REFRAMING ORGANIZATIONS
Artistry, Choice, and Leadership
By
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Executive Book Summary by Patricia St. Denis
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Bolman and Deal released their first book in understanding organizations and how managers/leaders lead through modern approaches in 1984. In 1991, Bolman, L.G. and Deal, T.E., released Reframing Organizations as a new release from Modern Approaches to Understanding and Managing Organizations. Bolman, L.G. and Deal, T.E., Reframing Organizations is in its sixth edition, released in 2017 and this is where the executive book summary is positioned within. The sixth edition includes all of the foundational learning including four-frame model, but in the sixth edition the book includes new research and revised case examples. The importance of combing scholarly and professional literature is pivotal as it gathers the two together to capture the best literature. Managers/Leaders will read this book and once done, will digest the wealth of theory and will conclude that the four frames, case examples, and stories reflect how organizations are rapidly evolving and that a leader in the present day needs to be a rational and technical organizer but also puts the value of being an artist as well. The absence of either one will have a direct impact on the successes of Managers/Leaders reframing organizations.

The book explains reframing organizations in six parts. Part one, Making Sense of Organizations. It introduces how leaders with limited knowledge of organizations make many mistakes and often fail at restructuring. This part also creates the theories of the four-frame model. In part two, The Structural Frame, the first four-frame model, is explained. In part three, The Human Resource Frame, teaches managers how to deal with people and their hearts for organizational restructuring success. In part four, The Political Frame, discusses issues of power, conflict, and ethics. In part five, The Symbolic Frame, refers to symbolic elements in organizations, like stories, rituals, humour, and culture. In part six, Improving Leadership Practices, it brings all the knowledge, case studies, influential leaders that have used the four-frame models to their advantage to reframing organizations. The executive book summary will highlight the assumptions of each frame.

> "REFRAMING REQUIRES AN ABILITY TO THINK ABOUT SITUATIONS FROM MORE THAN ONE ANGLE, WHICH LETS YOU DEVELOP ALTERNATIVE DIAGNOSES AND STRATEGIES. WE INTRODUCE FOR DISTINCT FRAMES— STRUCTURAL, HUMAN RESOURCE, POLITICAL, AND SYMBOLIC—EACH LOGICAL AND POWERFUL IN CAPTURING A DETAILED SNAP SHOT" (P. 6-7).

Overview of the Four-Frame Model

	Structural	Human Resource	Political	Symbolic
Metaphor for Organisation	Factory or Machine	Family	Jungle	Carnival, temple, theatre
Central Concepts	Rules, roles, goals, policies, technology, environment	Needs, skills, relationships	Power, conflict, competition, organisational policies	Culture, meaning, metaphor, ritual, ceremony, stories, heroes
Image of Leadership	Social architecture	Empowerment	Advocacy	Inspiration
Basic Leadership Challenge	Attune structure to task, technology, environment	Align organisational and human needs	Develop agenda and power base	Create faith, beauty, meaning
Organisational Ethic	Excellence	Caring	Justice	Faith
Leadership Contribution	Authorship	Love	Power	Significance

A great leader never sets himself above his followers except in carrying responsibilities

- Unknown

Part One: Making Sense of Organizations

"The demands on managers' wisdom, imagination and agility have never been greater, and the impact of organizations on people's well-being and happiness has never been more consequential" (p. 7).

It is critical for managers/leaders to understand two things about restructuring organizations; one is aligning an organization through its strategy and mission and second, is to understand the importance of people regarding relationships and teamwork. Theses valuable lessons learned are what Steve Jobs applied when he re-entered into the corporate world after he was fired from Apple Computer, a company that he founded. Managers/leaders need to understand that reframing requires that you think about situations from all angles to get a detailed snapshot of the work that is ahead. The most powerful ways to create a snapshot is to frame your thinking around the four frames—structural, human resources, political, and symbolic. The four frames will help a manager/leader to mitigate through their own lack of knowledge, knowing exactly what they are up against, and keeps from personal assumptions and set of ideas that can hinder the success of reframing an organization.

In the four frames, Bolman & Deal use a metaphor for each frame. The metaphor for the structural frame is factories. The factories frame organization includes structures like an organizational chart, strategic planning, short and long-term goals, and standard operating and procedures. The metaphor for human resources are families. The families frame organization looks at their people as family. It is important to develop relationships with the people that work for the organization. A comparison of doing head, heart, and hands check-ins with the people that work in the organizations make them feel like they a part of the team. This frame, if followed within in its true authenticity will have people working with their whole being. Leaving the human resource frame out in organizations can have destructive outcomes like people waking out on their jobs, poor profits for companies, and bankruptcy. The metaphor for the political frame is jungles. The jungle frame organization is like an arena of political power and control. The organizations must delicately dance to a symphony of balancing power, power needs to be dispersed into the right places. The jungle frame includes bargaining, negotiations, and quick and critical decision-making. The metaphor for the symbolic frame is temples and carnivals. Temples and carnivals are connected deeply to culture. The organization puts value on rituals, ceremonies, humor, and myths. Temples and carnivals make a comparison to being like a theatre. Temples and carnivals must be careful that actors are following their script and clearly and concisely portraying the organization they act for.

Four-Frame Model

- How do you see the four frames in your organisation/institution?
- What is the problem, and what is the situation in which it is embedded?
- Which frames are in play?
- Which frame(s) is most likely to lead to the desired change?
- How can the concepts, metaphors, and values of that frame be used to reframe the situation to resolve the problem?

The absence of navigating their leadership in these four frames can lead to managers/leaders amplifying their egos, creating unnecessary ambiguity, and blaming others for their shortcomings.

The need to understand the peculiarities of organizations will help managers/leaders to recognize when they are drowning, failing, misinterpreting, or poorly leading.

The Peculiarities of Organizations

- Organizations are complex

- Organizations are surprising

- Organizations are deceptive

- Organizations are ambiguous

It is through experience and wisdom that managers/leaders make sense of what is going on in their organizations, positive or negative. They need to be able to have a balcony view of the organization and need to apply what they have learned from theories and intuitive capacity. They need to know the history of the organization to mitigate through the present and look to the future while keeping focused.

The 9/11 disaster is a good example of the complexities of multiple organizations involved in a horrific time in history. The policemen, firemen, ambulance workers, military, corporations, and other organizations trying to work together to save lives and in other ways save the world.

The element of surprise in decision-making within an organization can sometimes have a different outcome than the manager/leader is expecting. An example of surprise is when the VW corporation was exposed for intentionally not meeting the emission requirements for many years. The exposure of the cheating cost CEO Martin Winterkorn his job and VW financial and reputation was marred.

People in organizations often resort to blaming and lying to cover up when reframing of an organization is struggling to meet the expectations of financial gains or following the successful framework to save the struggling organization. In the case of Wells Fargo Bank, CEO John Stumpf, he stuck with what he knew and tried to continue on the track he was on with hopes that he could remain steady. He did not want to show that he could not make good decisions and used fear as a tactic to keep people quiet on this lying and deceit. It was outsiders that "blew the whistle" on John Stumpf that exposed his deceitful way of running Wells Fargo Bank.

Organizations tend to act like a deer in the headlights when they know they are heading for troubled waters. They may get fixated on the problem but only to work hard to cover up its real issues or create a decoy to avoid solving the real problem.

Managers/leaders need to hone their intuition and the ability to recognize problems in situations quickly and efficiently.
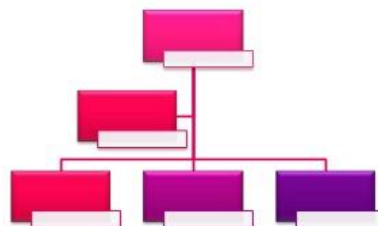
Part Two: The Structural Frame

"We emphasize how structural design depends on an organization's circumstance, including its goals, strategy, technology, and environment" (p. 43-44).

Structural Frame

- Origins - sociology & management science.
- Goals, specialised roles, and formal relationships.
- Structures fit organisations environment and technology.
- Responsibilities, rules, policies, procedures.

The Six Assumptions of Structural Frame

1. Organizations exist to achieve established goals and objectives and devise strategies to reach these goals
2. Organizations increase efficiency and enhance performance through specialization and appropriate division of labor.
3. Suitable forms of coordination and control ensure that diverse efforts of individuals and units mesh.
4. Organizations work best when rationality prevails over personal agendas and extraneous pressures.
5. Effective structure fits an organization's current circumstances (including its strategy, technology, workforce, and environment).
6. When performance suffers from structural flaws, the remedy is problem solving and restructuring.
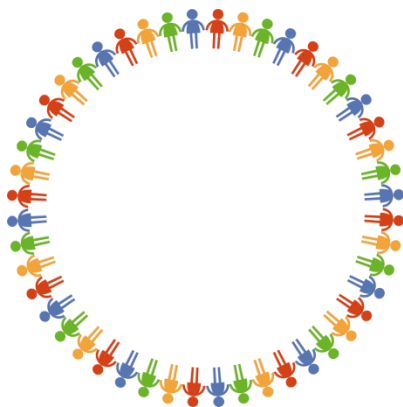(Bolman & Deal, 2017, p.48)

Part Three: The Human Resource Frame

"The resource frame centers on what organizations and people do to and for one another" (p.113).

Human Resources Frame

Challenge is to tailor organisation to people – find a way for individuals to get the job done while feeling good about what they are doing.

The Four Assumptions of Human Resource Frame

1. Organizations exist to serve human needs rather than the converse.

2. People and organizations need each other. Organizations need ideas, energy, and talent; people need careers, salaries, and opportunities.

3. When the fit between individual and system is poor, one or both suffer. Individuals are exploited or exploit the organization—or both become victims.

4. A good fit benefits both. Individuals find meaningful and satisfying work, and organizations get the energy they need to succeed.

(Bolman & Deal, 2017, p.118)

Part Four: The Political Frame

"Viewed from the political frame, politics is the realistic process of making decisions and allocating resources in the context of scarcity and divergent interests" (p.179).

Political Frame

- Origins - political science.
- Organisations as arenas, contests, or jungles.
- Different interests competing for power and resources.
- Rampant conflict – difference in needs, perspectives, and lifestyles.

- Bargaining, negotiation, coercion, compromise, and coalitions.

The Five Assumptions of Political Frame

1. Organizations are coalitions of different individuals and interest groups

2. Coalition members have enduring differences in values, beliefs, information, interests, and perceptions of reality.

3. Most important decisions involve allocating scarce resources–deciding who gets what.

4. Scarce resources and enduring differences put conflict at the center of day-to-day dynamics and make power the most important asset.

5. Goals and decisions emerge from bargaining and negotiation among competing stakeholders jockeying for their own interests.

(Bolman & Deal, 2017, p.184)

Part Five: The Symbolic Frame

"The symbolic frame focuses on how myth and symbols help humans make sense of the chaotic, ambiguous world in which they live" (p. 236).

Symbolic Frame

- Origins - social and cultural anthropology.
- Organisations as tribes, theatres, or carnivals.
- Culture – rituals, ceremonies, stories, heroes, and myths.
- Organisation is theatre – actors play role while audiences form impressions.

The Five Assumptions of Symbolic Frame

1. What is most important is not what happens but what it means.

2. Activity and meaning are loosely coupled; events and actions have multiplied interpretations as people experience situations differently.

3. In the face of uncertainty and ambiguity, symbols arise to help people resolve confusion, find direction, and anchor hope and faith.

4. Events and processes are often more important for what they express or signal than for their intent or outcomes. Their emblematic form weaves a tapestry of secular myths, heroes, rituals, ceremonies, and stories to help people find purpose and passion.

5. Culture forms the superglue that bonds an organization, unites people, and helps an enterprise to accomplish desired ends.

(Bolman & Deal, 2017, p.242)

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Part Six: Improving Leadership Practice

"…we focus on combining lenses to achieve multiframe approaches to managing and leading" (p.295).

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Reframing Organisational Process
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	Structural	Human Resources	Political	Symbolic
Strategic Planning	Strategies to set objectives and coordinate resources	Gatherings to promote participation	Arenas to air conflicts and realign power	Ritual to signal responsibility, produce symbols, negotiate meanings
Decision Making	Rational sequence to produce right decision	Open process to produce commitment	Opportunity to gain or exercise power	Ritual to confirm values and provide opportunities for bonding
Reorganizing	Realign roles and responsibilities to fit tasks and environment	Maintain balance between human needs and formal roles	Redistribute power and form new coalitions	Maintain image of accountability and responsiveness; negotiate new social order
Evaluating	Way to distribute rewards or penalties and control performance	Process for helping individuals grow and improve	Opportunity to exercise power	Occasion to play roles in shared ritual
Approaching Conflict	Maintain organisational goals by having authorities resolve conflict	Develop relationships by having individuals confront conflict	Develop power by bargaining, forcing, or manipulating others to win	Develop shared values and use conflict to negotiate meaning
Goal Setting	Keep organisation headed in right direction	Keep people involved and communication open	Provide opportunity for individuals and groups to make interests known	Develop symbols and shared values
Communication	Transmit facts and information	Exchange information, needs, and feelings	Influence or manipulate others	Tell stores
Meetings	Formal occasions for making decisions	Informal occasions for involvement, sharing feelings	Competitive occasions to win points	Sacred occasions to celebrate and transform the culture
Motivation	Economic incentives	Growth and self-actualisation	Coercion, manipulation, and seduction	Symbols and celebrations

Bolman & Deal (2017), suggest that reframing leadership requires that leaders combine two or more frames provides a kaleidoscope of opportunities for solving the complexities, surprises, deception, and ambiguity. Leaders also need to know that application of the same frame or certain combination of the frames for every situation is not always the option as circumstances arrive. In reframing leadership, Bolman and Deal examine the skills, processes, and purpose for leaders to have strong and successful leadership practice by looking at the four frames.

Structural Leadership

1. Structural leaders do their homework
2. Structural leaders rethink the relationship of structure, strategy, and environment
3. Structural leaders focus on implementation
4. Effective structural leaders experiment.

Human Resource Leadership

1. Human resource leaders communicate a strong belief in people.
2. Human resource leaders are visible and accessible
3. Effective human resource leaders empower others.

Political Leadership

1. Political leaders clarify what they want and what they can get.
2. Political leaders assess the distribution of power and interests.
3. Political leaders build linkages to stakeholders.
4. Iacocca worked hard to build linkages
5. Political leaders persuade first, negotiate second, and coerce only if necessary.

Symbolic Leadership

1. Symbolic leaders lead by example.
2. They use symbols to capture attention.
3. Symbolic leaders frame experience.
4. Symbolic leaders communicate a vision.
5. Symbolic leaders tells stories.

Multiframe Leadership

"Multiframe thinking is challenging and counterintuitive. To see the same organization as a machine, family, jungle, and theatre requires capacity to think in different ways at the same time about the same thing" (p.422).

The CEOs of Amazon, Google, GM, and Zappos all have the great task of mitigating through decision-making, leading their organizations, and making high profits. The world today is highly competitive. The leaders of today need to have space to act diplomatically, confront problems, be courageous, do head, heart and hand checks, and always maintain integrity.

This book challenges all leaders including the school-based administration to lead their teachers and students through mapping what success is and drawing what that looks like in the four frame model.

As an Instructional leader, I can the importance in using and being mentored by someone more knowledgeable in applying the four frames into reframing as it is needed. I can see where I am strong; I can see where I am weak.

I am having a hard time as an Indigenous leader to find myself in this book. The closest that I come to positioning myself to connect Indigenous leadership is the human resource and the symbolic frame, with the latter being the one I could connect more too.

I am including four provocative questions for Bolman & Deal in this executive book summary.

Provocative Questions for Bolman and Deal

1. How does an Indigenous leader who works in a First Nation organization and apply the four frame model when an Indigenous leader is required to lead from an Indigenous worldview?

2. How can an Indigenous leader decolonize the four frame model?

3. How does a non-Indigenous organization promote and support Indigenous leadership within their organizations? What is missing from the four frame model to include Indigenous leadership?

4. How would Bolman and Deal honor Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the 94 Calls to Actions within the four frame model? What would they add or reframe?

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. Bolman and Deal did an excellent job of providing the greatest hits of organizational studies as examples to connect to leadership and the four frame model. The connection to how people follows a leader that can clearly connect to people that create an image of reframing a country like how Donald Trump did and how Hilary Clinton could not clearly provide an image to the people of reformation to make her the first woman president in the history of the United States of America.

References

Bolman, L.G. & Deal, T.E. (2017). *Reframing organizations: artistry, choice, and leadership.*

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