

Welcome ...

[Click here to download an online version of the Newsletter](#)

We have taken a fresh look at our Bulletins. Recently CMCE has published a Newsletter every two months and a Bulletin between Newsletters when we wished to publicise one of our events. We are not holding any events at the moment for obvious reasons and we wanted to give Newsletter readers some more thought-provoking material at a time when many people have more opportunity to read than usual. We therefore plan to publish Bulletins with their own distinctive content in the alternate months between Newsletters.

In this edition of the Bulletin, we start with an editorial from our Director reflecting on the role of management consultants in the new world that we are now facing. We follow it with the first of an occasional series of articles giving [a consultancy buyer's point of view](#); our recommendations on what to read and listen to during lockdown in [In Brief](#); and [a commentary on the Ethical Dilemma](#) that appeared in our last Newsletter.

The Newsletter Editor

During the Korean war in the 1950s some returning Western prisoners were found to have profoundly changed their views to become supportive of Chinese communist ideology. This surprising and disturbing *volte face* was put down to a process they had undergone while prisoners that became known as brainwashing.

The distinguished American social psychologist Edgar Schein studied this and elucidated a three-stage process of effecting this type of change: unfreeze, change, refreeze.

The unfreezing stage prompts the individual to question previously held beliefs. This could be through social pressure (being part a group that subscribes to the changed views), physical pressure (e.g. deprived of sleep), or through changed circumstances, perhaps occasioned by an external threat.

Managements and management consultants have used unfreezing to start the process of organisational change. For example, there was a famous multinational some years ago that through accounting sleight of hand announced the first quarterly loss it had made since its formation 50 years before. Its corporate historian told me that this was because the management wanted this threat to galvanise the workforce into accepting a programme of major change; the sense of crisis would make them open to doing new things in new ways. (Even so, the business declined and was taken over a few years later!)

The parallels with the current situation in respect of the Covid 19 pandemic are clear: the threat and

consequences of infection to self and loved ones has prompted individuals to accept personal restrictions and state surveillance that would be unthinkable in other times, but equally to embrace new ways of working and social interaction.

The unfreezing has happened, and changes have taken place. But what changes will endure after the crisis has passed?

Dealing with the virus has been likened to a war, and there is an aftermath to a war.

Speaking about the collapse of the Iraqi state at the end of the Gulf War, one general observed that towards the end of the Second World War there was a team of thousands of people planning for the rebuilding of Europe; the equivalent for the Gulf War considering the rebuilding of Iraq was negligible. (Interestingly, it is said that General Norman Schwarzkopf had been keen to pursue the earlier Kuwait conflict into Iraq, but had been prevented by Secretary of State Colin Powell, who observed that prosecuting the war into Iraq would require the US to take a responsibility for its rebuilding).

We should learn from this. Managements and management consultants have to rebuild and reshape structures and processes for a post-virus world. And the time to start planning– if you have not already done so – is right now.

Calvert Markham
Director

The Centre for Management Consulting is founded by



*The Worshipful Company
of Management Consultants*