

ORGANIZATIONAL AWARENESS (OA)

Organizational Awareness is the acumen to appreciate and the ability to use the power relationships in one's own organization or other organizations. This includes the ability to identify the real decision-makers and the individuals who can influence them; and to predict how new events or situations will affect individuals and groups within the organization.

<i>This Means...</i>	<i>This Doesn't Mean...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowing who to talk to, in order to ensure support for action in a particular idea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being unaware of who would have a particular interest in an idea you have
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding the viewpoint and objectives of different divisions and why these can, at times, conflict with your objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • steering clear of trying to deal with the sometimes frustrating and conflicting needs and viewpoints of different people and divisions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • getting things done by using relationships with others and the "informal system" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relying entirely on formal systems to get something done ("management by memo")
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding the history of major initiatives, the underlying reasons they were adopted, and the interests of key people who are involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acting in ways that go against organizational norms ("bull in a china shop")
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding and sharing the norms and values of the department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • suggesting actions which go against the stated and implicit values of the department
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not proceeding with certain projects until the timing is right based on your understanding of how the division/branch will react 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focusing on your team's immediate objectives without considering what else is going on within the division/branch
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cultivating useful contacts with a broad range of people in a variety of strategic positions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contacting stakeholders only when you need to solve a problem

**Developmental
Activities**

Level 1-2 Activities

Use your organizational chart to help you build a picture of the areas you need to investigate.

- Identify the various functions and familiarize yourself with their business needs and the competencies required for these roles
- Take action to learn more about the parts of the organization that are unfamiliar to you. Review internal documentation developed by the business unit; contact colleagues to learn more about what they do and any skill or “talent gaps.”
- Prepare a master list of people who can provide assistance or information. Note their area of expertise and how they can provide assistance or information (e.g., competitor intelligence, product information, etc.).
- Let these people know that you have an interest in their area, and ask them to send you any information which they think you might find useful.

Reflection Tip:

- * Find out about their interest areas on which you may be able to provide information. When you come across any pertinent information, make sure to send them a copy, or keep them updated through a quick e-mail or voice-mail.

Know what’s going on in and around the Government and your Organization.

- Read organizational literature (e.g., newsletters, reports) and take advantage of informal opportunities to communicate with people throughout the organization.
- Read a report that describes a recent employee attitude survey or organizational climate study.
- Read any books that recount the history of the organization or any of its key players.

Reflection Tip:

- * Discuss with your peers, both within and outside your business unit. What are the implications for their areas? Who do they see as having a role in resolving issues, implementing solutions?

Develop a historical viewpoint of the organization.

- Read past literature on the organization (e.g., newsletters, annual reports, etc.) in order to understand the philosophy behind major decisions and innovations.
- Speak to people with long tenure to get their perspectives on the history of the organization and why things are done the way they are.

- Try to identify the rules and procedures which have been developed on sound principles which still hold today, as well as those which seem to simply continue because of tradition.
- Take note of the groups which would be affected if those historical processes were changed, and how they would possibly react.

Reflection Tip:

- * Find out who was involved in these decisions and find out where they are now.

Develop a diagram of the impact of those around you.

- Review your branch/division's organization chart.
- Draw arrows to every person that affects your work directly or indirectly.
- Identify the departments/functions in which those people work.
- Consult this diagram when you weigh the importance of decisions you must make; this will help you identify who you need to impact.

Reflection Tip:

- * Draw a series of connecting lines that identifies the informal relationships.

Scan brochures and mailings of upcoming conferences and events where other organizations/divisions are presenting.

- Look to see what events your service partners, suppliers, etc., are actively participating in.
- Keep track of their topics and the speakers' names and titles.
- Ask to attend an event where one or more of your key service partners will be.
- Use the opportunity to network and learn more about what's happening in their businesses.

When faced with a decision, identify the impact on your peers and your Organization.

- Identify the other business units your decision will impact.
- Develop a list of the benefits/risks of the decision. Use this list in discussions with affected business units.
- Ask employees from the affected business units for their perspective on the pros or cons of your decision.
- Identify the key decision-makers with your business unit, within the larger organization, and outside the organization, who exert influence over policies and practices.

- Keep a record of your findings. Use the information to assess which individuals exert influence over business units involving your immediate job.

Reflection Tips:

- * Discuss your thoughts with your peers. Did they have any benefits/risks you didn't consider?
- * Collect information to help you identify the key decision-makers:
 - Who do others refer to when asked a difficult question?
 - Who seems to “have the ear” of the formal decision-makers?
 - Who is highly respected by his/her peers?
 - Who maintains positive relationships with others who are seen to wield power?

Make sure that you routinely get out into other areas within your Organization/Government on an informal basis.

- Get acquainted with people and develop an understanding of the informal influence network. Until this becomes second nature, you may want to set aside regular times each month to get out and talk to people.
- One good way to reinforce the pattern is to habitually take a few extra minutes chatting informally about non-work interests with people, even when there is a formal business agenda to cover.

Reflection Tip:

- * Keep a journal of your activities, and review periodically.
 - Who did you meet?
 - What do they do?
 - Who do they know/where do they fit in Government?
 - Are any patterns emerging regarding relationships, needs, concerns?

Initiate a meeting or discussion with a seasoned manager.

- Ask this person to share his or her knowledge of your Organization's history, explain the evolution of the Organization's mission, and describe the origin of the Organization's strengths and weaknesses.
- Ask about the key success factors for the different business units.
- Ask questions to gain information about the informal networks that this individual has found successful in helping to get work accomplished over the years.

Reflection Tips:

- * Ask questions to help you understand what has happened within your Organization and why.

- * Consider how development of new relationships internally may help you to do your job more effectively.

Look for opportunities to socially meet with individuals who have information of value to you, or are in positions of influence.

- Consider becoming involved in local clubs, associations, charities, sports activities, etc. that these people are involved in.

Reflection Tip:

- * These can be people within Government or outside of it.

Level 3-4 Activities

Gain support for your proposals at various levels of the organization before making a presentation or request at higher levels.

- Determine who is likely to support you and who may object.
- Target the individuals who will be key supporters or obstacles.
- Talk to the people who will be directly impacted by your proposals. Tailor the costs and benefits of your proposal to meet each individual's needs.
- When you have gained support at one level or in one area, move on to the next.

Discuss the organization with co-workers.

- In your discussions with co-workers, make an effort to get their perspectives on how to get things done within the organization.
- Try to understand who you should go to get things done even if this person doesn't have formal responsibility for these areas.

Prepare a master list of sources of information or expertise in the organization.

- Prepare a master list of people who can provide assistance or information. Note their area of expertise and how they can provide assistance or information (e.g., competitor intelligence, product information, etc.).
- Let these people know that you have an interest in their area, and ask them to send you any information which they think you might find useful.

- Find out about their interest areas, around which you may be able to provide information. When you come across any pertinent information, make sure to send them a copy, or keep them updated through a quick e-mail or voice-mail.

Reflection Tip:

- * Organizational culture is made up of shared values and beliefs – try to identify some of these by reviewing events which draw a large response (positive and negative) from individuals.
 - Which values/beliefs were supported? Violated?
 - How did the leaders respond to the reaction?
 - What messages were/are sent about what is important within your Organization/ Government?

Determine the reasons behind major initiatives or changes in your organization.

- Meet with the executives involved in the implementation of a new program or initiative in your organization to review the event and help you understand the reasons behind the decision.
- Probe for informal decision making processes or organizational norms which led to the decision.
- Ask for advice on ways in which you could frame your ideas and recommendations in the future to make them more acceptable.
- Discuss the organization with co-workers.
- In your discussions with co-workers, make an effort to get their perspectives on how to get things done within the organization.
- Try to understand who you should go to get things done even if this person doesn't have formal responsibility for these areas.

Reflection Tip:

- * What political issues or obstacles had to be considered during these changes/ initiatives?

Work with people at higher levels than you in the organization/ government

- Ask your manager to identify special projects or task forces that are charged with a broad intervention.
- Volunteer your time or expertise to work on these initiatives.
- Work closely with experienced project team members on the initiative to learn about their reasoning and implementation strategy.
- Pay attention to other areas, with particular attention to “political” interests in the initiative.

- Use this information to implement your own ideas or suggestions in your area.

Do a cultural force field analysis before embarking on a project.

- Consider your goal and the movement toward that goal.
- What is the situation now?
- What is the situation as you would like it to be?
- List the cultural forces which would support the movement to your goal (e.g., culture fosters development, professionalism, collegial sharing).
- List the cultural factors which would act to restrain your progress toward your goal (e.g., department has just gone through major transformation and are change-weary, atmosphere is one of distrust between managers and staff, long tenure has led to air of "entitlement").
- Consider the risks and benefits of continuing with the initiative, in light of the supporting and restraining forces.
- Make a decision about whether it is possible, and in the best interests of the organization to go ahead or put the initiative on hold.

Reflection Tips:

- * Remember that the cultural forces affecting each initiative will vary – look at each situation individually.
- * Organizational culture does not change quickly, but there may well be a more appropriate time to tackle the problematic areas than the present. Make your decision carefully.

Take an inventory of your stakeholders, groups, associations and any other business contacts, and consider how frequently you contact them to keep informed about issues of mutual interest.

- Regularly attend networking luncheons, dinners, seminars, discussion forums, etc., at least once a quarter.
- Regularly ask yourself "who did I see today that gave me some useful information about what is going on in the organization?" Stay in touch with that person on a regular basis.
- Regularly meet with colleagues in other organizations within the industry, or other business units, and identify opportunities or projects that will be of value for you both to work on together.

Reflection Tip:

- * Before the event, think about the sort of information that you might like to gather. What sort of questions could you use to get at this information?

Establish how decisions get made in your Organization.

- Work together with your colleagues to identify the individuals within your Organization or division, or in other ministries or organizations outside of the government, who exert influence over policies and practices.
- Keep a record of your findings.
- Use the information to assess which individuals exert influence over areas involving your immediate department.
- Create an influence chart for your own area and consider what you have learned about each key decision-maker and his or her relationship to other people.
- Draw a series of connecting lines on the formal organizational chart showing the informal relationships that exist between different key decision-makers in the government.
- Consider the informal structure and determine who you need to talk to and gain support from for any current or future outcomes you would like to achieve.
- Put your plan into action.

Level 5 Activities

Conduct a SWOT (Strengths/ Weaknesses/ Opportunities/ Threats) analysis of a government department.

- Select an area of government and research its internal and external environment (through information gathering, reading, talking with individuals, etc.).
- From your perspective, list the internal strengths and weaknesses, and external opportunities and threats of the department.
- Think about what your analysis reveals about the department's current behaviour, its political environment, its social challenges and the implications of this information on your department.

Work on cross-functional projects.

- Get involved in projects that involve people from other areas in the organization.
- Acknowledge and reward efforts by people in other departments to support your department or the larger organization.
- Contact another department and explain how your group works and explore potential marketplace synergies that could benefit both departments.
- Plan an appropriate course of action and send joint progress reports to the division management for both areas.

Develop your sense of appropriate “timing” when considering a proposal or implementation of new ideas.

- Think about what else is going on in the organization; how does the timing of your initiative relate to other priorities?
- Identify whose support you require to implement your ideas.
- Review the organizational chart and identify the key decision-makers, the gatekeepers, and the influential supporters.
- Identify the informal lines of communication to which you have access.
- Track your thinking by noting the decision and the alternatives.
- Develop an understanding of the agendas and viewpoints (hidden and explicit) of others who are key players in the issue.
- Modify or frame your ideas to meet the needs or concerns of key influencers in the organization.

Reflection Tip:

- * Think about what actions you could take to anticipate potential conflicts, competing demands and viewpoints when implementing a new idea.

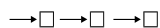
Construct an organigraph of your Organization/ business unit.

- Think of your Organization/business unit in terms of the flow of information, products and services. There are four main types of interactions:

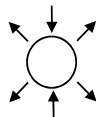
Sets – if people, parts act independently of each other (e.g., lawyers in a large firm, who have their own group of clients with whom they do all their work), they are considered to be sets.



Chains – if people, materials, info are connected to each other in some order (e.g., assembly line in manufacturing environment), they are seen as chains.



Hubs – these are any physical or conceptual point at which people, materials or information move (e.g., an airport, a manager).



Webs – these are grids with no centre; they allow open-ended communication and continuous movement of people and ideas (e.g., new product development).



- Review the organigraph for opportunities to increase partnerships, leverage existing products and services or communicate what the organization is about to others. (Harvard Business Review, Sept/Oct 99).

Reflection Tips:

- * Organigraphs are representations of how an organization works which go beyond traditional organizational charts. They can help people recognize what parts connect, how people and processes should come together, which ideas have to flow where. This idea was developed by Henry Mintzberg and Ludo Van der Heyden.
- * There is no one organigraph that will be right for your Organization/business unit all the time – managers and leaders need to build a customized organigraph to reflect their business unit.
- * Share you organigraph with your colleagues to test your assumptions and gather feedback.