Chapter One: Introduction

1.2 Background

Today we find ourselves in a transformed condition, one created by an emphasis on voice and social representations, the conversational modifications (agreements and disagreements) between group members, marked by overwhelming flows of exchanges of knowledge and information exceeding the limits of the subject. These transformations call for the need to emphasize the role of conversational practices in the construction of change and a shift in our thinking about change away from the notion it is something we try to persuade people to do, to an understanding of the process of change as something that transpires when people decide what to do, or not, through their active participation in ordinary, day-to-day, mundane talk or utterance.

This thesis therefore places an emphasis on voice and social representations and examines the transformations brought about by conversation in the social construction of change highlighting the agency role of utterances in the formation, function and ongoing processes of change in organizational life (Ford and Ford, 1995, Taylor and Van Every, 2000, O'Neill and Jabri, 2007) and in particular how ordinary talk or utterances contribute to processual change (Dawson, 2003). The objective of this thesis then is threefold: 1) to examine how and in what ways the polyphonic nature of ordinary and naturally occurring talk or utterance contributes to the process and social construction of change; 2) to examine how change is legitimized in talk or utterances, as more often than not, legitimation is the communication strategy used monophonically by management to initiate and support continuing claims for change; and 3) to propose a new interpretive framework that offers a representation of change as a dynamic, polyphonic, participative conversational process in place of the all too popular monophonic (subject-verb-object) offering that much of the literature developed for managers and consults is based on.

Therefore, why does this subject-verb-object bias exist and why does management rely so much on monophonic practices when initiating and legitimating change? Can an alternative interpretative framework for organizational change that accounts for the polyphonic agency role of ordinary, day-to-day, mundane talk or utterance give us new and better insights into the processes of change? And what is the agency role of ordinary, day-to-day, mundane talk or utterance to the process of change, what is its contribution?

To understand the agency role of conversation in the process and social construction of change the focus in this thesis is on the group, within a business context, as it is the group that is primary to our understanding of organizing (Dibben, 2009). From a process perspective, organizing is implicated in a processual mode of being. But Taylor and Van Every (2000: 324) define an organization as *a form of life* that structures and expresses a social context, and the social context used to define organizing or organization in this thesis is a group of people working together to achieve a common purpose (Handy, 1993, Pugh, 1997, Streatfield, 2001).

One of the most widely accepted contributions to our understanding of change within a group context is Tuckman's work on developmental sequence in small groups (Tuckman, 1965), proposing that all groups progress through stages of forming, storming, norming, performing, and a fifth stage, adjourning, which was added later to the model based on the review of twenty two further studies (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977, Tuckman, 2001). Tuckman acknowledged that reference to the forming, storming, norming and performing stages was "a conceptual statement suggested by the data presented" (Tuckman 1965: 5) in the articles he reviewed and was subject to further testing (Tuckman, 2001).

Whilst Tuckman's model provides us with a framework for recognizing the various stages groups pass through as they emerge from initial formation through to cohesion and productivity his work does not provide us with specific insight or explanation on what exactly it is within the group process that produces these transitions. Reference is made to the interpersonal, along with task, as a significant dimension of observation reflecting certain behaviours associated with the various stages of group development (Tuckman and Jensen 1977: 421) but again, little or no explanation is provided on how the interpersonal dimension contributes to the process of growth and change. My work seeks to bridge this gap in Tuckman's model by focusing on and linking the role of utterances or conversation, which is central to interpersonal or social interaction, directly to the processes of change thereby making Tuckman’s model more ready to encompass a conversational viewpoint.

The linear form through which Tuckman develops his model has been reliant on a stage-by-stage transition where Cartesian separation of the subject from each of the stages is often assumed. Each of the stages is treated as an 'entity' that is reified and described as separate. The separation of the individual from each of the stages is largely magnified. Each entity is reified as separate from the individual and ultimately for the group as a collective. Rather than seeing the individual as separate from the change implied in each of the four stages of group development, I bring in the individual as an active “participant with others” who are fully involved in *inhabiting* each of the four stages of group development and the corresponding conversational spaces that open up with the *potential* for change.

The contribution of my thesis therefore is to move beyond a linear conception of Tuckman's work and to promote a sort of an immersion where the individual is viewed as an active subject having an agency role with others in the formation of each of the four main entities. I extend the work of Tuckman by proposing the notion of *becoming* (D'Arcy and Dibben, 2005) for understanding each of the four stages. This notion of becoming overlaps significantly with conversations in that the agency role of utterance, brought about through conversational interaction and exchange, which gives rise to new positions and possibilities for collective becomings, hence change.

Tuckman's stages of group transitions may be finite, but conversational practices are not. The current absence of conversations and their role in the social construction of change makes it problematic for Tuckman's model to ignore. Whilst Tuckman’s model is often presented as a linear sequencing of stages that are largely facilitated by the monophonic voice of the manager or team leader with a dichotomy between leader and others (followers or team members), daily practice and experience, and the heart of this thesis, suggests that organizing and the emergence of recognizable patterns within group formation and function arise rather as a result of the polyphonic nature of interaction and participation by members in a particular social context.

A common pattern, which will be explored in more detail in subsequent chapters, is the way change *potentials* evolve as “inspired” or “spontaneous” ideas resulting from polyphonically situated interactions, and how it is from these moments that an idea diffuses from utterance to full acceptance and practice if, and only if, there is sufficient legitimacy given to the *potential* of change in the “space” created whenever conversation and exchange is made possible. The source of legitimacy for a change *potential* is based on how any particular group views any claims of legitimacy against their own justifications, explanations and perceptions that permeates their particular conversational space. This notion of the evolution of initial ideas in utterances to full acceptance and practice based on a group’s legitimacy of those ideas draws on Berger and Luckmann’s four levels of legitimation in the social construction of knowledge (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) and is the second major contribution of this thesis.

Berger and Luckmann’s four levels of legitimation serves as the theoretical framework to understand the workings of legitimation in language, and by implication conversational practices, and how language is used as the principal instrumentality of legitimation (1966: 82) to produce new meanings and to integrate meanings already attached to disparate institutional processes (1966: 110). This is a theme further developed by Kenneth Gergen’s (1994, 1996, 1999, 2001) work in social psychology and the focus on relational processes of meaning or sense making, and by David Boje’s insights on theme based conversations to account for the polyphonic, multi-voiced, non-linear, often unfinished and complex conversational interactions that take place in organizational settings (Boje, 2008).

The problem has been that the greater part of research and theory development on legitimation in organizational contexts has focussed on; rules (Stryker, 1994); structures (Ashforth and Gibbs, 1990); objects (Johnson, 2004); and authority (Jost and Major, 2001). Much of this research has been lead by the Political and Social Sciences (Mazza, 1999) and tends to focus on three main aspects of legitimacy as power, legitimacy as consent, and legitimacy as conformity (Mazza, 1999).

Whilst a great deal of theorizing and research has gone into understanding the topic of legitimation and its broader implications and contribution to social dynamics little has been explored in terms of understanding how change is legitimated in ordinary utterance or conversation within groups and how the process of legitimation in conversations contributes to the process of change, again, particularly as more often than not legitimation is a communication strategy used monophonically by management to initiate and support continuing claims for change. The focus, therefore, is not on *how* change is legitimated (i.e. external factors) but rather how people (management, groups) legitimate change *in* the course of mundane, naturally occurring, ongoing talk or conversation. The common denominator of naturally occurring utterance provides the opportunity to build on and link Berger and Luckmann and Tuckman's work to the growing field of research about the dynamic and polyphonic nature of conversation in the process of change.

My motivation and interest in exploring this topic is to understand more fully how polyphonically situated interactions facilitate change in group and organizational settings, and how this contributes to group and organizational adaptiveness which is so critical for ongoing organizational success (Barrett et al., 1995, Ford and Ford, 1995, Heracleous and Barrett, 2001).

In chapter two, as part of the literature review on the topic, a theoretical framework of what is meant by "the organization" (Taylor and Van Every, 2000, Cooren et al., 2006) and the role conversation plays in the construction of group realities and the impact and influence these have on the legitimation of management of change is given. Also, the notion of conversation and it's central role in the process of organizational change is explored (Ford and Ford, 1995, Genus, 1998), as is how legitimacy is given to that change in utterances, closely linked to conversation's role in the social construction of change.

In chapter three the research strategy, methods and assumptions and why the particular approach for conducting the research was chosen is outlined. An explanation on the overall approach for the data collection phase, which is ethnographic in nature is presented, detailing how the observation and recording of the conversations referenced to in the thesis were collected by me as a researcher participating directly in most of these conversations in the capacity of both a contract consultant and university researcher in the organization where the conversations took place (Miller & Brewer 2003: 99). Details on why and how participant observation and interviewing procedures were used to conduct the ethnographical side of the research to collect data at the various sites was collected is given along with how the data collected in the field was compared and contrasted with data collected using a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to verify field observations with key informants (Lee, 1999, Leedy and Ormrod, 2001, Miller and Brewer, 2003, Creswell and Clark, 2007). The data collected from the field notes, document analysis, and interviews is presented using the case study method (Hill, 1993, Lee, 1999, Stake, 1995, White and Taket, 2000) to give the reader an insight into the context and content of the conversations referenced to in this work.

In chapter four, a case is presented which is based on observations and the recording of conversations collected over a twenty eight month period in an Asia Pacific global property service company with 2,500 employees. A summary of the field work is built around nine vignettes that give voice to various groups and individuals that participated in the company wide change initiative that took place over the twenty eight month period.

The content of the field work is then used in chapter five to develop and illustrate the *Conversational Themes and Legitimation Model,* which links the polyphonic role of conversation in the process of change within the legitimation framework. The aim of the *Conversational Themes and Legitimation Model* is to demonstrate how change is socially constructed polyphonically (Jabri, Adrian & Boje, 2008) rather than through the singular voice of management or a change agent as it is often portrayed to be (Barrett, 2002, Daly et al., 2003), and how change *potentials* evolve and emerge as a direct result of the level of legitimacy that supports the change *potential* in naturally occurring talk or utterances. The final offering in chapter five presents my contribution to the change literature by linking Tuckman's stages of group development model with Berger and

Luckmann’s levels of legitimation and situating both within a conversational framework linked to the process of change.

Finally, chapter six provides a summary and conclusion with thoughts and implications on how the work could be extended further in the future. Rather than understanding change as a carefully managed process progressing in a linear, monophonic, or stage-by-stage transition towards a predetermined outcome as it is often assumed to be, the notion of change brought about through active “participation with others” who are fully involved in *inhabiting* various conversational spaces (commencing, confronting, conforming, and coalescing conversations) open up the *potential* for change within each of these spaces. The work of Tuckman is extended by the concept of becoming, as a framework to understand the multiple becomings present in each of the four stages of his model giving rise to new positions and possibilities for collective becomings. Finally, Tuckman’s model and Berger and Luckmann’s four levels of legitimation are situated within a conversational framework by linking them to the role of conversation in the process and legitimation of change.

Chapter Two: Organizational change - A review of the literature

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature on organizational change with a particular emphasis on the role of conversation in the social construction of change, the development of groups, and the function of legitimation of change in utterances where organizational change is viewed as a process directly linked to and embedded in ordinary, mundane, daily, and naturally occurring conversations (Ford and Ford, 1995).

2.2 Organizational change

Much of the literature on organizational change is viewed from and directed at the role of management offering them idealized schema and simplified typologies to implement change within their organizations (Kanter, 1983, Plant, 1987, Connor and Lake, 1994, Kotter, 1996, Genus, 1998, Robbins and Finley, 1998, Anderson and Anderson, 2001, Burnes, 2009). These schema and simplified typologies on change management shape the mental models used by management (Senge, 1992, Spicer, 1998, Young, 2008) which in turn influences the practices they commonly adopt. However, there is an acute awareness by practitioners and academics alike that these schema and simplified typologies, estimated to be up to seventy percent of the time, fall short in bringing about a level of change in organizations that is considered acceptable (Ford, 1981, Robbins and Finley, 1998, Beer and Nohria, 2000, Choo, 2005, Ormerod, 2005).

Typically, causes of failure in change management in the literature are traced back to insufficient or lack of management agency. Many of these causes are framed or presented to us as something a manager *does* or *says* that is directed toward others, subordinates for example. Although specifically relating it to communication, Phil Clampitt (2001) describes this “what I do to you” paradigm as an “arrow approach” - the arrow being a perfect descriptive of a monophonic directive or dispatch - that is, that I (the manager, the one with the tools, control and mandate), shoot my arrow (the vision, the target, the instruction, etc), at you (the subordinate), and if I hit the mark I will effectively *control* you and the situation so you do as I want and intend.

The common causes of change management failure identified in the literature, all with an arrow “what I do to you” approach behind them, are attributed to; management’s lack of or not enough communication of the vision (Kotter, 1995); or management appointing the wrong people (Hammer and Stanton, 1995, Kotter, 1995, Robbins and Finley, 1998, Anderson and Anderson, 2001); or management’s reluctance or inability to release or commit sufficient financial or human resources and effort to the change (Sims, 2002); or management’s inability to deal with complacency and obstacles that block the new vision (Kotter, 1995); or management’s lack of commitment to the long term effort required, and failing to plan for sustaining energy (Anderson and Anderson, 2001); or faulty management decision-making due to a focus of effort in the wrong areas (Robbins and Finley, 1998); or management’s inability to demonstrate to staff that change is possible by not achieving early results and thereby motivating staff to commit to bigger change initiatives with bigger payoffs (Kotter, 1995); or management’s haste -too early- or hesitancy -too late- implementing change (Robbins and Finley, 1998); or management’s inability to follow the normative or prescribed method for implementing change (Hammer and Stanton, 1995, Anderson and Anderson, 2001); or management’s inability to create or understand the current culture or to manage or effectively deal with the existing company culture (Ormerod, 2005); or finally, management’s inability to manage resistance and to win over, persuade, convince or get buy in from individuals or parties that don’t understand, oppose, or disagree with a change initiative (Sims, 2002, Kanter, 1983).

While much of what is listed above may indeed contribute to implementation failure there is a general omission in these descriptions that marginalizes the broader polyphonically experienced social context within which the processes of change take place at group level where change is interpreted, embraced or rejected. The focus on the individual role type with monophonic voice, for example, the leader, the manager, the change agent, the resistor etc., and the marginalizing of the mundane, ordinary day to day polyphonic largely spontaneous social voice is deeply ingrained in popular organization theory, and by implication the management of change (Gergen and Thatchenkery, 1996, Gergen, 1999, Heracleous and Barrett, 2001, Sjöstrand et al., 2001).

This tendency to focus on the monophonic arrow “what I do to you” approach (Clampitt 2001) is based on the Cartesian assumption that the individual, the leader (Handy, 1993) or change agent for example, and others, such as staff, strategy, structure, programs, and communication, are separate (Capra, 1996, Damasio, 2006), and that change is something that is applied to others or things by an agent of change. Fault in outcomes (implementation failure), viewed from this perspective tends to attribute causes of such failures on the agents of change as seen in the list of causes of implementation failure provided in earlier. This view however is limiting (Shotter, 1992) in that it provides only an elementary understanding of the process of change due to its emphasis on the individual as the agency of change. Most of these popular offerings are linear, hence monophonic, in both the sequencing of the various phases they are often built around, and in the way change is assumed to be planned and communicated (Beckhard and Harris, 1987, Beckhard and Pritchard, 1992, Dunphy and Stace, 1993, Belasco, 1996, Lloyd and Feigen, 1997, Anderson and Anderson, 2001, Stanley and Jones, 2006, Paton and McCalman, 2008).

Planning for change can only be at best tentative (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985, Westley and Mintzberg, 1989), provisional, sketchy, or conjectural, and concern for the high failure rate of intentional change (Beer and Nohria, 2000) and trying to find methods to improve formalized, idealized schemas and simplified typologies that characterize much of the management literature on change is unlikely to improve the chances of a successful change initiative due to the monophonic models of communication many of these programmes are based on (O'Neill and Jabri, 2007, Boje, 2001, Jabri, Adrian and Boje 2008). Outcomes planned for and anticipated at a certain point in time past are highly unlikely to be realized exactly as anticipated at some future point in time due to the unpredictable nature of change within a dynamic social system (Prigogine, 1996, Tsoukas and Chia, 2002) though this expectation is assumed to be the case in the way many change programmes are presented (Townsend, 1990, Harrington, 1991, Clemmer and Sheehy, 1992, Hammer and Stanton, 1995, Kotter, 1996, Lloyd and Feigen, 1997, Paton and McCalman, 2008).

The tendency to publish works on change from management's perspective only too readily reinforces the Cartesian split between self and other (manager and subordinate) which in turn limits exploration and understanding into how group level processes contribute to change outcomes. That understanding how group level processes contribute to change is greatly under developed is evidenced by Whelan-Berry and Gordon's research into multi-level analysis of the organizational change where they failed to discover any change process models at the group or team level of analysis in the organization studies and change literature they reviewed (Whelan-Berry and Gordon, 2000).

2.3 The development of groups

One such contribution, however, that does provide some insight into the formation, development and function of groups is Tuckman's work on developmental sequence in small groups (Tuckman, 1965). His "conceptual statement" (Tuckman 1965: 5) forming, storming, norming, performing, and a fifth stage, adjourning, which was added later (Tuckman, 2001, Tuckman and Jensen, 1977) is based on a review of fifty articles on the topic in 1965, and a further twenty two studies in 1977.

Stages of Group Development (Tuckman, 1965, Tuckman, 2001, Tuckman and Jensen, 1977)
Forming: Getting acquainted, goal setting, organizing, value clarification, creating purpose, awareness, orientation.
Storming: Assertiveness, conflict management, flexibility, kaleidoscope thinking, resistance, clarification, hostility.
Norming: Communication, feedback, affirmation, entrepreneuring, networking, cooperation, involvement, cohesion, support.

Stages of Group Development (Tuckman, 1965, Tuckman, 2001, Tuckman and Jensen, 1977)
Performing: Decision making, problem solving, rewarding, multicultural and diversity awareness, mentoring, productivity, achievement, interdependence, pride.
Adjourning: Evaluating, reviewing, celebrating, bringing closure, separation, termination, recognition, disengagement, satisfaction.

Figure 2:1 Tuckman's stages of group development

The subsequently popularity of Tuckman's model has meant it has been readily cited and used in organizational studies (Robbins et al., 2004) and reference books for managers and trainers (Hare, 1992, Tuckman, 2001, Hiebert and Klatt, 2001, Biech, 2001). Tuckman's model presents a conceptualization of changes in group behavior, in both social (interpersonal stages of group development) and task realms (task behaviours), across all groups settings, over time (Tuckman 2001: 69).

The linear form through which Tuckman develops his model has vastly been reliant on a stage-by-stage transition where Cartesian separation of the subject from each of the stages is often assumed. Each of the stages is treated as an 'entity' that is reified and described as separate. Whilst reference is made to the behaviours evidenced in the interpersonal realm, such as intragroup conflict, and emotional responses to task demands, little or no explanation is provided on how communicative interaction or utterances, that a great deal of time and group activity is spent in, contributes to growth and change within the group. The current absence of this makes it problematic for Tuckman's model to omit conversation and its role in the process of change.

<u>2.4 Conversation in organizational life</u>

That a great deal of time and organizational activity is centered around and in conversational activity and talk (Mintzberg, 1971, Mintzberg, 1973, Alvesson, 1994, Taylor and Van Every, 2000) is well accepted. Conversation is held to be a social or relational practice (Gergen, 1994) that constitutes and constructs worlds of meaning that define *why* a group or an organization exists in the first place, *who* is responsible and accountable for *what*, and *how* members are to behave and work together, rather than representing the meaning of the world (Fairclough, 1992, Ashmos and Nathan, 2002).

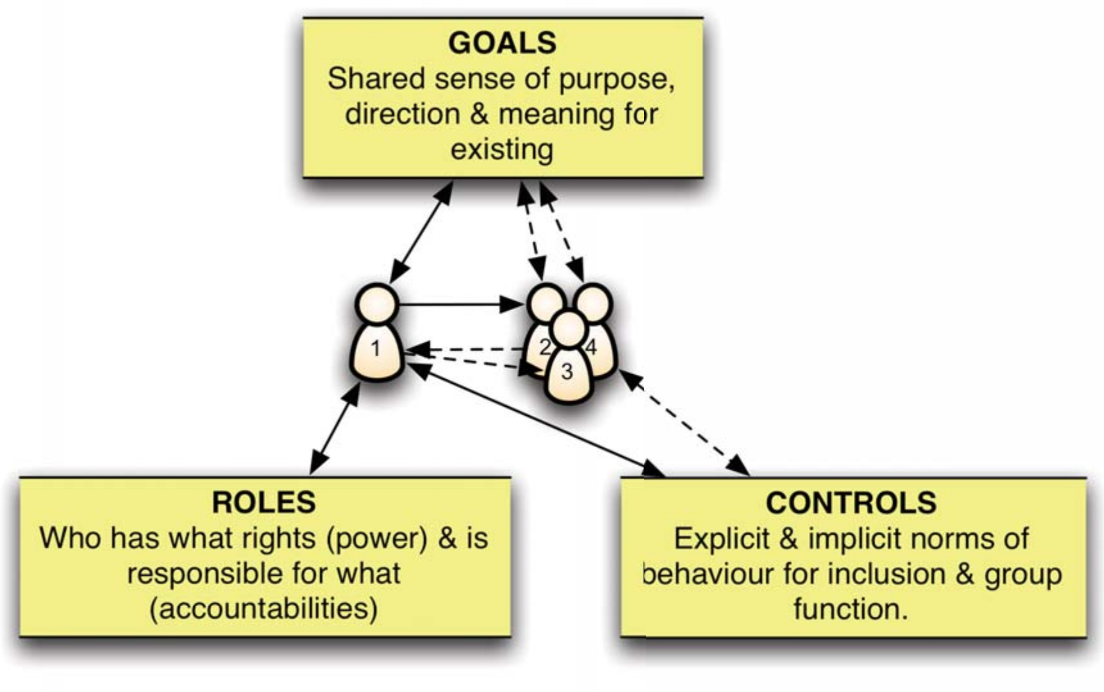

Figure 2:2 A group and "organization" formed in conversation

Organizing is something that emerges and evolves as a socially constructed form of life within conversation, situated in a living present and context (Taylor and Van Every, 2000, Griffin, 2002) as seen in the way two or more people engaged in conversation define a purpose (Tietze et al., 2003, Bains and Bains 2007), the roles and power positions (Adair, 1986, Fairclough, 2001), and norms of behavior for conditions for inclusion and belonging (controls) (Tuckman, 1965, 2001, Roberts and O'Reilly, 1979, Feldman, 1984, Ashmos and Nathan, 2002, O'Neill and Jabri, 2007,). Conversation is central to the process of the construction of meaning (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, Barrett et al., 1995, Searle, 1995, Duimering and Safayeni, 1998, Ford, 1999, Sjöstrand et al., 2001, Burr, 2003). Implicit in this understanding is an action-oriented view of conversation, in which it is accepted that talk and action cannot be easily separated (Searle, 1969, 1995, Fairclough, 1992, 2001) as evidenced by the way people talk their way to solutions and into working agreements (Hamilton, 2001, Francis, 2003).

The action component of talk within a conversation has important relational implications for organizational change. Communication no longer mirrors or reflects reality, rather it is formative in that it creates and represents the process of organizing (Taylor and Van Every, 2000). This notion of talk as action and reality is central to Ford and Ford's (1995) conceptualization of organizational change as "shifting conversations" in which conversations are treated as both an expression and outcome of social construction, and include a mix of spoken, visual and written interactions (Ford, 1985, 1999, Ford and Ford, 1995, Ford et al., 2002). Their framework provides a useful lens for investigating how shifts in conversation produce change. Importantly, it shows how existing relational networks act to constrain and/or facilitate new conversations of change and meaning (Choo, 2005).

Conversations construct new realities that frame the context within which organizational members make sense of current and future workplace realities (Ashmos and Nathan, 2002); a process similar to what Weick (1995) describes as the "bracketing" of experience or events into meaningful form. Ford and Ford (1995) argue that since bracketing is part of the ongoing processes of social construction among organizational participants, there can be no singular beginning point to a change initiative. Nevertheless, they reason that conversations in the organization arise at some point following a form of utterance and describe these as "initiative that These are deliberately introduced by managers and likened to the identification stage of organizational decision making, in which managers attempt to get other managers to pay attention to what they are saying.

Organizations are formed in talk and maintained in talk and while some of that talk may be captured in text, for example as vision statements, plans, policies, procedures, organizational charts, reports, e-mails, presentations, etc., (Taylor and Van Every 2000) the organization exists nevertheless as conversationally based networks of relationships (Ford and Ford, 1995, Ford, 1999, Gergen, 1999, Tsoukas and Chia, 2002) which over time is expressed in the language of the members of these relational groups as a reality assumed to have a life of its own (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

One such approach that supports this view and is steadily gaining popularity, both as a critique of the traditional view of change (Barrett et al., 1995, Gergen and Thatchenkery, 1996, Linstead, 2004) and as a vision for the way forward, is social constructionist in character (Gergen, 1999). The emphasis of this approach explores how the “we”, the “group”, and the “many”, construct or produce through conversations and on-going talk perceptions of what is considered to be real, factual or true for the members of that particular group (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, Burr, 2003).

The social constructionist view is that rather than presenting communication as a tool used *within* the change process, that is a monophonic perspective of management communicating the change initiative *to* staff (Plant, 1987, Connor and Lake, 1994, Cesaria et al., 1997, Genus, 1998, Gilsdorf, 1998, Barrett, 2002, Polanyi, 2002, Sims, 2002, Elving, 2005, Paton and McCalman, 2008), change is a process brought about through the influence and contribution of many, often differing voices that interact, explore, interpret and differ from person to person or group to group depending on the context of each of these sites of conversational exchange. Put another way, change is presented as a phenomenon that occurs within the social context of many diverse and varying views (Ford, 1999; Heracleous and Barrett, 2001; Jabri, 2006) that results from the ongoing emergence, transitioning and becoming (D'Arcy and Dibben, 2005) of shared meanings held by a group (Gergen, 1994, 1999, Searle, 1995), rather than mere agreement or consensus that is short-lived (Jabri, Adrian and Boje, 2008).

For the constructionist, all claims to what is considered real or known can be traced to processes of relationship (Gergen, 2001) and conversation as the basis of social interaction. Knowledge of the current or future goals, roles or behavioral norms of an organization, rather than being something held in the head of the individual who then uses language as a mirror to describe his or her knowledge as objective reality (Gergen, 2001, Sjöstrand et al., 2001, Burr, 2003) is, according to the constructionist perspective, something that emerges from and is sustained by the conversations that occur between the people that make up that organization (Taylor and Van Every, 2000, Gergen, 2001).

It is through conversation that people interpret and assume various roles, power relations and subject positions within a group (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, Fairclough, 1992, 2001) and it is through conversation that goals, roles, norms, and values, distinctive for a specific group, are constructed and co-constructed amongst its members (Feldman, 1984, Schein, 2004). Over time multiple perspectives about roles, norms, and values become embedded in speech familiar to those within a given social or relational entity, so much so that what is produced (the conversation) acts back on the producers (the social entity or group) thereby legitimizing that which is experienced as "real" and "true" (Homans, 1951 / 2004, Tuckman, 1965, 2001, Berger and Luckmann, 1966, Feldman, 1984,). Any proposed change, monophonically given, therefore may be seen as anomalous to the existing perceptions that are built into an organization's commonly accepted conversational practices and norms (Jager, 2001, Corman et al., 2002, Ford et al., 2002).

Moreover, "communicating" with employees, something often promoted as a core strategic component of a management lead change initiative (Beckhard and Harris, 1987, Beckhard and Pritchard, 1992, Kotter, 1995, 1996, Genus, 1998, Beer and Nohria, 2000, Anderson and Anderson, 2001), does not necessarily alter perceptions or gain support and acceptance for the change (Sims, 2002). Conger warns that the ability to transform an organization by dictate, that is senior management telling the organization what will change and how, is a way of the past (Conger, 1991). The Cartesian dichotomy between self and other is all too prominent when "communication" is presented in the change management literature as something that management must do to employees to assist the change process (Kotter, 1996, Gilsdorf, 1998, Barrett, 2002, Burke, 2008,). A few examples drawn from the literature on communication and change, targeted at management, illustrates this tendency:

"*Meaningful* communication is communication that accomplishes two primary objectives: (1) *informs and educates employees* at all levels in the company's strategy; and (2) *motivates and positions employees* to support the strategy and the performance goals" [italics to emphasize] (Barrett, 2002).

Some even suggest it is the “organization”, again as an entity separate from employees, that communicates with them. For example “Organizations require different approaches to their *employee communication*” [italics to emphasize] , and “...they [organizations] have necessarily had to think more now than in the past about how *they* communicate with employees” [italics to emphasize] (Kitchen and Daly, 2002). These authors suggest communication is something done *by* management *to* employees to inform, educate, motivate and position them to support a proposed change. Communication is presented here as a monographic, one way process, which is unfortunately too often adopted by management who are informed and influenced by the popular literature on the topic.

This tendency for management to apply monophonic methods of communication to introduce changes initiatives with the use of PowerPoint presentations, e-mails and training sessions may predispose many change efforts to failure (O'Neill and Jabri, 2007) due to the lack of buy-in, adoption and assimilation by those to whom the change is intended (Lewin, 1997 (first work originally published 1948, second work published 1951, Gold, 1999). Those most supportive of a change initiative are influenced more by the multiple interactions and conversational exchanges they have (Thomas et al., 1986) rather than by “communications” from senior management which is often over simplified, positive and fails to represent the contextual content and images held by various groups that make up an organization (Morgan, 1997, Duimering and Safayeni, 1998).

As an organization grows and various groups, sub-groups and cliques are formed as an extension of the original founding group, those in the dominant power position (management) spend a great deal of time in conversational practices with other member groups focusing on meaning-making and meaning-giving (Argyris and Schon, 1978, Senge, 1990, 1994, Senge et al., 1999), and legitimating (justifying and explaining) why things are as they are in the organization (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, Reuf and Scott, 1998, Mazza, 1999, Zelditch and Walker, 2003, Johnson, 2004). However, over time all groups, sub-groups and cliques co-create their own interpretations perspectives (Tsoukas, 1993, Ford and Ford, 1995, Genus, 1998, Heracleous and Barrett, 2001, Palmer and Dunford, 2002,) on *why* their group and the organization exists (goals), *who* they feel is responsible and accountable for *what* (power positions and roles), and *how* they feel members should behave and work together (behavioural controls, norms and conditions for inclusion).

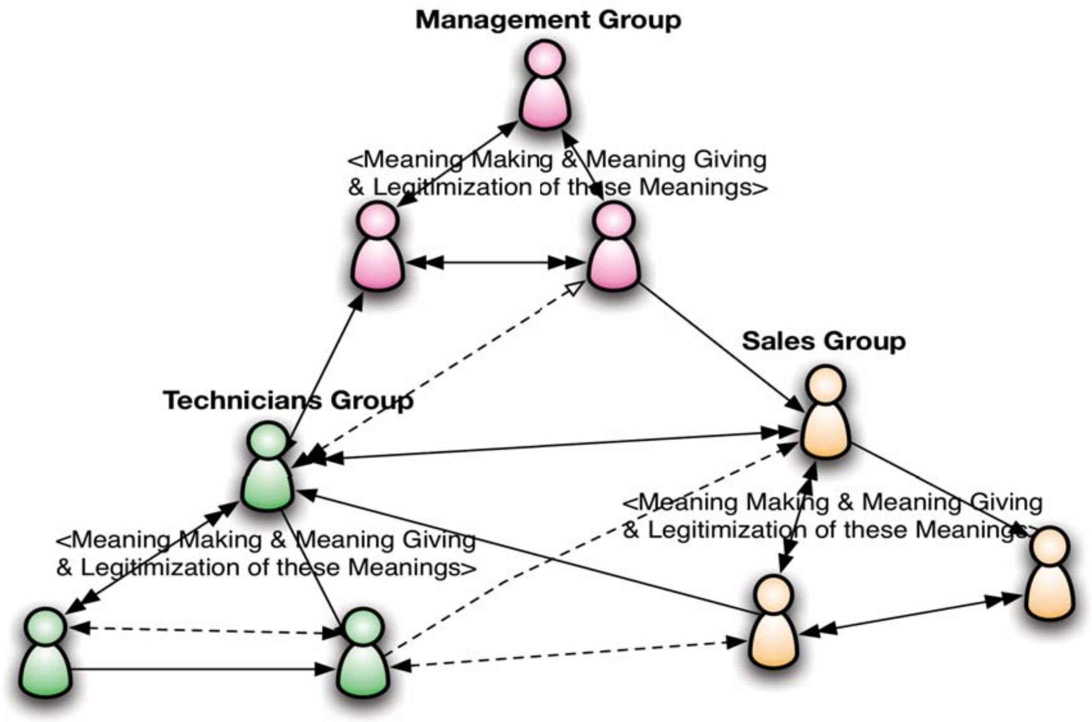

Figure 2:3 Conversational Interaction for meaning making & giving, and the legitimization of those meanings

One thing in common with much of the literature on communication in relation to organizational change is the implicit and explicit legitimation given to the authority and role of management to lead change (1983, Senge, Beckhard and Harris, 1987, Belasco, 1990, Beckhard and Pritchard, 1992, Hammer and Champy, 1993, Connor and Lake, 1994, Hammer and Stanton, 1995, Kotter, 1996, Hammer, 1996, Hooper and Potter, 2001, Anderson and Anderson, 2001, Paton and McCalman, 2008) and employee's duties and obligations to follow the instruction of management in these things (Weber, 1922, Lencioni, 2005).

<u>2.5 Legitimation in organizations</u>

The greater part of research and theory development on legitimation in organizational contexts focuses on; rules (Stryker, 1994); structures (Ashforth and Gibbs, 1990); objects (Johnson, 2004); and authority (Jost and Major, 2001). Much of this research has been lead by the political and social sciences (Mazza, 1999). The abstract and sophisticated debate within the social sciences about the meaning of legitimacy tends to focus on three main areas: legitimacy as power, legitimacy as consent, and legitimacy as conformity (Mazza, 1999).

The legitimacy of power has long been recognized with reference to the legitimacy of a leading elite justifying the differentials of power present between political leaders and others in the coordination of organized action aimed at the execution of economic objectives (Machiavelli, 1513 / 1992). Max Weber's work (1922) has in more recent times been applied to legitimize the role of leadership in commercial enterprises as being significantly different and more privileged than that of employees (Mazza, 1999). Employees in bureaucracies, Weber claimed, needed to have a rational orientation toward the tasks allocated to them and the organization itself (Weber, 1922). In fact, Weber attributed to the leadership the task of managing the diversity of organizational motivations, in particular the motivation of employees towards the tasks assigned to them by leadership and the legitimacy of leadership to issue decisions concerning the division of labour (Weber, 1922).

Today the legitimacy of a leading elite is even more firmly entrenched in management and organizational thought as evidenced by the sheer number of publications on management and leadership that have proliferated on the topic[1]. The aim of many of these publications is to provide management with tools or legitimating apparatus to assist with the ongoing legitimation of management's use of power and the privileges that come with the position (Johnson, 2004). One such tool used by management aimed at the legitimization of corporate activities is the Vision and or Mission Statement (Mazza, 1999). Many other tools come to mind that equally endorse or legitimate management's power position such as letters of employment, the strategic plans and the cascading of objectives to others, monthly performance reporting and reviews, training and development programmes, the succession plans, and of course remuneration and reward policies.

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[1] 6,153 according to http://harvardbusinessonline.hbsp.harvard.edu/hbrsa/en/issue/0510/article/

Legitimacy as consent is intrinsically coupled with management legitimation. Social acceptance at the organizational level is possible only if the management context is legitimated (Mazza, 1999). The aim of this aspect of the legitimating process is the gaining of social consent about the courses of action undertaken and conformity. More formally, the norms, values, beliefs, practices, and procedures accepted by the group tend to be those that are legitimated by management (Johnson, 2004) who assume consent by the group to these due to the social acceptance of their role by the group (Feldman, 1984, Jost and Major, 2001).

Finally, the legitimacy of conformity is linked to the growing pressure towards global and organizational standardization (Bhagwati, 2004). This is seen in the rise of many accrediting, legislative and evaluating bodies such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the Baldrige National Quality Programme and the like (locally adapted hybrids of this programme), the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, or the British Standards Institute (BS). The existence of these legitimating accreditation or auditing bodies makes breaking or the establishment of competing rules, hence change, that much harder (Mazza, 1999).

Whilst a great deal of theorizing and research has gone into understanding the topic of legitimation and its broader implications and contribution to social dynamics little has been explored in terms of understanding how change is legitimated in ordinary talk or utterances and the degree legitimating conversations contribute to the processes of change.

2.6 Legitimation in conversation and storytelling

Berger and Luckmann's (1966) definition of legitimation is "explanations and justifications", and it is in the process of conversation that we give our "explanations" and "justifications" (Garfinkel, 1967) to make perceptions, beliefs and ideas acceptable and normative to a group (Berger & Luckmann 1966: 82, 111). A great deal of conversational effort in fact is given to the legitimation process in organizational settings. Mintzberg estimated that up to eighty percent of management time is spent in verbal contact mostly interpreting issues for others (Mintzberg, 1973). Managers in other words spend a significant amount of time explaining and justifying whilst conversing with subordinates. A considerable amount of time is spent in conversations with superiors and peers before, during, and after the development of something as straightforward as the formation of business plans (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985).

Other means and activities that legitimize why things are as they are for a particular organization include induction and workplace related training programs, performance review meetings, conference calls, coaching sessions, business briefings and presentations, accounting and financial reporting, management meetings, team meetings, and review meetings, in other words, lots of meetings (Mazza, 1999). It is through all these conversationally based activities that views about the goals, roles and behavioral norms, unique for that organization are legitimized (O'Neill and Jabri, 2007).

Eero Vaara, who analyzed eight Finnish-Swedish post merger integrations, identified four types of discourse based themes used to legitimate a participant's actions and contributions in a post merger change process (Vaara, 2002). What was highlighted was the way participants relayed stories about these post merger change processes and the role these stories played in passing on tacit information that contributed to the learning, institutionalization and legitimation of change efforts going forward. The four types of discourse (rationalistic, cultural, role-bound, and individualistic) tend to emerge as a result of the psychological pressures associated with the identity building relative to perceptions about a person's (or group i.e., management) contribution to the success or failure of a change process. Stories told and relayed tended to attribute success to the actions of the "author" of the story thereby legitimizing their view of the change. Interestingly, failure accounts rarely referred directly to the actions of collective management or specific persons. Rather, the storytellers tended to point to other non personal factors such as organizational resistance or environmental changes for example. Vaara's work makes an important contribution because his four types of discourse (rationalistic, cultural, role-bound, and individualistic) reveal the important role of storytelling to socially construct perceptions related to change and how participants in the stories legitimated their role and contribution based on the theme of the story (Vaara, 2002).

Whilst storytelling is well recognized as a means to create shared frames of meaning and or to make sense of experiences (Boje, 1991, Sims, 2002, Brown et al., 2005) the complexity and sophistication of these stories, and the utterances that surround, emerge from or are embedded in these stories, will be affected by the complexity of the “background” from which utterances are drawn and the degree the social constructs of the organization are legitimated.

2.7 Levels of conversational legitimization

This complexity and sophistication is brought about by the number of levels of conversational legitimization upon which social constructions of realities proceed. The notion of levels of legitimation in the social construction of change is guided by the work of Berger and Luckmann who proposed four levels exist moving from simple to more universal application (1966: 112-113) with the exception that for the purposes of this thesis legitimization is fully referenced through speech, or conversation, and utterance as a unit of meaning (O'Neill and Jabri, 2007).

The initial step involved in legitimation of viewpoints is present in common or simple utterances. Utterances are used to name and define things, and it is through utterances that basic or simple explanations and justifications are provided. An utterance can be a word or a sentence, spoken or written. It is a real unit of speech because it reflects a real speech situation (Jabri, 2004). Each utterance is infused with intentions (Bakhtin, 1981, Shotter, 1992, Zebroski, 1999, Holt, 2003). In each speech act, utterance is an expression of what is being experienced by the person as he or she is being firmly situated in a thoroughly social context (Searle, 1969).

The second level of legitimation is achieved through an exchange of utterances in conversation and the way with which such an exchange comes to relate to and build on other people’s utterances. This is achieved through conversations that explain and justify the actions associated with a particular meaning. While an addressor and an addressee may use different words, differences often occur depending on the perspective and role assumed (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

However, over time these utterances give way to more complex explanations and justifications that evolve into ever more co-constructed frames of reference that further define the specializations, the norms and rules of social conduct and significance. A manager for example, might use budgets, drawn directly from the language and constructs of accounting and financial theory to guide decision making for the organization of the firm whilst at the same time drawing on other people's utterances (marketing, R&D, etc) to support his or her role and function (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, Johnson, 2004).

A final fourth level of legitimation is realized when utterances (level one), simple explanatory exchange of utterances (level two), and comprehensive and complex frames of reference (level three) are integrated into a totality of meaning that is experienced and lived within the language (Daft and Wiginton, 1979, Barker and Camarata, 1998, Alvesson and Karreman, 2000, Fairclough, 2001, Holt, 2003, Tietze et al., 2003) of any given social network. An example of this is the way company vision, mission and values statements can take on an all encompassing framework to institutionalize behavior and belief for members of that organization as seen with Hewlett-Packard's HP Way. The HP Way, centred around five broad value definitions, provides a comprehensive and all encompassing framework that provides employees with what the HP Alumni Association[2] describe as "...an egalitarian, decentralized system…" that manages behavior expectations and norms. It does in essence provide HP's many thousands of employees worldwide with an all embracing frame of reference to make meaning out of what they do day to day in the absence of many of them ever getting to go to the HP Head Quarters in Palo Alto or to meet HP's senior management team in person.

[2] http://www.hpalumni.org/hp_way.htm

Levels of Legitimation Berger & Luckmann (1966)
Level One: Linguistic objectifications The naming of things. Simple affirmations to the affect that this is how things are seen, and addresses the question "Why?"
Level Two: Theoretical propositions Explanatory schemes seeking to relate various sets of objective meanings. These schemes are highly pragmatic, directly related to concrete actions.
Level Three: Explicit theories Comprehensive frames of reference, frequently entrusted to specialized personnel because of the complexity and differentiation.
Level Four: Symbolic universe Bodies of theoretical tradition that integrate different provinces of meaning and encompass the institutional order in a symbolic totality. An all embracing frame of reference.

Figure 2:4 Berger and Luckmann's four levels of legitimation

Whether acknowledged or just assumed, the perspectives shared and legitimized through conversational interaction becomes so "real" for those who locate themselves within them that they attain a level of meaning that is deeply embedded in the language, identities and rituals of every day being and becoming (Bakhtin, 1981, Shotter, 1992, Dibben, 2009, Dibben and Newton 2009).

The ability to enter into these conversations is developed over time through initiation and induction into the conversational practices and constructs of that particular and unique social entity or relational network. The shared meanings and perceptions are only really known as a result of a lived experience of being within the "group", the "many", or the "we", in question (Homans, 1951 / 2004, Schein, 2004). To those immersed or absorbed in a particular conversation that which is assumed to be real is thought to be universal until members seek to enter into a conversation with those who occupy a different social network and then encounter its differences in view and perspective (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, Gold, 1999, Lewin, 1997 (first work originally published 1948, second work published 1951)).

2.8 Legitimation in conversation space or "background"

These levels of legitimation, moving from simple to more complex forms of legitimation, are related to the degree of the depth of the relationship and the "space" (Searle, 1995) or "conversational backgrounds" (Ford, 1999) that participants occupy in the conversational exchange. This moving from simple to more complex forms of legitimation relate to what has gone before (reflexivity), the present context and circumstances by way of sense making and what is to come, or sense giving (Garfinkel, 1967, Argyris and Schon, 1978, Pollner, 1991, Garfinkel, 1996, Ruggerone, 1996, Huxham and Vangen, 2003, Cunliffe and Jong, 2005). The complexity, familiarity and depth of meaning is based on the depth of the relationship with the background cultivated over time. For example, to the reader of the following there is very little meaning to be derived.

A enters the room and approaches B who is working at his desk whilst working on his computer.

A "hey how's it going?" B "Yeah good, you?" A "OK... but hey, guess who I just ran into?" B "not...?" A "yep! And he mentioned ..", B "not …", A "yep!" B "No way?", A "Yep", B "and are we going to..?" A "yep, absolutely!" B "well f**k me.. hey we need to meet later and think about how we are going to handle this.." A "gotcha.."

The conversation carries little or no meaning to someone not intimate with the "space between" those in the conversation occupied (Bradbury and Lichtenstein, 2000). We know they are talking about some one else who carries some significance to the two conducting the conversation, and we know that something known to them has been confirmed. We also know that what has been discussed is prompting some form of action from them in the future. But beyond that there is very little meaning in the conversation unless we are initiated into the group, its setting and shared meanings (Tuckman, 1965, 2001, Schein, 2004). To understand the meaning one must be intimately connected to what has gone before, the present, and an assumption built into the current assumptions, of what is to come. Knowing is determined by the depth and significance of the relationship (Gergen, 1994, 1999, 2001). Therefore, the more “I” relate the stronger the conversation space “we” work from and assume to know. When ever we meet we simply pick up where we left off, linking today's experiences through conversation to what has been and what is assumed to come. Conversation space is where there is a merging or mingling creating a form of shared meaning that is constructed between two or more people. The merging or mingling that creates a form of shared meaning in conversation is an all at once knowing (Gadamer, 1976).

This notion of conversational space has been touched on by a number of researchers, each relating how conversations emerging out of a conversational backdrop contribute to the process of change (Barrett et al., 1995, Ford and Ford, 1995, Ford, 1999, Heracleous and Barrett, 2001, Vaara, 2002). Barrett, Thomas and Hocevar, representing an interpretist view, examined a large scale change initiative in the US Navy that failed initially to take hold due to the conflict of meaning between what was being proposed in the language of the change initiative and the established patterns of discourse and action or practice (Barrett et al., 1995). The change initiative was not fully understood by those to whom the initiative was directed simply because organizational members did not normally talk that way, and there were no familiar patterns of activity that made that particular utterance intelligible.

They found for a change to be successful organizational members would have to engage in utterances that helped organizational members to challenge the underlying assumptions upon which their relational bonds were developed and from which their beliefs and practices sprung. The need to challenge underlying assumptions was due to the patterns of conversation and practice that provided the “background” of common experience and context for organizing behavior. Change occurs, they argue, when a new way of talking replaces an old way of talking.

At the same time, Ford and Ford (1995) introduced the concept of four types of specific conversations that change managers or agents engage in to bring about intentional change (1: initiative conversations, 2: understanding conversations, 3: performance conversations, and 4: closure conversations). Ford's (1999) research on the four conversations demonstrated that change managers or agents engaged people in the organization in each of the conversations, and as a result of participation these conversations resulted in a shift in perceptions in *first* and *second* order realities [italics to emphasize two levels]. The need for a shift in the deeply held beliefs, linguistic agreements, understandings and the vocabulary of a particular social network or community embedded in first order realities is necessary, Ford argues, because first order realities serve as the "background" from which all explicit conversations occur and from which the network nature of organizations arise. Second order realities represent realities which are create when those engaged in a conversation "attribute, attach, or give meaning, significance, or value to first order reality". To change performance, Ford and Ford (1995, 1999) argue, a change manager or agent must create a shift or an alteration in the existing tapestry of linguistic products and their consequences without which all attempts at changing performance is fruitless or short lived.

Heracleous and Barrett (2001), presenting a structuralist view of discourse, reflect on organizational change that conceptualizes discourse as "a duality, constituted by two dynamically interrelated levels: the *surface level of communicative actions* and the *deeper level of discursive structures*, recursively linked through the modality of actors' interpretive schemes" (Heracleous and Barrett, 2001) [italics mine to emphasize two levels]. The level of communicative action takes place as a result of social interaction where utterances not only say things, but also do things. Deep structures are where the rules and resources are that organizational members draw on and enact in their daily practices. These deep structures are defined as relatively "stable, largely implicit, and continually recurring processes and patterns that underlie and guide surface, observable events and actions" (pg. 758). The function of deep structures are normative, acting to support or reject action oriented arguments that are more open and explicitly stated in communicative actions (pg. 763).

They apply their structuralist views to highlight the difficulties encounted with the implementation of electronic risk placing technology in the London insurance market. They found that various stakeholders clashed due to divergent assumptions and conflicting communicative actions based on the deep structures each group were communicating and interacting from. From their approach they were able to discern patterns in communicative actions, as well as hidden assumptions, understandings, and values that underlie, guide and legitimate communicative actions. Failure to bring about change, they argue, is a result of different stakeholder groups “talking past each other” because of their almost diametrically opposed utterances at both deep structure and communicative action levels (pg. 774).

2.9 The paradox of legitimation in supporting stability and creating change

Legitimating conversations serve a secondary function in that they enforce member conformity to the rules or laws that are unique for membership within any given organization or group (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, Hare, 1992, Cobb et al., 2001). Organizations fulfill a sociological need to make human behavior more stable and predictable (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). Organizations are rule and law making entities, and the rules and laws are legitimated within the language and conversational practices of the members within that organization, and its various groups and sub-groups (Mazza, 1999, Johnson, 2004). Change in essence is asking members within any particular law and rule making environment to break the existing laws and rules.

This again has significant implications for those tasked with the management of change, for if meaning and perceptions of reality are deeply embedded in the language and conversations that take place in an organization, then it is only through a change in the conversational content and practices that change, meaningful change, can be achieved. This again reinforces the need to see the role of conversation not as a tool used *within* the change process, rather, conversation should be viewed as creating prospects for change (Dawson, 1994, Ford and Ford, 1995, Tsoukas and Chia, 2002, Vaara, 2002), and that it does so by a process that is largely dependent on collaboration with others present within the context in which change occurs. Or put another way, change is a phenomenon that arises from within the social context of conversation (Ford, 1999; Heracleous and Barrett, 2001; Jabri, 2006) that results from unfolding shared meanings held within a group, rather than mere agreement or consensus that is short-lived (Jabri, Adrian, and Boje, 2006).

Rarely does the introduction of new ideas into an organization happen smoothly and without problems. There can be, and often are, frustrations, setbacks and disappointments in attempts to bring about change (Beer and Nohria, 2000, Sims, 2002). However, understanding the contribution of the social construction of shared meanings and change in conversation offers practitioners an alternative focus to move their change efforts forward. The social construction of shared meaning and the role of change in conversation provides a framework for identifying and comparing the constructs of the current conversational norms and meaning with any proposed change.

Efforts to superimpose or to force through new realities based on perceptions held by management rarely bring about positive change or a shift in perceptions within the other groups that make up that organization (Robbins and Finley, 1998, Ford, 1999, Ormerod, 2005, O'Neill and Jabri, 2007). A proposed change threatens to destabilize deeply held perceptions of what are believed to be the goals, roles and behavioral norms of a group and unless opportunities are created for meaningful interaction between members of various groups to reconstruct new meaning and significance in relation to the change, a shift in currently held perceptions is unlikely to take place. Current perceptions are legitimized within the context and conversations of the members within a relational network (Gergen, 1994, 2001), and unless all levels of the conversational legitimation process are contributing to the reconstruction and support of new realities and meaning, it is unlikely change will transpire. The existing explanations and justifications act as a resisting force to the proposed changes and will ensure existing perceptions and behaviors congruent with and reflective of the current practices are maintained (Dent and Goldberg, 1999, Jager, May 2001, Ford et al., 2002).

2.10 Summary

Much of what has been drawn on to provide a theoretical framework and understanding for this thesis strongly suggests that naturally occurring conversation or talk has a significant contribution in the form and function of organization and thereby a significant contribution to the processes of change. Central to this process is the *potentials* of change that emerge in the opening up or moving of conversations into many varied, diverse, and different directions (polyphonic rather than the monophonic paradigm) to challenge existing assumptions and frames of reference (Senge, 1990, 1992, Senge et al., 1999). These socially constructed assumptions and frames of reference are formed and held in place in the conversational content that in most cases serve to explain and justify (legitimate) perceptions held by the groups and sub-groups that make up an organization. Therefore, critical to the process of change is the de-legitimizing of currently held constructs and the legitimization of new perceptions and new relational networks of meaning thereby allowing new meanings and understandings to be assimilated into ordinary day-to-day conversations and actions allowing new forms of organization to emerge (Tuckman, 1965, 2001, Barrett et al., 1995, Schein, 1995, 2004).

Conversation as ordinary daily talk or utterance is presented as a social or relational practice that constitutes and constructs worlds of meaning that define *why* a group or an organization exists in the first place, *who* is responsible and accountable for *what*, and *how* members are to behave and work together, rather than representing the meaning of the world. Implicit in this understanding is an action-oriented view of conversation, in which it is accepted that talk and action cannot be easily separated. Accepting conversation as the mainspring of organization moves the focus away from some of the popular metaphors that reflect a Cartesian focus on the “individual” such as the leader, a manager, or change agent to understanding how conversation as a socially situated activity contributes significantly to the emergence, formation and change within daily organizational life and practice.

A review of the literature on communication in change management was presented suggesting that the monophonic, one way process, portraying communication as something done *by* management *to* employees biases managers towards the use of monophonic methods which in turn reduces the likelihood of acceptance for change by those to whom the change is directed. Closely linked to the assumption of communication by management to employees is the implicit and explicit legitimation given to the authority and role of management to lead change and employees' duties and obligations to follow the instruction and guidance of management in these things.

Finally, the concept of different levels of conversational legitimization, guided by the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966), upon which social constructions of realities proceed was offered, with the exception that for the purposes for this thesis legitimization is fully referenced through speech, or conversation, and utterance as a unit of meaning (O'Neill and Jabri, 2007). These levels of legitimation, moving from simple to more complex forms of legitimation, are related to the degree of the depth of the relationship and the space or conversational backgrounds that participants occupy in the conversational exchange.

Chapter Three: The Methodology for Conducting the Fieldwork and Analysis

3.1 Introduction

The overriding consideration for selecting the methods and procedures used for this study has been determined by an interest in understanding *how* and in *what* ways ordinary and naturally occurring "conversations" contribute to the social construction and legitimation of change in an organizational setting, and how this may influence or impact on the likely outcome of a change initiative.

Several research methods have been utilized for collecting and analyzing data for use in this thesis (Miller and Brewer, 2003, Creswell and Clark, 2007). The overall approach for the data collection phase has been ethnographic in nature, that is, the observation and recording of the conversations referenced in the thesis have largely been studied in naturally occurring organizational settings with me participating directly in most of these conversations both as a contract consultant and university researcher (Miller & Brewer 2003: 99). Details on how participant observation and interviewing procedures have been used to conduct the ethnographical side of the research at the various sites is given in Sections 3.5 to 3.7. Data collected in the field has also been compared and contrasted with data collected using a structured questionnaire to gather information from participants that would not otherwise be gleaned from observation methods, and semi-structured interviews have been used to verify field observations with key informants (Lee, 1999, Leedy and Ormrod, 2001, Miller and Brewer, 2003, Creswell and Clark, 2007). Details about these two supplementary methods are given in Section 3.10.

Data collected from the field notes, document analysis, and interviews have been presented using the case study method (Hill, 1993, Lee, 1999, White and Taket, 2000). This method allows for the documenting of the unfolding nature of a change initiative and related conversations in chronological order. Comparative (Smith 1991: 6) and theme analysis procedures have been applied to the case materials for further exploration of the data as it relates to the aims for this study (Boje, 2001). Details of the procedures used for the case study, comparative and theme analysis methods can be found in section 3.10.

3.2 Considerations guiding the field work and research effort

Whilst there has been a great deal of research and theory development on the more formal aspects of organizational change where communication is considered to be one of a number of important activities within the change process (Rogers, 1997, Gilsdorf, 1998, Wong, 2000, Cheng et al., 2001, Barrett, 2002, Radford and Goldstein, 2002, Barge and Little, 2002, Kitchen and Daly, 2002, Polanyi, 2002, Orlikowski and Yates, 2002, Murphy and Kraidy, 2003, Elving, 2005, Cooren et al., 2006,) little has been done to understand the contributions or implications of naturally occurring talk or conversation within which these formal aspects of change are embedded. Priority therefore has been given to methods that helped with the observation, collection, and analysis of naturally occurring conversations in relation to how perspectives or views of reality and meaning are constructed and legitimized amongst individuals within and between the various groups that make up an organization.

3.3 The role of the researcher

Due to the need to observe first hand the experiences, situations and conversations entered into by those within a change process, my role as researcher has meant I have been more than an independent observer (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002, Wolcott, 2002, Buchanan and Dawson, 2007), and have in some cases been socially inhabiting emergent situations in what was observed (Hari Das, 1983, Reid, 1987, Bartree and Cheyunski, 1997, Sackmann, 1991, Tedlock, 1991, Hill, 1993, Vinten, 1994). The collection of materials in the field have resulted in the development of a comprehensive case study based on two years longitudinal studies conducted in an Asia Pacific property services business head quartered in Hong Kong relating to a change initiative impacting on business practices around the Asia Pacific region.

Access to this organization and my ability to participate in, observe and record the relevant conversations related to the management of change came about as a result of my employment with this organization as a management consultant working closely with the organization's senior management team, and subsequently with various other groups and sub-groups that made up the organization.

Getting agreement from CEO's for me to include their organizations in this research was no easy task. Early efforts in the initial stages were often frustrated by a lack of willingness by most CEO's approached to participate due to the potential confidentiality of information collected. This is a common problem encountered by many seeking to do business based research (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). Fortunately, approval was received from the CEO of a regional property services company on the condition that the true identity of the organization be kept confidential to ensure sensitive information regarding the competitive capabilities and personal interactions, opinions and company politics would be protected. Therefore, throughout I have used factious names both for individuals and the company participating in the research.

The conversational content is based on observations and recollections of naturally occurring utterances that took place in board rooms and meeting rooms; over cups of coffee or a meal in and outside office hours; in office corridors, traveling in cars to and from meetings, airports, hotels or conferences; sitting in planes, waiting at airports, in fact any location where I was able to observe and interact with people in the course of my work carried out as a consultant for the participating organizations over the two year period.

My access to a wide range of conversations, as a result of the consulting work, contributes to the credibility of the study (Miller & Brewer 2003: 222) but is also one of its biggest limitations (Wolcott 1999: 29). Simply, I was only able to be at one place at one time, and was therefore, unable to observe all the conversations that contribute to the construction of a particular group's perception about a particular change initiative. Therefore, the use of semi-structured interviews, positioned as conversations (Brown and Humphreys, 2006), have been used where appropriate to fill the gaps, in addition to e-mail exchanges and an on-line questionnaire soliciting additional information to better understand an insider's views about the change initiative taking place in the organization.

The field work was carried out in an organization whose primary goal is to conduct business for profit. Whilst reference may be made to other social entities that exist outside of this profit making business context such as government agencies, families, social clubs, etc., the research presented here only focuses on the conversations witnessed and conjoined by me as a consultant inside a for-profit business setting.

My credibility as the main instrument (Fetterman 1998: 31; Creswell 2007: 45) for collecting and analyzing the data gathered during the field work is supplemented by over 21 years experience working as a consultant. The many consulting assignments I have been engaged in across the Asia Pacific rim have provided me with substantial insight and understanding related to the context, terminologies and deeper workings of organizational life.

The second consideration is that over these extended periods of time I've been able to develop intimate relationships (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002) with numerous people making it easier for them to share their views with me candidly (Van Maanen, 1995, Wolcott, 1999) rather than with an unknown researcher approaching them for the first time. Illustrations and utterances drawn from my consulting experiences undergird the theoretical perspectives presented. To ignore this rich source of information and experience would be to deny a valuable source of insight based on firsthand observations and participation.

Thirdly, much of my consulting work commenced with an initial research component to better understand not only the management style, strategy and processes of the organization but a major focus of the initial research focused on understanding the culture and behavioral aspects of the people that made up the organization (Paul, 1988, Sackmann, 1991, Tietze et al., 2003, Schein, 2004). I have been able to draw on this level of expertise also in conducting my field work with a high level of discretion and tact.

3.4 The selection of the research strategy, methodology and procedures

The extensive use of qualitative methods in organizational and social science research has demonstrated its usefulness and validity for exploring topics related to human interaction and for understanding how people experience or make sense of those experiences (Lee, 1999, Leedy and Ormrod, 2001, Miller and Brewer, 2003, Seale, 2004). As this is a study on the role of conversation in the social construction and legitimation of change, the research is definitively qualitative in its approach.

The strategies and methods used to observe and collect data for analysis have been influenced by the work of Garfinkel with his emphasis on naturally occurring social settings as the domain in which the study of conversation should take place (Garfinkel, 1996, 1967); and the work of Wolcott, Van Maanen and Dey (Van Maanen et al., 1982, Wolcott, 1990, 1999, 2002, 2003, Van Maanen, 1995, Dey, 2002) who provide guidelines, procedures and protocol on the role of the researcher for observing and collecting field work based data.

Several well known methods, well suited to organizational settings, have been combined to conduct the field work, such as direct observation and participation, informal interviews, group discussions, and occasionally analyses of organizational documents (Das, 1983, Reid, 1987, Tanton and Fox, 1987, Sackmann, 1991, Tedlock, 1991, Hill, 1993, Vinten, 1994, Paul, 1996, Bartree and Cheyunski, 1997). Overall, my use of direct observation, informal conversation (guided interviews), group discussion (focus groups) and participant observations have been synthesized to provide an open and less restrictive framework (Seale, 2004: 197) allowing a great deal of flexibility to interact with or engage people at all levels of the organization whilst deploying a method of observation and data collection that presented the least amount of intrusion for those contributing to the research.

The data used for this thesis whether audio or written has mainly been situated in “real-time” naturally occurring organizational settings. Formal meetings with respondents with the sole purpose of gathering data pertinent for the study has been limited to twenty one semi-structure interviews (see Appendix C for details). Apart from these twenty one semi-structure interviews, participants have not been told “ I am doing a PhD research project on the role of conversation in organizational change, may I interview you?”. The only other exception has been those who participated in the on-line questionnaire where a requirement was made from UNE’s Human Ethics Committee to state clearly at the commencement of the questionnaire the aims of the research. The deliberate effort to use observations taken from “real-time” naturally occurring organizational settings is guided by the ethnomethodological ideal of making sense out of “the familiar world of everyday life” (Garfinkel 1967: 36).

One of Garfinkel’s major criticisms of traditional approaches to the study of social phenomena is the conducting of research, or data collecting methods, in unnatural settings often controlled and structured by the researcher and the aims of the study (Garfinkel, 1996, 1967). Concern lies in the tendency to apply research procedures, protocol or specific data gathering techniques, that the researcher unwittingly uses to create an artificial context that distorts or colors the meaning of the conversational content of those being observed (Alvesson, 1994). For example, if I was to ask someone permission to record a conversation on their views about a change initiative they would more than likely be more reserved about what they said about that change initiative, especially if the initiative was something the CEO was passionate about. The caution is that if participants are aware they are “the observed” their contribution will more often than not be filtered for affect (Smith, 1991) or biased towards the researcher’s aims as a result of the line of questioning used (Kaplan 1964; quoted in Smith 1991). To that end, this work seeks to present a series of conversations and how from the various groups within the organizations under observation they share and shape views about the change experienced and how their views about the change is legitimized.

Whilst reference to ethnomethodology’s focus on research being conducted in naturally occurring settings has contributed to the way the field work has been conducted, the analytical methods associated with conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998, Psathas, 1995, Silverman, 2001), and discourse theory in general, has played a limited role in this work. The main reason for this is that conversation analysis tends to be based on data gathered from the field using audio or video recorders with the researcher isolated from or acting as a detached observer of the conversations under study rather than as an active participant (Cook, 1989). In addition, this method, when analyzing the data collected, tends to focus more on producing insights into linguistic rules such as “turn taking” in conversation, structuring, sequencing, and orderliness of conversation (Garfinkel, 1996, Ruggerone, 1996) which do not entirely fit with the broader aims of this study.

The reason discourse theory, and discourse analysis in particular, has not been drawn on in this study is that there is a tendency in this approach to emphasize talk *and* texts, written documents, verbal reports, artwork, pictures, symbols, buildings, and other artifacts (e.g., Fairclough, 1995; Taylor et al., 1996) and to use these items *collectively* as the site of study for meaning and explanation of organizational life and change. Hence the comment made by Maguire & Hardy (2009) that “Discourses cannot be studied directly—they can only be explored by examining the texts that constitute them”.

My focus however has been different in that rather than looking for meaning *retrospectively* though the study of talk *and* texts, written documents, verbal reports, artwork, pictures, symbols, buildings, and other artifacts, all seen as part of a wider view of institutionalized discourse, I have focused on the “one off”, “never to be repeated” *moment* when an utterance takes place (Shotter, 2004) where meaning is socially constructed amongst those participating in the utterance (Gergen, 1994, 2001), that is where meaning is understood *in the very moment of the utterance*. It is for this reason I use conversations to study conversation, and as a result of this, I introduce a new interpretative framework and research method that accounts for the polyphonic nature of ordinary, day-to-day mundane talk on organizational life and change.

Maguire & Hardy (2009), reflecting the rational and monophonic tendency, which seems to be imbedded in this form of analysis, make the claim that discourse “‘rules in’ certain ways of talking about a topic, defining an acceptable and intelligible way to talk, write or conduct oneself” and also “‘rules out’, limits and restricts other ways of talking, of conducting ourselves in relation to the topic or constructing knowledge about it" (Hall, 2001: 72). Nothing could be more monophonic that ruling in or out ways of talking about a topic than this and clearly is an antithesis to the relational view that the polyphonic perspective offers.

To be able to inhabit various situations so I could partake in "spontaneous" conversation, I sought permission to move about more freely in the conduct of my field work, undercover and in a covert manner, with agreement from the CEO of the organization and with strict guidelines and conditions for doing so from the University of New England's Human Ethics Committee. Issues related to privacy and consent to be recorded had to be seen as secondary to the nature of the research where the priority was to observe people conversing with each other naturally without the interferences that might influence or alter these conversations or behaviours adversely (Wheatley, 1999/2006). To protect personal privacy of those observed all direct reference to names and other personal data that might in anyway compromise someone's identity have not been used or have been altered sufficiently to protect an individual but without compromising the quality of their contribution.

The integrity of the guidelines proposed and satisfaction that sufficient measures were in place to protect privacy or any potential personal embarrassment were met with approval from the University of New England's Human Ethics Committee (HE04/185, Valid to:19/11/05 completed, and HE07/019 Valid to: 26/2/2008 and now completed) to proceed (see Appendix D). From the participating company's perspective, approval was given to conduct the research covertly in the course of carrying out my consulting duties subject to an assurance that the organization and participant's identities were kept strictly confidential, and that the gathering of information of any kind was restricted only to conversations related to or focused around organizational change initiatives.

3.5 Conducting the field work

Broadly, the field work has been ethnographical in nature as it has proven to be an effective approach long used by researchers who venture into natural settings to observe human social phenomena (Wolcott, 1990, Alvesson, 1994, Crabtree et al., 2000, O'Connor, 2000, Gille and Riain, 2002), and as an approach for conducting organizational studies (Rosen, 1991; quoted in Alversson 1994).

The overriding strategy for conducting the field work has been guided by Wolcott's (1999: 46 - 63) three phase approach. Phase One: Experiencing - participating in naturally occurring events; Phase Two: Enquiring - seeking deeper meaning by asking what is going on; and Phase Three: Examining - turning attention to what has been produced by others such as presentation materials, memos, e-mails, notes, etc.

3.6 Phase One: Experiencing

The experiencing phase relates to the work the researcher does to "move back and forth between involvement and detachment" (Wolcott 1999: 48). On one hand there is a need to be totally involved as a participant with those being observed (Fetterman, 1998), whilst on the other hand there is a need to be somewhat detached as a researcher to ensure the field work and collection of data follows clearly defined procedures to ensure consistency and thoroughness (Creswell, 2007). What follows is a description of the key considerations, methods and the procedures deployed during the "experiencing" phase of the field work.

3.6.1) The amount of time conducting the field work:

The quantity of information gathered, based on the amount of time given to conduct the field work is proportionate to the amount of time spent working and "experiencing" conversations in the comprehensive case presented in the next chapter. For the company that participated in the study twenty five percent of my time was contracted for in the first year the research was conducted (one week at least each month) which increased to fifty percent of my time in the second year (minimum of two weeks every month). This amounts to approximately one thousand, four hundred and forty contact hours or one hundred and eighty normal working days. Not all this time of course was devoted to conversational topics suited to the aims of this thesis but it does nevertheless give an idea of my familiarity with the organization and the people in it.

3.6.2) Participant Observer:

It has already been mentioned that the opportunity to observe and collect data was made relatively easy on the basis that my access to the company paralleled the work I provided as a consultant working for this organization. I had access to the most senior management level (CEO and country MD's) down to the lowest levels (support staff and junior members).

My interactions with members of the organization were typically conducted in the usual meeting format with anywhere from two or more people seated around a board room or smaller meeting room table. These meetings typically were either regular business meetings, special task force meetings, or management review meetings. In addition to these meetings, I facilitated or participated in special management or workgroup forums, workshops and ad hoc group discussions. I traveled to different parts of the business in the Asia Pacific region with members of the organization and entered into conversations in the informal settings airports and planes provided to chat with people about company related business issues.

My knowledge of the property service industry [3] totals 10 1/2 years. My previous experience the property services industry is briefly mentioned to validate how relatively easy it was for me to participate in the various conversational activities that took place on a day to day basis as an active participant, and perhaps more importantly, how I was more fully aware and attuned to the tacit and implicit messages given in utterances (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002) taking place between the various workgroups that made up the organization.

3.6.3) Recording:

To begin with I used a template to record conversations and any relevant information on the context, place, time, the participants, the conversational

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[3] Positions held in the property services industry include: Director of Organizational Development (2 yrs.), Group HR Director (2 1/2 years), and a consultant on retainer for 6 years.

content in a turn taking format, the tone used, body language and or any other pertinent bits of information that helped to capture the conversation and the context in which it took place (see Appendix C). I have often taken and used my computer during management and staff meetings so it was not unusual for people to see me with my computer open and me typing up notes on the meeting.

The rational behind the initial use of the template was the assumption that it would make it easier during the analysis stage to extract the text for contrasting and comparing, and that using a template to capture as many conversations as possible using this method would improve the consistency and quality of the recording between one situation and another.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Date</td><td colspan="6"></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Location</td><td colspan="6"></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Time</td><td colspan="6"></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Researcher and relationship of researcher to participants</td><td colspan="6"></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="7">Respondent / participant name and details</td><td>Code</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="7">Sample</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Contextual / environmental features</td><td colspan="2">Background information / issues leading up to the encounter / interaction</td><td colspan="3">Comments / observations</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Same…..</td><td colspan="2"></td><td colspan="3"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Speaker (code)</td><td colspan="3">conversation</td><td colspan="2">Body language / gestures / tone</td><td colspan="2">Themes / classifications</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="3">Sample…...</td><td colspan="2"></td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
</table>

Figure 3:1 Front, second and subsequent pages of the field notes template

The template however proved to be impractical to use due the need to move quickly from one column or cell to the next while the conversation was in full flow. Also, if I was an active participant in the conversation I felt unnatural (more like a secretary) and slightly detached from full participation (Wolcott 1999: 48) when writing more than just a few words or phrases. I abandoned the use of the template in meeting situations after about a six attempts using it.

At other times I just typed as much as I could on a blank page adding to the notes later from memory to fill in the gaps. I experimented with just typing as much as I could without making reference to the name of the speaker so the conversation read as a story with no central characters to indicate who said what. To indicate a change in the speaker I alternated between italics and normal text.

> Based on the information in hand, (flicking through a small pile of papers) like these falling inquiry levels... a totally unacceptable level of client complaints... and look at these revenue figures! I would say we have a lot to put right. I think it is time we turned this company into a real “quality” organization *do you mean a real “quality” organization, everyone in the industry recognizes us as a leading brokerage firm* I don’t think we should confuse “recognition” with being a “quality” firm, what I am saying is we need to be more aware of what our clients want, and then to make sure we put the processes in place that deliver on those expectations. The way I see it now we do our own thing and then go to the market and try to flog it to the clients, this is not the best way to do it, is it? *That’s the way we have always done it. We have some excellent people with the expertise to come up with what we think is best for the market and while we do our best to meet individual customer needs we simply don’t have the resources to custom make a solution for every one* And that’s my point, we are not really customer focused. When did we last involve some of our customers in a discussion to build solutions together? *Having the time to do this is a real issue… we simply don’t have that luxury* Well, the way I see it we have to do something to turn things around, and we need to do it sooner than later. I would like us to at least explore the feasibility of focusing everything and everyone around “customer focused quality *Ah… well we did something like that about eight years ago when we got in some expensive consultant who introduced us to a service excellence program, it went down like a lead balloon, no one bought into it.*

Figure 3:2 Free flow recording with no names

Typing certainly saved on the time needed to go back later and transcribe handwritten field notes so they were in a format that could be used for importing into the HyperRESEARCH software, but as with using the template, recording the field work using the computer still made me feel detached from full participation with the group and the conversation.

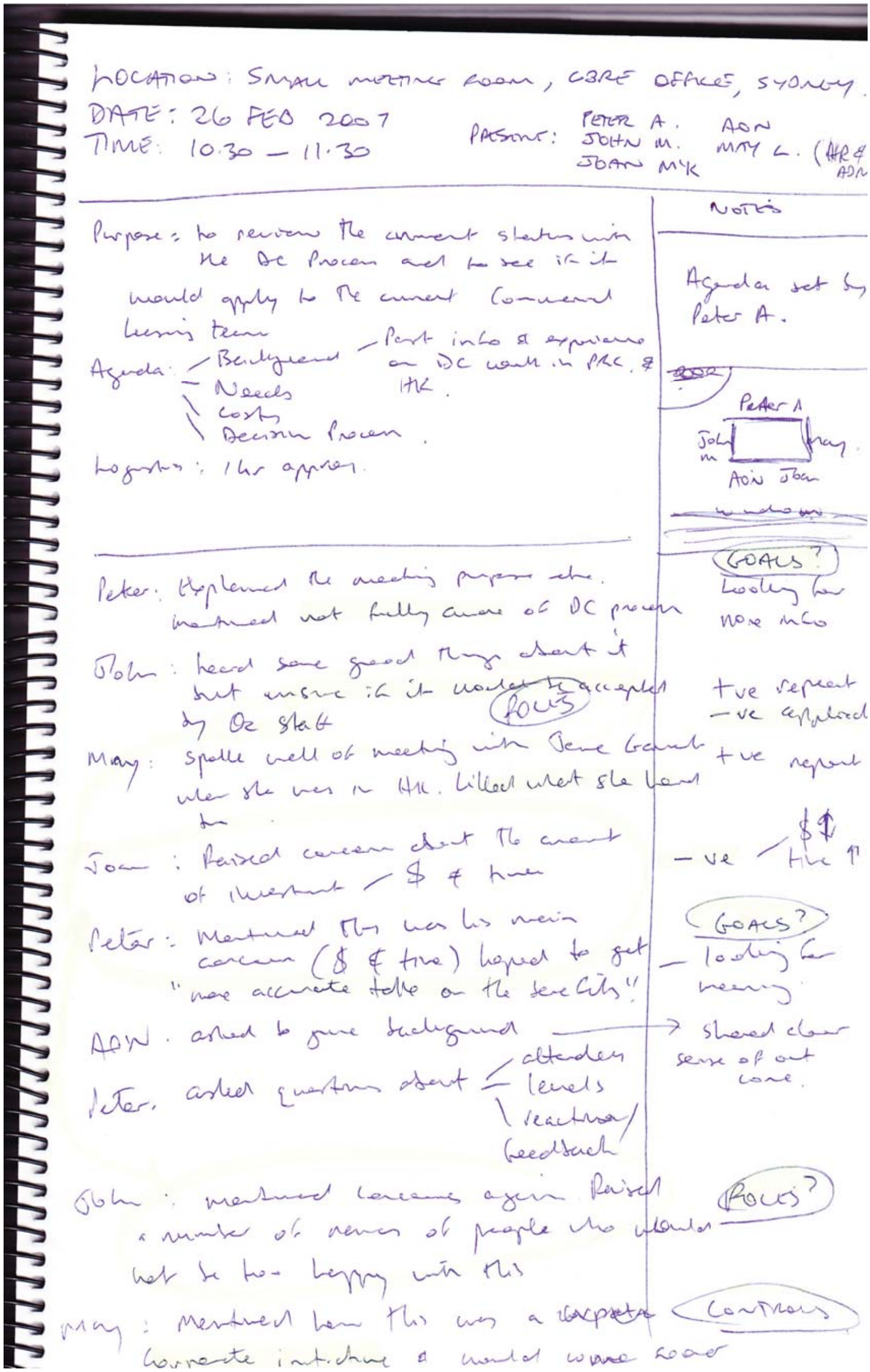
The method of choice ended up being the use of pen and paper to jot down key sentences, phrases or words, to record the flow of the conversation in chronological order. I experimented with the mindmap format (Buzan, 2001, Buzan, 1974) but found that unless I numbered the ordering of conversational contributions the notes were difficult to follow afterwards to see how ideas were either built on or where themes emerged into new orders of conversational flow.

When using a note pad I would note at the top of the page the place, time, date, those present, and other information that might be pertinent to help recall the context. In most cases I would include a brief seating plan if it was a meeting situation noting who sat where.

I then divided the rest of the page into two columns. The left column being the larger portion of the page where I could write down as much as I could of the content spoken using brackets to note any body language, gestures or tonal emphasis pertinent to the utterance. The left hand side of the page, being the lesser of the two columns in width, is where I would jot down points of interest of observation for follow-up or exploration when reviewing what had been written after the event. Other items recorded included brief notes on any whiteboard or flip chart work, and sometimes on papers distributed or used during a meeting, again only if pertinent to the conversational exchange.

I found pen and paper note taking to be the best method for recording conversations as it was easy to use (no technology failure) and it is a usual and expected practice for a consultant to take notes during meetings. It certainly was not something unnatural or out of place to do so. At no time did anyone question me on why I was taking notes during a particular situation or exchange.

The field notes proved to be invaluable tool for jolting the memory after the event so gaps could be filled or linkages made where there was relevance to the aims of the study. An example of one page from my field note pad is provided on the following page demonstrating the above.



LOCATION: SMALL MEETING ROOM, CBRE OFFICES, SYDNEY.
DATE: 26 FEB 2007
TIME: 10.30 – 11.30
PRESENT: PETER A. AON
JOHN M. MAY L. (HR & ADM)
JOAN M'K

NOTES

Purpose: to review the current status with the DC Process and to see if it would apply to the current Commercial Leasing team

Agenda set by Peter A.

Agenda: – Background – Part into & experience on DC work in PRC & HK.
– Needs
– Costs
– Decision Process.

Logistics: 1hr approx.

Peter A
John M
May
AON Joan
windows

GOALS?
Looking for more info

Peter: Explained the meeting purpose etc. mentioned not fully aware of DC process

John: heard some good things about it but unsure if it would be accepted by Oz staff
FOCUS
+ve report
-ve applied

May: spoke well of meeting with Jane Grant when she was in HK. Liked what she heard
+ve report

Joan: Raised concern about the amount of investment / $ & time
-ve / $$ time ??

Peter: Mentioned this was his main concern ($ & time) hoped to get "more accurate take on the benefits!"
GOALS?
– looking for meaning

AON. asked to give background → shared clear sense of outcome.

Peter. asked questions about – attendees
– levels
– reactions/feedback

John: mentioned concerns again Raised a number of names of people who would not be too happy with this
FOCUS?

May: Mentioned how this was a corporate initiative & would ... soon
CONTROLS

Figure 3:3 Sample of handwritten field notes

Occasionally I used an electronic recording device to capture the conversation especially when in public forums such as workshops or formal meeting presentation sessions. The electronic devices that I used that were easy to operate, compact to carry and particularly helpful for recording in a discreet manner during meetings was the Sony IC recorder, a 40g iPod with a Belkin microphone, and or the recording capabilities built into the Journler and Microsoft®Word for Mac 2004 applications.

Figure 3:4 40g iPod with a Belkin microphone

To begin with I thought the recording devices were going to be a great help in capturing conversations for later review and transcription, however, even though approval had been given to use a recording device without the individual's personal permission (COMMITTEE APPROVAL No: HE07/019) I felt very uncomfortable using these devices covertly knowing that potentially there was a breach of trust and confidentiality by a colleague simply because they had not been informed of what was taking place. Even if used in a very discreet manner the risk of being "found out" and having trust betrayed (Fetterman 1998: 64) far out weighed the potential benefits from being able to go back over the conversation at a later stage. As a result, audio recording was seldom used except for the twenty one semi structured interviews where respondents were asked for permission to record.

Occasionally I would take a digital photo of the setting in which the conversation took place, more to act as a visual prompt or reminder of the context (Fetterman 1998: 66) than to use as research data. Often I would take the photo before people arrived or after they left the meeting room. Rarely if ever is it customary for people to take photos of colleagues or meetings during the course of their daily work, so again, not wanting to impose or to stand out as the “researcher” meant that the taking of photos was seldom done.

3.7 Phase Two: Enquiring

The aim of the enquiring phase is to complement the participant observations (Wolcott 1999: 51). Occasions arose when it was difficult to be an independent participant observer, at other times I needed more insights and information to better understand someone’s view or to verify my own interpretation of a situation. Therefore to supplement the experiencing phase semi-structured interviews, positioned as conversations (Lee, 1999, Wolcott, 1999, Brown and Humphreys, 2006), were used.

When conducting the semi structured interviews I followed two different procedures (Lee 1999:62) at two different stages. At the beginning of the field work I conducted twenty-one semi structured interviews (see Appendix C), ranging from one to two hours each in length with a cross range of individuals to solicit their views on various change initiatives that were taking place in their organization. The participants were selected by the organization randomly and were invited to participate in the research by e-mail from the Country Managing Director. A small meeting room was made available for me and over the course of one week I met individually with all twenty one respondents. Upon entering the room and making the normal introductions I outlined the purpose of the interview and asked for consent to record the meeting. All twenty one respondents signed the consent and participated fully. I followed the same set of questions for each respondent.

Whilst these interviews presented me with some insights, unfortunately much of what I was hearing was simply the recalling and retelling of accounts about events in isolation from the context they took place in (Wolcott 1999:55). My questions guided the respondents to give me answers about what happened, from their perspective, and whilst they provided me with insights as to how the conversations they entered into influenced the construction of their perceptions about a change initiative by the very nature of the interview process the respondent and I were constructing and creating “our” own unique story as a result of the interaction we had with each other, drawing on our own memories, interpretations and experiences, and adapting these to the ebb and flow of the moment we shared in the interview conversation (Gadamer, 1976). Stating up front that the interview was for a PhD research project, conducting it with a standard set of questions (even though most were open ended), recording the interview with a 40g iPod and microphone, assuming the role of “researcher” and the other person as “respondent”, all contributed to some of the interviews being a little superficial and fabricated. Put simply, this style of interview did not suit the aims of this thesis and was abandoned from future use.

Subsequent interviews, after the initial twenty-one, were more spontaneous and far less structured (Fetterman 1998: 38). None were recorded with an audio device. Responses or further information sort for was casually raised in the course of normal work related activities rather than planned sessions. Sometimes I needed to clarify something said earlier to better understand some background information or events that may have contributed to the situation or to someone's view, and or sometimes just to clarify or confirm my own understanding of the situation. Often these conversations would start with, “Oh by the way, may I ask you about…” or “Earlier you mentioned that…. could you just give me a little more information about ….?”, or “I am not sure I heard you right what did you mean…..?”.

These spontaneous and unstructured enquiring conversations provided a rich source of additional information. Because they were spontaneous in nature the flow of conversation and enquiry would often move into any number of other directions. It was often during these sessions that people would reveal the conflicting constructs that they would be attempting to make sense of, or to rationalize, based on the various social obligations they held as members of the various groups they belonged to or represented within the organization. One such example was seeing someone participate and agreeing wholeheartedly in a conversation on the need to identify and remove non-performers holding up the change initiative, then when out of that context be critical of some of the key players who were pushing for the removal of such people. When I asked this person how easy was it for him to remove someone for non-performance, whom he hired in the first place, his reply was not directed at my question but rather he drew on what he saw as a wider social obligation to justify or rationalize his inaction in this area, “Its all very well to get rid of the non-performer but frankly a business is more than just a numbers game. What about the reputation we’ll get in the market place? Personally, I think we are just too focused on the numbers…”

The limitation of the spontaneous and unstructured enquiring conversations was that there were times that I could not take notes there and then while these conversation was in play. Firstly, most of these conversations arose when the opportunities presented themselves so they could not be planned for, and secondly, people simply do not take notes when having spontaneous conversations. It would be considered totally out of place viewed with suspicion. Therefore, in a number of cases notes were written up after the conversation drawing on memory.

3.8 Phase Three: Examining supporting documents or texts

Most organizational change initiatives are documented as “talk in text” in PowerPoint presentations, in e-mails and other forms of communiqué sent from key stakeholder(s) such as senior management or the change agent, posters and other promotional message conveying materials, and training manuals that provide a valuable source of information (Fetterman 1998:58). Again, access to this information was relatively easy to attain due in part to my role as a consultant. All I had to do was ask. At no time was I declined access to any printed or official company documentation when asked for. Not being a major part of this study I rarely make reference to pertinent documents to demonstrate how these impact on and are impacted by organizational conversational practices. I prefer to refer to these documents as “talk in text” (Heracleous, 2006) as in and of themselves they only have significance when they are sighted by someone and referenced to in conversation. The texts by themselves do not have efficacy or life bearing force until sighted, and only “live” when used by those who come across them or have need of them whilst going about their duties (Cooren et al., 2006).

The only other form of "talk in text" that may have bearing on this thesis is the conversations that take place between two or more people by way of e-mail and instant messaging. E-mail and instant messaging is used more and more these days as a means of interacting with others. Mostly they lack any semblance of formal structure, they are spontaneous and are conducted in a manner similar to normal conversation. That is, communication moves back and forth between two or more people building on and adding to what has gone before. Not having ready access to this data source this form of communication has not been used.

3.9 Storing and categorizing the data

3.9.1) Storing the Data

Data collected has been stored either as handwritten notes, typed as notes using either Pages version 4.0.2, Microsoft ® Word & Excel 2004 for Mac, or Journler (Journal & activity record). The word processor of choice has been Pages version 4.0.2.

Under the terms of the guidelines from the University's Human Ethics Committee, all field note materials, whether hand written or in soft copy format are to be destroyed after five years from the time of completion of the research.

3.9.2) Categorizing the data

The aim of this section is to broadly outline how the field work data has been categorized. A detailed description of the process used for analyzing the data using the case study method and theme analysis is covered in more detail in the next section.

The first level of categorization involved the search and identification of patterns in the conversational content specifically related to Tuckman's stages of group development (Tuckman, 1965) and the Berger and Luckmann's four levels of legitimation (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). This sorting, comparing and searching for patterns was used to build the *Conversational Themes and Legitimation Model* (see chapter five). Similarly, the diagram linking stages of group development, levels of legitimation and change management conversational themes (see *figure 5:5)* has also been developed from this patterning process.

The second level of categorization involved the use of typed text file format field notes being coded based on their meaning, or coding chunks of data (Fetterman 1998: 97) using the HyperRESEARCH software version 2.8.2 (Creswell 2007: 163), a Mac compatible coding programme similar to the QSR NVivo software. Fourteen “open” codes (Lee 1999: 48) were placed in the software’s “coding list editor”. For each of the fourteen codes (see below) I developed a brief definition to ensure consistency of meaning when applying the codes. The codes and their definitions below relate to conversations around:

1. Goals or purpose (the object of a person or group’s ambition or effort; an aim or desired result, the reason for which something is done or created or for which something exists)

2. Roles or position (the function assumed or part played by a person in a particular situation, a person's place or rank in relation to others)

3. Behavioural norms or controls (the power to influence or direct people's behavior or the course of events, something that is usual, typical, or standard)

4. Resisting or opposing (withstand the action or effect of something or some one, disapprove of and attempt to prevent)

5. Supporting or agreeing (have the same opinion about something; concur)

6. Explaining (to make an idea, situation, or issue clear to someone by describing it in more detail or revealing relevant facts or ideas, an account for an action or event by giving a reason as an excuse or justification)

7. Justifying (show or prove to be right or reasonable)

8. Sense making (the attempt to make sense of an ambiguous situation. More exactly, sensemaking is the process of creating situational awareness and understanding in situations of high complexity or uncertainty in order to make decisions)

9. Negotiating (trying to reach an agreement or compromise by discussion with others)

10. Creating legitimacy (to make legitimate; justify or make lawful, create conditions for conformity to law or rules)

11. Claiming legitimacy (The focus of the conversation assuming something to be real or fact)

12. Non-Management personnel (rank-and-file, staff members, non-executive, staff)

13. Middle Management personnel (reporting to senior management, and supervising non-management personnel)

14. Senior Management personnel (those responsible for managing the business as agents of the shareholders)

The reason for creating these codes was to ascertain the degree to which each of the fourteen code headings appeared in the conversational content and to what degree did they contribute to the legitimation of views and process of change.

The third and final level of categorization relates to the template used for coding data for the case study and theme analysis side of the work (Creswell 2007: 172). Broadly the headings for this part of the categorization process were:

1. An in-depth portrait of the cases

2. Case context

3. Case description

4. Within and cross case theme analysis

5. Findings and Implications

3.10 Analytical methods and procedures:

The rational for using the case study method was provided in section 3.1. The procedures for two other supplementary methods used are also outlined. Whilst not a major contributor to the work the reason for deploying them was to provide additional insights into the topic and to provide a measure of triangulation to the study (Stake 1995: 112 - 116). The first supplementary method was an online questionnaire that solicited views about organizational change from one hundred and twelve respondents, and the second was a review of twenty five books offered by Amazon.com on organizational change presented in the form of a matrix.

3.10.1) Case study and theme analysis method

The case, spanning a two year period, involved people mainly from offices in Sydney, Hong Kong, Singapore, Shanghai and Beijing to allow for a level of comparison and contrast between various parts of the organization observed. The categories used for coding the data used in the case are briefly introduced in section 3.9.2 and will now be further elaborated on.

a) An in-depth portrait of the case

This includes basic background information and pertinent demographics about the organization including a brief history of the organization, its structure, service and product offerings and the challenges facing the organization (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001). The main events pertinent to the change initiative are presented in chronological order. In summary this section presents the uncontested facts about the case.

b) Case context

As several groups within the organization have been observed a description of these groups and the key actors within them are presented. I have also included detailed descriptions of the context to assist the reader with their understanding of the setting in which a particular conversation took place.

c) Case description

The case description is the verbatim documenting of various conversations observed or participated in. These conversations are presented as a series of vignettes. Keeping in mind that this thesis argues for the polyphonic nature of the social construction and legitimation of change the emphasis has been on the group's constructs and not on presenting an individual's perspective in isolation or as a privileged voice though in some cases I have presented views based on a one-on-one conversation.

In the company referenced to in the case English is the preferred language for business across the region. All the conversations observed and participated in were conducted in English. As many of the participants were not native English speakers I have where feasible recorded the conversation as given and have not tried to correct the grammar or sense of how something was said.

d) Within and across case theme analysis

Themes within the verbatim conversations were extracted based on Tuckman's four stages of group development (1964) and Berger and Luckmann's four levels of legitimation (1966). In identifying and looking for themes I have taken an interpretive approach accepting that conversation has a central role in the social construction of meaning (Heracleous, 2006) often spoken using metaphors, rhetoric, symbolism, and familiar theme based stories (Tsoukas, 1991, Jermier, 1998, Mazza, 1999, Hamilton, 2001, Heracleous and Barrett, 2001, Gibson and Zellmer-Bruhn, 2001, Tietze et al., 2003). I have also been aware that conversations are very much time-based and sequential in terms of chronological flow therefore they have been presented in the order they were observed. I used procedures common to story network analysis (Boje, 2001) to develop the *Conversational Themes and Legitimation Model* presented in chapter five and the subsequent stages of development of this model in that chapter have been based on the sociogram network display process (Boje 2001: 62-73) for description and understanding. This model has also been used to provide commentary to interpreting the case materials in chapter five.

The final procedure for analysis was to compare the outputs from the “within case theme analysis” for the nine conversations presented representing the development of the conversational content over a twenty nine month period to contrast and to identify similarities and or differences. The “within case theme analysis” for the nine conversations has been presented as a commentary beside each of the vignettes.

f) Findings and implications

The findings and implications are presented in detail in Chapter five and are used to present the *Conversational Themes and Legitimation Model* and my *Linking Stages of Group Development, Change Management Conversational Themes, and Levels of Legitimation* framework being the original contribution of this thesis to the literature on the topic.

3.10.2) An online questionnaire

As indicated earlier, to supplement the field work observations an online questionnaire was developed to solicited views about organizational change (see Appendix D). An invitation was sent to 302 people selected from over sixteen companies, from a cross range of industries, operating in the Asia Pacific Rim. There were 174 visits to the site, 112 completes and 27 partials. Partial responses have not been included. From the respondents who completed there were seven CEO’s, fifteen Directors (vice president, CFO, COO or CIO), twenty-five department heads, fifty managers, five supervisors / team leaders, and ten non-managerial staff.

The thirty two open ended and multiple choice questions presented related to:

a) Basic background information (title, years of service, levels of management between them and the senior management, number of people supervised, and their function).

b) A change initiative that they were a part of in their organization within the last 12 - 24 months (the main theme of that initiative, the goals of the initiative, how they were made aware of it, how involved they were in the informing process, how their manager, themselves, their colleagues and other work group members felt about the change initiative)

c) The content of discussion with others about the change initiative (content, positivity or negatively predisposed, who influenced their perspectives most about the change)

d) An evaluation of the current status of the change initiative (a success, to early to tell, not sure, or a failure)

e) Their views on what helped and what hindered and what they might do differently if they could do the initiative again.

As this questionnaire was only conducted to supplement the field work observations, results from the questionnaire have been used selectively.

3.11 Summary

The overriding consideration for selecting the methods and procedures used for this study has been determined by an interest in understanding *how* and in *what* ways ordinary and naturally occurring “conversations” contribute to the social construction and legitimation of change in an organizational setting, and how this may influence or impact on the likely outcome of a change initiative. Observing conversations first hand using direct observation, informal conversation (guided interviews), and participant observations has provided an open and less restrictive framework for carrying out the field work over a two year period. The analysis of the data collected has been done using case study and theme analysis procedures. Finally, the procedures for an online questionnaire that solicited views about organizational change from 114 respondents has also been provided.

Chapter Four: The Case - Asia Pacific Property Services

4.1 An introduction to Asia Pacific Property Services Inc (APPS[4])

This case relates to a change initiative in an Asia Pacific business of a global property service company listed on a major US stock exchange. From 2001 to 2007 the revenues of the Asia Pacific business grew 460% under the leadership of the Asia Pacific CEO who was appointed to the role early 2001. The revenue goals set for the following five years were just as ambitious. Much of the growth was driven off the back of bullish property markets and demand for commercial and industrial property solutions in Asia generally and China specifically.

APPS has approximately 2,500 employees in the eleven countries that make up the Asia Pacific business. Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand are considered to be mature markets and are well established with many mature and seasoned brokers and managers. Many of the company work practices are exported from Australia and New Zealand to the Asian parts of the business in a deliberate attempt to “share best practices”. To facilitate the sharing of the best practices a number of Australian and New Zealanders were given overseas postings around the region to assist in the management and development of the various Asian businesses related to the strategy.

The Asia Pacific regional Executive Board is made up of six people; the Asia Pacific CEO who reports to the World Wide Chairman / CEO in New York; the Chief Financial Officer, and the MD’s of Australia/ NZ, Greater China, Singapore, and Japan. The MD’s of Australia/ NZ, Greater China (PRC, HK, Taiwan), Singapore (includes India and South East Asia), and Japan (includes Korea) each run their part of the region as “hubs” and have their own senior management teams accountable for overseeing and dealing with the day-to-day operations of the business.

[4] All company and individual names have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the organization and people who participated in the various conversations.

That said, there are a number of “corporate” initiatives driven out of the CEO’s office such as universal branding standards, financial reporting and accountabilities, and CRM (Client Relationship Management). It is the later, CRM, that this case focuses on particularly related to the rollout of a CRM IT system and one of its applications called “Pass It On” (PIO), offering an IT based platform for managing referrals.

The formal governance of the regional business is administered through its various registered entities and their respective boards supported by another management group referred to formally as the “Leadership Forum”, and informally as the “Leadership Team”. The Leadership Forum is made up of the CEO, the CFO, and the regional Managing Directors of the various business lines (industrial, investments, valuations, property management, hotel and leisure, residential, corporate clients and commercial, and research). Some of the members on this forum are country MD’s but most are not.

Whilst many of the members in the Leadership Forum do not hold official Executive Director responsibilities, they are nevertheless a powerful group as all of them in their own right are well established, mature and seasoned property brokers that collectively account for the majority of the company’s revenue through the deals they structure around the region with large multi-national global clients. All the regional business line Managing Directors are based in Hong Kong, apart from the Industrial leasing and sales Managing Director who is based in Shanghai (also the Shanghai office Managing Director), and the Hotel and Leisure Managing Director who is based in Singapore (a life style choice when recruited).

As members of the Leadership Forum feature in this case each are briefly introduced in the tables below:

Name	Position	Biodata	Length in APPS
Brian	CEO	Australian, mid 50‘s, male	4 years
Dave	CFO	Australian, late 40’s, male	7 years

Name	Position	Biodata	Length in APPS
Mike	MD - Corporate Clients	English, mid to late 40‘s, male	12 years
Joe	MD - Valuations	Hong Kong Chinese, late 40’s, male	11 years
YK	MD - Investment	Hong Kong Chinese, early 40’s, male	5 years
Kenny	MD - Industrial	Australian, early 40’s, male	2 years
Steve	MD - Property Management	Australian, early 50’s, male	14 years
Rob	MD - Hotel and Leisure	English, late 50’s, male	1 year
TM	MD - Residential	Singaporean Chinese, mid 50’s	3 ½ years
Mac	Chief Economist - Research	(American, late 40’s, male	6 years

Two other key people, acknowledged as part of “senior management” also contribute to this case. They are:

Name	Position	Biodata	Length in APPS
Kate	Regional Manager Client Relationship Management	Australian - mid 30’s, female	4 years. Brought in by the CEO from his previous company
May	Asia HR Director	Hong Kong Chinese, early 40’s	4 years

The Executive Board and the Leadership Forum together form a matrix structure for overseeing and managing the business. This structure applies to all employees in the APPS. Everyone reports to a geographical Managing Director and a regional Product or Service Line Managing Director. Finance, Administration and country Human Resources all report to the regional Chief Financial Officer and the Country Finance Director. An anomaly to this is the Asia HR Director who reports directly to the CEO.

4.2 Case context

APPS represents the Asia Pacific arm of a large global property services organization head quartered in New York. APPS, along with the North American and European arm, differentiate themselves from smaller local property service providers by targeting and servicing other global, multinational (MNC's) and large regional organizations offering assistance with the acquisition or disposal, or the leasing or management of building assets on behalf of these clients. In order to provide a consistent level of service delivery and practice in any geographical location, an Account Manager is appointed to oversee the "client account" and to ensure the ongoing servicing of the client's property related needs are met to a high level of customer satisfaction.

The managing of these large accounts provides APPS with a regular revenue stream by way of the monthly account management fees paid for the services rendered. The sheer size of some of these global, multinational (MNC's) and large regional organizations with their geographical spread means that there may be anywhere from ten to forty other people across APPS who may be in daily contact with APPS's corporate clients servicing these client's local needs around the region. Successful account management is based on the ability of the service provider to identify and meet client needs quickly. Clients pay a premium for this level of service yielding good returns for APPS. The regular cash flow and attractive margins also create strong competition between rival property services businesses for these key accounts.

Traditionally, property services companies transacted business on the basis of strong personal relationships between the brokers and the client in a local setting. Business traditionally is conducted in a transactional manner. Simply, a fee is paid for each job as needs arise and are dealt with. The weakness of this transactional approach is threefold. First, management are unable to plan very far ahead as work is mostly transacted when it arises. Second, the focus on a local market means that a good relationship and service delivery is seldom exploited for the client's company in other parts of the region. And finally, the broker-client relationship which serves as the basic building block of the transactional approach does not require any degree of loyalty from a broker to any one property services company. Brokers tend to work for the organization that offers the best commission rate and terms of employment. If a broker leaves one property company then the client and all information about that client leaves with the broker when he or she joins another. These factors combined are generally recognized as limiting for the potential to grow a business and prevents it from capitalizing on the economies of scale that arise from regional or global accounts.

This basic business model began to change in the mid 1990's when many of the large global property services companies began to restructure their businesses moving away from the delivery of services being localized and transactional to being more global and sustainable. One main component contributing to the rethink of the basic business model was the emergence and popularity of client relationship management (CRM). CRM offered these organizations the philosophy, practices and platform to build the economies of scale needed through the volume of work contracted for when "locking" clients into a two to five year term contract thereby limiting the dependence on the fickleness of local personal relationships. It was CRM that APPS's CEO proposed as one of his principal planks for driving change through APPS regionally. APPS's official[5] definition of CRM is:

"Client Relationship Management is the process by which we use best practices and strategic planning to ensure we offer our clients the best possible service across our Asia business lines and offices. CRM maximizes the potential to retain clients which in turn maximizes our capacity for growth. CRM is a global

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[5] Taken directly from APPS's Client Management Intranet site with permission

initiative at APPS, emphasizing the fact that we all have a role to play and do not operate in a closed environment. The more we share information and relationships across departments and offices, cross- selling our services to clients, the better we perform as individuals and as a company".

Adopting CRM however also meant property services companies had to begin to build sophisticated information systems and other supporting practices to manage a greater degree of regional information about the client which then had to be shared across the whole company. Initial attempts to establish a CRM database focused on gathering basic demographic information about a client's organization. These initial databases recorded and stored vital information about the client's office addresses and contact numbers, key personnel, details of property assets owned or leased, fee schedules, critical dates for lease renewals or the renegotiation of contracts, and file notes recording important bits of information for reference for future users of the database. In summary, the first generation Client Relationship Database served more as a depositary of historic information, often recording an event after it happened.

It was between 2001 - 2003 that many global property services companies moved CRM to the next level of sophistication by developing web based interactive platforms where brokers could carry out their daily tasks and for senior management to track broker activity on a regular basis. Typically, a broker would launch his or her web browser to access the company's homepage. The homepage presented employees with a number of options for them to access, such as, a company news page, career opportunities, invites to company social events, access to the company client database, and access to the products, services and people in the other service lines within the company.

This case is presented as nine vignettes to chronicle the evolution of the CEO's attempts to change and grow the company using CRM and in particular one of the CRM IT system applications called "Pass It On" (PIO). The original purpose of the PIO initiative was to make it easier for brokers to share business leads with colleagues in other departments or geographical locations online thereby ensuring potential business opportunities were not lost to a competitor or passed over through complacency. APPS's official[6] definition of PIO is:

"Pass It On" is the custom-made APPS business referral website designed to enable the development and tracking of crucial cross-border business. It's a quick and simple system for sending referrals to colleagues in other departments or wholly-owned offices throughout Asia and the Pacific – increasing revenue for APPS and making it easy for you to earn referral fees and the chance to WIN HOLIDAYS every quarter".

The Pass It On initiative was developed in Sydney, Australia by Kate L, who was responsible for the development of a similar product for a competitor when she worked there with Brian R. before he took over the CEO role with APPS. Pass It On was developed over a period of approximately four months starting September 2004, and was first introduced and rolled out in Sydney Australia in February 2005. After that point it was progressively introduced around the group first in the rest of Australia and New Zealand, then to Hong Kong, Singapore, Greater China (PRC and Taiwan) and the rest of the Asian businesses (Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, etc).

Responsibility for the rolling out PIO and for providing training on how to use the new CRM system fell to Kate L. She reported on a day to day basis to the CFO who was responsible for APPS's IT function, and she also reported to the CEO who was the CRM initiative champion and sponsor.

What follows are the nine vignettes, along with reflective comments linking these utterances with Tuckman's stages of group development and the legitimating efforts of the speakers, reflecting how the CRM IT change initiative featured within the utterances of those situating the various settings showcased.

[6] Taken directly from APPS's Client Management Intranet site with permission

<u>4.3 Case description - The conversations</u>

4.3.1 Three months after the launch: A broker's view 18/07/2005 Sydney, Australia

Al: tell me about Pass It On..
Jennifer: Ahhh "Pass it on" it came out just over 3 months ago which is an initiative I guess to cross sell through the business, to try and get departments... different departments talking to each other, and actually getting more business through that, cause it is a very flat hierarchy it is very different to other large companies, but every one is very focused on what they do... and they don't seem to see the bigger picture, so it is a system where you can go on and basically click and quickly type in the detail, an e-mail log in regard to a lead
Al: Was it developed in Sydney?
Jennifer: I think it was, we actually didn't get much of the initial reason it was developed, we were told more that this is what is happening, and I know Kate because she does the CRM, obviously the IT guys have developed it all, but I assume Kate is where it came from, I just don't know to be honest…
Al: Why, in your view, does management feel there is a need for PIO?
Jennifer: Because they are very aware the company is losing a lot of business because people are not connecting on the different levels

Commentary

Jennifer's understanding of PIO is prefixed with "*I <u>guess</u>..*" The purpose is not entirely clear. Her opening statements show that three months in from the launch of PIO she is still trying to make sense of PIO in the forming, commencing conversational space, & level one legitimation stage.

On one hand she sees the initiative as intending to get "*different departments <u>talking</u> to each other*"…however on the other she describes it as a "*system where you can go on and basically click and <u>quickly type in</u> the detail"*. What she describes, getting departments talking with each other and a process that does not require personal, face-to-face contact with others, is a theme which reappears later which she uses as the basis to question the legitimacy of PIO (storming and confronting conversational space).

PIO was introduced using a PowerPoint presentation during a formal training session in the main board room lasting approximately 60 mins. Jennifer's comment "*we were <u>told</u>…*" reflects the monophonic approach used to introduce the initiative.

The legitimacy of the initiative is further undermined by her commenting on a level of confusion over the key people involved in the development of PIO *"I <u>know</u> Kate because she does the CRM, <u>obviously</u> the IT guys have developed it all, but <u>I assume</u> Kate is where it came from, <u>I just don't know</u> to be honest*".

Her understanding of management's view of the legitimacy of PIO is because:

1) *"the company is losing a lot of business"*
2) *"because people are not connecting"* and
3) "fees are being lost"

(level one legitimation)

because they might get .. I will use my self as an example because they might sell a building but there could be leasing potential and finance potential but they are very focused on their own job and what they are doing and they don't look at the benefits for the whole company so there are potential reasonable fees that are being lost just because of the lack of communication, which just goes on all the time through the company as a real problem…

Al: What, in your view, does management specifically hope to achieve with this initiative besides the passing on of information?

Jennifer: More money, dollars, more business, [laughter] I guess open more communication and getting different departments getting use to talking to each other and I guess feeling that it is not such a difficult thing, I guess it is a culture change ...everyone is used to doing their own thing and focusing on their own little bit and they are trying to change the culture to get it to be more open...more communicating...more flowing workplace

Al: How was PIO implemented? What specific steps or activities that took place? How did you find out about it?

Jennifer: OK myself personally, I know that a main problem with us coming to this business has been that people aren't communicating

Commentary

She reiterates her understanding of the legitimacy of PIO being *"money, dollars, more business...open communication...getting different departments... talking to each other"*

Her description of the company *"doing their <u>own</u> thing and focusing on their <u>own</u> little bit.."* is juxtaposed with the message management gave during the formal presentation introduction of PIO "*<u>they</u> are trying to change the culture to get it to be more open...more communicating...more flowing workplace*" (norming, conforming conversation space, level three legitimation)

The first time she heard about PIO was during a meeting with her boss. The boss must have presented PIO positively as reflected in her comment "*this <u>great</u> new initiative*"

A subsequent meeting was held with the designer of PIO, Kate, but again it appears it was only *"a bit of look into it"*. There is no suggestion here that Jennifer or her colleagues were engaged in a dialogue (polyphonic process) about their needs or challenges and how PIO might be designed around the user's input or requirements.

with us with regard to what is selling and what is going on …. so we were having a meeting with Steve E earlier in the year and told us about this great new initiative and to have a chat with Kate, it was not launched at that time but we had a look at it before it was actually launched so we got a bit of look into it, and then when it was launched they had everyone around the board room table for an hour and they had the projector and showed how it would work and what the benefits were
AI: Was it made clear to you how the change initiative would alter specifically your current role in any way, and if so, how?
Jennifer: It was going to specifically alter it in such a way as to hopefully to improve it ... because basically to get more referrals coming in and more enquiry to hopeful generate more deals at the end of the day which hopeful to make it easier for the individual agents to and what to do that rather than picking up the phone and making a call and a quick e-mail would be easier way to get it done and it wouldn't be such a big deal so…
AI: Was it made clear to you how the change initiative would alter your primary purpose or goals for you or your work group, and if so how?
Jennifer: No
AI: Was it made clear to you how the change initiative would alter the company policy, procedures or rules,

Commentary

Because there was little opportunity or space for commencing conversations to take place both with the designers of PIO, her boss and her colleagues (see next two pages), her role and that of her colleagues is still unclear "*hopefully generate more deals...and hopefully to make it easier for the individual agents..*"

Whilst she has emphasized a number of times the aim of PIO was to get different departments "*talking to each other more"* and to *"improve communication"*, she highlights the disconnect between what she understands the aim to be and how PIO actually works, that is via e-mail rather than "*picking up the phone and making a call*". "*Hopefully*" indicates her commencement of questioning the legitimacy for the initiative (storming and confronting conversation space).
She has now openly voiced her doubts over what is proposed and how it is to be implemented. Management's claims of legitimacy for the initiative is now being questioned.

Now she is more direct about her questioning of the legitimacy of PIO. Here she clearly and directly says "*no*" the goals for PIO were not clearly stated.

However, when discussing company policy and procedural issues (level two and level four legitimation) she waivers between her reservations about the legitimacy of PIO and the companies claim to its legitimacy "*I guess...it was expected that you would go into PIO and log it...rather than maybe picking up the phone...so they were trying to get people to use that system..*" However, there is still a level of personal uncertainty about the legitimacy of PIO. Legitimacy for PIO has definitely moved from being something her boss initially thought was "*great*" to "*they were trying to get people to use the system*". There is no "we", ownership or inclusion assumed in this utterance.

and if so how?

Jennifer: I guess… it was expected that… when you had a tentative deal for another department that you would go into Pass It On and log it in straight away rather than maybe just picking up the phone… so they were trying to get people to use that system straight away so yes.. that was when it was presented I guess ..when it was launched ..and any queries you go back to Kate and ask her… although saying that it is a bit strange because most people will still prefer to pick up the phone any way and call because it is actually easier to do it than actually go through a computer and five different sections so in a way… it has not actually made it any easier and people actually either go on to it once they have had communication and the deals ... and they think I.. we had better put it on PIO so anything actually hasn't…so this is just another thing to do..

Al: Was there any written procedure?

Jennifer: Like written on paper? No, all verbal

Al: Was it made clear to you how the change initiative would alter your existing behaviour or values, and if so how?

Jennifer: I guess even though I said they obviously wanted us to use it straight up when you had a deal it wasn't said you must do it this way they said this is a new way to do so they said this a tool to assist you and

Commentary

She now compares the current practice with that which PIO proposes and again questions the legitimacy of PIO "*although saying that <u>it is a bit strange</u> because <u>most people will still prefer to pick up the phone any way and call because it is actually easier</u> to do it than actually go through a computer and five different sections so in a way… <u>it has not actually made it any easie</u>*r"

Having questioned the legitimacy of PIO on the basis that the current method was seen to be 'easier" she now questions whether it was stated implicitly whether she actually had to use PIO "*even though I said they obviously wanted us to use it….<u>it wasn't said you must do it this way</u>"*.

As seen in this section, PIO was seldom talked about in formal management meetings except with the CEO. As will be seen later, this may reflect the lack of buy in for the initiative by other senior managers due to the rejection of the initiative initially by the brokers. PIO was clearly seen by other senior managers to be the CEO's initiative and "pet" project. Public support, a department head having it as an agenda item for discussion for example, or open criticism tended to be avoided. To be seen to be publicly supportive of a process that was privately ridiculed by many senior and respected brokers ran the risk of being seen to be "shining the bosses shoes" or "greasing up to the boss". Simply put, people in APPS during formal interactions rarely opened up a conversation about how they really felt about this initiative.

obviously they had these great prizes as well because if you got the most referrals volume or deal number out or in there because the agents are pretty slack generally…

Al: How often did you talk with management about the change initiative formally?

Jennifer: never

Al: Informally

Jennifer: not often..

Al: How often did you talk formally with your work group colleagues about the change initiative?

Jennifer: never

Al: Informally?

Jennifer: not often..

Al: How often did you talk with members of other work groups about the change initiative?

Jennifer: not often

Al: Do you think management feels the change initiative is a success or failure?

Jennifer: How would you know, I just don't know

Al: What about you? Do you feel the change initiative is a success or a failure?

Jennifer: Its not looking good... estate agents…is just the way they are.. and probably they are pretty arrogant and that is the way they are so they didn't want to push it on us by saying you must do this… but saying that I have sent out some and only received a couple of referrals from a guy ... but the one I have sent out… I have actually got a deal for a

Commentary

This lack of dialogue with senior management on the status of implementation of PIO is summed up in her comment *"I just don't know"*.

She now is open about the chances of PIO being embraced into the day-to-day fabric of organizational practice "*its <u>not</u> looking good*". Adding to her doubts the initiative might not be all that successful she states that brokers are "*pretty arrogant and that is the way they are <u>so they don't want to push it on us saying you must do this</u>..*" This is almost a statement of open defiance (storming, confronting conversation space, level two legitimation).

To give legitimacy to her position as a dissenter she relates a personal experience to explain how the system is flawed. She explains how she made a referral on PIO which was converted into a business opportunity even though the receiver of information did not use the system as designed *"I ... actually got a deal for a guy for new business and <u>he hasn't actually replied to my PIO e-mail</u> ….he actually has not done that yet"*

She raises further objection and another likely obstacle hindering the successful adoption of PIO when she says "*it just shows you <u>how difficult it is in this organisation</u> to actually get people to really think a little bit…*"

guy for new business and he hasn't actually replied to my PIO e-mail so…and that's a deal that has been done so I have spoken to the guy and we probably should do that and I still have got that …because all it is …because all you do is receive an e-mail and reply I have received that referral … and he hasn't even done that yet…it just shows you how difficult it is in this organisation to actually get people to really think a little bit...

AI: We are assuming this person has been through the same training?

Jennifer:…yes, yes, I think so… Kate went to every office I understand so every office has had the same communication.

AI: How did people above you respond or react to the change initiative when it was first introduced? What did they say about it?

Jennifer: Obviously they were very positive about it and tried to reinforce it and tried to say it was a tool that should be used to help business in the company and work flow and I guess generally backing up that it was a good system and that is was going help them with business and make everyone a lot more money and that was generally said after the presentation …. but really there has been nothing since then.. and also after the first quarter's just gone by and in fact the two winners were actually from ... property finance ... and no comment was made from any

Commentary

She mentions that senior management (no names) expressed strong support for the initiative when it was first introduced at the launch presentation *"Obviously they were <u>very positive</u> about it and tried to reinforce it and tried to say it was a tool that should be used <u>to help business</u> in the company and work flow and generally backing it up it was <u>a good system</u> and that <u>is was going to help with business</u> and <u>make everyone a lot more money</u>.."* The claim by senior management that PIO will "*<u>make everyone a lot more money</u>..*" is an appeal to the personal ambitions of all brokers which is make money. In a subtle way the claim seeks to blur the line between the business making more money (which is one of the main reasons PIO was introduced along with the intention to keep client related information with the company) and personal gain. How now could someone raise any opposition to PIO?

Because senior management and the PIO project team were operating from a top down monographical paradigm they did not engage the organization formally after the initial introduction in ongoing conversation through the various phases of development, conversational themes and legitimation. Her comment *"there has been nothing since then"* demonstrates how PIO has not been included in formal settings into the content of the regular conversational interaction between management and the brokers.

Further evidence that PIO for the local Sydney office management team held little relevance as an initiative is reflected in the comments that the team that qualified for the reward promised to those who use the system was completely ignored, "*<u>no comment was made from any of the head people</u> at all about it...it just goes to show how bad it is in the company..*".

Even though the immediate boss and senior management felt PIO was "*great*" and was endorsed publicly at the beginning, a degree of skepticism about the initiative when first heard is now stated... *"I was a little bit dubious"* and her reasons for this doubt is based on her belief that the well established practice of just picking up the phone to pass on a referral was better. The current practice is seen to be more legitimate.

of the head people at all about it which we sort of said Oh that's interesting which just shows you how bad it is in the company and how small our department is and where we got the two referrals and then there was no I guess follow up from management at that stage there was none of that and we thought oh that's interesting

Al: How did you respond or react to the change initiative when it was first introduced?

Jennifer: I was a little bit dubious,...

Al: Why?

Jennifer: ... because I felt that it wasn't easy, I didn't think it was necessarily easier than picking up the phone. I thought that it was a good idea and I was interested to see how it would go but there is probably 5 or 6 stages you got to go through to complete the process so you actually have got to go back in to update it and say you have accepted and then it is proceeding … active, proceeding and completed so we are looking at all those stages and these guys can't even pick up the phone and call, how are they going to get through these…go and do all these five stages, put in comments actually do stuff so ... to me it actually makes it…it didn't seem to make it that much easier. For me it is not easy because I have gone through the process but the two deals in the entire company that is actually done ...its not looking good...

Commentary

Having started the conversation exploring commencing conversation space she has now moved completely into confronting conversational space. She does not hesitate to declare her view that the initiative is unworkable. Whatever reasons at first were thought to give PIO legitimacy (money, make deals, improve communication) have now been discarded due to her giving voice to her concerns and the apparent lack of relevance to current practices and group norms...*"but there is probably 5 or 6 stages you got to go through to complete the process…. you actually have got to go back in to update it and say you have accepted and then ... so we are looking at all those stages <u>and these guys can't even pick up the phone and call, how are they going to get through these......its not looking good…</u>*"

In the same week I spoke with with Jennifer I spoke with nineteen other people in the Sydney office and all of them had a similar story to tell.

4.3.2 Six months in: The CEO and senior management's views 6/12/2005 HQ, Hong Kong.

(A leadership forum meeting)

Brian: One of the things I need you blokes to hammer home is CRM and in particular "pass it on"...you're the guys that have to set the example ….where's it up to now? ..that's what I want to know and how much are you guys pushing this...we are still losing a lot of business opportunities just because every time a broker closes a deal and forgets to ask if...if there are other deals… what else can we do to help?… its simple really...not too difficult at all...

Mike: You're right but what tends to happen is those who do create referrals do so because that's what they do anyway..they just pass them on...so folk never seem to care about helping other divisions...

Brian: Yes true some do, a lot bloody well don't and in my opinion a lot of business opportunities are lost… fruit for the picking rotting on the ground… funk'n waste...

Mike: I don't think that's going to change though..even with all the pushing..some seem to do the right things some...

Brian: I think the thing we need to do is encourage people to record transactions that way we can see just who is doing this and who isn't.. we had a pretty good system at CP ... when I worked there that

Commentary

The CEO is trying here to engage his management team in a conforming conversation "*one of the things I need you blokes to hammer home is CRM…".* He makes reference to the lost *"business opportunities*" to legitimize his challenge for his management team to do more to get CRM and PIO adopted as standard practice in APPS. The ultimate aim is to have PIO fully legitimated and assimilated into institutional fabric of the organization (performing, coalescing conversation space and level four legitimation)

From his perspective he sees PIO as "*simple really...not too difficult at all".*

Easing into a confrontational conversation, Mike begins by agreeing with Brian *"you're right..<u>but</u>".* The "but" then is used to raise concerns by making reference to what is seen to be current workplace realities "*those who do create referrals do so because that's what they do anyway...folk never seem to care about helping other divisions"*

Brian, is currently occupying conforming conversational space, is not drawn into the confrontational conversation Mike is starting. Instead he makes reference again to the potential rewards from using CRM "*fruit for the picking rotting on the ground...funk'n waste"*

Mike tries to engage again in a confrontational conversation but before he has a chance to present any of his reasons Brian moves the conversation to where he started the exchange which is to get his management team dialoging around conforming issues. *"I think <u>the thing we need to do</u> is <u>encourage people</u> to record transactions that way we can see just who is doing this and who isn't".* He legitimizes this practice by making reference to the success of a similar scheme used in his previous company (level three legitimation) *"we had <u>a pretty good system</u> at CP ... when I worked there <u>that seemed to work</u>".*

seemed to work..not perfect but at least it gave us a bit of a clue on who was doing this and who wasn't

Joe: In my mind that's not ...umm… you know.. that's not going to be easy...

Mike: He has a point but I agree we could do more to capture the information we have… it also links with the loss of information that happens..all too often really..when a broker quits on us.. so much walks out of the door

Joe: We have to limit that loss though and maybe...but the problem as I see it is…

Brian: Well Kate's been on this thing long enough… more people should be using the "pass it on" programme..they just got to ask 2 fuck'n simple questions of a client then stick it in the programme..… we need to get a lot smarter about how we manage our clients...I mean a lot of stupid wasted effort goes into having several people from different parts of our business call on the same people in the client's business..they must get really pissed off with this... and it makes us look fuck'n stupid at the same time..

Mike: As far as I know we manage our main accounts pretty well...we are...

Brian: I don't agree with that statement at all.. just last week I was with Bill G from Apex Bank and he grizzled and bitched about all the fuck'n calls he had to deal with from

Commentary

Joe seems to ignore Brian's comments completely and joins the confrontational conversation that Mike has initiated *"that's not going to be easy…".*

Mike, not having been given a chance to voice his concerns with PIO tentatively enters the conforming conversation with Brian *"I agree we could do more to capture the information we have…so much walks out the door"*

Joe, still operating in confrontational conversational space, agrees with Mike and attempts to open the discussion up again for debate *"<u>but</u> the problem as I see it is..."* He does not get the chance to complete his sentence as Brian cuts him off. Brian again stresses the need for "*<u>more</u> people"* to be using PIO and again makes reference to what he sees as the simplicity of the system. Brian makes it clear there will be no further opportunity in this exchange to move the conversation into confrontational space.

Brian emphasizes again the legitimacy of the initiative by highlighting the way forward and linking it with the client *"we need to <u>get a lot smarter</u> about how we manage our clients...I mean a lot of stupid <u>wasted effort</u> goes into having several people from different parts of our business call on the same people in the <u>client's</u> business… they <u>must get pissed off with this</u>"*

our blokes..this sort of thing really ticks these sort of bastards off...

Mike: Yeah but the problem is that it is every man and his dog is after the buck...everyone goes for what he can get..time is limited...some feel they don't have time to do "pass it on".

Brian: Don't go there again, Christ, I thought we dealt with that years ago! when someone says they don't have time to help a client then they should be shown the door...they've picked the wrong company..

Dave: Mike has a point though Brian and maybe its time we opened this up again for discussion..let's face it you want to change the way the brokers behave you're gonna have to look at other things that work against a system like this anyway. People will only do what they are rewarded on..

Brian: Yeah!..but if we look at things like fee sharing again then some of you are going to have to be willing to take some big hits on what you take from the business..are you prepared for that?

Mike: The problem actually, the root of the problem goes much further than fee sharing and P&L its…

Brian: Don't make this thing complicated guys.. we have to just push the system and tell everyone to get on with it.. that's it..period!..I don't want wasted opportunities going down the toilet.…

Mike: I don't think it will be that…

Commentary

Mike takes offense at Brian's comments on the way client accounts are managed (confronting), however Brian, still not willing to enter into the confronting conversation that Mike and Joe have tried to initiate, again tries to close further debate by relating an experience he had the previous week with a client (level two legitimation) *"he grizzled and bitched about all the fuck'n calls he had to deal with from our blokes..this sort of thing really ticks these sort of bastards off"*

Mike continues to voice his discontent with PIO hinting that the real issue is the time pressure brokers are under. *"Yeah but the problem is that it is every man and his dog is after the buck...everyone goes for what he can get..time is limited...some feel they don't have time to do "pass it on".* Mike is not as bold as to openly claim he personally opposes PIO, rather he makes reference to "*some…*"

Brian's response to Mike's comment is to reference an earlier conversation where it was made explicit that the client should be the core of everything a broker does and for all APPS employees to follow (performing, coalescing conversational space, level four legitimation). Brian emphasizes the importance of this by being explicit about the consequences if not complied with, "*they should be shown the door...they've picked the wrong company..".*

Dave, the CFO, now enters the conversation and invites Brian to open a dialogue in confronting conversation space *"Mike has a point though Brian and maybe its time we opened this up again for discussion".* He makes a reference to changing the way brokers behave (Brian's earlier comment) and suggests they look at other things that work against the PIO system. He begins to comment on how people are motivated by what they are rewarded on but is interrupted by Brian.

Brian challenges this line of thought by suggesting the remuneration of those sitting around the table could be adversely affected if this line of discussion is continued. There has long been an issue with the commission based remuneration scheme which Brian has previously raised as something that may be reviewed and changed. Mike tries to deflect this line of reasoning by suggesting the issue is even deeper, but again he is prevented from finishing.

Brian: If they don't want to get with the programme they can fox trot oscar..for Christ's sake we don't run some funk'n charity here.. you guys are just too soft sometimes.... we need Kate to get around all the offices and show them what "pass it on" will do...there are a lot of benefits for all…most importantly the client...I'm just sick and tied of covering the same ground again and again when we get to this sort of topic….come on guys….time to get with the programme….

Joe: can we at least have...comment on the programme?...where it is working and not..

Mike: we should do...but we have to be open and honest about this!

Brian: Of course... I'm not that much of a bastard…. but we need to get people moving with this programme… its good for clients, its good for business...its must be good for the brokers too... I don't want this initiative to be just another frigg'n talk fest thanks…..

Al: Maybe I should have a chat with Kate if you thought it worthwhile...I might be able to see if there is anything I can do to help...

Brian: I think that would be a good idea...you can help her structure up what she needs to do to move things to the next level..it will mean more resources so we will have to fly this past the Board again too..sure to need some more investment for this as she rolls it out so we'll have to run it past them to open the purse strings… tight bastards….ok enough

Commentary

Brian suggests his colleagues are making things complicated and uses this argument bringing the focus back to the conforming conversation "*we have to just push the system and tell everyone to get on with it.. that's it..period!"* Again he legitimizes his stance by making reference to PIO helping to avoid "*wasted opportunities.."*

Mike attempts again to confront but again he is stopped. Brian makes a strong call for conformity with a veiled threat to any one harboring any form of opposition to CRM and the intentions of the PIO initiative *"If they don't want to get with the programme they can fox trot oscar...come on guys...time to get with the programme"*

Joe and Mike make one last bid to draw Brian into the confronting conversation space, and even though Brian says "*of course"* to Joe's plea to comment on the programme, Brian is determined to stay with the conforming conversation and makes his position again very clear *"but we need to get people moving with this programme… its good for clients, its good for business...its must be good for the brokers too... I don't want this initiative to be just another frigg'n talk fest thanks….."* Again he legitimizes his position with reference to the benefits of PIO for the clients, the business and the brokers.

Brian focuses on getting more structure in the rollout process "*to move things to the next level"* with his intentions to present a request for more funding to the Board. The reference to the Board is another way of giving the PIO rollout and initiative more legitimacy (level two legitimation).

4.3.3 A senior manager's view 6 Dec 2005

(Same day walking out of the meeting with Mike back to his office)

Mike: You must think us amateurish when you see these sort of meetings?
Al: no not really, there are some strong views there..besides...every company is different so I don't expect to see the same thing from place to place...why do you say that anyway?
Mike: Brian can fall off his bloody tree sometimes when he gets on to his CRM mantra…I know he means well and frankly we do need to be more systematic in the way we capture information and share it around the region but the frustration is ...its the brokers themselves who are not IT savvy… they are deal makers..our real challenge is changing their behaviour and to do that we have to change quite a number of other things too…Brian means well but...ahh I shouldn't go there
Al: its ok...
Mike: the brokers just are too busy to use "pass it on" and they are out there chasing their own buck..do you think they are going to want to sit in front of some computer screen and record everything… if you want to really change the way we do things change how we reward and report results...the problem is that some of the big earners like YK work on their own on a deal which can take them months to secure then once its

Commentary

Mike's opens a commencing conversation with *"you must think us amateurish"* to sound out my position and views on what was just witnessed.

He receives reassurance that it is OK to talk about these things and responds to the invitation "*why do you say that anyway?"* by moving quickly into confronting conversation space.

First, he expresses anger at Brian's stubbornness "*Brian can fall off his bloody tree sometimes when he gets on to <u>his</u> CRM mantra"*. By calling it *"<u>his</u> CRM"* he implies CRM is not yet embraced fully by himself or the organization as a whole (coalescing conversational space and level four legitimation). He does however agree wholeheartedly with the importance of being systematic to capture and share client related information (conforming) but raises concerns about the brokers acceptance of IT as the method for bring about this change "*its the brokers themselves who are not IT savvy"* (confronting). He raises other issues that he thinks contributes to the broker's current attitudes and behaviour, namely, the current priority on the use of time, the way brokers are remunerated, and the emphasis during management meetings on the achievement of revenue targets.

He highlights how PIO does not apply to all departments *"some of the big earners like YK <u>work on their own</u> on a deal which can take them months to secure then once its closed they walk away with zillions! ..<u>they don't have to work with other departments</u> the way <u>we</u> do ...*". Mike makes the accusation that the special exemption for YK is based on his previous relationship with Brian "*Brian use to work with YK in CP so he gets <u>the mates</u> treatment if you know what I mean".* The reference to PIO not applying to all departments and the "mates treatment" are attempts to give legitimacy to his reservations about PIO.

closed they walk away with zillions! ..they don't have to work with other departments the way we do in leasing so "pass it on" means nothing to those guys and the young brokers look up to them..... Brian use to work with YK in CP so he gets the mates treatment if you know what I mean….anyway…..he'll have his way, since he's taken the helm he's pretty much got what he wants...mostly good stuff too of course..just sometimes he can be a bit deaf to feedback from some of us old hands ...

Commentary

It should be noted that in the previous meeting YK, who was in attendance, said nothing when PIO was being discussed. The topic had little or no relevance to him but even his silence is viewed by others (Mike for example) that he is included in the discussion and siding with Brian.

Mike finishes the conversation by accepting that PIO will eventually become the norm for APPS "*he'll have his way, since he's taken the helm he's pretty much got what he wants...mostly good stuff too of course".* However, underlying his frustration and his hesitancy to enter conforming conversation space is the lack of a formal forum to air his concerns (Storming, confronting conversation space, level two legitimation).

4.3.4 Nine months in: More brokers' views 1st March 2006

(A conversation between six of Mike's team members who are part of a breakout group at an annual Corporate Clients conference in KL, Malaysia).

TC: (standing by a flip chart as scribe and facilitator) OK let's talk about CRM and PIO… who wants to start? (silence for a few seconds) come on its not that bad..the system is working a lot better now...
Alvin: yeah right....
TC: don't be like that…..its not that bad...
Goh: its not that good either... just...last week I went onto the system and it would not let me log on!..
Alvin: lucky you…

Commentary

TC, who is in a power position as facilitator, shows tentative support for CRM & PIO (conforming conversation space)"*come on its not that bad..the system is working a lot better now"*. He has been tasked to lead the group in a discussion to identify ways to get the system adopted more widely. The group's initial silence indicates the sensitivities related to declaring in front of others whether you are a supporter or resister of the CRM IT system.

Alvin is the first to speak to declare his lack of support for the system "*yeah right"* which is given in a derogatory manner (confronting).
TC who is tasked with producing an output from the group tries to focus Alvin and the group on this, by saying "*don't be like that...its not that bad"* The comment *"its not that bad"* suggests TC has some reservations about the system but he is putting these aside for the time being to help the group complete the task.
Goh declares his opposition to the system by saying *"it is not that good"* and relates a personal experience with the system. TC points out that the system did not work because Goh was not using it properly. "*have you updated your user code?*

TC: have you updated your users pass code?

Goh: what up date? a new pass code? oh

TC: don't you guys read your e-mails? Kate sent out an e-mail Monday or Tuesday last week…

Roy: yeah it works fine now (nudging Goh)

Alvin: I'm still not sure its what it is all that its cracked up to be..I'm still just picking up the phone..

Roy: yeah like when?

Alvin: when I have too….

TC: Ok Ok back to what we have to do here and we only have another 15 minutes… what's some ideas on how we can get better use out of our CRM database and to get more people using PIO?

Anin: I think we still need some more training on how to use it… I get a bit confused with all the fields you have to fill in...

Alvin:….yeah bring Kate up...I want to see Kate again

Roy: pervert…

Powan: in my office we use the CRM database all the time and its really helpful ...we are getting more ideas on how to help our clients..you know how much business comes from this one or that….

Alvin: yeah but are you guys hitting your targets? No.. that's because you're stuck behind the screen all the time…

Powan: for your information we are hitting our targets and we only get to use the computers first thing in the morning for about an hour and again at the end of the day… it works fine

Commentary

TC uses Goh's example to challenge the group suggesting the system is only good if instructions are followed and not ignored (conforming conversation), which is what is implied by TC's challenge "*don't you guys read your e-mails*".
Roy indicates he does read his e-mails and voices support for the system declaring *"yeah it works fine now" (*conforming*).*
Alvin hearing support being voiced for the system makes reference to the old practice of "*just picking up the phone".* This phrase is used repeatedly by those who express opposition to the CRM IT system.
Roy challenges Alvin's claim by saying "*like when?"* As far as Roy is concerned there is no evidence to back Alvin's statement (confronting conversation).

TC sensing the growing tension pulls the group back to the task at hand. By doing so he closes off the confronting conversation and invites the group to move into conforming conversational space again.

Anin requests more training to help her and her colleagues in Indonesia to overcome their confusion about how to use the system.

Alvin, who does not want to particularly move into conforming conversation space tries to make light of the request with a sexist orientated comment, presented by him as a joke, implying the only reason he would want training is to see the trainer. The content of the training by implication is discounted.
Roy who has already challenged Alvin once before challenges Alvin's cynical comment by calling him a pervert.

As more people are voicing a level of support for the system Powan from the Bangkok office adds his voice to the conforming conversation saying "*we use the (system) all the time and its really helpful"*

Alvin, who is still occupying confrontational conversation space tries to challenge the benefits of the system claimed by Powan. To do this he makes reference to being "*stuck behind the screen all the time"* which is another regular theme used by those opposing the CRM IT system.
Powan is quick to legitimize his comments by stating clearly he and his colleagues are performing and explains the guidelines used in his office to avoid spending too much time at the desk rather than being in front of clients. (conforming conversation space)

for us..

Alvin: yeah well in our office we think it is a waste of time… besides what business are we going to get from you guys anyway? (pointing at Powan from Thailand)

TC: That's only part of the aim of the CRM database Alvin…the reality is that a number of your bigger clients operate overseas so you should be using it for passing information on about what you know about your clients...

Goh: I think what would be helpful is if the system had some way of tracking the progress of business in the pipeline.. and referral fees too

Roy: yeah that would be good… also it needs more space to type in your notes..I find that you can only write so much before you hit the limit..

Alvin: what are you guys writing in there anyway!… I think it would be better if they just scrapped the stupid thing…

TC: Alvin...whether you like it or not you have to use it… it will help make our client management more consistent across the whole company and it will improve the referral success rate...

Alvin: as my boss says these IT type initiatives cost us big! ….all these type of projects...IT type projects...end up costing more than we bargain for...and all the other things going on around the region is really overcomplicating things ....in Sing we try to keep it simple...this is not a difficult business… its a relationship business...you just need to pick up the phone if you've got a

Commentary

Alvin now states very openly "*in our office we think it is a waste of time*". By stating "our" and "we" he suggests opposition to the CRM system is wide spread. To legitimize his position he challenges Powan on the lack of referrals coming to Singapore from Thailand.

TC pushes back on Alvin's comment and reminds him that this is a two way process, "*you should be using it for passing information on about what you know about your clients"*

Both Goh and Roy make some practical suggestions for improving the system suggesting they have fully entered into the conforming conversation space.

Alvin is still occupying confrontational conversation space but as no one else is conversing in this space his ideas are not advanced.

TC now openly challenges Alvin to conform "*whether you like it or not you have to use it".* He legitimizes this position by stating "*it will make our client management more consistent across the whole company.."* By calling it "our" client management he is identifying positively and publicly with the corporate initiative (verging into coalescing conversation space).

Alvin again seeks to legitimize his opposition by stating his boss is also opposed to the system (second level legitimation). He uses another much used theme by those who oppose the system *"this is not a difficult business...its a relationship business..."* The inference is that brokerage work is a person to person process and formal systems, especially IT systems, are a barrier to carrying out business on a personal level. Alvin completely withdraws from the conversation to use his blackberry.

TC attempts to remove the tension Alvin has created by comparing the different stages of maturity that exist between the different offices.

referral… that's what we do if we have a lead….ah well its not our money…(picks up his blackberry and begins reading it)

TC: you guys have a much more mature business than most of the other regions...and maybe you guys have stronger relationships with your clients but in the rest of the region where things are expanding so fast we need systems like this CRM database and PIO to help with our growth…

Roy: it works well for us..sure there are a few glitches but mainly its fine..

Powan: its fine for me too…

Anin: if we can have some more training it would help

TC: yeap noted Anin.. let's summarize then.. there are three things we can ask for some improvement on...a tracking aspect...more space for typing in notes and some training for the Jakarta team..or is that more generally for others too? I know we could do with some more in HK as we've had a lot more new people join..anywhere else? (silence), nope OK let's head back to the main conference room then.

(Alvin, still working on his blackberry, stays behind while the others leave the room)

Commentary

TC is now openly supportive of the system in this group situation, and in his role as facilitator he endorses the company position "*we are expanding so fast we need systems like this…" (*Now moving towards performing and coalescing conversational space).

Both Roy and Powan voice their support of TC's summary on the legitimacy of the system to help with the regional expansion "*mainly its fine"* and "*its fine for me too*.

TC closes out the meeting by summarizing the recommendations for improvement.

Alvin, who has at no point joined the conforming conversation which dominated the group session has completely detached himself from identification with the group. He remains behind in the room while the other members exit. Goh, who initially voiced opposition to the CRM system and who is also from Singapore, leaves with the group rather than staying behind with Alvin.

4.3.5 Twelve months in: Back to the leadership forum 12th June 2006

(An overheard conversation in the main conference room waiting for the CEO to arrive and to start a leadership forum meeting)

Commentary

Steve starts a bit of informal banter with his peers calling an agenda item on CRM *"Kate's project"*. Rather than openly state it is *"the CEO's pet project"* which Joe makes a reference to, Steve is attempting to give voice to the reservations still held by many on the leadership forum. Implementation and functional issues have never been openly aired at this level. Brian's lack of willingness to enter into any meaningful confronting conversations, and his intolerance towards dissension about CRM/PIO has meant no one has voiced opposition during the leadership forum meetings.

Steve: ...I see there is another agenda item today to discuss Kate's project…

Joe: well its not really Kate's project...

Steve: yeah I know but you know what I mean...its ...

Mike: yeap… the black hole…

Steve: do you guys really get the value from REDB[7]? I can tell you we've had to invest a lot more to get our facilities management software to interface with it…

Joe: it depends who is using it…

Mike: and who you speak to...

Joe: best to be on the good side when the big fella is about...

Mike: in fairness we have been pushing it (in corporate clients division) a bit and when people use it properly it does seem to do what its suppose to do...the problem is getting everyone to use it …

Steve: yeah once they got the facilities management model to interface it seemed Ok but … we don't get any referrals from you guys (laughter)

Joe: my guys just don't like it ...and I don't really blame them..even I still find it complex… and in Vals we are pretty computer savvy…

Steve: nurds you mean...

Mike: yeah like I said... I just can't get everyone in my team behind it… I've tried...I still think it wasn't initially set up right...

Joe: yeah but who was it designed for anyway…

Mike: Steve how much did you guys

Commentary

Mike's comment "*the black hole"* is reference to concerns held by many about the true cost of implementing a regional wide comprehensive CRM IT system. Privately many have concerns whether the return of investment will match the proposed benefits from implementing such a system.

Joe's comment "*best to be on the good side when the big fella is about.."* is a reminder that the leadership forum is not the place to publicly question or challenge the CRM IT system.

Mike comments that he has been asking his team to use the system, but by saying "*we have been pushing it"* he is not declaring personal ownership and support for the CRM IT system. He gives tentative voice to support the system when he says "*it does seem to do what its suppose to do"* But states there are problems "*getting everyone to use it".*

Steve endorses Mike's comment and makes a joke there are no referrals for facilities management. Traditionally, referrals usually come from FM to the leasing or sales agents and not the other way round. Steve is stating the obvious.

Joe states stronger concerns and opposition on behalf of his team and himself. He legitimizes his view of dislike for the system calling it *"complex… and in Vals we are pretty computer savvy"* indicating that even for people who are conversant with computer use the system is seen to be complicated for users.

Mike agrees with Joe and suggests the real issue is the way the system was developed from the beginning "*I still think it wasn't set initially set up right…"*

Joe adds to the discussion about the initial design asking *"who was it designed for anyway?"* questioning the legitimacy of the grounds for the CRM IT system.

To this point there has been an informal confronting conversation about the CRM IT system, but Kenny, who was recruited into APPS by Brian, expresses strong support for the system.

[7] REDB "Real Estate DataBase" the official IT name given to the CRM IT system after it was integrated with other APPS databases.

have to invest to integrate?…

Kenny: you blokes banging on about CRM again?… we use it mostly in our neck of the woods[8] but like you say Mike not all product lines are behind it...personally I like it...I can see exactly whose doing what and when… helps me for sure...I've told my guys they have to use it…

Mike: I've done the same but some of my guys are a bit more stropy than your guys Kenny…and being ...

Kenny: you mean my guys are smarter (laughter)

Commentary

Kenny is very loyal to Brian and both worked together in a previous company. Both Brian and Kenny, and their families, have been known to socialize regularly. Kenny echos Brian's approach to get the CRM IT system used by all when he comments *"I've told my guys they have to use it…"*(conforming)

Mike indicates that his attempts at "telling" his team to use the CRM IT system have not been as productive claiming "*my guys are a bit more stropy than your(s)".* Mike of course is not as completely supportive and convinced of the benefits of the system as Kenny is. Kenny's clear rebuke "*you guys banging on about CRM again"* and his strong support of Brian's initiative prevent the conversation going further.

4.3.6 Fifteen months in: Kate's view 20th Sept 2006

(A casual conversation during lunch break)

Al: I'm interested to hear how the CRM project is going...how is it all working out for you...it must be over a year now your've been rolling this out..

Kate: more than that Alan...its nearly a year and a half...and its going really well…Dave has been so supportive too...he's always made sure we've had the financial support...and you know Brian is pretty passionate about it all...and he has every reason to be…

Al: do you get much feedback about it? you know from the users

Kate: to be honest Alan we hear only good things...its been a big job getting around all the offices in Australia and Asia and with all the expansion its been hectic...I think

Commentary

I lead into the conversation with an invite to Kate's to share her views about the CRM IT system rollout.

Kate corrects me on the length of time the project has been underway "*eighteen months"* which is in fact three months longer than it actually was to this point in time. She gives legitimacy to the project by commenting on the endorsement for it from her bosses, the CFO, "*Dave has been so supportive too...he's always made sure we've had the financial support"* and the CEO "*and you know Brian is pretty passionate about it".*

When asked if she gets any feedback from the users she states *"to be honest Alan we hear only good things"* but does not elaborate on specifics other than to state its *"been a big job getting around all the offices..."*

[8] Shanghai

people really appreciate me taking the time to show them how to use it...we are getting more and more people using it now…

Al: I understand some product groups find it a bit difficult to use though

Kate: no its more some don't take the time to really understand how to use it..you know what these people can be like Alan...real cowboys!...I find the ones who really take the time to get to know the system use it best and they get a lot of benefit from using it too...I do get e-mails from people saying they enjoyed the training...Brian is really good too because he is always making people aware that this is important...I get a lot of support from him...its also great working closely with the Hong Kong Corporate Communications team too...I think people are getting use to seeing the head office team having more of an impact on the business...Shirley has been spending a lot of time in Japan since Brian and Dave have been involved in buying a business there…but she is really good though...as is Tom… he's really good with the IT side...we've got a really busy year ahead...I will be in China for about two months...next year…

Al: are you the only one doing the training and selling of the programme..

Kate: well no not really...Shirley does a lot with promoting it in the regular company newsletter and Tom helps with the IT support side...and like I say its high up on Brian's agenda

Commentary

She is self congratulatory when she comments *"I think people really appreciated me taking the time to show them how to use it.."*

She comments that *"more and more people are using it now"* which would indicate there was a recognition that it was at one point not as well supported as intended.

I proceed to present some of the concerns I've heard others raise about the system but rather than being willing to explore what these issues might be Kate places any inadequacies of the system on the users "*no its more some don't take the time to really understand how to use it"* and then labels these people with a derogatory stereotype "*real cowboys".*

She makes the claim that those who *"really take the time to get to know the system use it best and they get a lot of benefit from using it.."* She legitimizes this claim by stating she gets "*e-mails from people saying they enjoyed the training".* Here she confuses feedback on the training with the system itself. Again she makes reference to the CEO to give legitimacy to the work she is involved in "*Brian is really good too because he is always making people aware that this is important".* She legitimizes the project further by mentioning the support she gets from the Corporate Communications team and her view that "*people are getting used to seeing the head office team having more of an impact on the business…"*

She appears to be oblivious to the reservations and opposition towards the CRM IT system.

She makes favorable comments on some of the other individual contributors such as Shirley with Corporate Communications who reports directly to the CEO, and Tom the IT developer with the Client Relationship Team that Kate is part of.

Kate seems to be assuming that CRM IT system is accepted broadly across APPS (coalescing conversation space and legitimation level four) again giving legitimacy to the initiative by stating *"and like I say its high up on Brian's agenda"* even though she still has a lot more training to deliver (two months in China) due to the influx of new people with the expansion there. Apart from the training the initiative is given additional legitimacy by being featured in the *"regular company newsletter".*

4.3.7 Eighteen months in: Support function views 1st Dec 2006

(A meeting with the Greater China HR Director and her training manager discussing training requirements for the coming year)

Al: it looks like you've got quite a lot scheduled then…

May: most of the training requirements focus on getting the newer brokers up to speed..China especially is growing so fast..

Al: what about CRM? How are you going to support that?

May: Ahh.. I am glad we got on to that… the way it is at the moment... the whole thing is seen to be a bit of a joke… I mean most people just have no idea what it is really about.. its not that people don't know.. its just that it is confusing…

Al: how so?

May: they say it doesn't really fit into...what they do...there are a number of serious conflicting aspects to the way the business talks about CRM...and the way people are held accountable for results...you know hitting targets is really what's seen as important around here…

Joanna: we did some CRM workshops about five months ago when Kate was up but the feedback on the programme was not good..

May: Joanna is right… a lot of the brokers complained that the system was too complicated...I mean they said the idea of CRM itself makes sense but the way they have to record everything in the CRM

Commentary

The Greater China HR Director acknowledges the challenges of training and equipping the growing ranks of new hires that has come about with the rapid opening of new offices in the PRC.

I ask how CRM training will be factored in to the overall development plan for the coming year.

Having worked closely with May over the previous eighteen months she is quick to open up to share her opinions *"ahh.. I am glad we got onto that*". The "*ahh*" signals concerns.

She echos comments to often heard that the system *"as it is at the moment...<u>is</u> <u>confusing</u>".* She gives voice to the adverse feedback she hears about the CRM IT system by summarizing the general attitude towards it as "*the whole thing is <u>seen to be</u> a bit of <u>a joke</u>.."*

She mentions that a prevailing view is "*that it <u>doesn't fit</u> into..what they do…(*and that there are*) a number of serious <u>conflicting</u> <u>aspects</u>".* She then makes a stronger link to the points of conflict relating it to "*the way people are held accountable for results"* This is a direct reference to the supreme importance of achieving revenue targets with little regard to how the targets are achieved. Those not reaching targets can lose their jobs. (The bottom 10% performers are removed every year).

To support May's comments Joanna mentions that the feedback after the training conducted by Kate *"was not good".*

database and all the other things they have to do takes up far too much time...really brokers on the whole just take the business when it comes to them...they just aren't going to fluff around trying to build a relationship...especially when there is so much business pouring in…. all they are after is the next deal… the commission..

Al: That might be true but if senior management wants CRM don't you think it still needs to be promoted...supported?

May:…that's true...but when we run the induction training and get to the CRM module we find more often than not the trainees just steer at us blankly…

Joanna: it really is a bit confusing when we try to explain...demonstrate... how it is all supposed to work… it really hasn't been thought through….to be honest I don't really understand the rational behind it….and I am suppose to do the introduction to it...its a good thing that the main training is done by Kate when she comes around because even I get a bit lost following all the steps...

May: don't get us wrong...we really do think it is a great concept but IT seems to be over used when it comes to this...on the one hand everyone is pushed to bring in the revenues which is what most do...but to having to spend time writing everything into a database and even giving other people leads using the PIO process it gets to be too time consuming… you know what these

Commentary

May is more specific about the negative feedback commenting it relates to *"the brokers complain(ing) that t<u>he system was too complicated</u>… and that to record everything in the CRM database and all the other things they have to do <u>takes up far too much time</u>"*

These two issues are recurring themes: 1) the complex nature of the system, and 2) the amount of time required to use the system properly.

May highlights there is little motivation for brokers to use the system as things are at the moment as the *"brokers take the business when it comes to them...t<u>here is so much business pouring in.</u>..all they are after is the next deal..(and) the commission".*

May agrees CRM, as a corporate initiative (senior management), needs to be supported but the interest is just not there at the moment, even for new joiners who seem to find it all a bit confusing "*more often than not the trainees just steer at us blankly".*

The training manager, Joanna, admits that even she finds the system a "*<u>bit confusing</u> (and) <u>gets a bit lost</u> following all the steps*" and suggests that it has not been "*thought through".*

Kate is seen to be the person who understands how the system is to work and it is to her that they look for the answers.

May expresses overall support for the CRM concept but highlights the issue is with the use of IT in the process. She again mentions the challenge brokers have who are *"<u>pushed to bring in the revenues</u>...* (compared to*)... having to spend time writing everything into a database...and giving other people leads using the PIO process"*

guys are like...go, go, go...
Al: Kate says it is a lot more streamlined now..
May:...well yes I've heard it has been streamlined a bit... but to be honest it is still seen to be too clumsy …
Al: what exactly makes it so clumsy?
May: my understanding is the number of screens people have to launch or go through to put information in or to send it to others...these guys are really only good with the mobile phone if you know what I mean…(laughing)
Joanna: yeah and I've heard some mention that even if you do put say a referral into the system it only really works if the other person responds to you...so most don't even bother to use it any more ...its like a catch 22…

Commentary

Having the time to use the system is again raised as a major stumbling block in the eyes of the brokers limiting their support for using the CRM IT system.

Even after some recent streamlining improvements were made to the CRM IT system the perception still exists that *"it is still <u>seen to be</u> too clumsy".*

Specific issues with the number of screens that have to opened and accessed and the amount of information that needs to inputted are mentioned.

A further weakness of the system mentioned is that it falls down if one person inputs data into the system and forwards on a referral for instance to another broker in another part of the business and the other person fails to respond to the request because they do not use or support the system *"so <u>most don't even bother to use it any more</u>...its like a catch 22…"*

4.3.8 Twenty-three months in: The CEO's views 21st May 2007

Shirley: (beckoned in to Brian's office interrupting our meeting) I've just completed the latest report you have asked for on the regional revenue from CRM with input from finance and it is really disappointing...it is something like only 17% of our revenue is currently coming from the top 10% companies on the CRM ledger... I thought you would be interested in seeing this...
Brian: what!...you've got to be kidding….oh that really pisses me off to hear this...we aren't making the progress any where near where we should be….it just means a lot of people aren't focused on practicing

Commentary

Almost two years on and the results show that the CRM initiative has not yet realized the results intended with *"...only 17% of our revenue ... currently coming from the top 10% companies on the CRM ledger…"*

The Pareto Principle, often applied to justify CRM, is that eighty percent of an organization's revenue should come from twenty percent of its top companies. This was not the result APPS was seeing after two years with the programme. Either APPS was not servicing their top 10% effectively or brokers were identifying or nominating the wrong companies for this status.

Brian expresses disappointment. He lays the blame for the disappointing results on the people "*a lot of <u>people aren't focused</u> on practicing CRM or using PIO as <u>they're meant to</u>..*" rather than questioning whether it might be the system.

CRM or using PIO as they're meant to …

Shirley: sorry to have to bring this ...I had hoped it would have been better with all the training and communiques that have gone out...its not like we haven't put in the effort for our people not to be aware of what its all about…Kate has done such a good job with the training...maybe its just that we have grown so fast…everyone is stretched...

Brian: it just means we've got a lot of people enjoying a jolly you mean.... they have just completely missed what this company is all about... if we aren't building business with the client we shouldn't be dragging them along to our CRM do's... obviously there is a lot of misunderstanding about what CRM is for...

Shirley: there are quite a number of brokers..especially from Australia and New Zealand.. that want to attend next year's CRM function...we've got thirty nine names already nominated for the rugby sevens ...

Brian:...well that will be right... and it just pisses me off... I meant we should not be bringing the clients they are nominating either... especially if they are not contributing to the revenue growth...I want you both to talk with Kate when you see her next week and see what you guys can come up with...I want you guys to come up with some ideas on how we might deal with this... I have a chance to give some pretty direct messages to the people who count

Commentary

Shirley tries to give legitimacy to all the effort put in by those tasked to roll it out commenting on "*its not like* <u>*we*</u> *haven't put in* <u>*the effort*</u>*...Kate has done such* <u>*a good job*</u> *with the training".* The possible excuse to legitimize the poor result with the CRM system is that *"*<u>*maybe*</u> *its just that we have grown so fast...everyone is stretched".* There is no mention or awareness that some of the real issues with the lack of use relate to the recurring themes mentioned by brokers about the complex nature of the system, and the amount of time required to use the system properly.

Brian sets the blame for the poor result on the people *"it just means we've got* <u>*a lot of people*</u> *enjoying a jolly...*<u>*they have*</u> *just completely missed what this company is all about...*<u>*obviously*</u> *there is* <u>*a lot of misunderstanding*</u> *about what CRM is".*

The conversation now turns to looking for ways to punish those considered to be the cause of the poor result which is to restrict them and their client nominations from attending the next major CRM function.

The proposed solution suggested is to use a monographical approach to *"*<u>*give*</u> *some pretty* <u>*direct*</u> <u>*messages*</u> *to the people who count in July when the MDs come for the mid year review conference".* Brian has consistently demonstrated over the two year period that his preferred method for driving change is to communicate what his expectations are (monographic approach) to his target audience.

in July when the MDs come for the mid year review conference.....its just amazing....

Al: I know we have spoken about this before Brian but maybe you need to open this up again for further discussion to find out what really is hindering things...

Brian: ...they all ready know what this is about... you know what these guys are like...we have done everything we can to make this easy for them..no...at the conference I will just make it clear that if they aren't doing CRM the way it should be they had better have a darn good reason why not...they want the big bucks and the title... well... now they are just going to have to work for it...I'm not going to settle for anything less.. we have come a long way in the last couple of years...at least now I get them to do a detailed one page business plan of sorts...more than just the revenue targets which they pluck out of the sky….the bottom line is we could just get rid of those small fee paying clients… and underperforming brokers and focus the resource and energy on the top 100 people around the region who bring in something like 83% of the revenue...sometimes you just have to wonder what we are in business for…

Commentary

His unwillingness or inability to enter into a dialogue of understanding and exploration with others though the exchange that takes place when in confronting conversation space has deafened him to hearing the real issues behind the failure for support for this initiative.

Brian assumes "*<u>they all ready know</u> what this (CRM) is about..*"

But to be absolutely certain his intentions and message is "*clear*" he states "*<u>I'm not going to settle for anything less</u>… we have come a long way in the last two years*".

Should there be a lack of response to his message and intentions with CRM the final resort he proposed is to *"<u>get rid of</u> those small fee paying clients... and <u>underperforming brokers</u>".* (As already mentioned, 10% underperforming brokers are exited from the business each year).

As CEO, Brian expects full compliance with his corporate intentions for the CRM IT system to be fully accepted as part of the institutional fabric of the organization (coalescing conversation space, and level four legitimation).

The lack of forum to air concerns (storming, confronting conversation space and level two legitimation) has resulted in a sufficient number of people across the business from adopting the necessary practices related to embrace the CRM IT system (norming, conforming conversation space and level three legitimation) from which they will in time make it part of their day to day conversation and work (coalescing conversation space, and level four legitimation).

4.3.9 "Talk in text" corporate view 26 Nov 2007. An e-mail

From: "Shum, Tom @ Hong Kong" <Tom.Shum@APPS.com.hk>
Date: 26 Nov 2007 3:07:37 PM
To: oneill2u@mac.com
Cc: "Lee, Kate @ Hong Kong" <Kate.Lee@APPS.com>
Subject: Pass It On Exposure

Dear Alan,

Great to see you again. I am very interested to learn more about the feedback and perception of our CRM systems internally in Asia. Often this sort of information doesn't filter down to me, but it is very valuable in understanding where and how I can do a better job of marketing these things and selling the features and benefits to colleagues.

Pass It On (PIO) is one of those tools to which there really is no downside, both for APPS and individual colleagues, so if there is a negative perception surrounding it in some areas, finding out more will help me to address that.

Once the technical problems in enabling Pass It On access to all Asia colleagues has been resolved, I will be having a major marketing and training push across Asia to drive up usage of the site and try to ensure that any misconceptions that it may have are properly addressed.

I would welcome any suggestions or feedback you have to share.

Many thanks and kind regards,

Tom Shum | Manager

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Commentary

"I am very interested to learn more about the feedback and perception of <u>our</u> CRM system" The comment "*our system"* indicates CRM, and PIO by implication, is held to be fully legitimized and assimilated into institutional fabric of the organization (performing, coalescing conversation space & level four legitimation). Because PIO is assumed to be fully legitimized and assimilated into institutional fabric of the organization, there is a hint of surprised that there may exist a "*<u>negative</u> perception"* about it. The discrediting of any differing view is further implied in the statement "*<u>often</u> <u>this</u> <u>sort</u> <u>of</u> <u>information</u> doesn't filter down to me"*.

The focus then moves towards confrontation (storming, confronting conversation space, & level two legitimation) when he states *"finding out more will help me <u>address that</u>"*. To bring these dissenters into the formal and institutional fabric of the organization (performing, coalescing conversation space & level four legitimation) he proposes norming, conforming and level three legitimation methods suggesting he will be "*<u>marketing</u> these things and <u>selling</u> the <u>features</u> and <u>benefits</u> <u>to</u> colleagues"*. (A monographically approach)
The statement *"there really is <u>no</u> <u>downside</u>, both for APPS and individual colleagues"* is a further claim of legitimacy based on the perceived benefits PIO should bring to the company and individuals.

He admits there are problems. But these are seen to be technical and not related to the lack of legitimacy of PIO amongst the brokers. Finally, he proposes norming, conforming conversations and level three legitimation methods again as the means to remove any differences by *"having a <u>major</u> <u>marketing</u> and <u>training</u> <u>push</u> across Asia <u>to drive up usage</u> of the site and try to ensure that <u>any misconceptions that it may have are properly addressed</u>"*. There is no sense here that he will seek input or will interact (polyphonically) with those who have a differing view about PIO. The corporate view, as it was at the commencement of the CRM/PIO development and rollout, is still a monophonic one.

4.4 Summary

Whilst only the APPS case is presented here, similar patterns were apparent in two other organizations observed during the same period. As seen in the commentary on the vignettes presented, recognizable conversational themes are identifiable, reflecting the constructs of those situating their views within the utterances. Whilst recognizable patterns appear to be evident they do not manifest as a series of phased steps with clear transition points moving from one level progressively to the other, but rather as themes sometimes converging and other times diffusing in a dynamic and interactive process that conversational engagement and exchange permits.

What does become apparent is that it is within this complex, dynamic and polyphonic interplay the convergence and diffusion of utterances are evident where change plays out or emerges. When opportunities for interaction are prevented or limited, as was the tendency for the CEO of APPS to do, there appears to be an adoption of monophonic practices (PowerPoint presentations, e-mail directives, new policy notifications, consultant lead initiatives, etc) to "drive" or "push" change, which is argued, adversely restricts change *potentials*.

These initial ideas, formed after working with and reviewing the field work over a period of time served as the basis for developing the models and original contributions about the role of conversation in the legitimation and social construction of change presented in the next chapter.

Chapter Five: Findings & Implications

5.1 Introduction

This chapter draws on the case content to introduce and illustrate the *Conversational Themes and Legitimation Model* and a synthesis *Linking Stages of Group Development, Change Management Conversational Themes, and Levels of Legitimation* which builds on Tuckman's stages of group development model, and Berger and Luckmann's levels of legitimation framework. The *Conversational Themes and Legitimation Model* highlights the polyphonic role of conversation in the social construction of change (Jabri et al., 2008) rather than a monophonic emphasis through the singular voice of management or a change agent as it is often portrayed to be (Barrett, 2002, Elving, 2005). The model demonstrates how change *potentials* evolve or emerge, or are marginalized or discarded, as a result of the conversational space entered into and the legitimacy, or lack there of, given to the change *potential* in naturally occurring talk or utterances rather than through a "formal" control and command process of managing change.

5.2 Implications from the case

Several points are observed when reviewing the case. First, the change initiative and the process of change may be viewed from two perspectives; that which is done with intent and that which plays out through the conversational exchange that takes place in day-to-day utterances and exchange. From the first perspective the CRM IT system and PIO is a predetermined change process initiated and driven by the CEO. The CEO, certain about what CRM can do for his business, is determined at every opportunity to promote it and to demand wide spread adoption of the initiative. From the second perspective the process is seen to be open and incomplete (Shotter 2006), emergent and unpredictable (the way Jennifer first supported PIO then later in the conversation spoke against it).

From the CEO's perspective the initiative is fully legitimate and opposition is seen as negative and is confronted and dealt with when it arises. When viewed from the open, incomplete and emergent perspective various groups and individuals representing those groups are seen to be wrestling with the implications of the changes as they support or marginalize the changes based on their perspectives of the legitimacy and reasons of legitimacy of current realities and practices. The CEO's perception of the legitimacy of the initiative based on his power position means CRM is kept high on the agenda ensuring it is featured regularly in the institutional and formal management practices of the organization such as annual strategy conferences, company website, business planning process and reporting meetings. Whilst the CEO has a power position to keep CRM on the corporate agenda, other key players, also at the senior management level see themselves having a legitimate claim to question the initiative on the basis that it is seen to interfere with their personalized networking and revenue generating practices.

What is common to both perspectives is the central role of conversation in the social construction of views and positions, but where they differ drastically is how they view the role of conversation in social intercourse. For the former, it is monophonic, for the later it is polyphonic. From the CEO's perspective, he is clear about his role, authority and position and is therefore constantly giving his views and directives for others to follow, and where necessary pulling up short any dissenting voice that offers a view different from his own. But for many others, we find them moving in and out of different conversations where at times we see them supporting then opposing, agreeing then questioning and forming their own views about the changes that are presented to them.

There is evidence, however, of four prominent conversational themes that correspond with the descriptions outlined in Tuckman's stages of group development, and evidence of the use of levels of explanations and justifications to legitimize views put forth to either embrace change or marginalize it. What follows is my original contribution that captures the above in a model to first demonstrate the polygraphic nature of the process of change as it is social constructed over time in the *Conversational Themes and Legitimation Model*, and a synthesis of Tuckman's model and Berger and Luckmann's four levels of legitimation framework situating both within a conversational framework (see figure 5.7)

5.3 The conversational themes and legitimation model

The *Conversational Themes and Legitimation Model* proposes that change *potentials* evolve from initial ideas to practice (assimilation) through a messy process of infusion and diffusion of ideas as change *potentials* are entertained or discarded in utterances relative to four recognizable types of conversation space entered into (Commencing, Confronting, Conforming, and Coalescing Conversations) that progress change *potentials* from initial ideas to some form of assimilation in practice.

In APPS's case, two years after the initial introduction of the CRM IT system, there were still multiple perceptions held by various individuals and groups within the organization about the CRM IT system. Again as seen in the APPS case, the four recognizable conversational themes (commencing, confronting, conforming, and coalescing conversations), which will be expounded on shortly, did not manifest as phased steps with clear transition points moving from one level progressively to the other, but rather as themes sometimes converging and other times diffusing in a dynamic and interactive process that conversational engagement and exchange permits. It is in this dynamic and interactive convergence and diffusion where change plays out. When absent, prevented or limited, as was the tendency for the CEO of APPS to do, there tends to be an adoption of monophonic practices (PowerPoint presentations, e-mail directives, new policy notifications, consultant lead initiatives, etc) to "drive" or "push" change, which is argued, adversely restricts change *potentials*.

Reflecting this tendency, a survey I conducted for this thesis (see Appendix D) based on the replies from 114 respondents from 20 different companies around the Asia Pacific Rim about a change initiative in their organization showed that 74% of them were informed about a change via monophonic management lead methods such as e-mail (14%), a presentation (28%) or during a formal management meeting (32%). 22% indicated that there was no discussion around the change as it was only a one way communication process whilst a further 43% indicated they could ask questions but for clarification only. Some of the comments (unedited) made by respondents about this communication process again reflect the tendency to see communication as a one way informing process:

“Sometimes yes but they are not really want to have further discuss or listen the comments about the new initiative” (unedited).

“It was an order rather than discussion”.

“We were allowed to question the detail but not question the overall rationale behind it”.

“Questioning is not widely accepted here”.

“This already decided by the senior management” (unedited).

“I was told that I my portfolio could increase drastically, and to start thinking about the integration process” (unedited).

Accepting that it is through the convergence and diffusion of ideas through conversational exchange where change plays out, the *Conversational Themes and Legitimation Model* presents a theoretical framework to illustrate how utterances move beyond the linear conception of Tuckman's work to where the individual is viewed as an active subject having an agency role in the formation of each of the four entities of group development. Rather, the *Conversational Themes and Legitimation Model* extends the work of Tuckman by proposing the concept of becoming arising from the convergence and diffusion of views (Bakhtin, 1981, Barge and Little, 2002, Zebroski, 1999, Martin, 1992, Holt, 2003, Shotter, 1992, Heidegger, 1962, D'Arcy and Dibben, 2005), as a framework to understand the multiple becomings present in each of the four stages and the utterances that take place in the conversational space relevant to those four stages. This notion of becoming overlaps significantly with conversations and the multiple telling and retelling of stories in the course of these exchanges (Boje, 1991, Boje, 2008, Brown et al., 2005). It focuses on how utterances give rise to new positions and possibilities for collective becomings, hence change. There is no end point, and no final result (Prigogine, 1996), but rather a continuous messy process linking and diffusing ideas from which change emerges.

Whilst Tuckman’s stages of group development are portrayed as a linear process where a dichotomy between the leader and others (followers or team members) exists, and where groups develop from one stage progressively to the other facilitated by the monophonic voice of the manager or team leader, daily practice and experience, organizational change and the emergence of recognizable patterns within group formation and function emerge as a result of the polyphonic interaction of many and not a privileged few. Rather than seeing the individual as separate from each of the four stages of group development and the change involved in moving from one stage to the other, I wish to bring in the individual as an active “participant with others” who are fully involved in inhabiting each of the four entities and the corresponding conversational spaces that open up the *potential* for change. Again, it needs to be stressed that there is no neat progression moving systematically from one stage to the other. More often than not two or more entities, or two or more conversational spaces, are occupied at point in time, with all “participants” legitimizing and seeking legitimacy for their views, continuously.

The four recognizable conversational themes (commencing, confronting, conforming, and coalescing conversations), which build on and integrates Tuckman’s stages of group development model, and Berger and Luckmann’s levels of legitimation framework, will now be introduced drawing on the case content to illustrate the role of conversation in the social construction of change explained in the *Conversational Themes and Legitimation Model*.

5.4 Commencing conversations.

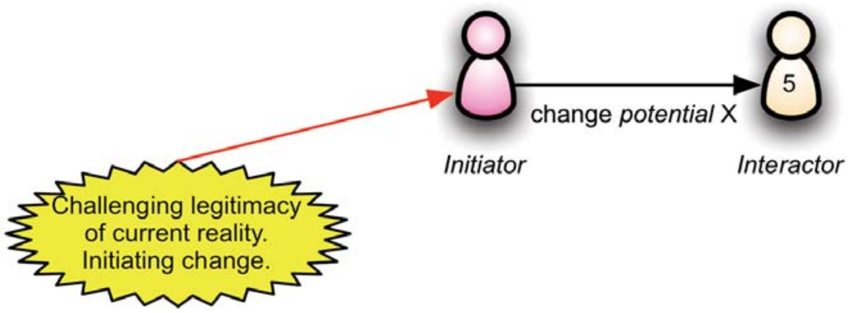

Figure 5.1 Commencing conversations: initiating change

All change commences initially as an idea in someone’s mind and at a point in time expressed to someone else in utterance. In APPS’s case it was the CEO and Kate, the CRM IT system project leader, who brought the initial ideas for the CRM IT system from the company they both previously worked in (Kate: "*we had a pretty good system at CP..."*). The prospects for change were advanced through conversation when the CEO shared his intentions to introduce a similar CRM IT system to APPS with his CFO. As a result of that conversational exchange funds were made available for the CEO to commission Kate to begin the project. The initiator (the CEO in this instance) engages in conversation (X) with the interactor (CFO) to "sound out" the initiator's view and how he/she perceived the *potential* for change (a suggested change to APPS's business model using CRM to reposition the business), however, as the initiator is commencing the conversation and sharing an idea or concept that is "new" to the "view" of the interactor, only the *potential* for change exists in that particular moment in the conversation. Moreover, the *potential* for change only exists if the interactor is drawn into a conversation (hence ingression) about the *potential* for the change that the initiator anticipates (X), and this only happens if the initiator is able to legitimize his/her view sufficiently with explanations and justifications so that the interactor entertains a different perspective from that which he/she currently holds. In APPS's CEO's case this was done by making reference to "the lost business opportunities" and "benefits to clients".

Typically, those initiating change *potentials* in an organization explain or justify proposals by making reference to customers, competition, shareholders, external economic conditions, government policy, etc, to support claims on why the *potential* for change is legitimate. This is the conversational space where the change *potential* initially merges with or evolves into a wider sphere of utterance, or is discarded.

Examples of legitimation in <u>commencing conversations</u> are:

1. "If you could provide the same level of service in all the countries around the region where we operate then we would be able to outsource our real estate acquisition or disposal services to you (**explaining**). At the moment we use a number of property companies around the region and the service consistency is just not there (**justifying**). Can't you guys commit the resources and create a regional and dedicated corporate services team? (**commencing**)"

2. “The board is just not happy with the current performance of your division (**justifying**). You must be more willing to use a different method to get customers aware of your product offering so they know what we sell (**explaining**). Things have moved on now (**justifying**) and the old way of selling your division’s products are now redundant (**explaining**). No one cares about fliers any more (**explaining**). Can you not use internet services more to promote our offering? (**commencing**)”

3. “I really don’t want us to lose all this customer information (**justifying**). When our brokers keep all this information at their own desks it goes if they go (**explaining**). Can’t we find a better storage system, say using technology, to gather this information up for future use? (**commencing**)”

As seen in *figure 5.2*, the interactor (5) who is also a member of another socially defined group, is actively engaged in a number of ongoing conversations with his colleagues (6,7,& 8) which now includes the *potentials* for change embedded in the initiators utterance (X). Group A Members (6,7,& 8) may listen, respond and interact in conversation with their colleague (5) about his/her conversation with the initiator but they will do so from their own conversational context. This results in the Group A Members either adding to (X+) or marginalizing (X-) the *potentiality* for change based on the level of legitimacy the Group feel supports the claim for change.

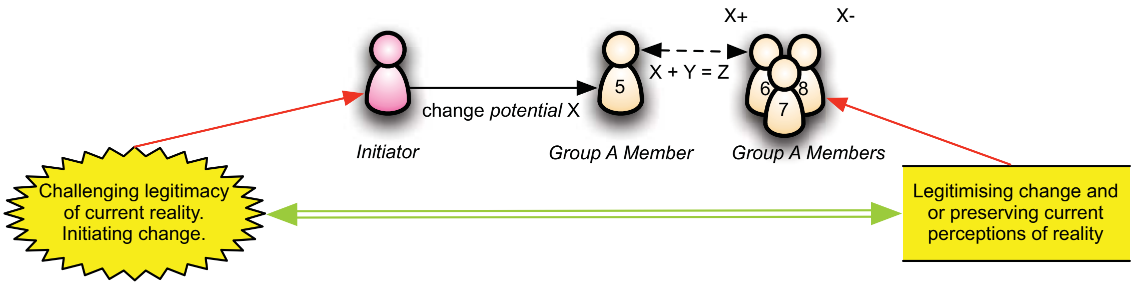

Figure 5.2 Commencing conversations: developing the potential for change

If the interactor (5) feels the initiator’s request is legitimate and he/she has been sufficiently drawn into accepting the *potential* of change in his/her utterances that the initiator anticipates, he/she will in turn seek to legitimize this *potential* for change with explanations and justifications in utterances to “influence” the other members of the social groups he/she belongs to. Except now, the interactor (5) will legitimize his/her position by picking up on or developing the group's previous conversational threads or themes and draw these into the conversation ("management are too slow at making product decisions!", "our competitors spend more on regional development than we do" etc) to further support the explanations or justifications the initiator has conversed around. The point here is that the *potentiality* for change (X) remains a *potentiality* only if there is sufficient legitimacy to support the interest to include new perspectives in ongoing utterances in both formal (X + Y = Z) and informal (X + Y = Z) settings.

Because commencing conversations relate to a process of ingression, utterances filled with change *potentials* in a sense *brings people into* conversational space that allows members to co-construct the *potential* of a new perception (X) with their current perceptions (Y) resulting in the merging or X and Y into prospects for an unanticipated third view (Z). The *potential* for change therefore, serves as a catalyst around which the group begins to form (Tuckman 1965) new understandings and meaning. If there is insufficient perceived legitimacy for the change *potential* idea, it is marginalized or discarded completely.

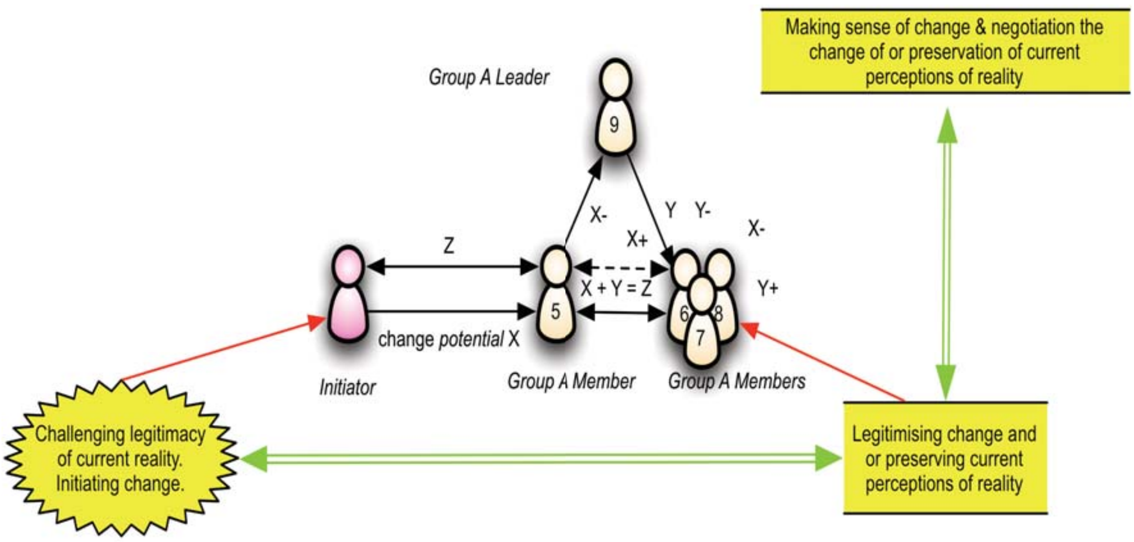

Figure 5.3 Commencing conversations: initiating shared meaning

Commencing conversations are utterances where groups seek to define goals, organize, clarify value, create purpose, awareness and greater orientation (Ashmos and Nathan, 2002) as to the reason for the existence for the group

(Tuckman's forming stage). These goals, organization, value clarification, purpose making, and orientation outcomes can only emerge if there is sufficient legitimacy given them when initially defined and named in the utterances that take place in ordinary talk (Berger and Luckmann level one legitimacy). Assuming there is vested interest (a benefit to be gained or a loss to be avoided) in the *potential* for change, that *potential* for change will move utterances positively towards the reconstruction of existing goals etc. If the *potential* for change amends the purpose of any group in some way then it will also require some level of amendment in understanding of the roles and work practices pertinent to that group also. The same could be said if the *potential* for change requires a significant change in perceptions about a particular person's or group's role, say from being seen by the customer as a "Salesman" to that of a "Consultant", then the expected change in the role will necessitate utterances to explore changes to the purpose (goals), and working practices and norms (controls) for those participating in the utterance, and perhaps more importantly, if the change is to continue in ongoing utterances.

Potential for change in organizational settings of course compete for legitimacy with other dominant ideas proposing change or supporting the current status quo. In most cases there are more than two parties or groups with vested interests in a particular change prospect. This inevitably means that commencing conversations, due to the encounter with contrary perspectives and legitimations, move utterances into a different conversational space or theme that involves conflict and confrontation.

<u>5.5 Confronting conversations</u>

Confronting conversations transpire when the *potentiality* for change is brought into conversational interaction with other groups, or cliques or factions within in a group. Conflict, negotiation, resistance, assertion and clarification tend to be the essence of the utterances that fill this space. Confronting conversations may seek to influence the perceptions held by other groups (staff, subordinates, other departments, etc) that differ in their perspectives, to shift what they express in their conversational content so they support and accept the change *potentials* but in most cases confronting conversations are an attempt to work out differing views, priorities and perceptions. It is a space where the differences are aired.

In APPS's case, there is a great deal of confronting conversations taking place even two years on around aspects of the CRM IT system. On the one hand the CEO confronts the perceptions held by others by stating, "*we have to just push the system and tell everyone to get on with it.. that's it..period!"* but comes short of opening up confronting conversation space for an exploration or exchange of differences with his colleagues who attempt to do so time and time again: Mike: *"But the problem as I see it is…".* Joe*: "Yeah but the problem is that…".* Dave*: "Mike has a point ...and maybe its time we opened this up again for discussion".*

Conflict, negotiation, resistance, assertion and clarification arise when there are differing group, or individual, perspectives about how legitimate the change *potentials* are, or the proposals offered for realizing the change *potentials.*

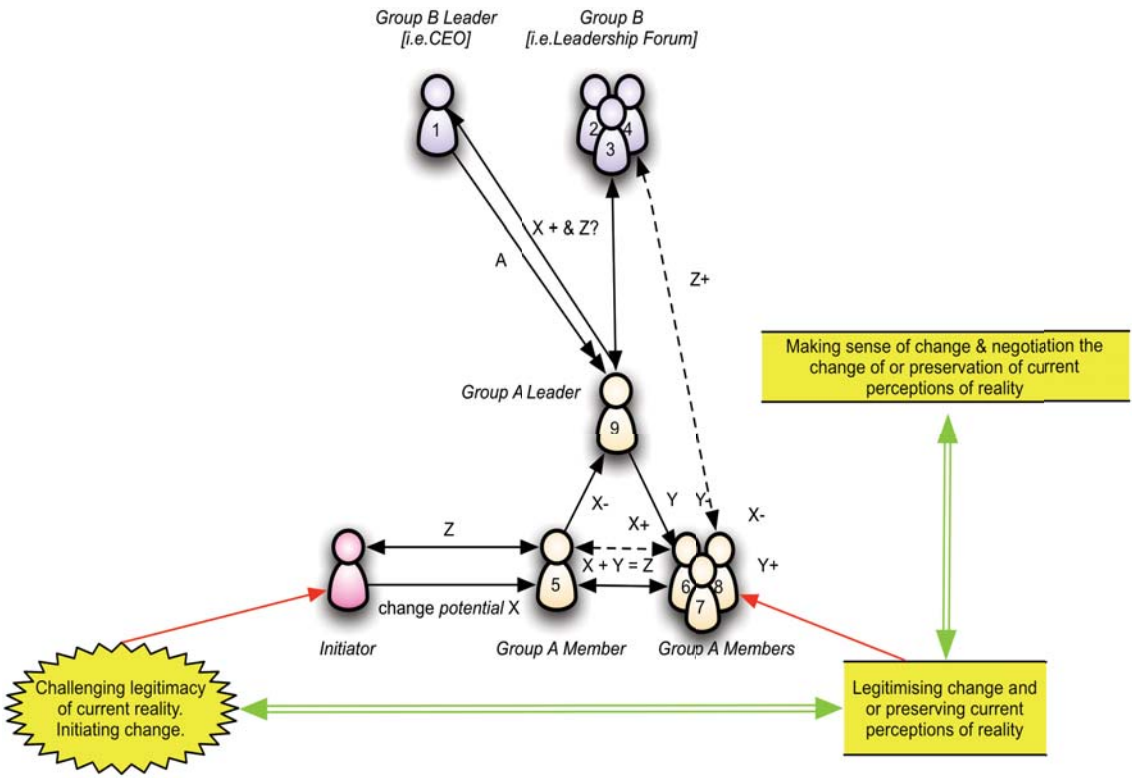

Figure 5.4 Confronting conversations: conflict and differing views

They are called confronting conversations because the *potential* for change challenges to some degree the legitimacy of existing constructs, specifically those relating to the group's existing perceptions around meaning of the goals, roles and behavioural norms for the group.

In the illustration above, the Group A Leader (9) may find that the Group B Leader (1), may be preoccupied with what is considered to be other more important priorities (such as pressure from the shareholders or board) and will see these priorities as being more legitimate and therefore as more important which are emphasized in (A), and not what the initiator would like to see (X) or Group A Member's view (Z). Equally, other members of Group B might be agreeable with the idea of (X) but question (Z?) or at least the way the Group A has interpreted (X + Y = Z) the initiator's expectations (X). Confronting conversations are filled with explanations and justifications to legitimize the support, resistance or rejection of a change *potentiality:* Brian*: "we need to get people moving with this programme… its good for clients, its good for business...its must be good for the brokers too..".* TC*: "whether you like it or not you have to use it...it will make our client management more consistent across the whole company.."* Kate*: "Dave (CFO) has been so supportive too...he's always made sure we've had the financial support...and you know Brian (CEO) is pretty passionate about it".*

Typically, those leading the change *potentials* make reference to customers, competition, shareholders, external economic conditions, government policy, etc, in the first instance but when encountering resistance they legitimize the change with reference to power positions, authority, policy and promise of shared rewards. Management may use "strategy" workshops, formal presentations, and or training / communication workshops to introduce and explain the change thereby legitimizing the change in a "formal" forum. This was certainly the case used in APPS. In my survey soliciting comments from 114 employees from business around the Asia Pacific Rim 74% mentioned that the change initiative they made reference to was introduced either by e-mail (14%), during a workshop or training programme (28%), or at a management meeting (32%). Whilst 78% mentioned they were encouraged to raise questions about the change initiative at the time it was first introduced to them 43% mentioned questions encouraged were for clarification purposes only. These findings demonstrate how common it is for the use of monographic methods to be used to introduce change and how prospects for interaction and engagement from those affected by a change can be limited to clarification only and not real exploration of the implications of the change.

Those resisting the change proposal will legitimize their resistance with reference to past or current experiences (specialist knowledge), past or present project achievements or failures, “research” (popular management literature, urban myth and academic), or the questioning of the competence of those proposing the change (Brown and Humphreys, 2006, Dent and Goldberg, 1999, Ford et al., 2002, Jager, May 2001). In the APPS case this certainly was a theme seen again and again: Jennifer: “*although saying that it is a bit strange because most people will still prefer to pick up the phone any way and call because it is actually easier to do it than actually go through a computer and five different sections so in a way… it has not actually made it any easie*r”. Mike: *“Yeah but the problem is...everyone goes for what he can get..time is limited...some feel they don’t have time to do “pass it on”.* Alvin*: “this is not a difficult business...its a relationship business...”*

Other examples of legitimation in <u>confronting conversations</u> are:

1. “We need to really manage our capex tightly at the moment as every dollar that we spend will affect how well we can meet our month to month commitments (**explaining**). Our business in America is suffering really badly with the slow down of the economy and we need to move any spare funds to the States to help prop up our struggling business partners there (**justifying**). What you say the customer is asking for sounds all very good and convincing but I simply cannot see how we can invest the sort of money needed to do this right. You are just going to have to convince the customer some other way, or at best help him to redefine his expectations. (**confronting**)”

2. “That is a very impractical idea, you have not thought it through at all! (**confronting**). For one thing the timelines you are proposing are unrealistic and do not fit in with our normal reporting requirements (**explaining**) and to be frank, I know Bill (the Finance Director) will not support such a proposal (**justifying**)”.

3. “What about our earlier agreement, I’m not going to let you back out of that! (**confronting**). We agreed at the last management conference that you would remove Joe (the poor performer) (**justifying**), which if you don’t you will be sending the wrong message to everyone that they too can fail to meet revenue targets and still keep a job (**explaining**).

Confronting conversations are filled with utterances where groups assert their views, create and manage conflict, demonstrate flexibility, work through resistance, and deal with hostility (Tuckman’s Storming Stage). Confronting conversations arise when different groups present or seek to connect or integrate different views or frames of meaning (Berger and Luckmann’s second level of legitimation). When either one or more persons contributing to the conversation sees things differently and is unable to accept or accommodate a differing view then there is confrontation or conflict. The more dominate group or the person representing the more dominant group (either in power, status or when representing an assumed more superior perspective) will tend to try and convince or persuade the person or party assumed to be the lesser, hence the notion of colonization. Negotiation, that is the proposals and counter proposals webbed into the conversation, will depend on the perceived strength of the explanations and justifications available and used by either party (Stone et al., 1999). This determination to is clearly seen with the CEO’s approach in the APPS case.

When understood properly, management will encourage members to participate in confronting conversations, and will in fact even create opportunities for differing groups to actively enter this conversational space so that differing views and perspectives can be aired, understood, and allowed to contribute to the ongoing construction of new perspectives or potentials (O'Neill and Jabri, 2007). When differences that are marginal or contrary to the main or dominant group’s perspective do exist then the so called lesser voices are still allowed space for respectful co-existence going forward because the polyphonic nature of change accepts difference as an important component for stimulating intellectual debate to deepen organizational learning and change (Senge, 1992, Senge et al., 1994, Barker and Camarata, 1998). The upshot of the process of confronting, negotiation, sharing and understanding is an emergence of a growing consensus or acceptance around some form of shared constructs that facilitates the opportunities for people to move in and out of utterances related to the change *potentiality* with ease.

Unfortunately, confronting conversation space is where many change initiatives falter and stall due to the popular belief that change is something that is communicated top down (Gilsdorf, 1998, Barrett, 2002, Kitchen and Daly, 2002, Elving, 2005). When looked at from this monophonic perceptive resistance, or the dissenting voice, is often viewed by those leading the change as a "problem" or blockage to the change and is viewed negatively (Dent and Goldberg, 1999, Jager, 2001, Ford et al., 2002). When resistance is encountered, the monophonic approach to solving this "problem" is to step up the level of communication (monophonically), again usually in the form of e-mail, presentations, training workshops and formal policy communiqués (see chapter five). These more formal communication approaches rely heavily on institutional legitimacy to support or demand compliance for the change based on the "right" of those in power to demand it (Searle, 1969, Tsoukas, 1994, Searle, 1995, Genus, 1998).

In the APPS case the CEO and others in the Corporate team responsible for rolling out and maintaining the CRM IT initiative also demonstrated this monophonic tendency to deal with opposition in an adversarial manner. The CEO's view is to demand compliance from dissenters or to move them out of the company: *"If they don't want to get with the programme they can fox trot oscar...come on guys...time to get with the programme"…..* "*they should be shown the door...they've picked the wrong company.."*. The CRM Manager, responsible for IT support viewed feedback as a "*negative perception"* and his solution to correcting other's perceptions was to *"hav(e) a major marketing and training push across Asia to drive up usage of the site and try to ensure that any misconceptions that it may have are properly addressed".*

5.6 Conforming conversations

The greater the perceived legitimacy for the change *potentiality* the more likely it is that utterances will be positively centred around how to embrace or make the change *potentiality* a reality. These conversations are more about exploring how the present "realities" and future *potentials* can be merged. Conforming conversations legitimize the adaptation of the change *potentiality* more into the "mainstream" content of conversational exchange. This adaptation process is facilitated by utterances that co-construction or reconstruction a change *potentiality* with the current views and themes resulting in the creation or emergence of new perceptions of reality, new frames of reference, and new shared meanings etc. These utterances move groups beyond the need to legitimate "why" something should change, or even "what" has to change, to make sense of and define "how" to make the change a reality. They are conversations that reconstruct the goals, roles and behavioural norms for that group, and the organization as a whole.

When conforming conversations are prominent resisters have either been "converted", or are isolated, ignored or removed. However they are viewed they are now a "silent" minority. Conforming conversation is a space that leaves little opportunities to question, challenge or inquire into alternatives or differences. For the majority these issues have been settled and the focus is now on making the *potential* a reality. The dissenting voice is now marginalized and has little or no legitimacy in the eyes of the majority. In the APPS case the dissenting voice was not given space by the CEO to be heard so after twelve months the only time it was raised was in the absence of the CEO.

When encouraged positively, groups affected by the change engage in conversations that affirm how the initiative relates to and is integrated into existing shared meaning around the goals, roles and behavioural norms for that group, and the organization as a whole. The change *potentials* is now more prominently heard in the "mainstream" content of conversational exchange. The change *potentials* are not only affirmed or openly supported in conversational exchanges but there are visible signs or growing evidence that the change is beginning to alter the way things are done in group behavior and/or work practices. If the change is perceived to be legitimate then it is generally supported by those who may not have a direct or any vested interests in the change *potential* being moved forward apart from it being good for the organization as a whole. This is certainly seen to be the case when TC in the APPS case, who is tasked with leading a workgroup, willingly challenges the dissenters to conformity. TC: "*whether you like it or not you have to use it"…..*"*it will make our client management more consistent across the whole company..*"

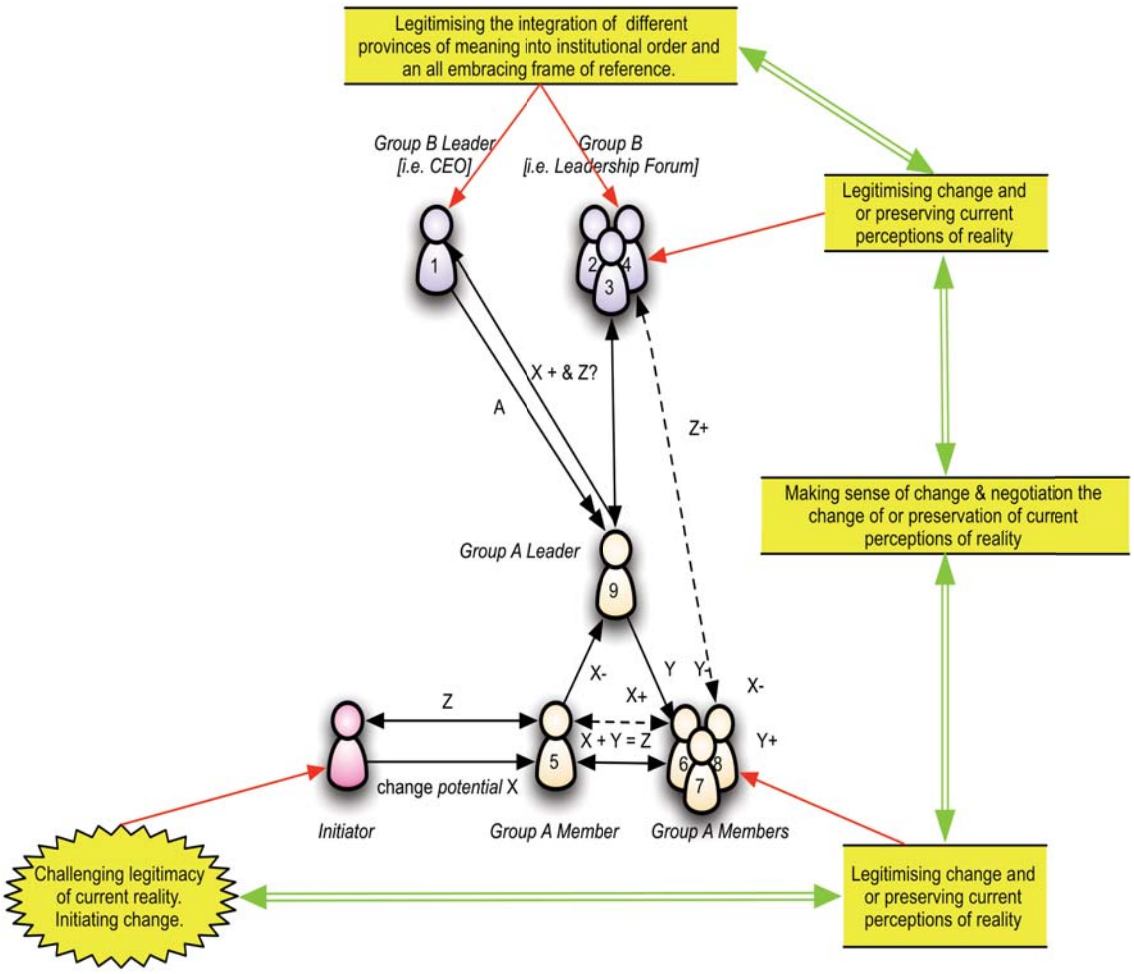

Figure 5.5 Conforming conversations: aligning perspectives

As can be seen in the illustration above, over time there is a growing consensus around how the change *potentiality* (X) is to merge with or be assimilated into current realities (Y) resulting in new shared meanings (Z). The conversation space that previously questioned or challenged the proposed change (Z-, Z?) now affirms the change positively (Z+). Conversations in this space are filled with utterances that seek to define the "what" the "how" the "who" and the "when" of change (Ford and Ford, 1995). The original idea for change (X) is evolving into something (Z) that was not originally perceived at the point of the change *potential's* initiation. The original idea is "being" enriched by the contributions of many voices that have joined in the ongoing conversation around the change *potential*. The change *potential* is "becoming" or emerging into a reality that is reconstructing the way things are understood and done. In the APPS case over a two year period the CRM IT System on the whole was embraced, though aspects of it were discarded, where it is today in the mainstream of organizational practice and culture.

Typically, those leading and embracing the change *potential* legitimize the change by making reference to other "successful" organizations and emphasize how the change will help make their company "world-class", "leading edge", or a "best practice" organization. It is further legitimized, as mentioned earlier by the use of e-mails from senior management (legitimizing with title and authority), memos (using institutional legitimacy by use of company letter head), and training materials and courses, where "leading edge" management theories are delivered by academics or consultants (legitimized with "knowledge" specialists).

Other examples of legitimation in <u>conforming conversations</u> are:

1. "I like the way this new software helps track sales prospects and work in hand (**conforming**). Previously we had two separate systems to do this which was kind of clumsy (**justifying**). Its much easier now to just open up this new CRM database and work off the one screen (**justifying**). As a manager of nine people it really helps me to see who is submitting what, or perhaps more importantly who is doing what" (**explaining and conforming**).

2. "I know we did not always agree with the early proposals but seeing how we can now have standard processes around the region makes good sense (**conforming**). The reality is our clients are looking for seamless service delivery no matter where they, or we, operate (**explaining**). It will certainly save a lot of argument of what is the best way to do things" (**justifying**).

3. "This training programme will help you understand what is expected of you in your new role as Safety Compliance Officers (**explaining**). I know this is in

addition to your regular responsibilities but our new emphasis on safety means each office has to appoint someone to help with the education and compliance around our new standards for safety (**conforming**). Besides, this initiative should help reduce the number of accidents as a result of creating greater awareness" (**justifying**).

Conforming conversations are filled with utterances where groups engage in open and positive feedback, affirmation, networking, cooperation, involvement, cohesion, and support (Tuckman's Norming Stage). Conforming conversations are legitimized through the support of explicit theories and comprehensive frames of reference that give credibility to the why, what, and how of the change (Berger and Luckmann's third level of legitimation). The initiator's original idea, which is now being deeply enriched, advanced and expanded on as a result of the many or multiple conversations that have transpired over time is beginning to alter in practice the perceptions of a group's goals or sense of purpose, the definition and relevance of member roles, and aspects of the group's working methods, norms and basic behavioural values. The change idea is becoming more evident. It is now beginning to be more noticeable, visible, recognizable and can be pointed to in places rather than something simply talked about at a conceptional or tentative level. As time progresses the "new" practices lose their "newness" and become more and more institutionalized in the content of conversational exchange as the "way we do things around here". This "way we do things around here" though cannot and does not have an existence in isolation from other mainstream conversational aspects of the organization. All conversational content must be brought together to give the appearance of a complete whole or an integrated frame of meaning.

5.7 Coalescing conversations

Coalescing conversations are utterances that focus on the full assimilation of what started as a change *potential* into the total, institutional and explicit framework of the organizational social context. The change *potentiality* has moved fully from what was at one point in time a conceptual idea to now being fully integrated into organizational practices and the dominant shared "reality" of how things just are. It is now fully “mainstream” in the explicit and formal domain of organizational conversational content. It is now part of the institutional order of the organization as established patterns of conversation defined in and referenced by organizational texts (Cooren et al., 2006, Phillips et al., 2004).

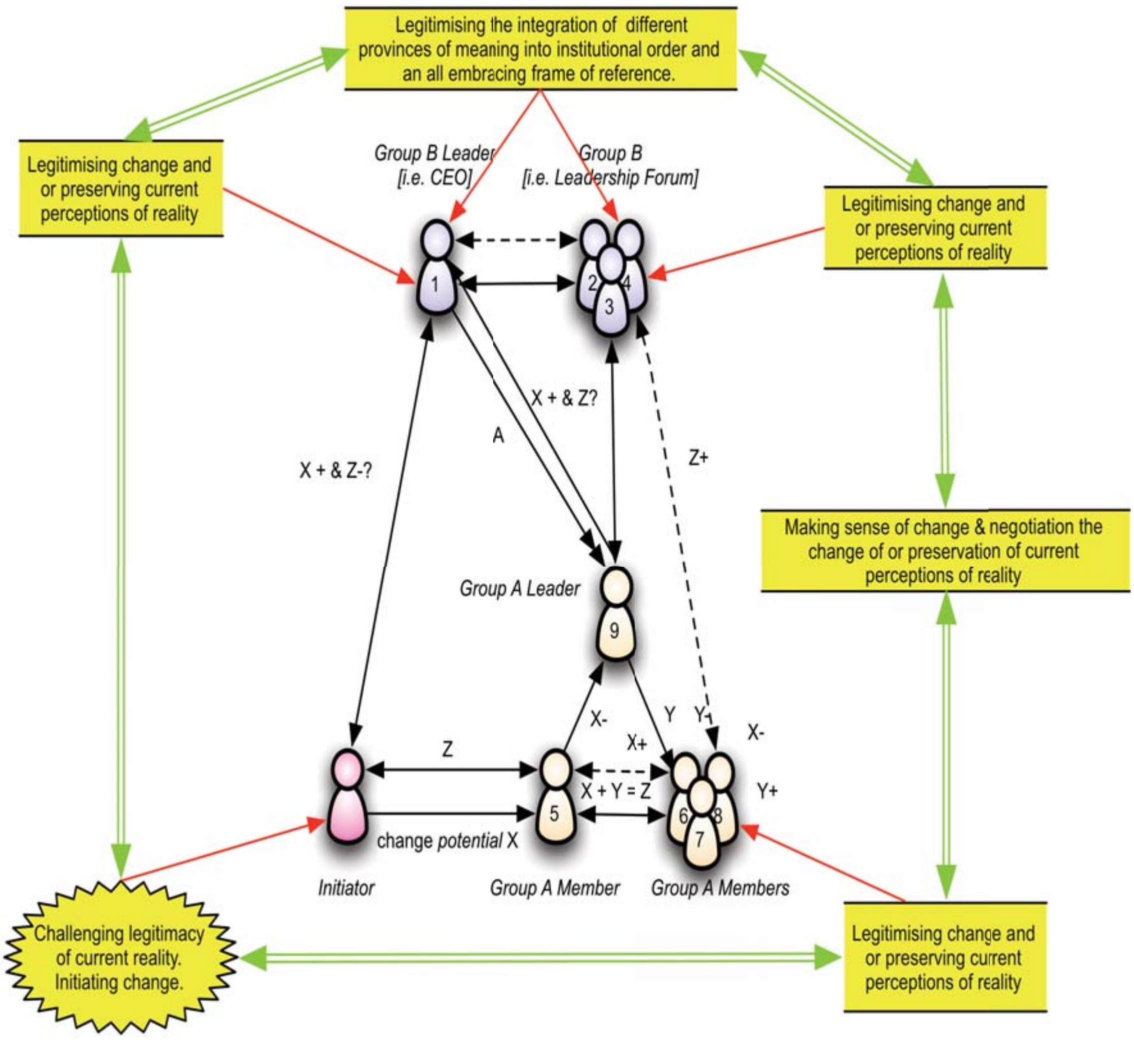

Figure 5.6 Coalescing conversations: change in practice

With the initial idea assimilated into all, or nearly all, conversational content and practices of the organization it is more often than not formally sanctioned and legitimized by the inclusion in the organization’s Vision, Mission and Values, company policies, procedure manuals, reflected in the reward and recognition system, professional body accreditation schemes such as ISO, industry standards and other organizational philosophical frameworks such as TQM or

Lean Management that integrate all into a perceived whole. The more conversations are grounded in this “perceived whole” or symbolic universe the more predictable things become, and the more predictable things are the more controllable the organization is (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 80).
Examples of legitimation in coalescing conversations are:

1. “We are now a truly fully integrated services delivery company that is able to manage every service delivery interaction using our regional Customer Relationship Management system and Customer Satisfaction Index (**coalescing**). Our CRM and CSI capabilities give us a real competitive advantage and makes us now the recognized leader in our field (**justifying**). Its important that every single employee understands the value of what we have created here because its exactly what our regional clients are looking for” (**explaining**).

2. “Our core leadership development curriculum is built around the same five core competencies (**explaining**). If someone was to commence at the most junior programme and work their way through to the most senior one then it would take them 12 - 15 years to do this and the same five core competencies are used as the framework throughout (**coalescing**). What is great about our core leadership development curriculum is the consistency the five core competencies gives to all these programmes, it eliminates confusion” (**justifying**).

3. “People, service, profit. These are the core values that drive our business everywhere, and have been so since the founding of our company by Fred Smith (**coalescing**). All decisions are run through these values and if a decision adversely impacts on any of the three core values then its not a good decision (**explaining**). This is a great mechanism for managing risk, especially if a decision may have a negative impact on what is considered to be core to our business success” (**justifying**).

Coalescing conversations are filled with utterances that are sanctioned and supported by the explicit or institutional frames of references of the organization. These institutional frames of reference guide decision making and problem solving; they define beyond question who is rewarded for what; who should be mentored and developed; and what the productivity and achievement expectations are (Tuckman's Performing Stage). These explicit or institutional frames of references are socially constructed and legitimized by habitual patterns of utterances that are situated in a symbolic whole that has been constructed over time to integrate different provinces of meaning into a symbolic whole which is then assumed to be unalterable and self-evident (Berger and Luckmann's fourth level of legitimation legitimacy). This symbolic whole is not crafted and communicated by one person or even one representative group (monophonic) to the other groups and sub-groups that make up an organization. It is something that evolves and emerges over time through a dynamic process where there is a mingling and interplay of many diverse and varied voices that enjoin the ongoing conversation that plays itself out every time individuals in a particular organization interact through ordinary talk.

In the APPS case the CRM IT system, two years on, had not reached the point where coalescing conversations were widely evident, but it was certainly moving that way. People left, and new people joined. The new joiners, like the new CFO, were inducted into the CRM conversation through formal programmes of induction, the intranet, internal publications and interactions with the CEO and other prominent voices that supported the CEO's intentions. The intranet, used by all APPS employees, with its e-mailing and database management capabilities placed the CRM IT system centre stage. Every day people would turn on their computers to launch the APPS intranet and enter the CRM portal.

The CEO continued to speak "passionately" about the importance of CRM and in formal settings at least it was widely supported. Aspects of the system such as the "pass it on" initiative were used by some (the Bangkok office) and not widely by others (the Singapore office), but overall the demand that brokers use PIO to facilitate referrals had over the two year period been dropped as a dominant theme when CRM was talked about. People used the method that worked for them.

As can be seen from the APPS case, the process from the introduction of an idea (the CRM IT system) through to adoption and assimilation is not smooth neither does the communication and implementation aspects of change move neatly and progressively from one stage to another. Not all of the CEO's expectations were adopted and assimilated as intended either. The PIO aspect of the CRM IT system, two years on in 2009, has by and large been dropped as a topic of conversation as many parts of the business rejected the idea of the use of an IT platform for making referrals preferring instead to use the traditional method of direct contact with colleagues face to face or by calling on the phone[9].

Utterances did however over time reflect more of the broader behavioural and functional aspects of the CRM initiative facilitated by the introduction of a number of structural changes, for example, the setting up of "dedicated client based work groups" whose sole purpose is to attend to the regional needs of large clients, the earmarking of a percentage company wide revenues for sponsored work related CRM events, the inclusion of CRM as a Key performance indicator (KPI) in the planning process, and as a core competency in the performance management and leadership development processes.

The CEO's determination to make CRM a core value and business driver ensured it was a topic of regular discussion and exchange throughout the business which meant it slowly but surely made its way into the mainstream of conversation and practice due to the legitimacy given to CRM by the authority inherent in the CEO's position. Conversely, the demise of the PIO aspect of the CRM IT system was based largely on the lack of legitimacy various work groups gave to the new practice due to claims that current methods to pass on referrals were superior.

What the APPS case shows us is that Tuckman's stages of group development has relevance not just at the small group level but at an organization wide level. At first the *potential* for change emerged as an idea around which conversations formed to create awareness and eventually to articulate a desired outcome or goal, with sufficient legitimacy given to move the *potential* of change to another level of conversational interaction. The second aspect of conversational

[9] From a conversation I had with a member of the Leadership Forum on the 5th of October 2009 who mentioned "We don't talk about PIO any more. Some parts of the business use it but most don't and Brian has other more important things to deal with now with this economic downturn".

exchange around the change *potential,* related to the clash between current views held and prospects for different or newer alternative views. The strength of claims of legitimacy held by those for or against the change played a significant part in how prospects for change played out. The CEO's unwillingness to understand and negotiate a shared meaning around the PIO aspect of the CRM IT system contributed to PIO not being widely adopted mainly because current practices were perceived to be more legitimate. Where aspects of the CRM initiative were adopted (the storage of client data, restructuring workgroups, CRM skills evaluation and practice) various work groups accepted the changes due to the level of legitimation given to the changes which they found acceptable.

Once issues of difference had been worked through in the storming or confronting stage conversations shifted to the development of norms and shared practice which were then formalized in text by way of standard operating procedures, training materials, policies and so forth. The appointment of specialist roles brought about further conformity across the business ensuring over time that what started as a *potential* for change moved towards full assimilation and acceptance with full legitimacy into the organization's business philosophy, principles and practices.

Change transpires when individuals as active "participants with others" engage in an agency role in the formation of each of the four main entities in conversation. Again, the case shows that the process may not be and may in fact need not be sequential. There is a moving in and out of various levels of conversation space at any given time. However, when sufficient legitimacy exists for the explanations and justifications given as participants engage in the various levels of conversation associated with the formation of each of the four main entities the change potential will emerge or transition from initial prospects to eventual assimilation. What has just been described outlines how Tuckman's group development model and Berger and Luckmann's work on legitimation complement each other especially when brought together or situated in the four conversational themes (commencing, confronting, conforming and coalescing) which is provided in the following pages.

Stages of Group Development Tuckman (1965, 1977, 2001)	Levels of Legitimation Berger & Luckmann (1966)	Conversational Themes O'Neill	Legitimating Change in Conversational Themes O'Neill
Forming: Getting acquainted, goal setting, organizing, value clarification, creating purpose, awareness, orientation.	**Linguistic objectifications** The naming of things. Simple affirmations to the affect that this is how things are seen, and addresses the question "Why?"	**Commencing Conversations:** The key focus of commencing conversations is **ingression**, that is, this space is filled with utterances between members of a particular group (senior management, R&D, union, customer, etc) around the *potentials* for change. These utterances serve as an entry point into a change process.	Commencing conversations are legitimized by reference to customers, competition, shareholders, external economic conditions, government policy, etc, expectations or demands.
Storming: Assertiveness, conflict management, flexibility, kaleidoscope thinking, resistance, clarification, hostility.	**Theoretical propositions** Explanatory schemes seeking to relate various sets of objective meanings. These schemes are highly pragmatic, directly related to concrete actions.	**Confronting Conversations:** The key focus of confronting conversations is **colonization** and /or **negotiation**, that is, this space is filled with utterances that seek to influence the current perceptions held by other groups (staff, subordinates, other departments, etc) and engage them in conversations so they support and accept the change *potentials*.	Confronting conversations are legitimized by reference to power positions, authority, practical experience, policies, regulations, formal decisions and directives, threats, custom, culture, values, beliefs.
Norming: Communication, feedback, affirmation, entrepreneuring, networking, cooperation, involvement, cohesion, support	**Explicit theories** Comprehensive frames of reference, frequently entrusted to specialized personnel because of the complexity and differentiation.	**Conforming Conversations:** The key focus of conforming conversations is **adaptation**, that is, this space is filled with utterances centred around understanding and knowing how to alter, amend or adjust current views and practices in order to comply with the change.	Conforming conversations are legitimized by reference to other "world-class" , "leading edge", "best practice" organizations, business models, management theories & gurus, qualifications (MBA) or desiring to conform to certification body requirements (ISO, Baldridge etc)
Performing: Decision making, problem solving, rewarding, multicultural and diversity awareness, mentoring, productivity, achievement, interdependence, pride	**Symbolic universe** Bodies of theoretical tradition that integrate different provinces of meaning and encompass the institutional order in a symbolic totality. An all embracing frame of reference.	**Coalescing Conversations:** The key focus of coalescing conversations is **assimilation**, that is, this space is filled with utterances that accept, integrate and absorb the change into the formal, institutional and explicit framework of the organization.	The initial idea has emerged to the point where it is fully assimilated into all, or nearly all, conversational content and practices of the organization. It is now legitimized in the Vision, Mission and Values statement, company policy, procedure manuals, and legitimized by ISO or other accreditation systems.

Figure 5.7 : Linking Stages of Group Development, Change Management Conversational Themes, and Levels of Legitimation

5.8 Summary

Change *potentials* evolve or emerge, or are marginalized or discarded, as a result of the conversational space entered into and the legitimacy, or lack there of, given to the change *potential* in naturally occurring talk or utterances rather than through a “formal” control and command process of managing change. The *Conversational Themes and Legitimation Model* presented demonstrates how change is socially constructed as a result of the polyphonic nature of conversational interaction rather than through the singular voice of management or a change agent as it is often portrayed to be (Barrett, 2002, Elving, 2005), and that change *potentials* evolve and emerge as a direct result of the level of legitimacy that supports the change *potential* in naturally occurring talk or utterances.

What has been argued for in this chapter is the need to move beyond a linear conception of Tuckman's work to where the individual is viewed as an active subject having an agency role “with others” in the formation of each of the four main entities of his model which contributes to the process of becoming or change within a group or organization. This notion of becoming is to be used as a framework to understand the multiple becomings present in each of the four stages of group development. Tuckman's stages of group transitions may be finite, but conversational practices are not and the absence of conversations makes it problematic for Tuckman's model to omit conversations and its role in the social construction of change. This has now been overcome.

Finally, a synthesis of Tuckman’s model with Berger and Luckmann’s four levels of legitimation has been made situating both within a conversational framework associated with the formation of each of the four main entities.

Chapter Six: Summary and Conclusions

6.1 Overall summary

The objective of this thesis then has been threefold: 1) to examine how and in what ways the polyphonic nature of ordinary and naturally occurring talk or utterance contributes to the process and social construction of change; 2) to examine how change is legitimized in talk or utterances, as more often than not, legitimation is the communication strategy used monophonically by management to initiate and support continuing claims for change; and 3) to propose a new interpretive framework that offers a representation of change as a dynamic, polyphonic, participative conversational process in place of the all too popular monophonic (subject-verb-object) offering that much of the literature developed for managers and consults is based on.

A review of Tuckman's work on developmental sequence in small groups (Tuckman, 1965), and his forming, storming, norming, performing model has been offered, noting that whilst explanations are provided in his work on the contribution of interpersonal behaviours within each stage, he does not provide insight or explanation on what exactly produces the change that progresses the group from one phase to another. My work addresses this issue by demonstrating that rather than progressing in a linear or stage-by-stage transition where Cartesian separation of the subject from each of the stages is often assumed, change is achieved through the active "participation with others" who are fully involved in inhabiting each of the four stages and the corresponding conversational spaces that open up with the *potential* for change within each phase.

The contribution of my thesis provides a perspective that moves beyond a linear conception of Tuckman's where the individual is viewed as an active subject having an agency role with others in the formation of each of the four main entities. I have extended the work of Tuckman by proposing the concept of *becoming*, as a framework to understand the multiple becomings present in each of the four stages of group development. It focuses on how exchanges give rise to new positions and possibilities for collective becomings, hence change.

The second major contribution of my work has been to demonstrate how these new positions and possibilities for collective becomings evolve from initial ideas in utterances to full acceptance and practice if, and only if, there is sufficient legitimacy given to the *potential* of change within the conversational space and exchange that a group inhabits at a given point in time. The source of legitimacy for a change *potential* is based on how groups view any claims of legitimacy against their own justifications, explanations and perceptions that permeates their particular conversational space. This notion of the evolution of initial ideas in utterances to full acceptance and practice is based on Berger and Luckmann's four levels of legitimation in the social construction of knowledge (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) where legitimation in language, and by implication conversational practices, serves as the principal instrumentality of legitimation (1966: 82) to produce new meanings and to integrate meanings already attached to disparate institutional processes (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 110).

To illustrate the non-linear, open and incomplete, emergent and polyphonic nature of the social construction of change a *Conversational Themes and Legitimation Model* has been offered along with a synthesis that situates Tuckman's stages of group development model and Berger and Luckmann's four levels of legitimation within a conversational framework. This has been done in my *Linking Stages of Group Development, Change Management Conversational Themes, and Levels of Legitimation* (figure 5.7) framework that accounts for how change *potentials* evolve from initial ideas to full assimilation as a result of inhabiting four recognizable types of conversation space which I call commencing, confronting, conforming, and coalescing conversations. This is brought about through active participation with others who are fully involved in inhabiting each of the corresponding conversational spaces that open up the *potential* for change.

6.2 Considerations for practitioners

Whilst I do not presume to offer generalizations I do believe there is an opportunity to present some considerations based on the work presented in this thesis for change practitioners, be they those who are formally tasked with implementing some form of change or those simply working and managing through the ongoing emergent nature of change taking place about us at an ever increasing rate.

1) Most change initiatives will impact on, to varying degrees, what are held to be perceptions about the current goals, roles and behavioral norms for a particular group or organization in which change is being experienced. Therefore, any deliberate or managed attempt to change or alter current “realities” will need to account for the on-going talk and conversational practices that legitimate the current goals, roles and behavioral norms held within the groups affected by the change.

2) If perceptions of current and future states are conversationally constructed as relational or group-dependent realities within a unique social context, and not something that is situated in the mind of individuals apart from a particular group or social context (Gergen, 1999), then a change program should provide multiple opportunities for the groups affected by a proposed change to participate in conversational based activities that allow for the re-construction of new perceptions around the goals, roles and behavioral norms in light of the proposed change.

3) Those tasked with change will need to work within and alter the current “explanations” and “justifications” used to legitimize current realities so that new perceptions, especially perceptions related to the goals, roles and behavioral norms are also legitimized and integrated into a feasible whole (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 72) that is acceptable to the people and groups that make up the organization.

4) There is a need for a significant shift away from the all too common tendency to focus on the monophonic or single voice of the leader driving change

(PowerPoint presentations, e-mail, formal plans), to a more polyphonic approach where multiple voices representing the various groups within an organization are able to contribute to the co-construction of new meanings and new relationships that hold significance. Acknowledging change as a relational and conversationally driven process, while more complex and difficult to conceptualize than the popular models of change currently offered, may help to improve the likelihood of the successful acceptance and adoption of new attitudes and actions by organizational members.

5) Apart from integration, legitimating conversations serve a secondary function which is to enforce member conformity to the “rules” or “laws” that are unique for membership within any given organization or group as a result of fulfilling a sociological need to make human behavior more stable and predictable (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). Organizational rules and laws are explained and justified within the language and conversational practices of the members within that organization, and its various groups and sub-groups. Change in essence therefore is often asking members within any particular law and rule making organization or group to break the existing “laws” and “rules”.

This again has significant implications for those tasked with the management of change, for if meaning and perceptions of reality are deeply embedded in the language and conversations that take place in an organization, then it is only through a change in the conversational practices that take place within that group that meaningful change can be achieved.

6) Communication should not be seen as a tool used *within* the change process, rather, communication should be embraced from a conversational perspective where conversation or ordinary utterances are viewed as creating prospects for change, and that it does so by a process that is largely dependent on engagement with others present within a given context. Put another way, change should be seen as a phenomenon that occurs within the social context of conversation (Ford, 1999; Heracleous and Barrett, 2001; Jabri, 2006) that results from unfolding meaning making and meaning giving in the group

context, rather than mere agreement or consensus by an individual that is short-lived (Jabri, Adrian, and Boje, 2006).

7) Efforts to superimpose or to force through new realities based on perceptions held by management rarely bring about positive change or a shift in perceptions within other groups that make up that organization. A proposed change threatens to destabilize deeply held perceptions of what are believed to be the goals, roles and behavioral norms of a group and unless opportunities are created for meaningful interaction between members of various groups to reconstruct new meaning and significance in relation to the change, a shift in currently held perceptions is unlikely to take place. Current perceptions are legitimized within the context and conversations of the members within a relational network, and unless all levels of the conversational legitimation process are contributing to the reconstruction and support of new realities and meaning, it is unlikely change will transpire. The existing “explanations” and “justifications” act as a resisting force to the proposed changes and will ensure existing perceptions and behaviors congruent with and reflective of the current practices are maintained.

8) There is a need, therefore, to create multiple opportunities for interaction between the various groups that make up an organization to legitimize new perceptions and new relational networks of meaning in regard to the proposed changes. Even though the effort required to open up to new forms of conversation is risky and time consuming it is a vital process necessary to ensure new meanings and understandings are assimilated into ordinary day-to-day conversations and actions of all who are considered to be the “organization” (Barrett et al., 1995).

9) Conversational practices within an organization are polyphonic in nature, emergent, often unclear or incomplete, contextually based, full of implicit and subjective meanings, subject to misinterpretation, misunderstandings, emotionally charged, and often encountered as struggles of power and protection around the various views and perceptions about the goals, roles, and behavioral norms between members from various groups, sub-groups and

cliques, that make up any given organization. Change practitioners will need to accept this ambiguity and see their role more as facilitators of change by engaging others in conversation rather than directing or managing it through command and control.

10) Organizations are made up of multiple conversational themes or spaces that members move in and out of depending on who they are with and what the focus of those conversations are at any given point of time, *and it is within these spaces that the potential for change exists and ultimately where prospects for change play out.* For example, a manager may give verbal consent and agreement to a directive given at Board level when presented with it, but once with his or her own team they may speak disparagingly of that directive for one reason or another, which the Board would be oblivious to until some future date when the expectation given in the directive was not forthcoming. Therefore, a change initiative is likely to be more successful if conversational spaces are opened up and participation for exchange is encouraged so *collectively* participants can explore how the purpose and processes associated with a particular change held by one group are actively explored polyphonically with another group's conversationally constructed aspirations related to their perceptions about their current goals (purpose), roles (subject positions) and controls (behavioural norms and values) in light of a proposed change.

Again, the above comments are given purely as considerations for change practitioners to stimulate reflection and further inquiry into alternative view points and methods when working with the process of change.

6.3 The limitations of the study

To record and analyze the role of all the conversations contributing to a particular change process is a far greater task than any one person, or even two years of field work, could realistically complete (Wolcott 1999: 29). Therefore, the study was limited to the observation and recording of conversations related to one significant change initiative[10] implemented in one multinational organization operating throughout the Asia Pacific Rim. An

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[10] the CRM IT System in APPS

opportunity to conduct a similar exercise in another comparable organization would add to the credibility of the study and the claims and propositions given. Unfortunately, the opportunity to work both as a “full-time” researcher and as an independent observer whilst carrying out contract work as a consult does not present itself all that often. Commitments to full-time employment limit the opportunity greatly.

Also, whilst the basis of the work presented in this thesis is centred around the implementation of the CRM IT System in APPS it should be stated that other change initiatives were also taking place in APPS which may or may not have contributed positively or negatively to the initiative presented in the thesis. How or if this was the case of course has not been covered or addressed.

An area of interest for further research and analysis would be to develop some hypothesis based on the theoretical frameworks presented in this thesis to test for possible generalizations that could be applied more widely to the application and understanding of the process of change.

6.4 Considerations for Further Research

The work presented in this thesis is by no means complete. A number of questions and topics for further research build around the interpretative framework introduced in this thesis document present themselves.

6.4.1 The interpretative polyphonic framework used in this thesis to understand the agency role of conversation in the process of change has been developed from and applied to one regional property services business. The question is will it be as fruitful if applied to other industries or businesses? For example, manufacturing, or construction, or procurement, or consulting organizations, or even in not-for-profit organizational settings, such as healthcare or government? Further application of the interpretative polyphonic framework in other organizational settings has the potential to open practitioners and academics alike to new insights into the role of ordinary and mundane utterances in the formation, function and ongoing transformational change of organizations.

6.4.2 The method for gathering data used for this thesis, using conversations to study conversations, is very much at odds with traditional methods for learning about organizational change such as interviews, surveys and questionnaires. The potential for biased comments, unintentionally brought about by the researcher's "intervention" challenges the accuracy of data gathered to furnish us with insights and understanding about change processes when survey and interviews have been used as the primary method for gathering data. Therefore, there is an opportunity to develop this "conversation to study conversation" method further, both for application in academic research and for practitioner's wanting to be effective and active participants in a change process.

6.4.3 The field of Organization Development has for sometime now recognized the need to redefine their offering (Bradford & Burke 2005) and have been seeking relevance for their practices and methods with the embrace of postmodern and constructionist applications. There is an opportunity to align the interpretative polyphonic framework introduced in this thesis, and the methods used to do the field work with the new developments taking place in the Organization Development camp.

6.4.4 David Boje (2008) in touching on the development in the field of transorganizational consulting, calls for practitioners and academics alike to forgo the tendency to focus on only one organization and to look at the complex interactions that take place between many organizations. There is a possibility to expand and develop the interpretative polyphonic framework introduced in this thesis to include the agency role of conversation across multiple sites, thereby possibly adding to our knowledge of change processes at a transorganizational, cross border and industry level.

These are but some of the areas for further research and consideration that this thesis opens up for further research, study and application.

6.5 Conclusion

That change is a constant fact of organizational life and that something as common and ordinary as day-to-day talk or conversation has a significant role and contribution in the process of that change is what this thesis has argued for. The thesis asserts that rather than understanding change as a carefully managed process progressing in a linear or stage-by-stage transition towards a predetermined outcome as it is often assumed to be, change is achieved through the active “participation with others” who are fully involved in inhabiting various conversational spaces (Commencing, Confronting, Conforming, and Coalescing Conversations) that open up the *potential* for change within each of these spaces.

I have extended the work of Tuckman by proposing the concept of becoming, as a framework to understand the multiple becomings present in each of the four stages of group development presented in his model and how exchanges give rise to new positions and possibilities for collective becomings, hence change. Finally, I have been able to situate Tuckman’s stages of group development model and Berger and Luckmann’s four levels of legitimation within a conversational framework by linking them to the role of conversation (Commencing, Confronting, Conforming, and Coalescing Conversations) in the process and legitimation of change.