs of its people, the organisation develops commitment and enthusiasm, and encourages higher levels of personal productivity and creativity. Values such as humour, transparency and passion become important. Failures become lessons, and work becomes fun. At this level of consciousness, organisations recognise the importance of employees finding meaning and purpose through their work. They encourage the alignment of their employees' personal motivations with the organisation's vision and mission and support employees in becoming all they can become in terms of their professional and personal growth.

Level 6: Making a difference

The main areas of focus at this level are external connectedness and an increase of internal connectedness through mentoring and coaching, and employee fulfilment. Partnerships are created with customers and suppliers, and the organisation finds ways to support the local community. Organisations that embrace inclusion consciousness recognise the importance of strategic alliances, being respected members of the local community and good global citizens. They seek to support the local economy by collaborating with local businesses, and voluntarily addressing environmental and social concerns. They go beyond the letter of the law in dealing with their environmental responsibilities. They support employees in finding personal fulfilment at work and create opportunities for them to make a difference in the local community. At this level of consciousness organisations care for the whole employee-for their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs.

Level 7: Service

The primary focus of organisations at this level is service to humanity and the planet. They have a global vision. There is recognition of the interconnectedness of all life and the need for both individuals and institutions to take responsibility for the welfare of the whole. At this level of consciousness, organisations care deeply about ethics, justice, human rights, peace and the impact of present day actions on future generations-sustainable development.

Social activism and consciously directed philanthropy become integral parts of their corporate strategy. They understand the importance of societal goodwill in building a successful organisation. They observe the highest ethical principles and always consider the long term impacts of their decisions and actions. By taking a strong moral position, they are able to garner the respect and goodwill of their employees and society-at-large.

Distribution of consciousness

Organisations do not operate from any one level of consciousness. They tend to be clustered around three or four levels. Most organisations are focused in the lower three levels of consciousness-self-interest-profit and growth (Level 1), customer satisfaction (Level 2) and productivity, efficiency and quality (Level 3).

The most successful organisations that are among the 100 Best Companies to work for tend to be distributed across the full spectrum of consciousness with particular focus in the upper levels of consciousness-the common good-learning and innovation (Level 4), internal cohesion (Level 5), employee fulfilment, customer/supplier collaboration (Level 6) and ethics and social responsibility (Level 7).