

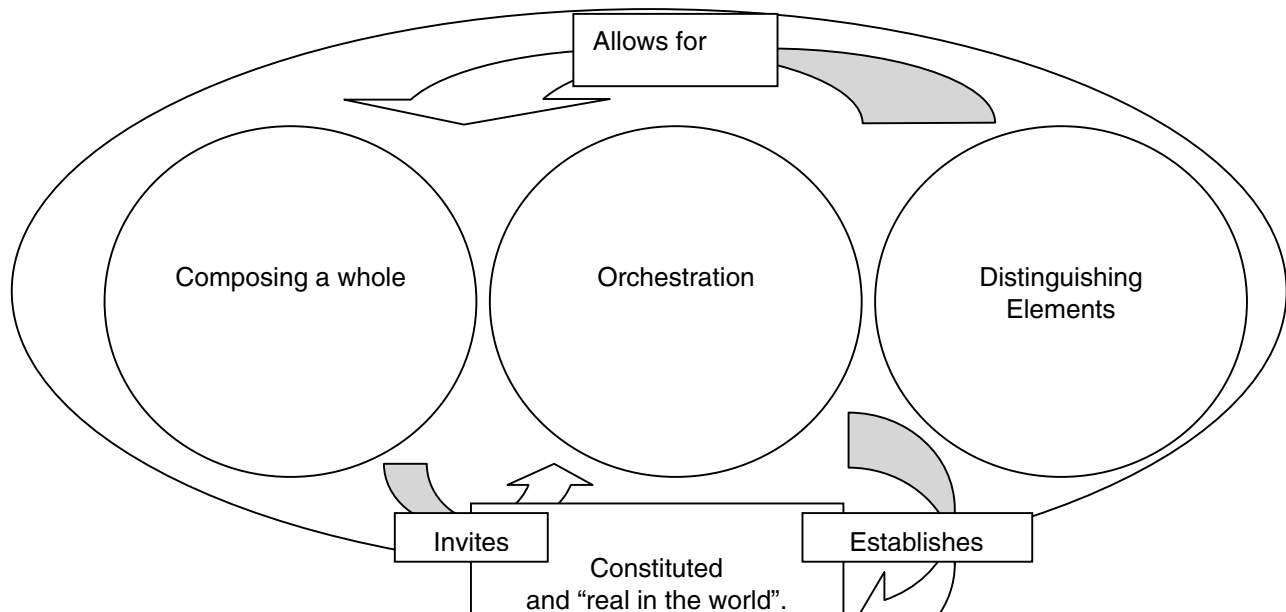
The Possibility of Communication at the Scale of Organization

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No one and no organization has “cracked the code” on communication at the scale of organization. Indeed, the quest of many to codify communication at this scale may be a result of a hidden assumption that such a phenomenon can be reduced to a code or recipe. Human beings are not “wired” to see, think or act from an organizational scale. Our subject/object relationship with the world limits our ability to do this, unless we make a conscious choice to do so. Generative Leadership Group has developed useful distinctions that allow people to see, think and act from different scales and recognize patterns. These models provide some access to “constituting” oneself as organization. However, to give access to causing organizational-scale communication, we need first to have access to the act of constitution, itself.

Distinguishing the Act of Constitution

A way of distinguishing “constituting” is to say that: Distinguishing the elements or parts of something allows you to compose a whole. Composing a whole invites the orchestration of that whole. Once orchestrated, the whole you have composed is constituted and real in the world.



Or, for an example of this from watching the Country Mouse and City Mouse videos with my children (one of my many high-level resources):

Strauss has become famous for creating a particular type of music we call waltzes. His understanding of the language of music allowed him to distinguish which notes and instruments would evoke the kind of melody he could hear in his head and wanted others to hear, too. Using his knowledge of the elements of music, he composed ways in which they would blend together as a whole, writing in the language of music for a variety of diverse instruments. When he brought musicians together to play what he had written and orchestrated their actions, the music they played constituted what we now call a waltz.

Strauss could conduct the waltz because he had written the music for and orchestrated each of the instruments. If Strauss had merely written music for the piano and stopped at that (or, to continue the example from the video, if the Bell Tower Rats had really burned his music sheets before the concert), it is highly unlikely that he would have become renowned for creating beautiful waltzes. He had to take his vision (the music he could hear in his head), distinguish its individual elements, scale up to make a workable composition of the elements and then orchestrate it (cause it to be played so that it could be heard outside of his head). Once others heard it, it was considered constituted, or real in the world.

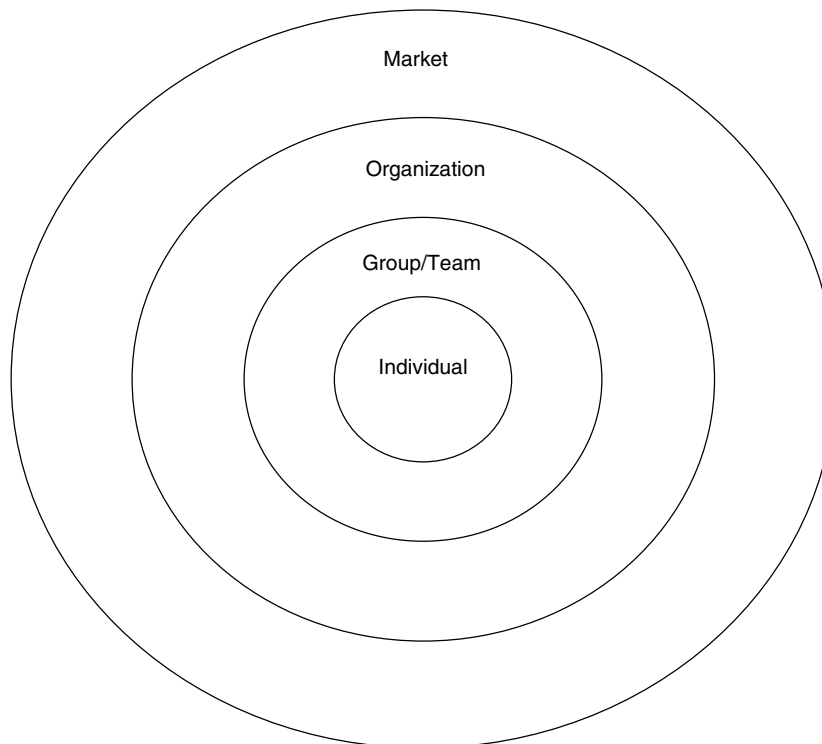
How Constitution Applies to Communication at the Scale of Organization

Constituting yourself “as” organization invites viewing oneself first as a constituent part and then being willing to step beyond that to be a composer, orchestra conductor and player at whatever scale would make the most difference at the time. In our “default” state as human beings, we are *constituted as individuals*, acting out of our internalized experiences, thoughts, feelings and memories. When we consciously constitute ourselves as something at a scale beyond individual, we are able to access a level of *awareness* of our environment that allows us to *discern* a broader, more complex field and *chose* how to behave from that enhanced awareness. For example, as an individual you may have the experience of not being willing to take on a project because you remember doing something similar before and failing. However, if you pause and look from a scale beyond your personal experience at what your team, organization or client needs and how producing this result would benefit them in the current environment, you may be able to *consciously chose* to embark on the project. In that case, you would be *informed* by the experience you’ve had in the *past*, but *not limited* or driven by it. In making this shift consciously, you are aware of the both the

possibilities and constraints of the project and your environment. You can make the choice to proceed *without compromise*, authentically. This is quite distinct from “going along with” something because it is perceived as the right thing to do, or digging your heels in because you don’t like the direction in which things are headed. It opens up the possibility of leading and communicating from a much broader spectrum than our habitual orientation.

Shifting the Scale of our Thinking

Causing communication at the scale of organization requires us to take our thinking out to at least one scale beyond organization itself. By using individual/group or team/organization/marketplace as a framework, you can position yourself mentally to think from what it takes to *cause* a market to come into existence and to *cause* communication in that market, for example.



If a test for communication having occurred is that people are taking action consistent with your speaking, then you can look into the marketplace and see where organizations have done a brilliant job of constituting themselves. Coca-Cola and Federal Express are just two examples of companies that started a market and continue to communicate in a way that causes people to take actions consistent with their messages. The amount of orchestration that goes into causing that to be the case is phenomenal, when you start to break it down into

its constituent parts. Standing there, who could possibly think that they could do that on their own? Who could do that without having a very good understanding of both the meaning and operation of their business, vision, strategy, human behavior, etc., etc.?

Causing Organizational Scale Communication

Communication can only be *caused* at the scale of organization. It is only available by orchestrating the parts to be a coordinated whole. No individual “communicates at the scale of organization” by themselves. *Leadership* and *Communication* are mutually arising phenomena. You do not get one without the other. Therefore, having some access to causing communication at this scale invites one to provide leadership organizationally (and beyond), as well.

Being able to cause communication at the scale of organization to willfully come into existence requires that, at a minimum, you:

1. Care enough to do it (have something compelling at stake for yourself, your clients, your organization, for example).
2. Understand enough about what causes humans to do what they do to have some insight into individual and group behavior (your own and that of others).
3. Can distinguish the elements of organization that are required for execution, both default and the ones that you generate (leadership, development, management, structure, systems, processes, etc. in addition to the functions and hierarchy).
4. Know the difference between changing things using force and creating them using language. Using force, or “driving” something, is useful if you are operating machinery. With human beings, it most often produces resistance. Since organizations as we know them in this context are composed of human beings, creating a new possibility and communicating it in a manner that enrolls them in pursuing the fulfillment of it works much more effectively than mandates or sheer personal determination.
5. Can see that people communicate as though it is clear to their listeners the scale to which they are referring. In fact, they may be speaking about something that is the content, process, context or field - and depending upon which one it is, the results you'll produce are quite different (i.e. communicating the details about the acquisition of a new company doesn't equal integrating the new company with the purchaser - that's communication as content, describing not creating).
6. Can design or co-create a composition (i.e. strategy) that calls for many to be involved in the execution.

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7. Can co-create plans with those involved that will allow them to see what the role of their function/self is in the execution.
 8. Will orchestrate the actions of the various functions and people involved so that their actions are coordinated and the strategy is executed.
 9. Will constantly relate the actions being taken and results being produced back to the vision and strategy. This gives meaning to people's efforts so that the accomplishment of their work is lasting and will compel them to go beyond where they've been before.

I could go on; however, to do so would be to run the risk of reducing communication at this scale to “paint by the numbers,” rather than the ongoing creative act of well-trained and educated professional artists that it clearly is!

A Lifelong Engagement

It becomes apparent that communication at the scale of organization and constituting oneself “as” something is an *ongoing, orchestrated act*. Developing the ability to “be” and do this is a lifelong practice that requires developing yourself consciously. It is not something that happens as a direct result of four days in a training program, or even a year. Otherwise (to stay at the market scale) Coca Cola would have come up with a good advertising campaign in 1900 and never have had to recreate it to be a successful business in the ensuing century. Indeed, they would have written a best selling business book to explain the process and we would all be experts just from replicating their actions! Ah, well, on with developing ourselves.