

Spiral Dynamics

Spiral Dynamics is a framework for understanding the core of human thinking, how people change, organise, develop consciousness, make choices, create strategies, and communicate. It can help effectively develop relationships with people so that with a minimum amount of effort you can talk the same language as the other person. On an individual basis it can help optimise communication.

At an organisational level Spiral Dynamics can be the framework for helping an organisation to understand why some groups of people need different treatment from others and the logical steps it needs to take to move from wherever it is, to where it wants to be.

Spiral Dynamics identifies eight points on the spiral which have corresponding outside Life Conditions and inside Thinking Systems. Where there is a match, then the organisation is at its healthiest. These are given colours in order to reduce the risk of suggesting any is 'right'.

Beige - outside is primitive/a state of nature - inside people are concerned with basic survival needs (banding together to stay alive, automatic and instinctive)

Purple - outside is mysterious and frightening - inside people placate the 'founder' (this could be the family run organisation, maintaining the ways of the family member who started it) and gather together for safety (kinship, tribes and lucky charms are given power)

Red - outside is rough and hard like a jungle (Microsoft's mission could be world domination and Oracle's to kill Microsoft) - inside people fight to survive in spite of others (egocentrically concerned with power and empires)

Blue - outside is controlled by higher authorities and guilt driven (IBM twenty years ago, local authorities in the past?) - inside people obey the rightful higher authority (and stay firmly 'inside the box', in control, with clear lines of authority and structure, enjoying stability)

Orange - outside is full of opportunities to take control (any fast growth sector will require plenty of entrepreneurial attitude) - inside people will pragmatically test options for success (and measure success in terms of achievement, materialism and a strive/drive approach)

Green - outside is the natural habitude for all humanity (many HR people would like staff to be well looked after and happily working in teams even if this is not seeing a pay-off in profit or in service delivery) - inside people form clubs and communities to experience growth (requiring a strict conduct of consensus, community bond, harmony and equity)

Yellow - outside is a complex system at risk of collapse (leading edge individuals and organisations such as Q.Learning! or Letts Publishing which challenged the big Publishing Houses hold on prices in order to allow freedom of information especially for children) - inside people are learning how to be free (using integrative thinking, systemic processes, with flexible behaviours to stay 'in the flow')

Turquoise - outside is a single, living interdependent entity (possibly the idea behind the UN) - inside people are seeking the order beneath earth's chaos (holistic, global and experiential)