



# Quantum people management

**Stephen Moreton**

Attend, 11 – 13 Cavendish Square

London, W1G 0AN

[stephen.moreton@attend.org.uk](mailto:stephen.moreton@attend.org.uk)

---

© 2008 Attend. 11-13 Cavendish Square, London, W1G 0AN

Tel: 0845 450 0285 | Email: [info@attend.org.uk](mailto:info@attend.org.uk) | Web: [www.attend.org.uk](http://www.attend.org.uk)

Attend is a charity registered in England under no. 1113067 and in Scotland under no. SCO39237. Registered Company no. 5713403.



# Quantum people management

## Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Part 1 – What is talent?</b>	<b>2</b>
Opening statement	2
The concept of talent	2
Cross-referencing the work of Ulrich with the work of Purcell	3
Case Study 1 – The Voluntary and Community Sector	4
<b>Part 2 – The quantum analogy</b>	<b>5</b>
Quantum people management	5
Hamel and Breen	7
The future of management	7
Can quantum mechanics be used to explain people and talent management?	10
Case Study 2 – Attend	11
<b>Part 3 – The undetectable force</b>	<b>14</b>
Higgs boson	14
Intellectual capital	14
Case Study 3 – The League of Friends of Stratton Hospital	17
Conclusions	19
Research questions	20
<b>References</b>	<b>21</b>

## Introduction

This paper aims to use principles of quantum mechanics to provide insight into the principles of people management. It also combines key messages given by leaders in today's world of people management. The discussion is stimulated by the findings from Stuart-Kotze and Dunn (2008) that "the 'war for talent' is a phoney war" in that "it's not talent that's in short supply; the shortage is in people that know how to manage it."

The supporting case studies have been deliberately chosen from the voluntary and community sector. This is because there is something of a people management secret that lies at the point where the management of volunteers and the management of paid staff overlap. It is around the notion of encouraging paid staff to volunteer their discretionary effort and talents in a way that furthers the aims of an organisation that itself embraces the principles and ethos of volunteering.

It is not intended as a research paper, and seeks to combine rather than juxtapose research previously undertaken. The conclusions reached essentially represent hypotheses that could act as a stimulus for further research, whilst also seeking to highlight what may be key underpinning concepts of people and talent management to today's practitioner.

There appears to be a common thread among the research and some potential insight could be achieved if the messages from this research could be blended together. However, the text that provided the impetus for developing these thoughts came from an unlikely source – a novel by James Rollins, titled *'Black Order'*. Much of the plot mechanics revolve around a device called *The Bell*, which Polish researcher Igor Witkowski claims was a Nazi anti-gravity machine. In Rollins' novel *The Bell* is a quantum measuring device that is said to control evolution.

Rollins outlines the basic principles of quantum mechanics and using them to explain how species adapt and evolve. It appears that the whole direction of life is dependent on the behaviour of life's smallest components. However, science does not know exactly why these components behave like they do – science has just observed that the behaviour exists. Much of the thought processes in this paper are based on this principle being applied to people management, in that the direction of an organisation is dependent on the behaviour of its people and that management theory does not know exactly why people behave like they do – management theory has just observed that the behaviour exists.

Gary Hamel (2007), in the groundbreaking book 'The Future of Management', reaches a conclusion: *"In management as in science, it's the anomalies that point us towards new truths."* So in a way this paper seeks to do 2 things:

- (i) To explore how management theory can be represented, on the assumption that people behave in the same way as the smallest component parts that make up their being.
- (ii) To be itself, an 'anomaly' that may contribute to the improvement of the management of people and talent.

Essentially this paper does not seek to provide answers to the mysteries that are managing people and managing talent, but it seeks to provide a signpost to where the answers may lie.

While, nothing can be stated for definite, the thought of people behaving in the same way as the DNA of the universe is too alluring a principle to ignore exploring it.

# Part 1 – What is talent?

## Opening statement

The discussion considers the work of Ulrich (2007), Purcell (2003), Hamel and Breen (2007), and references are also made to the views of Jackie Orme (2008), Chief Executive of the CIPD, and CIPD podcasts (2007). The principles of quantum mechanics are presented as revealed by the Felder and Felder (2008) in their discussions of Young's Double-Slit Experiment, and the discussion that follows tends to point to the following conclusions:

The key underpinning principles of talent management are:

1. *To adopt management practices that avoid intrusive measurement of activities, and instead focus on how effective the organisation is able to be.*
2. *To ensure all relationships that exist in the organisation support both individual and organisational needs.*

## The concept of talent

Jackie Orme, in her opening key-note address to the CIPD Centres' Conference in 2008, highlighted that talent management is being increasingly recognised as the central issue in effective people management. Further, in a podcast interview (2008), when asked for her strategic vision for human resource development, she replied firstly that talent *"is going to be an enduring issue"*, and *"will continue to dominate"* in HRD in today's organisations.

So what is this 'talent' that is being cited as the 'holy grail' of people management professionals?

There was a time when talent shows on television were popular, but then there was a period when they received less attention. More recently however there has been a resurgence of talent shows, and these are capturing the public's imagination, who then vote in their millions for what they consider to be the best 'talent'. But the acts are so diverse. How can we compare a 55 year old singer with a young boy who can spin on his head? What are the fundamental ingredients that make up talent? Technical skills, personality, communication skills, performing under pressure?.... the X-factor?

Talent in the workplace is described by Ulrich (2007) as a combination of competence, commitment and contribution. He explains that these 3 factors interact to create the intangible concept of talent, and that it is a product of the creative and constructive synergy between the individual and the organisation. For example, talent according to Ulrich's explanation could be represented as an individual having the ability and ambition of Cristiano Ronaldo, harnessed and delivered by the management processes and people relationships at Manchester United FC.

The concept of talent can be represented as *individual ability and ambition, harnessed and delivered.*

Ulrich cites his formula for talent as:

### **Talent = Competence + Commitment + Contribution**

He also explains how these 3 factors are interwoven to create the phenomenon that is talent. Mathematically however, the 'addition' function does not appear to best represent the complex inter-relationship between these 3 factors. For example, consider a 'trifle', with core components fruit, jelly sponge, and custard. The equation,  $\text{trifle} = \text{fruit} + \text{sponge} + \text{custard} + \text{jelly}$  doesn't do justice to the dish. It is the interaction of these elements supported by a skilled arrangement that can make a quality trifle.

These 'addition' signs are therefore not mathematical symbols, they are the scientific symbols used to represent chemical reactions. In chemistry the 'addition' of elements creates a new substance and this is certainly the case with talent.

## Cross-referencing the work of Ulrich with the work of Purcell

Purcell (2003) explored the secret of 'understanding the people and performance link', and reached the conclusion that performance was a combination of an individual's ability, their motivation and the opportunities available to them in the workplace.

Purcell cites his formula as:

**Performance = Ability + Motivation + Opportunity**

Similarly, according to 'trifle principle' these addition signs represent a chemical reaction.

It appears clear that the parallel's between the work of Ulrich (2007) and the Purcell (2003) are too significant to ignore, and some insight could be obtained by cross-referencing their various findings.

So how do these two works synthesise? An interesting conclusion results if we make some assumptions as follows:

a) Competence = Ability (*applied* in an organisational setting)

In other words, an individual can only have competence if their ability is related to the workplace environment.

b) Commitment = Motivation (*applied* in an organisational setting)

In other words, an individual can only have commitment if their motivation is embraced in the workplace environment.

c) Contribution = Opportunity (*applied* in an organisational setting) + Performance of the *individual*

In other words, an individual can only make a contribution to the organisation if the opportunities available become reality, and that the individual is able to 'perform' when these are presented.

Therefore, substituting these assumptions back into Ulrich's formula (the 'trifle version') gives us:

Talent = Competence + Commitment + Contribution  
= Ability(*applied*) + Motivation(*applied*) + Opportunity(*applied*) + Performance(*individual*)  
= (Ability + Motivation + Opportunity)*applied* + Performance(*individual*)

However, as Ability + Motivation + Opportunity = Performance, then:

<b>Talent = Performance(<i>of the individual</i>) + Performance(<i>applied in an organisational setting</i>)</b>
--

This formula provides an interesting point of discussion. It's as if the combined research of Purcell and Ulrich has presented a 'chemical reaction' for exploration. A 'chemical reaction' where both the individual and their organisational activities are both separate entities, but also simultaneously entwined as one to create talent.

But this formula is not a new concept. In a CIPD Podcast on Talent Management (2007), Adrian Moorhouse, former Olympic swimming champion and now Managing Director of lane 4 states:

"Matching the motivations, dreams and goals of an individual with the motivations, goals and dreams of an organisation – when you get those closely aligned then, I think, you've got a very motivated group of people because it's not work, it's life."

## Case Study 1 – The Voluntary and Community Sector

*“You’ve got a very motivated group of people because it’s not work, it’s life.”*

If there was ever a way of summing up the ‘workforce’ of the Voluntary and Community Sector in one statement, then this is it! Whether the organisation is fully volunteer run, or run by a mixture of paid staff and volunteers, the passion of the cause and the desire to make a difference to the community is endemic throughout the sector. However, all is not a bed of roses – In the UK, the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) has nearly 4 times the number of formal grievances than the public sector, and nearly 6 times more than the private sector. It is widely recognised that the VCS has limited people management and HR capability, and when combined with a passionate workforce, both frustrations and unmet expectations give rise to higher incidents of negative conflict.

Conversely, when a VCS organisation gets it right, it can be ‘world class’ in every sense – creativity and innovation are matched in equal measure with resource provision focused on delivering key outcomes, as the organisation strives to pursue its vision amidst the complexities of its external environment.

VCS organisations that get this right are able to bring out the talent of their people and encourage both paid staff and volunteers, to offer their ‘discretionary effort’ for the cause. Such organisations are able to fully utilise the skills and interest of volunteers by matching these with both current and developing workstreams. The ‘latent talent’ that exists at many levels within volunteers frequently allows organisations to take opportunities otherwise unattainable if this talent had remained untapped. Similarly, paid staff are also encouraged to volunteer discretionary effort if the underpinning facets, highlighted by Purcell’s research are in place: Effective line management, HR policies that fully engage with people, and an organisation to believe in.

In this sense, the world class VCS organisation applies the principles of volunteer management to not only its volunteers, but also to its paid staff. It encourages people to volunteer their talent, their time, their intellect and creativity, and their commitment and loyalty.... *“because it’s not work, it’s life!”*

## Part 2 – The quantum analogy

### Quantum people management

This is where the principles of quantum mechanics can offer an analogy. In the quantum world, particles also behave as separate entities whilst simultaneously behaving as part of the overall matter that they make up. For example, the notion that light can behave like **particles** or **waves**.

The analogy considers:

**Light:** representing talent

**Particles:** representing the various efforts of the individual to achieve:

- (i) their personal interests
- (ii) the organisation's goals

**Waves:** representing the result of perfect synergy between the individual's and the organisation's goals.

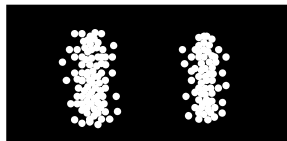
Firstly, consider the behaviour of light as follows:

Felder and Felder (1998) describe the famous 'double slit experiment' conducted by Thomas Young, where he set up a thin plate with through two parallel slits cut in it, and placed a screen behind them as shown below:



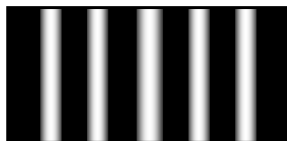
A coherent light source (made up of photons) was then shone through the two slits with the resulting pattern appearing on the back screen. These photons shot through the two slits and it appeared logical that these would be diffracted, making a pattern 'A' on the back screen as shown below: This is certainly the pattern that was made if light was shone through a single slit.

Pattern 'A'



However, once passing through the two slits the photons interacted with each other and behaved as a wave rather than particles and create pattern 'B' as follows:

Pattern 'B'



This caused a fundamental rethink on what exactly light was made up of, and opened up a whole new scientific world to be explored.

An analogy with people management can be made on the following lines:

- The light source represents an individual working for the organisation and each photon represents the various activities they undertake.
- The left hand slit represents the individual's personal interests, and the right hand slit represents their 'organisational targets'.
- If the individual's personal interests are perfectly aligned with their organisational targets, the two interact and blend together to co-exist as a single 'wave' of light, representing organisational and personal harmony.
- This however, will only occur if the two slits of an individual's personal interest and their organisational targets are perfectly aligned.

Further insight was obtained in another scientific experiment, where scientists fired **electrons** through the slits with the same results, and reached the conclusion that the electron leaves as a particle, becomes a '*wave of potentials*', goes through both slits and interacts with itself.

The people management analogy would be:

- If an individual's personal interests and their organisational targets are perfectly aligned, each of the individual's activities relates to both of these to such an extent that they will both effect and enhance each other.

However, the real scientific 'surprise' came when scientists placed a sensor at one of the slits, to observe the behaviour of electrons, to see exactly what was happening to cause them to behave as they did when they passed through the slits.

The discovery made was the electrons went back to behaving like particles and created the first pattern 'A', as a direct result of the fact that they were being **measured**. The effect of the measuring device was to '**collapse the potential**' of the wave. Home and Gribbin (1991) point out: "It seems that if light is allowed to behave like a wave then it will; but if it is constrained to act like a particle then it does."

The people management analogy would be:

- If the individual feels their activities are constantly being measured, they will not be able to focus solely on these tasks, because they will also be concerned about meeting the requirements of the evaluation. These two different focuses do not naturally align and the result is the individual's personal interest and their organisational targets exist as separate entities rather than co-existing.

Also, their efforts will have more disparate results, with a 'diffraction' effect spraying the outcomes around the two intended targets of the individual's personal interests and their organisational targets, thus limiting the effectiveness of both.

In a world where measurement of activity in the workplace is common practice, this quantum phenomenon provides a significant challenge. It suggests that as soon as people feel their activity is being observed it makes them lose focus on the potential synergy of their personal interests and their organisational targets and 'collapses this potential', creating disparate efforts and outcomes.

However, we have to recognise that this is just a model, and as such we cannot just make the assumption that people and organisations behave like the very particles that construct the universe, even if this proposition does have a certain captivating fascination!

So, how does this model measure up in the context of current management thinking?



## Hamel and Breen

An interesting perspective on the evolving nature of effective management is provided Hamel and Breen (2007)

Hamel claims an organisation cannot be a 21<sup>st</sup> century success story if 19<sup>th</sup> century techniques are employed to run it – he proposes a fundamental rethink about the way management is approached.

He advocates throwing everything we think we know about management out of the window due to it being all out of date. He argues that although management techniques have achieved a good level of efficiency and productivity in the past, this has come at the expense of creativity and innovation. Hierarchy and discipline stifle innovation. He states: "We must coordinate the efforts of thousands of individuals without creating a burdensome hierarchy of overseers to invent organisations where discipline and freedom aren't mutually exclusive."

Hamel argues:

"You can't build a company that's fit for the future unless you build a company that's fit for human beings...management that has been practiced over the last one hundred years has not been very human friendly. People are more innovative, more adaptable, more resilient and more engaging than your organisation is."

He continues:

"The 'technology' of management: the review meeting, the planning process, the budgeting, the control systems – they literally leach the adaptability and innovative thoughts out of people between the hours of 8 to 5."

These statements certainly suggest that management processes, which by definition involve measurement of an individual's activities, can limit the effectiveness of both personal development and organisational goals. Therefore it appears that a more detailed analysis of Hamel and Breen's work is warranted, and some of their ideas are presented below for further insight.

## The future of management

- People contribution

People contribution according to Hamel (2007) is made up of the following human capabilities:

Passion	35%
Creativity	25%
Initiative	20%
Intellect	15%
Diligence	5%
Obedience	0%

He argues that getting the most out of people requires them to be creative and committed, and this involves less management rather than more. It means worrying less about alignment and spending less time "checking up on folks". It means less of the 'wrong' type of measurement.

- Principles of modern management

These principles include:

Principle	Application
Standardisation	Minimise variances from standards
Goal alignment	Establish clear objectives and supporting metrics
Planning	Forecast demand, budget resources and schedule tasks
Control	Correct deviations from plan
Extrinsic rewards	Provide financial rewards for achieving specific outcomes

Measurement is intrinsic in the above principles, and Hamel also highlights that if the goal is to create organisations that are highly adaptive and fully human, these principles are insufficient and often toxic.

He explains that experimentation beats planning in an ever unpredictable workplace. Also, as soon as there is a plan, measurement against this plan begins. However talent needs 'slack time' and space for improvisation to explore what could come next. The people contribution will then equip the organisation in the future by exploring alternatives to the status quo.

Further the concept of measurement in control processes is given a severe health warning. Hamel states "most companies have deviance-abhorring, conformance-exalting management DNA; most are filled with executives intent on wringing the irregularities *out* of their organisations"

Obviously measurement of activities is a key tool to iron out any deviances, but Hamel then goes on to highlight that the variety created by 'deviance' is central to the survival of organisational life. He cites the evolutionary processes of *variety* and *selection*, where life is constantly producing genetic variety through mutation and sexual reproduction. The analogy drawn is that an organisation becomes extinct when it fails to adapt fast enough to change in its habitat. So, whilst deviances do need to be identified, they need to be checked to see if they are '*positive deviants*'. And if they are identified as *positive deviants* they need to be celebrated, *not* ironed out!

As mentioned in the introduction to this paper, Hamel (2007) states: *In management as in science, it's the anomalies that point us towards new truths.*" Therefore whilst deviants do need to be measured, the focus of this measurement of deviants is totally different, and those being measured will perceive this as so. Thus their efforts will be aligned to the organisational effort.

So, we come to the crux of the matter: *What should be measured?*

Some key concepts to be celebrated appear in the *future of management*, and it is arguably the measurement of these that will ensure measurement is not intrusive and avoid disturbing the synergy between personal interests and organisational goals. These concepts include:

- Political decision-making influencing what ideas are adopted.

Political decision-making can squash positive deviants unnecessarily. The extent internal politics affects decision-making needs to be measured.

- The mission matters.

"*Meaning* is the critical design rule for creating adaptable organisations". The extent people have meaning in their work needs to be measured.

- Innovation and 'management mutants'.

As highlighted above deviants need to be measured, and 'positive deviants' celebrated.

Hamel then presents 6 challenges to identifying 'positive deviants', and the strategies suggested for addressing these tend to point to the following generic solutions:

Challenge	Solution
How do you build a democracy of ideas?	Recognise people contribution
How do you amplify human imagination?	Recognise people contribution
How do you dynamically allocate resources?	Check people contribution
How do you aggregate collective wisdom?	Check people contribution
How do you minimise the drag of mental models?	Check people contribution and communicate results
How do you give everyone a chance to opt in?	Recognise people contribution

Two threads seem to be appearing: *Checking* and *recognising contribution*. And **contribution** was represented earlier as:

Opportunity (*applied* in an organisational setting) + Performance of the *individual*

Therefore, two additional factors also need measuring as follows:

- Opportunity (*applied* in an organisational setting)

This refers to an individual being able to make a contribution to the organisation if the opportunities available become reality. The realisation of opportunities needs to be measured.

- Performance of the *individual*

This refers to the ability, motivation and opportunities currently available for the individual. Here we encounter a problem with the measurement of ability and motivation. Going back to the quantum mechanics for a moment, clumsy measurement can *collapse people and organisational potential*. If ever there was an argument for getting the recruitment process right, where ability and motivation were aligned to the needs of the organisation from the outset, then this is it!

Any measurement of ability and motivation must therefore be aligned with the individual's desire for 'meaning' and innovation. Then it is likely that the individual will perceive the measurement to be supportive rather than intrusive. This must be the aim of any measurement of the individual.

All other measurement can then focus on checking and recognising the contribution that creates the organisational wave pattern rather than focusing on the individual particles. Also, if the wave is measured, then by definition, the contribution of the particles to the wave is also measured.

These conclusions appear to concur with those of Linda Holbeche (2008), Director of Research and Policy at the CIPD. She concludes that the "kind of measures that should be put in place are those that point in the direction of travel – for instance the link between the quality of line manager relationships and employee engagement". These sorts of issues are frequently measured using employee satisfaction surveys, but there is a **further principle** being uncovered here. For example, the very act of carrying out a survey may be intrusive and therefore counterproductive. It may result in line managers trying to ensure the relationships with their staff are perceived to be 'good quality', rather than purely endeavouring to work effectively with those they manage. Thus, **how** 'measurement' is undertaken may well be a key factor of effective people and talent management.

## Can quantum mechanics be used to explain people and talent management?

F W Taylor (1911), widely regarded as the father of 'scientific management' believed management could be made a "true science, resting upon clearly defined laws, rules and principles as a foundation". However, this approach is exactly what Hamel cites as being out of date in today's world of people management.

The 'laws' of quantum mechanics however are much less clearly defined. In fact science has yet to fathom the mysteries of the behaviour of the smallest of things. In this regard, Taylor's assertion ironically still holds merit – management may still be a science in its truest form.

Hamel and Breen's philosophy of the future of management may therefore have a kindred spirit with quantum mechanics. They appear to be advocating that we need to re-align management so that individuals are not aware they are being measured, so they can concentrate on creating synergy between the personal aspirations and organisational goals. Any measurement needs to be 'undetectable' to the individual save the celebrating of the end result of synergy.

Their stance seems to align with the notion that 'intrusive measurement' can *collapse people and organisational potential*. It may be that there is a secret of people management lying within the very particles that make up our universe. Hamel's dream is for organisations where freedom and discipline can co-exist, just as particles and waves can co-exist in the behaviour of light.

So, to revisit the 'talent' formula we appear to have:

**Talent = Performance(*individual*) + Performance(*applied*)**

Where talent is dependent on creating a synergy between an individual's personal interests and their organisational targets.

This is similar to the analogy of quantum people and talent management that has been discussed. Where talent is dependent on the particles of an individual's effort becoming a '*wave of potentials*', and through the perfect alignment of an individual's personal interests and their organisational targets, it creates the optimum outcomes.

This gives the 'quantum talent' formula as:

**Talent = Particles** (of individual effort) + **Wave** (of optimum outcomes)

To ensure the individual's efforts contribute to both their own interests and their organisational targets, the key underpinning principle of talent management is to *adopt management practices that avoid intrusive measurement of activities, and instead focus on how effective the organisation is able to be*.

If this is achieved, then talent can flourish within the organisation and can then be truly represented as '*individual ability and ambition, harnessed and delivered*'.

## Case Study 2 – Attend

**Attend** is a UK-wide health and social care membership charity that supports c750 local volunteering organisations. Its vision is to place volunteering at the heart of health and social care, and seeks to support its members in making a difference to their local communities. Attend has a small team of head office staff and a regional volunteer infrastructure that endeavour to ensure national resources can be matched to local needs.

The Chairman of Attend (also a volunteer) was to speak at the North Wales Conference, but unfortunately was unable to make the trip from Yorkshire due to illness. The CEO had 24 hours to create a solution and the following issues needed consideration:

- Was it a key imperative for a representative of Attend's board or head office staff to take part in this conference?
- If the answer is 'yes', how can this be managed?
- Considering the Chairman was particularly keen to be present at the conference (it was also an opportunity to revisit the area located as an evacuee during the war), was there an underlying issue with the Chairman's illness and ability to fulfil other functions?

The best solution transpired as, the CEO was to substitute for the Chairman, which required him to leave his home on Friday night in Essex and return on Sunday afternoon. This would naturally leave the Chairman feeling concerned that her own illness had meant the CEO was unable to spend a weekend with his family (NB culturally, the term 'Chairman' tends to be used regardless of gender in hospital volunteering in the UK). This issue therefore also needed to be managed, and the CEO proceeded to ensure a positive outcome was achieved for all involved.

In broader people management terms, this issue is about performance management, and the strategy adopted in this case was 'macro-management' rather than 'micro-management'. The focus was on *how can we ensure the organisation is able to be effective?* The issues pertaining to personal contribution tends to 'come out in the wash'.

In other words, if a member of staff (paid or volunteer) is unable to deliver their role for whatever reason, the fact that a solution is found (by substitution, delaying implementation, or changing strategy) gives a message that the activities and associated contribution to the organisation is important. This reflection naturally leads them to consider the following sorts of questions:

- Am I able to deliver this aspect of my role?
- Do I want to deliver this aspect of my role?
- Are there organisational constraints that hinder me delivering this aspect of my role?

This natural reflection is an opportunity for covert measurement of their own ability, motivation and opportunities, and well managed, allows these issues to be explored as a natural bi-product of focusing on creating the organisational 'wave'.

So, revisiting the situation that the Chairman was unable to make the trip to North Wales, 'absence' was not the problem, the problem was the potential damage to the organisational 'wave'.

Both the solution reached and the way the situation was managed provided a positive climate for all involved to consider the extent of their own current and future contribution.

So how does this principle of performance management apply to managing Attend's paid staff? Each staff member has regular 1-1's with their line manager where the focus is on achieving key workstreams rather than primarily whether they have achieved their specific organisational targets. Consideration is given to what issues are potentially inhibiting their contribution, which tends to provide a joint focus where problems and subsequent solutions are owned by the member of staff.

These 1-1 reviews therefore provide a useful opportunity for both the individual and their line manager to consider and reinforce the 'meaning' of their role. In addition, both these discussions, and also ad-hoc discussions that occur naturally in the workplace consider what 'deviants' in working practice may be positive and worth pursuing.

Therefore, the focus tends to be on the how they are helping the organisation to be more effective, rather than measuring their performance in activities. The impact of this approach to performance management can have a significant affect on an individual's motivation and loyalty.

So what happens if problems are identified with people not being able to provide the expected contribution to the organisation? The constant opportunities for reflection that people have working in this environment are provided by the 3 questions already outlined:

- Am I able to deliver this aspect of my role?
- Do I want to deliver this aspect of my role?
- Are there organisational constraints that hinder me delivering this aspect of my role?

Situations relating to underperformance tend to be managed in one of two ways:

- (i) The line manager and the individual concerned review their personal organisational targets in more detail, and the reasons for underperformance are analysed.

If there are significant problems with workstreams that are not attributable to organisational constraints, then the line manager naturally tends to focus more overtly on the need to achieve organisational targets. This more overt approach is recognised by the staff member as a more 'intrusive' management tool, and alerts them that there is a problem that needs to be addressed. There is no need to progress down a 'capability' disciplinary route.

- (ii) The line manager offers to remove this aspect of the role from the staff member and manage it in another way, so that there is no need for further involvement in this specific workstream by the staff member.

Done in an appropriate way, the staff member can reflect on the extent they wish to align their personal interests with their own organisational targets and continue to be part of the organisational 'wave' (as per the 'double-slit experiment').

But this more overt focus has been criticised by this paper as 'collapsing the organisational wave'. However, if the individual's personal interests are not aligned with their organisational targets, then the 'wave' is damaged anyway, and intervention is needed. It is this subtle but significant change of focus onto their organisational targets that is sufficient to give a message to the staff member that there is a problem with this alignment, and this provides the opportunity for the individual to explore whether they really wish to contribute to the organisational 'wave' or maybe they would be more comfortable working in another environment or organisational culture.

The evidence that supports this approach is that for the last 6 years, there has been no need to invoke the disciplinary procedure under capability for any individual, where there have been problems related to performance, staff who have personal interests more suited to other organisational climates tend to find them and move on.

Additionally, Attend adopts a mature approach to maintaining relationships with former staff and volunteers if they have left the organisation in these sorts of circumstances, and there are many instances of these individuals having some involvement at some level with the organisation in the future.

This could be in a volunteering capacity, being part of a totally different project requiring different skills sets and time commitment. Alternatively it could be as a staff member of their new organisation seeking to create some joint-funded partnership working opportunities. There are also several instances where a staff member return months or years later to volunteer on a regional team, or undertake a piece of paid project work as an associate or consultant.

Attend manages to maintain positive relationships with staff and volunteers because it has a long term view of these relationships. Even when an employment situation or volunteering placement is no longer tenable (due to 'performance issues'), the individual will tend to leave their role acknowledging that the role required was not for them. They are also aware the organisation they are leaving will be a welcome place to revisit if the future allows. An interesting aspect of Attend's relationships with its people it that the process of aligning the individual's personal interests with Attend's organisational targets, frequently does not stop when employment or a volunteering placement finishes!

## Part 3 – The undetectable force

### Higgs boson

**But, HOW is this achieved?** What is the **mysterious force** that encourages the efforts of individuals to interact with each other and create an organisational 'wave'?

Is it not a bit simplistic to suggest that by just measuring the 'right things' in the 'right way' will ensure people's efforts will create an integrated 'wave' or organisational outcomes?

There is a further quantum phenomenon that scientists believe exists, which could provide the added dimension of people and talent management that could explain how people's effort interact and synergise with each other.

This phenomenon Known as 'Higgs boson' is described by Ananthaswamy (2007). The Higgs boson is infamous as the only particle predicted by the standard model of particle physics that remains undetected. In theory, every other particle in the universe gets its mass by interacting with an all-pervading field created by Higgs bosons.

So, applying this to the 'theory' of quantum people management, it appears that there is a '**mysterious force**' that gives peoples' actions impact in the workplace, and this force is integral in establishing the conditions for people's actions to interact with each other to create positive organisational outcomes.

Clues as to what this '**mysterious force**' represents in people management can be found by exploring the concept of an organisation's **intellectual capital**.

### Intellectual capital

Intellectual capital describes the knowledge assets that are available to the organisations and is a large part of intangible value. The CIPD (2007) describe intellectual capital as:

**Human capital** – the knowledge, skills, abilities and capacity to develop and innovate possessed by people in an organisation.

**Social capital** – the structures, networks and procedures that enable those people to acquire and develop intellectual capital represented by the stocks and flows of knowledge derived from relationships within and outside the organisation.

**Organisational capital** – the institutionalised knowledge possessed by an organisation which is stored in databases, manuals etc. This would also include HR policies and processes used to manage people.

However, the CIPD highlight that organisations must be able to understand the relationships between these different forms of capital. They emphasise that human capital alone will not create value as people have to be motivated and managed by the use of good HR practice and given the opportunity to develop and use their skills.

It is again appropriate to use the 'trifle principle' to represent the 'chemical' relationship between these elements as:

**Intellectual capital = Human capital + Social capital + Organisational capital**



In the same way Ulrich's 'talent' equation was broken down, an interesting conclusion results if we make some further assumptions:

- a) Human capital = Ability + Motivation  
In other words, an individual's ability and motivation combine to create their capacity to develop.
- b) Social capital = Relationships  
In other words, the nature of the interaction that exists within the organisation, and also with those outside of the organisation.
- c) Organisational capital = Opportunity  
In other words, the enabling systems designed to create the options and opportunities that optimise the contribution that people can make to the organisation.

And, substituting these assumptions back into above formula, we get:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Intellectual capital} &= \text{Ability} + \text{Motivation} + \text{Relationships} + \text{Opportunity} \\ &= (\text{Ability} + \text{Motivation} + \text{Opportunity}) + \text{Relationships}\end{aligned}$$

Also, as according to Purcell; Ability + Motivation + Opportunity = Performance (of an individual), then:

$$\text{Intellectual capital} = \text{Performance}(\textit{individual}) + \text{Relationships}$$

However, progressing the CIPD's assertion that human and intellectual capital needs to be put into practice for value to be realised, this formula could represent **potential intellectual capital**.  
In other words: the potential value that could be achieved given the potential of the individual and the various relationships that exist, which could be utilised to optimise their contribution.

In physics, **potential energy** is 'stored' energy, and **kinetic energy** represents energy in 'motion' and it could be argued that the true value of intellectual capital will be a combination of potential and kinetic intellectual capital.

Thus, intellectual capital could be represented as:

$$\text{Intellectual capital} = \text{Potential intellectual capital} + \text{Kinetic intellectual capital}$$

Where Kinetic intellectual capital = Performance(applied) + relationships(applied)

Giving a formula for total intellectual capital as:

$$\text{Intellectual capital} = \text{Performance}(\textit{individual}) + \text{Performance}(\textit{applied}) + \text{Relationships} + \text{Relationships}(\textit{applied})$$

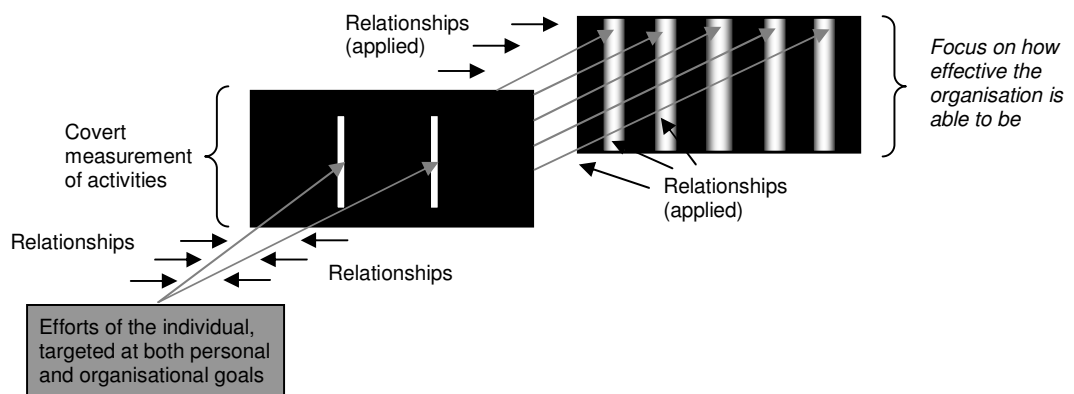
Or, by substituting the 'talent' formula cited earlier, we end up with:

$\text{Intellectual capital} = \text{Talent} + \text{Relationships} + \text{Relationships}(\textit{applied})$
---

'Relationships' can be assumed to mean the '**planned**' relationships as defined by work design and network systems.

'Relationships(applied)' can be assumed to mean the **real interaction** that actually occurs in practice.

The diagram below, (based on the double-slit experiment) represents the interaction of these elements.



It appears therefore, that the 'theory' of quantum people management, identifies **relationships** as being the '**mysterious force**', or the 'Higgs Boson'. A force that gives an individual's every effort, impact and meaning within an organisational context.

It may be therefore, that this 'force' of planned and actual relationships has the potential to create an organisation where its people can "live, move and have their being" (Luke, c61-63 A.D), whilst simultaneously unrelentingly contribute to the success of the organisation.

### **Case Study 3 – The League of Friends of Stratton Hospital**

Stratton Hospital in North Cornwall is believed to be the second oldest Community Hospital in the United Kingdom having opened in 1859. The League of Friends of Stratton Hospital has been supporting the work of the hospital since 1949.

The average age of people living in this area is increasing, as is the length of life-expectancy. Therefore the need for 'end-of-life' care for people within the community is becoming more apparent. Also, due to the current level of service provision, those in need of palliative care services are frequently required to make 90 - 120 mile round trips, which are made more complicated with the seasonal travel-related problems.

This situation has been a cause of increasing concern and people within the hospital (paid staff and Friends volunteers) have discussed creating the provision of a couple of palliative care beds. However, the hospital is small (see picture below) and has minimal grounds in which to expand just a small area at the back of the hospital. Plans were drawn up for a small single-story extension (the majority of the hospital is single storey). Further complications were anticipated in relation to privacy and dignity, as the access to the different areas of the hospital was limited, with 'through traffic' routes being adjacent to many ward areas.



A small team of Attend's head office staff were in Cornwall supporting the development of the South-West region and took the opportunity to pop in for a visit with the Friends of Stratton Hospital. As part of this visit the members of the Friends group shared these plans and explained they were keen to support them in any way possible.

A tour of the premises followed, which led the party to the proposed site for development at the back of the hospital. The area between this and the back gate was a raised series of slopes with some outbuildings housing electric and other facilities. Attend's CEO (who had been a director of a hospice in a previous role) asked why this layout of land was needed, and the discussion then explored whether this land could be utilised. It wasn't long before the idea of a purpose built 2-storey facility, with its own entrance around the back of the hospital was being considered.

These seeds of thought were then progressed and the impact of the various relationships gave impetus and meaning to the project to those who were to become involved. The relationships were as follows:

#### **Internal relationships:**

- **Planned**  
The project plan to undertake a feasibility study was sketched out and it was agreed who would undertake the various activities.

For example:

- Attend's CEO would liaise with former colleagues responsible for managing the building of palliative care centres.
- The Friends would facilitate a meeting with hospital staff.

These actions alone provided much impetus to the proposals to address a long-running concern, but which had up until then only been tentatively explored.

- **Actual**  
When actions were progressed, this allowed those involved to identify both emergent and unrealised strategies (Mintzberg, 1978).

For example:

- Initial investigations identified the NHS Trust were seeking to respond to the Government's 'End of Life Care Strategy' that had been published the previous month. This discovery also developed an 'external relationship' with the NHS Trust into an 'internal relationship', as the work of the Friends of Stratton Hospital could help the Trust meet their own strategic objectives. This added significant impact to all subsequent activities – the sort of effect that an appreciative audience can have on the cast of a musical production. The cast feed off the energy of the audience and the audience amplifies this by recognising and appreciating the intricacies of the performance.

#### **External relationships:**

- **Planned**  
Following the discussions with former colleagues with palliative care experience, a stakeholder analysis was undertaken to guide the communication strategy of this proposed venture.

For example:

- The NHS Trust were contacted so they could respond to the initial proposals and also guide further discussions with those involved in local palliative care. This helped to obtain the perspectives of a key stakeholder; probably a 'sponsor' or a 'blocker' (Hayes, 2002), and also build a picture of other key external stakeholders that would have to be consulted at the planning stage.

- **Actual**  
The genuine interaction with external relationships, where those involved were seeking to further and protect their interests, provided opportunities to profile their own work and interests.

For example:

- Palliative care provision in the area comes in the form of satellite centres run by other organisations, and any duplication of services needed to be avoided. However, any additional palliative care service provision would reduce the client base for other organisations and have an impact on their funding, and would therefore be met with some resistance. These external relationships helped to identify where the proposed services could be justified to all stakeholders on the basis of the 'End of Life Care Strategy' and the demographics, geography and infrastructure of the community.
- As discussions progressed, it became apparent that other community hospitals in the UK provided a range of palliative care services and that there were potential opportunities for benchmarking of good practice. These hospitals were keen to be used as potential exemplars and the genuine interaction with those within these organisations helped to give impact to a robust and informative benchmarking strategy.

So what are the lessons here for people management?

It is clear that the interaction created the opportunity for further learning for those involved, and this can have a natural effect on:

- Improving the individual's **ability** by developing their knowledge of key issues
- Enhancing the individual's **motivation**, as a result of interaction with others
- Providing the individual with **opportunities** for involvement at various levels

All of these factors encourage what is possible for those involved to make a contribution to the situation and volunteer their 'discretionary effort'.

The above activities represent the strategic analysis and planning phases of this project, and if the decision is made to proceed the local Friends group will then mobilise their own resources to gain the support of the local community and raise the funds required. Once again their own internal and external relationships will be key to giving impact and meaning to their actions.

The solution is as yet unknown, but with the above relationships interacting effectively with the various activities, whatever the solution is it is likely to be 'fit for purpose'

This situation provides a further example that the 'latent talent' that exists at many levels within volunteers frequently allows organisations to take opportunities otherwise unattainable if this talent had remained untapped. In addition, whilst it has frequently been said that 'communication is the lifeblood of the organisation', it's **relationships** that provide the heartbeat!

## Conclusions

So, on the basis that the assumptions made on the research of Ulrich (2007), Purcell (2003), Hamel & Breen (2007) and the CIPD (2007, 2008) are valid, the overall implications of this paper suggest that the key principles of effective people management according to quantum people management are:

1. *To adopt management practices that avoid intrusive measurement of activities, and instead focus on how effective the organisation is able to be.*
  2. *To ensure that all relationships that exist in the organisation support both individual and organisational needs.*
-

## Research Questions

As highlighted in the introduction, this paper is not intended to be a research paper, but its conclusions could represent hypotheses that could act as a stimulus for further research.

The following questions are examples of the sorts of issues that could be explored:

1. What are the most effective and non-intrusive ways of measuring:
  - a) The political decision-making that influences what ideas are adopted
  - b) The extent people have meaning in their work  
NB the appropriateness of current data collection methods can be explored (e.g. employee satisfaction surveys)
  - c) Anomalies and 'management mutants' (identifying positive and negative deviants)
  - d) The opportunities available to individuals to make a 'contribution'
  - e) Individual performance  
NB the use of well established practices (e.g. performance appraisal or the 'balanced scorecard') could be reviewed to consider the extent these tools can be counterproductive by utilising intrusive measurements that 'collapse the organisational wave'.
  - f) The quality of organisational relationships (both planned and applied)
2. What are the key internal and external relationships that give individuals' effort impact and meaning?
3. How can these relationships be effectively planned and nurtured?

If these issues can be progressed within an organisation, it is likely that it will become a place that's "fit for human beings", and the lessons learnt may be invaluable to others seeking to find answers to the secrets of people and talent management.

---

## References

---

1. Stuart-Kotze, R and Dunn, C (2008) Who are your Best people?: How to find measure and manage your top talent. Prentice Hall. Pearson Education.
2. Ulrich, D (2007) The Talent Trifector, Workforce Management Magazine (9/17/2007)
3. Purcell, J et al (2003) Understanding the People and Performance Link: Unlocking the black box. CIPD.
4. Hamel, G and Breen B (2007) The Future of Management. Harvard Business School Press
5. Hamel, G (2007) Gary Hamel on building organizations for the future. Amazon Video. Online, available: <http://www.amazon.com/Future-Management-Gary-Hamel/dp/1422102505>
6. CIPD podcasts (2008) Interview with Jackie Orme – episode 23. CIPD. Online, available: <http://www.cipd.co.uk/podcasts/articles/jackieorme.htm?IsSrchRes=1>
7. CIPD podcasts (2007) Talent Management – episode 4. CIPD. Online, available: <http://www.cipd.co.uk/podcasts/articles/article4.htm?IsSrchRes=1>
8. Felder, G and Felder, K (1998) Quantum Mechanics: The Young Double-Slit Experiment. North Carolina State University. Online, available: <http://www4.ncsu.edu/unity/lockers/users/f/felder/public/kenny/papers/quantum.html>
9. Home, D and Gribbin, J (1991) What is light? Is light a wave or a particle - or both? New Scientist magazine 1793: 02 November 1991, page 30. Online, available: <http://www.newscientist.com/channel/fundamentals/quantum-world/mg13217934.200>
10. Holbeche, L (2008) High Performance Working: Shaping the Future. People Management: 30 October 2008, pages 24-27
11. Taylor, F (1911) The Principles of Scientific Management. New York. Harper and Row.
12. Ananthaswamy, A (2007) Higgs boson: Glimpses of the God particle New Scientist magazine, 2593: 02 March 2007, page 8-11. Online, available: <http://www.newscientist.com/article.ns?id=mg19325934.600>
13. CIPD, (2007) Human capital: factsheet. CIPD. Online, available: <http://www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/corpstrtg/hmncapital/humancap.htm>
14. Luke, (c61-63 A.D) Acts of the Apostles chapter17, verse 28. New International Version
15. Mintzberg, H. (1978). Patterns in strategy formation. Management Science. 24(9), 934-948.
16. Hayes, J. (2002), The Theory and Practice of Change Management. London. Palgrave