

ResoFact

{ Articulating and monitoring the source of
organisational performance and integrity

- ⌘ Organisations of all kinds are losing trust and are becoming exceedingly unattractive
- ⌘ People work in organisations as grudge rather than this being desirable
- ⌘ Low loyalty, low productivity
- ⌘ Scandals galore

The Status Quo

- ⌘ High performance
- ⌘ Strategic integrity
- ⌘ Deep rooted ethics
- ⌘ Laying the groundwork for superior reputation and productive stakeholder relations
- ⌘ Embedding an unassailable competitive advantage

The business case

Issues in Business Ethics 35

Dominik Heil

Ontological Fundamentals for Ethical Management

Heidegger and the Corporate World

REPUTATION
INSTITUTE

 Springer

UNDERSTANDING AND LEADING ORGANIZATIONS A HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

Dominik Heil

The purpose of this paper is to argue for an ontological investigation into the very nature of organizations and their leadership, in the tradition of Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology. Organizations in general, and corporations in particular, play an ever more prominent role in contemporary society and, given their pervasive influence in all spheres of life, it seems surprising that this has not led to a vibrant ontological inquiry into what they are in their very nature. In choosing a guide for engaging in such an ontological inquiry, Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology seems promising, as he made the most prominent contribution to the ontological project in the twentieth century—a time that coincides not only with the rise of corporations, but also with the corporatization of many other aspects of contemporary society.

Real progress in any science takes place when the fundamental assumptions of the very nature of entities to be researched are acknowledged as untenable, and are revised in a more or less radical manner. In such instances—as Michael Erwin points out, with reference to Heidegger—the inquiry, strictly speaking, is no longer scientific but philosophical—or, more precisely, ontological. Ontology is defined as “the branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being” and is also understood to be “the study of beings as such,” but it can be a “regional” ontology, concerned with the being or nature of e.g. numbers, space, or a work of literature.” In this essay, I want to submit the phenomenon “organization” and, by implication, the field of organizational studies to such an ontological investigation, with the goal of making such a contribution.

An ontological investigation is itself pre-scientific and serves to build a foundation for establishing and developing appropriate theory-generating and scientific approaches, and, consequently, research agendas and research methodologies. Just like any other academic discipline, organizational sciences and studies

necessarily rest on the assumptions about the very nature of the entity with which they are concerned, namely, the organization—whether these assumptions are specifically articulated or not. As Heidegger himself points out, science and ontology are, therefore, inherently inseparable. Any science presupposes an understanding of the very nature of the entity that is being researched, and can only research and understand that which is inherently permissible in its way to ascertain entities.” If the fundamental ontological assumptions of the very nature of the organization as the entity that organizational studies is concerned with turn out to be untenable, all the hard work built on these assumptions would turn out to be of limited validity, or even to be misleading.”

Concerns about an Ontology for Organizational Studies

Thomas C. Powell has made a foundational contribution to the academic field of strategic management—and, by implication, organizational studies—by explicitly confronting these fields of investigation with philosophical questioning and inquiry.¹ His arguments against an ontological discourse are not novel from a philosophical perspective. They deserve their prominence in the following argument, however, as they are a rare occurrence in the field of strategic management, in two ways. First, they articulate the implicit, but until then largely unarticulated, empiricist and pragmatic philosophical foundation of the vast majority of the prominent scholarly work in these academic disciplines, especially in the English-speaking world. Second, by doing so, Powell's papers provide the opportunity to engage with this philosophical bias and expose it to further scrutiny and development where this is clearly relevant, even according to Powell himself.²

Unlike many other academic fields—for example, the political science or law—which were generated by philosophical insight and are guided by an ongoing, more or less vibrant

PHILOSOPHY TODAY

SPRING 2010

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ARTICULATING ESKOM'S ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

A HERMENEUTIC
STUDY

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Thought leadership

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To create ethical high performance companies we need a fundamental re-think of what a company is in the first instance...

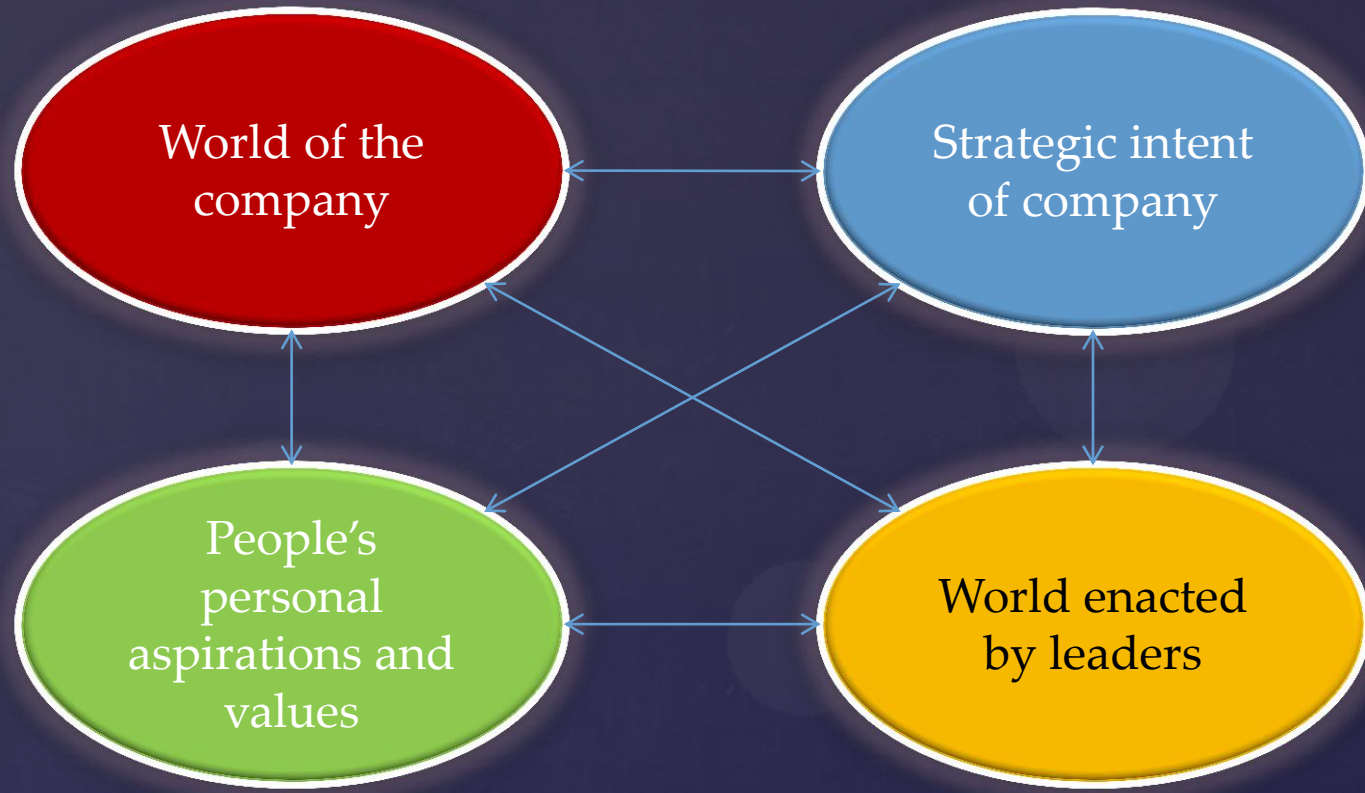
Physical Objects (i.e. stones, tools)	Organisms (i.e. plants, animal)	Human Beings (i.e. you, me)	Works (i.e. art, architecture, literature)
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A new starting point for
understanding organisations
and how they perform

- ⌘ Companies are “works”: the type of entity that sets up a reality or “world”.
- ⌘ “World” is the taken for granted understanding how things are around here
- ⌘ Human understanding, thinking and action is fundamentally a function of the world we find ourselves in.

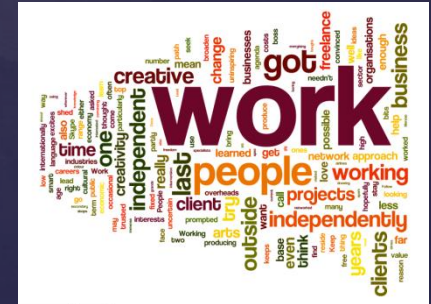


Companies and Action



Elevating Strategic Integrity

-
- A 3D bar chart with a red arrow pointing upwards, symbolizing growth and progress. The chart features several bars of increasing height, colored in a gradient from blue to red. A large red arrow is superimposed on the bars, pointing towards the top right. In the background, there is a faint grid and a line graph showing an upward trend.



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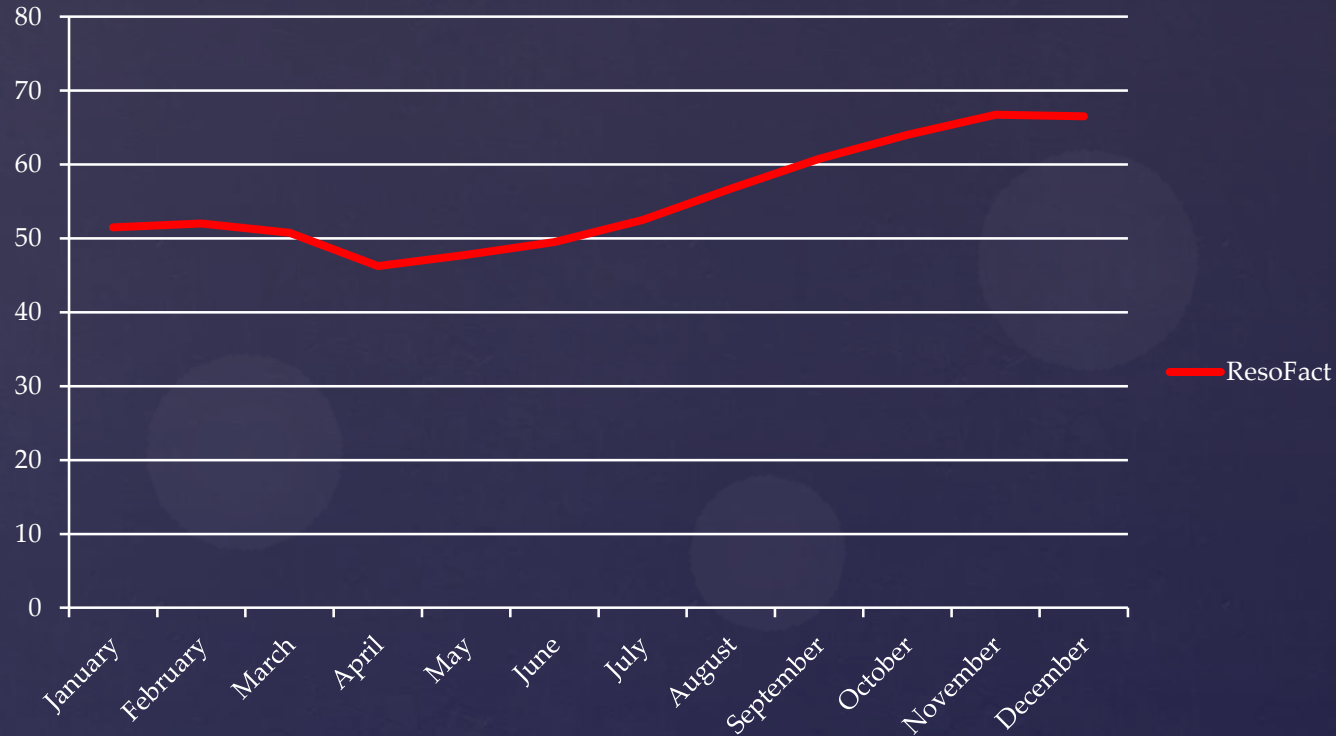


Organisations cause performance by resonating with employees and involved stakeholders:

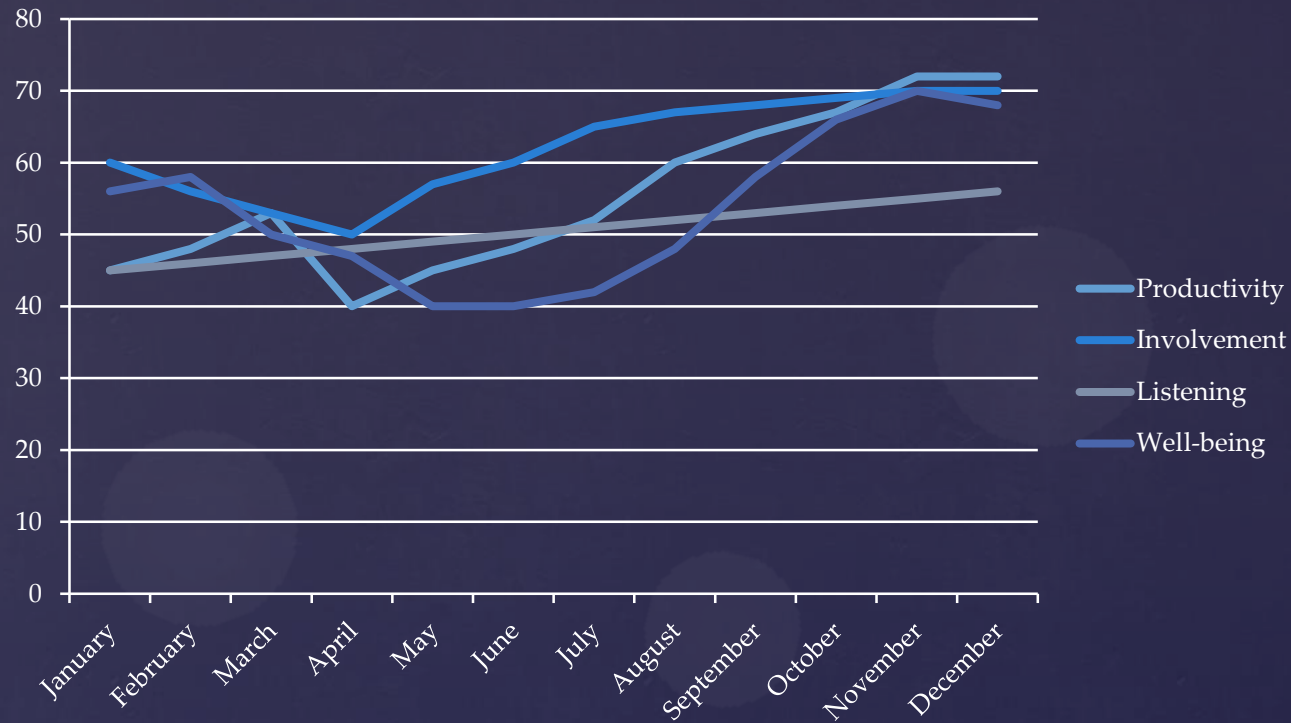
- ⌘ Do people become **productive** by being in the organisation?
- ⌘ Are people **involved** when they are in the organisation?
- ⌘ Are people **being heard** and do they listen to others in the organisation?
- ⌘ Does the organisation give people a **sense of well-being**?

Organisational Resonance

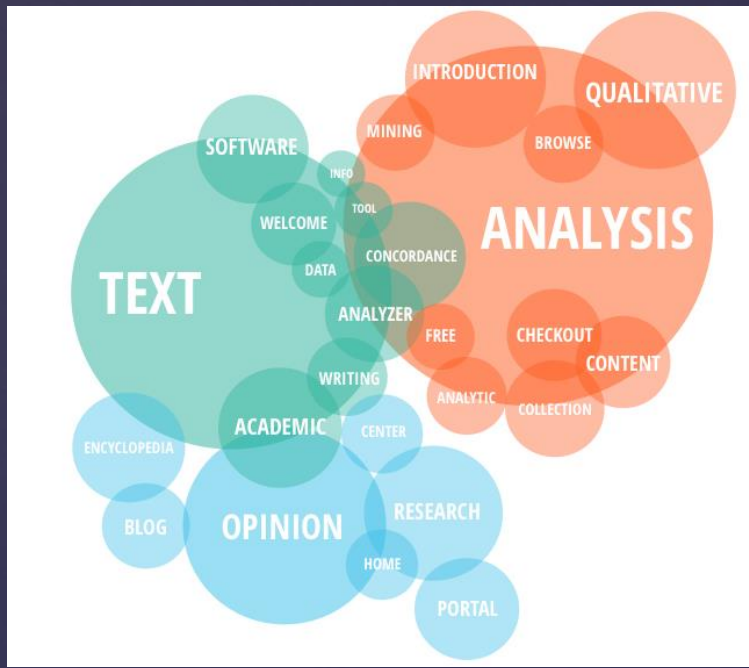
ResoFact



ResoFact Display



ResoFact Component Analysis



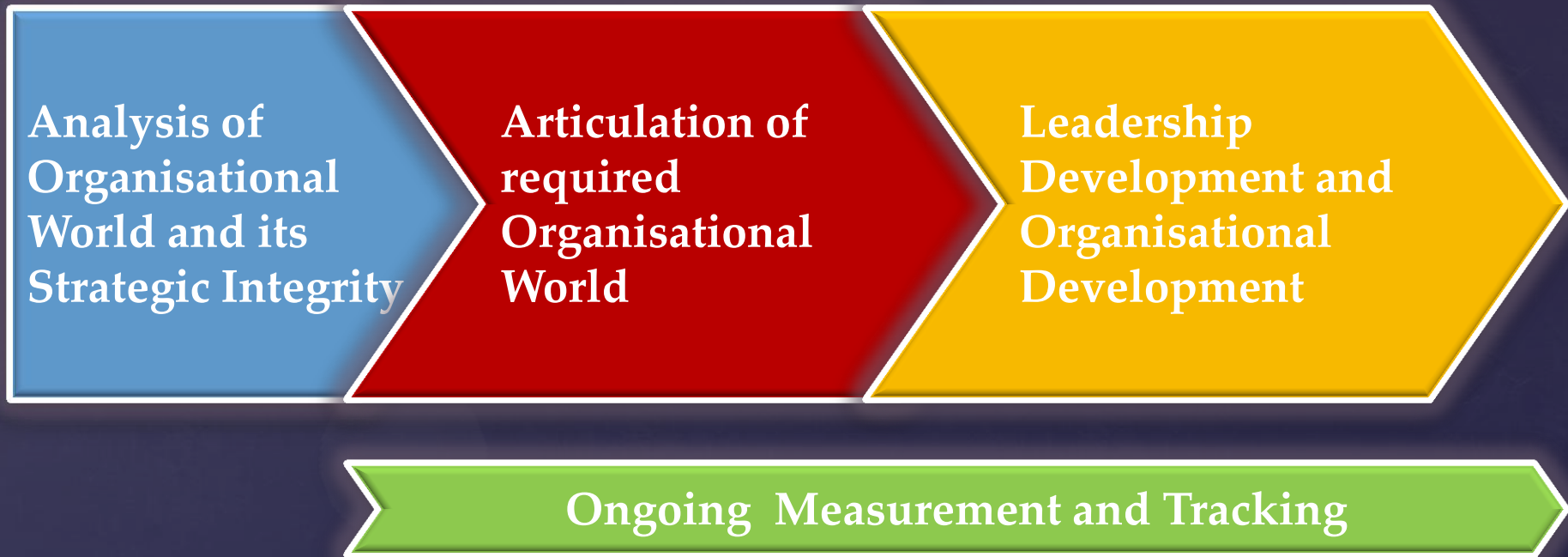
ResoFact Text Analysis (cont.)

Desired World

The kind of world the company needs to achieve its strategy

THEMES	DIVISIONS
High performance (winning positive culture)	Tx, Cx, Ex, HR
Value employees	Dx, SOP, Tx
Competent leadership	GBx, SOP
Common goal and understanding	SOP, Ex

OTHER IMPORTANT COMMENTS	DIVISIONS
High performance culture	GBx, Dx, Cx, TM
Make employees accountable	Tx, Ex, TM
Leaders need to be decisive	Tx, TM
A learning organisation	Cx, GCD



Building ethical companies:
making it happen



How can you elevate ethics and performance in your organisation?



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