In Search of Marketing Management

A Study of Managing in Marketing

Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

Peter William Lenney

Submitted: June 2006

This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Lancaster University. This thesis is my own work, and has not been submitted in substantially the same form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

Abstract

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This empirical study attempts to craft a richer description, and deeper understanding, of the work of managers in marketing than that elaborated in the managerial work literature and within the marketing management discourse. Perspectives on both the character of the 'content' and 'conduct' of marketing manager work are sought.

Several marketing managers, operating in diverse commercial contexts, were interviewed and observed. The field research deployed an array of longitudinal methodologies including programmes of diary-stimulated interviews, work shadowing, participant self-observation, and action research.

A description of managerial work is developed that rests at an 'ontic level' between that of classical / 'Fayolian' management theory and the conceptualisations generated through the empirical study of managerial work. The developed model characterises the 'substance' of managerial conduct as the *'shaping and sustaining of commitments'*. The model,

based on a metaphorical temporal rope, elaborates the various interweaving strands and threads of what is argued to be the quintessence of managerial behaviour, the forms and characteristics of organizational commitments, the character of their crafting and conducing, and the properties of the so-emerged commitment webs.

The 'content' of the subject managers' work is elaborated through the concept of endeavour portfolios, and the inherently political, weak-situation / wicked-problem character of their endeavours is illuminated. The 'rhetorical technology' of the marketing discourse is found to permeate the content of the subject managers' endeavours, and provide adequate labels for the strands and threads of their endeavours. However, outside of their use in the staging of truth effects, the processual prescriptions of the marketing discourse are not evident in their daily work. The marketing management discourse is found not to speak to the milieu, or substance of the subject managers marketing management. This 'substance' rests in their pursuit of innovative reconciliations for the complex of contradictions that confronts them.

For my Mum and Dad

My sincere thanks must go to all the firms that welcomed me with open arms, and to the managers who allowed me such intimate access to their work lives. I am hugely indebted to Professor Geoff Easton, my supervisor, who has made the last five years an exceptional experience, and a remarkable education. However, my greatest debt of gratitude is to my wife Pauline, who has been a tower of strength during what has been the most challenging period of our life together. She has stuck with me through thick and thin, launched me on my current academic trajectory, turned me back into something approximating a normal human being, and sustained me emotionally and financially over the last few years. Pauline – Thank you – you are simply amazing!

" Katy"

" Yes Dad"

"What's Marketing?"

" Daaad...!!"

" What?"

"It's a word...silly"

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Research Questions

" *Maybe some of the time spent by some teachers on producing unreadable esoterica would be better used in listening to consumers, watching practical marketing men in action and, if possible, having a go at it themselves"*

[King 1985 p18]

Little concerted attention has been paid to the second of Hunt's [1983] fundamental explanada of marketing: *"the behaviour of sellers directed at consummating exchanges".* The predominant focus of the marketing discourse has been the first of Hunt's fundamental explanada - *"the behaviour of buyers directed at consummating exchange"*, and marketing's law-like generalisations [Sheth et al 1999], particularly as they relate to customers and markets.

" [We]..*need to undertake more in-depth ethnographic studies of what marketers in different contexts actually* ***do,*** *relating the intentions and understandings of those managers to the marketing actions that are subsequently taken"*

[Brownlie et al 1994 p9 – emphasis added]

This thesis seeks to respond to Brownlie et al's call for research, a call to which only Brownlie himself [1997] seems to have responded. As will be illustrated, studies in the managerial work field have been extensive but provide only a narrow window on 'managing in marketing'. There is a wealth of prescription and proscription within the marketing management discourse and pedagogy, as to what marketing managers ought, and ought not, to be 'doing'; but there is little available empirical insight into what managers in marketing actually 'do', and how they go about 'doing' it. Although the so-called 'Marketing Management' discourse provides little perspective on 'managing' in marketing, it can, however, be taken to strongly infer the 'content' of marketing manager jobs. The first aspect of this empirical study attempts to craft an understanding of the 'content' of marketing manager work, together with insights into how the strands of activity of marketing managers interconnect with the issues and problems they deal with, and which constitute their 'jobs'. I seek to confront the following questions:

- What are the characteristics of the 'content' of marketing managers' jobs?
- What is the particular nature of the constellation of issues and problems that they confront, and with which they have to grapple?
- Does the nature of the 'content' of their work, and that of the 'issue-problem constellation' that confronts them, shape distinctive characteristics of marketing management work?

- To what extent are the 'issue-problem constellations' of 'managers in marketing' reflected in the prescription of the marketing management school of thought?

As will be seen, I have attempted to address the last of these questions without falling prey to the methodological problems of earlier empirical studies of managerial work, and have not assumed that abstract marketing management processes should, and will be, simply manifest in observable behaviour.

Brownlie & Saren conclude, from Brownlie's largely unreported quasi-ethnography of several marketing managers, that, although marketing managers do engage in the normative practices inhered within the marketing discourse and pedagogy:

"..[they] *do not engage with them in ways prescribed by the theory. Nor can the processes they are part of be accounted for...through the currently available language of marketing management"*

[Brownlie & Saren 1997 p155]

And they rightly raise the question as to:

"...whether it is possible to construct more persuasive accounts of marketing management without understanding the processes and practices of organizing as they express themselves in the dynamic socio-

linguistic interactions that occur between actors, whether they are labelled marketing managers, or something else."
[Brownlie & Saren 1997 p148]

The descriptions of managerial work developed to date have been, in the main, decidedly 'thin' [Geertz 1973 p7]. The managerial work literature has largely characterised the 'visible' activities of managers; this simply manifest purposeful activity, this 'outer skin' of behaviour, I will term conduct. Conduct is the 'visible' behaviour and activity of managers engaged in their individual, and collaborative, pursuit of organization and organizational performance. I shall endeavour to develop a 'thicker' description managerial work, one that reveals the 'substance' of the manifest managerial conduct of 'marketers'. This is a perspective that I hope will assist in the development of an explanatory account of managerial work, and will contribute to answering Hales' question " *Why do managers do what they do"* [1999].

In summary, this study attempts to develop a perspective on the 'substance' of the conduct of marketing managers, if not of all managers, and on the 'substance' of their marketing management work. These research endeavours build on, and respond to, the marketing discourse critical work of Brownlie [1991], Brownlie & Saren [1997], Hackley [1998] & Brown [1993]; the managerial work studies of Mangham [1979], Hannaway [1989], and Mangham & Pye [1991]; Weicks conception of 'sensemaking' [1995], and the perspectives on collaborative work developed by Winograd & Flores [1986].

This dissertation on the nature of marketing managerial work begins by reviewing and critiquing the managerial work literature [Chapter 2], and by highlighting the perspectives on marketing managerial work that exist within the marketing management discourse and pedagogy [Chapter 3]. The methods used in the study, and its empirical foundations, are outlined in Chapter 4. Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the characterisation of the 'content' of the subject marketing managers' endeavours, and its character; this process culminates in a conceptualisation of the 'substance of marketing management'. Chapter 7 moves on to a re-conceptualisation of managerial work, and develops a model of the 'substance of managerial conduct'. The concluding Chapter 8 brings together all of the developed conceptualisations, and '*rounds out*' the marketing managers' job.

Chapter 2

Managing & Marketing Managerial Work

Starting with a trickle in Scandinavia [Carlsson 1951], and stimulated into a torrent by the 'folklore versus fact' controversy of Mintzberg [1975] origin, the stream of empirical investigations into what became known as *'the nature of managerial work'*, has spanned over five decades, and turned back into a trickle.

Several excellent literature reviews punctuate the publication stream (Campbell et al [1970], Carroll & Gillen [1987], Grint [1995], Hales [1986, 1999, 2001a & b], Martinko & Gardner [1985], McCall et al [1978], Scarborough [1998], Stewart [1983, 1989, 1994], Thomas [2003] and Whitley [1989]). In combination, these reviews provide a lucid synthesis and critique of the field, and they have consequently provided much material for this chapter. I am greatly indebted to the authors of these articles.

A tabular 'guidebook' to the core of the empirical 'managerial work' literature is provided in Appendix A.

2.0 The Nature of Managerial Work

2.1 The 'Findings' of Empirical Investigations

In their timely review of the forty earliest diary and observational studies to pass their 'quality' filter, McCall et al [1978] summarised the output of these investigations into what they termed the *"characteristics of managers and managing"*. As we shall see, other researchers would have done well to take note of McCall et al's careful use of words. The research informing their review comprised investigations of many different forms of supervisory personnel, from first level foremen 'up' to chief executive. McCall et al concluded, that in combination, the emerging body of empirical work supported the following broad conclusions with respect to the '*characteristics-of-managing*':

1. Managers work long hours
2. Managers are busy - they are involved in a large number of episodes/incidents per day, with these episodes being characterised by brevity; the pace of events is high
3. A managers work is fragmented:
    a. Managers are interrupted frequently
    b. They show *"a tendency from foreman to chief executive.. to handle problems in rapid-fire order, interspersing significant and trivial matters in no particular pattern"*
    c. Decisions are broken into bits, and interspersed with other decisions and activities

4. The managers job is varied:
    a. Managers are engaged in a large number of contacts of many different types, both internal and external
    b. They deal with a variety of content; at lower levels that variety being largely within content areas.
    c. Their activities encompass a broad spectrum, from paperwork and phone calls to speech making
5. Managers spend most of their time within their own firms
6. A managers work is predominantly oral:
    a. At higher levels up to 90% of their time is spent in oral communication
    b. Verbal interactions are predominantly face-to-face in formal and informal meetings, together with *"fleeting contacts"*
    c. Many issues of varying character, functionality, urgency and importance are often dealt with within one fleeting contact
7. Managers use a lot of contacts:
    a. Contacts are predominantly internal and lateral i.e. not chain-of-command
    b. The intensity of lateral contacts peaks at middle manager level, being lower at both junior and senior levels
8. Managers are not reflective planners:
    a. Behaviour is reactive, being focussed on current events and information
    b. *"To the extent that managers want to plan, look ahead, to keep a broader perspective, it is not an easy thing to do"*

9. Information is the basic ingredient of managers' work - capturing, processing and disseminating information dominates their working day

The recent studies of Tengblad [2003, 2004], which replicate both Carlsson's [1951], and Mintzberg's [1971] empirical work, would appear to demonstrate, that with one exception, little has changed in the characteristics of managing, since these milestone studies were conducted. The intensity of travel has, it would appear, increased markedly in line with the growth of the geographic scope of business operations. This travel intensity is seemingly driven by a continuing and overwhelming preference for the richness of communication provided by face-to-face oral contact [Daft & Lengel 1986]; despite the advent of advanced telecommunications, video-conferencing and e-mail. 'Empowerment', and the much heralded, though little evidenced, shift towards 'post-bureaucratic', de-centralised, soft-network organizations would appear to have made little impact on the day-to-day pre-occupations and work activities of managers [Hilmer & Donnellon 1994; Hales 2002]. There would appear to be no great sign of the 'new managerial work' [Drucker 1988].

" *Recent organizational change has created not post-bureaucratic, network organizations but merely slimmed down versions of bureaucracy - ' bureaucracy-lite' so to speak.....Reports of the death of the 'manager' are a trifle premature"* [Hales 2001b p54]

In his most recent review of the literature, when synthesizing the conclusions of the empirical work of the field, Hales [2001a] coins the acronym F.R.E.N.E.T.I.C. to capture the characteristics of managerial work:

- **F**ragmented
    - Involving rapid commuting between short interrupted activities
- **R**eactive
    - Responding to, rather than initiating requests
- **E**xigent
    - Concerned with unforeseen, ad hoc, day-to-day matters: things which crop up
- **N**egotiated
    - Involving bargaining over the boundaries, content and style of the job
- **E**mbedded
    - Where decisions and plans are developed whilst engaged in other activities; *"one activity providing the context or even opportunity for the other"* [Hales 1986; Kotter 1982]
- **T**ense
    - Involving pressure, competing demands and conflicts
- **I**nteractive
    - Involving a high level of face-to-face communication

- **C**oncrete
    - Concerned with actions rather than concepts, and practicalities rather than abstractions

My 20 years at the managerial coalface lead me to strongly identify with the spirit, if not all of the connotations, of Hales' FRENETIC acronym. I believe it represents an elegant synthesis of the conclusions of the empirical studies in the field. The one major exception is to the claim that managers are almost wholly reactive, and rarely pro-active. It will be argued that the acronymic 'R' may well have been put to better use in capturing managerial work's repetitive and recursive character.

There is one other general 'finding' in the literature that should be noted before we move on. It is persistent in its presence, though it is only ever given fleeting attention. Very few, if any, managers solely engage in 'managing'. The vast majority spend a substantial component of their time, either individually or collectively, doing work of a technical-specialist nature. In search of management, many studies appear to have been looking for 'managing' as a job, not as part of a job [Glover 2002].

2.2 The Core Methodological Problems

Research in the 'managerial work' field exploded with Mintzberg's [1975] contention, based on his structured observational studies, that he had discovered the *"fact"* about management in contrast to the *"folklore"*, promulgated by Fayol [1916/1949], and by implication, that disseminated by those who followed him, all of whom, to a large extent, re-stated his perspectives albeit in somewhat different forms [e.g. Gulick 1937; Barnard 1938; Drucker 1954].

What Mintzberg [1970, 1971, 1973 1975] 'saw', and here I précis his findings, were managers sitting between their organisations and a network of contacts, performing a great quantity of work at an unrelenting pace; doing work characterised by variety, fragmentation and brevity; strongly preferring verbal media and issues that were current, specific and ad hoc. He characterised their behaviour in terms of them exercising the roles of figurehead, leader, liaisor, monitor, spokesperson, disseminator, negotiator, resource allocator and disturbance handler. He observed these managers, and did not 'see' them engaging in the 'Fayolian' [1916/1949] management functions of planning, organising, commanding, coordinating, and controlling. He concluded:

"Fayol's fifty year old description of managerial work is no longer of any use to us"

[Mintzberg, 1971 p B-108]

This conclusion stimulated a fervent debate that was pursued with the inevitable 'he was right, he was wrong' conclusions of further studies [e.g. Lau et al 1980, McCall and Segrist 1980, Snyder and Wheelen 1981, Kurke and Aldrich 1983]. This controversy merits discussion, as the conceptual, linguistic and methodological issues it involves, are pertinent to the framing of the current study. The discussion will also provide a useful platform from which to revisit some of the pre-McCall et al [1978] literature, and view later work in the field.

"If you ask a manager what he does, he will most likely tell you that he plans, organizes, co-ordinates and controls. Then watch what he does. Don't be surprised if you can't relate what you see to those four words" [Mintzberg 1975 p49]

Within the above quotation lies the nub of the methodological problems of the structured observational studies of managerial work that are so well crystallised by Martinko and Gardner [1985]. As Snyder and Glueck [1980] point out Mintzberg missed a crucial opportunity in not asking his subject:

" to explain what he was doing and [most importantly] *why he was doing it, each time he engaged in an activity"* [p72]

Their contention was, as Martinko and Gardner [1985] put it, that:

"Planning was not identified as a recognizable act in Mintzberg's procedure because it involves largely cognitive processes" [p686]

There is, however, not only this clear-cut research method problem of unobservable cognition, i.e. the possibility that we cannot observe the Fayolian functions of management as they are 'all in the manager's mind', with managers *"acting thinkingly"* [Schon 1983, 1987; Isenberg 1984 p89], or just doing it 'out-of-sight' [Carroll & Taylor 1968, Carroll & Gillen 1987 p43].

"..while we know in the minutest detail the length of every phone call...we know very little about what impact these activities have"
[Pitner 1982 p11]

A metaphor from the world of art may prove useful in furthering this discussion. One could surmise that if one watches a sculptor, no matter how long the observation, or how sophisticated the coding and categorisation utilised in the recording of his visible behaviour and activities, one would only ever capture the conduct of sculptors, not the art of sculpture. Through the simple observational descriptions so generated, the art of sculpture would be virtually indistinguishable from the craft of masonry. One might be able to observe 'the characteristics of managing' as McCall et al [1978] carefully put it, but could one ever hope to 'see' Fayol's conceptualisation of the functions of management simplistically and unequivocally manifest in the everyday activities of individual managers. As Martinko and Gardner put it:

"the observation of overt managerial behaviours characteristic of structured observation studies is an incomplete process that only touches the tip of the iceberg...one never really gets at what managers 'really do'"
[1985 p688]

At least with a sculptor one can observe the physical emergence of a work of art, and make an indisputable connection between the resulting sculpture and his masonic activities. That is, of course, provided that the method of study is appropriately longitudinal, and not wholly cross-sectional in character. It could be argued that few, if any, studies of managerial work meet this requirement [Appendix A].

Through the lens of the sculptor metaphor, the finding of the extensive observational study carried out by Martinko and Gardner, is hardly surprising:

"...there was little support in our data for the proposition that managerial behaviour is related to performance"
[1990 p344]

The managers in their study were all observed to exhibit the same behaviour, and engage in the same activities, but what they pursued and 'got done', varied widely both in its nature, quality, and its pace. The 'sculptures' produced by these managers were all very different, even though all the sculptors engaged in all the same types of activities and behaviours. Mintzberg and his followers observed what managers were manifestly 'doing', in the sense of their activities and behaviours. They could not have hoped to simplistically observe what they were 'doing' in the sense of what they were 'pursuing' through their activity, either individually, or even more so, collectively.

From an empirical base, [e.g. Hemphill 1959, Mahoney et al 1965, Penfield 1975], Carroll and Gillen [1987] cogently argue that the everyday activities and behaviours Mintzberg and his followers observed, were those of individual managers acting in the ways they found necessary to accomplish their individual contribution to the collective pursuit of the Fayolian 'functions-of-management'. But as Carlson points out:

"If we ask a managing director when he is coordinating, or how much coordination he has been doing during the day he would not know and even the most highly skilled observer would not know either. The same holds true of the concepts of planning, command, organization and control."

[1951 p24]

Mintzberg's supposed refutation of Fayol has deserved focus given the centrality of the issues it raises. Interestingly, returning again to our metaphor, the term 'a sculptor's work' is commonly used to refer to the output of his activities, the sculptures, not to the masonic chiselling and gouging behaviour itself. This is a point on which Mintzberg should possibly have reflected, when he entitled his book *"The Nature of Managerial Work".* As Hales points out: *"managerial work and managers' behaviour are not synonymous"* [1986 p89].

2.3 Terminological Problems – the language game

The managerial work field has been plagued by highly and, often even internally, inconsistent use of terminology [Hales 1986 p89]. McCall et al's

[1978] careful use of language is an early and rare exception. There are some emerging guidelines for the language game in which we are immersing ourselves [Watson & Harris 1999], and it is on this basis that I can begin the process of establishing the vocabulary I will utilise in this thesis. Building on Chia [1996], Watson & Harris conclude:

"There 'is' no organization. There is 'organizing' - brought about through relating and talking. There is no 'management'. There is 'managing'- brought about, just the same, through talking and relating"
[1999 p19]

Through this lens 'organization' can be viewed as an ongoing achievement of 'managing'; a striven for 'state', that is a necessary condition for collective human endeavour. It is a 'state of human-collective affairs', of "productive co-operation" [Watson 1994a], that requires purposive effort for it to be attained and sustained. According to this perspective a 'manager' can be regarded as someone purposively involved in the attainment, maintenance and modulation of organization.

2.4 Emerging Characterisations - A Confusion Of Categories

Studies, both before and after Mintzberg, did incorporate elements of the so-called classical functions of management into their analytical categories. A representative selection of these various, empirically founded, categorisations and conceptualisations is presented in Table I:

As can be seen, the individual components of these conceptualisations operate across a broad spectrum of the potential dimensions of characterisation. As Hales comments:

" [They] *display some fairly clear discontinuities, even inconsistencies, both internally and amongst one another, with 'managerial' and 'technical' elements, functions and tasks, content* [what] *and form* [how] *mixed together"*

[2001a p7]

Several authors have attempted to draw out some common 'managerial work elements' from the array of characterisations propounded in the extensive body of evidence on managerial work. I feel these attempts only serve to exacerbate the conceptual and linguistic problems of categorisation to which Hales has drawn our attention, and I will not pursue a similar goal in this review.

Table I

Hemphill [1959] "Position Elements"	**Sayles [1964]**	**Mahoney et al [1965] "PRINCESS" functions**

• Technical/staff service provision
  ○ E.g. H.R., Legal, Scientific
• Supervision of work
  ○ Operational control of human & physical resources
  ○ Efficiency focussed
• Internal Business Control
  ○ Inventory management, budgeting etc.
• Business development
  ○ Concerned with products, customers & markets
• Human, Community & Social Affairs
  ○ Public & staff relations
• Long Range Planning
• Exercise of Power & Authority
  ○ Decision making
  ○ Business control
• Business Reputation
  ○ Product & service quality
• Personal Behaviour
  ○ Profile & Visibility
• Preservation of Assets
  ○ Financial control & Treasury
	• Leading
	• Monitoring
	• Lateral Relationship Engagement of various types:
	  ○ Trading
	  ○ Work-Flow
	  ○ Service
	  ○ Advisory
	  ○ Audit
	  ○ Stabilisation
	  ○ Innovation
		• Planning
		  ○ Determining goals, policies, action plans, setting agendas
		• Representing
		  ○ Giving speeches etc.
		• Investigating
		  ○ Collecting information, measuring, reporting
		• Negotiating
		  ○ With customers, suppliers, tax-office, staff, unions
		• Co-ordinating
		  ○ Information exchange, expediting, liaison with other managers, programme adjustment
		• Evaluating
		  ○ Assessment of proposals, people, performance on all fronts of all types
		• Staffing
		  ○ Hiring, firing, promoting
		• Supervising
		  ○ Directing, developing and leading subordinates

Table I (Continued)

Horne & Lupton [1965] "FOUR" Activities	**Mintzberg [1971] " Managerial Roles"**	**Pheysey [1972]**

• Formulating
  ○ Definition of ends & means, objectives and plans
• Organizing
  ○ Enable, create and maintain means
• Unifying
  ○ Co-ordinating, harmonising, adapting, focussing
• Regulating
  ○ Everyday manipulation of human & material resources
	• Interpersonal roles;
	  ○ Figurehead
	  ○ Leader
	  ○ Liaison
	• Informational roles:
	  ○ Monitor
	  ○ Disseminator
	  ○ Spokesperson
	• Decisional roles
	  ○ Entrepreneur
	  ○ Disturbance Handler
	  ○ Resource Allocator
	  ○ Negotiator
		• Trouble Shooting
		  ○ Investigating causes for breakdowns etc
		• Forward Planning
		  ○ Setting targets
		• Briefing Subordinates
		• Conducting Meetings
		• Reviewing progress of subordinates
		• Taking an interest in personal problems

Table I (Continued)

Tornow & Pinto [1976] "Job Taxonomy"	**Kotter [1982]**	**Luthans [1988] " Activities of Real Managers"**

• Product, Marketing, & Financial Strategy Planning
• Co-ordination of other Organizational Units & Personnel
• Internal Business Control
  ○ Supervision, Resource Allocation, Expense Control
  ○ Budgeting & Performance Monitoring
• Products/Services & their Marketability
• Public & Customer Relations
• Consulting
  ○ Providing expert advice/input
• Autonomy of action/discretion
• Approval of financial commitments
• Staff service to superiors
• Supervision
• Complexity & Stress
• Advanced Financial Responsibility
	• Crafting Business Agenda(s)
	  ○ Loosely connected goals & plans vs. wide range of issues
	  ○ Spanning all timeframes
	• Building Networks
	  ○ Bosses, Peers, Subordinates, Subordinate's subordinates,
	  ○ Government, Press, Public
	  ○ Customers, Suppliers, Competitors
	  ○ Sources of Finance
	• Pursuing Agendas(s) through Networks
	  ○ Implementation /Execution
		• Communication
		  ○ Exchanging Information
		  ○ Paperwork
		• Traditional management
		  ○ Planning
		  ○ Decision making
		  ○ Controlling
		• Networking
		  ○ Interacting with Outsiders
		  ○ Socializing & Politicking
		• Human Resource Management
		  ○ Motivating & Reinforcing
		  ○ Disciplining & Punishing
		  ○ Managing Conflict
		  ○ Staffing
		  ○ Training & Developing

2.5.1 The Character of Managerial Conduct

2.5.1.1 Managerial Conduct - Why is it F.R.E.N.E.T.I.C?

The study that is most useful in directly addressing this question is the quasi-ethnographic work of Sayles [1964]. Mintzberg, after criticising the 'looseness' of Sayles' methods and approach, comments:

".. *Sayles is one of the few researchers whose writings demonstrate that he appreciates the complexities inherent in managerial work*"
[1973 p218]

Sayles [1964], Dubin & Spray [1964], Hales [1989, 2001a], and others see the origins of many of the characteristics of managing as resting in the functional-technical specialisation of business operations, and the ever more intricate division of managerial labour around the management labour-process.

"*...the..challenge that seemed to me to be at the heart of modern management..was..dictated by the growing division of labour within management itself...*[with]..*the increasing number of high level professionals introduce*[ing] *substantial uncertainty into decision making and complicated consensus building*""
[Sayles 1999 p9 - reflecting on his study of 1964]

The responsibility for attaining and sustaining organization is seen to be distributed widely, both laterally and hierarchically, amongst many managers. As Hales puts it:

"..horizontally among different management specialisms with different areas of responsibility [e.g. marketing, finance, production] and vertically among different levels of management with different scopes of responsibility"

[2001a p5]

Numerous early studies of managing [e.g. Burns 1954 & 1957, Blau 1955, Landsberger 1961, Dubin & Spray 1964] point up the intensity of the lateral interactions between managers, both in terms of content and frequency. These interactions were determined as being fundamental to organizational functioning:

" A manager almost never has authority equal to his responsibility; he must depend on the actions of many people over whom he has not the slightest control"

[Sayles 1964 p42]

" informal relationships are key to the effective operation of bureaucracy"

[Blau 1955]

As one of Sayles respondents put it:

" ...I only have 18 people directly reporting to me..the..ones I can give orders to. But I have to rely directly on the services of 75 or 80 other people....they in turn are affected by perhaps several hundred others, and I must sometimes see some of them too....."

[1964 p 43]

The lateral dimension of bureaucracy has almost certainly been further emphasised by the increasing dispersion of functions [e.g. marketing], into sub-specialisms [e.g. public relations, advertising, product management, brand management, merchandising etc.], the emergence of so-called lean organizations with considerably flatter structures, and the ever increasing geographical complexity of business operations.

" New managers learn very soon that formal authority is a very limited source of power. Most of those who can make a manager's life miserable are people over whom they have no formal authority; that is bosses and peers. Management has just as much to do with negotiating interdependencies as it does with exercising authority...the higher your position the more dependent you become..."

[Hill 2003 p262]

It would appear that Mary Parker-Follet [1941] was right, managing, or as she put it 'management', is *'the art of getting things done through people'*. However the people are not always the subordinates, to whom she refers, but occupy positions of many types and levels, ranging 'up', 'down', 'across' and 'outside' the enterprise.

2.5.2 Managerial Conduct - It's All Talk!

"..the ability for coherent organizing to occur depends upon 'the myriad of loosely coupled micro-conversations going on endlessly every day' "
[Dunford & Palmer 1998 p218, quoting Broekstra 1998]

As a multitude of studies have pointed out (refer Appendix A; Boden [1994] and Gron [1983]) managers spend the vast majority of their time talking, and, more often than not it would appear, talking to other managers within their own firm:

"Managers talk and listen most of the time"
[Stewart 1983 p87]

" However automated the work or standardised the procedures, people bring organizations to life. What people do - up and down the hallways and up and down the organizational structure, all day long, is talk.."
[Boden 1994 p23]

A substantial proportion of this talk appears to be in pursuit of interlocked behaviours [Weick 1969, 1979]:

"..tying together the independent parts of the total operation that have been fractionated by the need for specialists, departments, and organizational checks and balances."
[Sayles 1964 p259]

This torrent of talk appears, in the main, to represent the everyday practical-social 'working-through' of the differentiation-integration dilemma [Lawrence & Lorsch 1967a & 1967b], and the concurrent negotiation of the manager's own role, in the collective pursuit of organization and organizational performance:

" The individual manager does not have a clearly bounded job with neatly defined authorities and responsibilities. Rather he is placed in the middle of a system of relationships, out of which he must fashion an organization that will accomplish his objectives"
[Sayles 1964 p27]

"Different aggregates of individuals coalesce around different problems as they float through the organization"
[Lombardo & McCall 1982]

This web of inter-dependent co-dependent relationships through which the manager operates is, however, characterised by ambiguity, uncertainty, contradiction, and constant change [Hannaway 1989; Lindblom 1959; March & Olsen 1976], together with a substantial degree of managerial discretion and choice with respect to conduct and foci of attention;

particularly at more senior levels [Stewart 1976, 1982 & Stewart et al 1980]. As a result, this complex network of relationships is unstable and unreliable, with this 'fashioning' of organization around objectives being, not a one-off task, but a constant perpetual component of 'managing':

"*..the actions of each manager affect all the other groups around him, and they must make adjustments before he can shift his own efforts. As one or more groups make what are, for him, less than optimal moves, our manager must make compensating moves. These, in their turn, affect still other groups and so our peripatetic manager must go around the circuit again* [and again & again ad infinitum] *securing new agreements, commitments, and assurances from those he had committed to something else only shortly before ....*"
[Sayles 1964 p26-27 – author insertion highlighted]

" [The manager seeks].. *not a static system of human relations...he is seeking a dynamic type of stability, making adjustments and re-adjustments....to maintain a moving equilibrium*"
[Sayles 1964 p163]

The complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty that pervade the network of individual interpretations, and the issues and problems that are 'to-hand' in this process, strongly favours the communicational efficiency of the verbal media. The iterative-interactive character of face-to-face communication, with its capacity for instant feedback and interpretation checking, makes it strongly preferred over all other forms of communication [Daft & Lengel 1986, Daft & Wigninton 1979, Boden 1994]. As Boden points out:

"The persistent urge to deal with complex activities in face-to-face settings means that space [as well as time] *matters centrally to decision-making and to organizations in action"*
[Boden 1994 p191]

This *'compulsion-for-proximity'* [Boden & Molotch 1994] adds a dominating locational emphasis to the critical temporal-sequencing character of the peripatetic 'organizing' activity of managers. Managers do not only spend the vast majority of their time talking, but also expend a substantial amount of that talk-time on jointly manipulating diaries, and juggling schedules, to create the time to talk to each other. Talking about talking, so to speak.

"..two themes appeared in the managers' descriptions of the job's challenges. The first was the need for stamina and sheer energy. The second was to organise and manage their time wisely. They began to suspect time was going to be one of their most precious resources"
[Hill 1992 p 56]

A manager is perpetually, and predominantly verbally, 'fashioning' organization around objectives, and participating in organization 'fashioned' by other managers, around other objectives. Managing is from this perspective a repetitive, recursive, and perpetual pursuit of multiple, simultaneous and often inter-dependent, shifting dynamic-equilibriums of organization around objectives. Managing would appear to be FRENETIC in Hales' acronymic sense, and understandably, given the above, at times almost frenetic in the literal sense.

Kotter's study of fifteen general managers [1982] led to a characterisation of managing similar to that embedded in the Hales' synthesis. It also appeared that his sample of senior executives utilised *"agendas that are made up of loosely connected goals and plans that address their long, medium, and short-term responsibilities"* [p160] and that they spent considerable effort in developing and exploiting *" a network of cooperative relationships among the people they feel are needed to satisfy their emerging agendas"* [p161] both outside, and in all directions inside, the enterprise. He concluded:

" Most visible patterns in daily behaviour seem to be a direct consequence of the way GMs [general managers] *approach their jobs, and thus consequences of the job itself and the type of people involved"*
[p163]

I would reverse this statement and argue that in order to cope with the necessarily relational, repetitive, recursive and relentless nature of 'organizing', Kotter's general managers utilise 'agendas' to enable effective reactive-opportunistic pursuit and maintenance of 'states of organization' around their objectives.

2.5.3 Managerial Conduct - Inherently Political?

"Trading, compromise, give and take are the order of the day. Many if not most of the subjects dealt with have no fixed objective answer even in a technical environment. Interpolation and judgement mean differences in opinion, and the manager must expect to engage in extended bargaining..."

[Sayles 1964 p130]

Productive cooperation in the pursuit of objectives would appear to be largely achieved through a dynamic array of reciprocating lateral relationships between managers; relationships that are not framed by the formal authority structure. Additionally, the degree of discretion available to managers, and the level of choice that can be exercised [Stewart 1982], makes the subversion of the formal authority structure relatively easy. Hence command, as well as cooperation, requires consent [Kotter 1977 p128; Watson 1994a].

"the goals of an organization...are not fixed parameters established by some over-riding logic of the economic system, but..issues to be resolved and ..matters open to an important degree of choice;...the ways in which any particular set of goals are to be pursued is also open to decision and choice........ Organizations are not unitary wholes but pluralistic entities in which multiple groups with differing interests, resources, skills and aims engage in both co-operative and conflictual activities. Politics in the

broadest sense, far from being an abnormal or unusual aspect of managerial life, is better thought of as inherent to the task of managing." [Thomas 2003, p56-60]

Managing is by necessity a micro-political social practice. It is a suasive social practice that involves the use of power resources and various modes of influence, including authority. [Kotter 1977; Stephenson 1985; Lee & Lawrence 1985, Butcher & Clarke 2003]:

" politics is not a pathology, it is a fact of large organization"
[Bower 1970 p305]

Clearly the interests of an individual manager and the enterprise do not necessarily always coincide, and this generates what empirical research highlights as another aspect of the political character of managing. What is sometimes referred to as "politicking" [Luthans 1985, 1988].

Several studies (e.g. Dalton [1959], Crozier [1964], Hannaway [1989] Jackall [1983, 1988], Watson [1994a], Watson & Harris [1999]) highlight this 'dark-side' of the characteristics of managing. It includes the spinning of information, backstabbing, the deliberate misrepresentation of others, the formation of cliques, the off-loading of blame, buck passing, nepotism and sycophancy in which many managers engage in their attempt to survive and prosper in the enterprise [Allen et al 1979 p79]. This should come as no surprise given:

" members of a corporation are at one and the same time co-operators in a common enterprise and rivals for the material and intangible rewards of successful competition with each other. The hierarchic order of rank and power that prevails is at the same time a ...control system and a career ladder"

[Burns 1961 p261]

Managers are pursuing 'personal agendas', and as Watson & Harris put it, they are:

" Clambering over each other to get on"

[1999 p84]

In complex collective endeavour it is most often impossible to isolate the contribution of an individual to a particular outcome - good or bad [Hannaway 1989 p142]:

"..a complex set of seemingly unrelated decisions by marketing, product development, and manufacturing may interact with the environment to increase profitability without anyone ever knowing who pulled the trigger"

[Lombardo & McCall 1982 p64]

Credit can be captured, and blame deflected [Jackall 1983; Grint 1995 p61-62] because of this loose connection. Luthans [1988] re-affirms Kotter's [1982] view that successful managers spend considerable time networking, but finds that politicking is prevalent in this activity; alongside its more 'legitimate' components. Luthans contends that effective managers concentrate solely on the latter components, successful effective managers on both.

2.5.4 Managerial Conduct - Radically Contingent?

Almost without exception, studies since Mintzberg [1973] have focussed on diversity in the 'managing' activity, not on commonality [Hales 1999]. The research conducted has, in the main, been descriptive, and has sought to illuminate variety, but has, explicitly and implicitly, identified parameters that would appear to impact on the 'conduct' exhibited by managers:

- The level of the manager in the hierarchy [e.g. Kraut & Pedigo et al 1989; Paoulillo 1981; Pavett & Lau 1983; Alexander 1979]
- Scale and scope of job responsibility [e.g. number of direct reports etc.; Stewart 1976]
- The 'nature' of the organizational structure [e.g. diversified, centralised etc.], and the industry and environment of the enterprise. [e.g. Hales 1987; Hales & Tamangani 1996; Gibbs 1994; Child 1973]
- Specialism / 'function' of the manager [e.g. marketing, production, etc.; Kraut & Pedigo et al 1989, Fox 1992, Child & Ellis 1973, Stewart 1976, Alexander 1975, Paolillo 1987]
- The scope for choice and discretion available to the manager and the exercising of that choice [e.g. Stewart 1979, Stewart et al 1980; Stewart 1982]

- The degree of dependency on others; the criticality, and the degree of difficulty of those relationships [e.g. Sayles 1964; Stewart 1976]
- The scale of the organization [e.g. O'Gorman et al 2005]
- Extent of exposure of the individual i.e. the surety with which an individuals actions can be linked to outcomes [Stewart 1976]

In essence these parameters are postulated to be key influences on managerial conduct [Stewart 1976, Whitley 1985]; in effect, one might say, possibly positioning the managers' conduct in terms of Hales' multi-dimensional F.R.E.N.E.T.I.C. profile.

It should be noted that Stewart et al's [1980] study of several managers within a very large public service organization pointed up sharply the potentially idiosyncratic character of managerial conduct. All of the managers studied were placed in substantially different positions on the 'F.R.E.N.E.T.I.C. spectrum', even though they all occupied ostensibly identical jobs.

2.6 Managerial Conduct in the Marketing Specialism - The Findings of Empirical Work

Relatively few empirical studies have directly examined the individuals, or groups of individuals, nominally engaged in so-called marketing management. However, in combination, the studies available do provide some useful insights.

2.6.1 Insights from the 'Managerial Work' Literature

Only a very few empirical managerial behaviour studies have captured marketing managers in their samples; fewer still with any analytic intent, and even fewer in a way that distinguishes between marketing and sales managers [Kraut & Pedigo 1989; Fox 1992; Gibb 1994]. However Fox [1992], and two of Stewart's studies [1967; 1976] purposively incorporated marketing managers, and Stewart's studies provide some insight. Fox, in his analysis, combined through a clustering technique, the task-characteristics underpinning Mintzberg's managerial roles [1971], and the task-qualities of Smith & Stewart [1977]. Fox suggests that only two of Mintzberg's roles were clearly evident, those of 'Negotiator' and 'Disseminator'. The marketing and sales managers captured in the work were additionally characterised as 'Group Manager', 'External Contact', 'Scheduler', 'Organiser', 'Go-Between', and 'Expert'; but not as 'Discusser', 'Trouble-Shooter' [Stewart 1967 – job profiles] or 'Resource Allocator' [Mintzberg 1971 - role]. Given the surrounding evidence [Appendix A] one may surmise, that blinded by a veritable sandstorm of statistics, Fox got lost in a labyrinth of labels. Or maybe his respondents did, when completing his 560-cell repertory grid.

However, with regard to the 'characteristics of managing', the conclusions of Stewart's early work [1967] presage almost entirely what is captured in Hales' FRENETIC acronym. There was little to distinguish marketing managers from the FRENETIC managerial crowd, other than the tendency for their interactions to incorporate more external contact.

Stewart's later work [1976] characterised managerial jobs in terms of the nature of the relationships required by the job, the exhibited work pattern, the exposure of the manager [see above], the demands made on their private life, and the uncertainties affecting the job. Marketing managers formed part of the broad initial sample, but sadly did not make the cut into the intensive phase of the research. The first phase found marketing managers to be heavily peer dependent. Although, as one would have expected, external contact formed some part of all the marketing managers studied, the research concluded that internal contacts of numerous forms dominated their work pattern. Despite this 'finding':

"...in contrast to the number of empirical studies devoted to buyer-seller relationships, scant attention has been paid to the web of cross-unit working relationships that constitute a major component of the managerial work of a marketing manager"
[Hutt 1995 p351]

2.6.2 Product & Brand Managers - a well studied sub-specialism

One particular species of the genus marketing manager, the product / brand manager, has received substantial and specific attention [Low & Fullerton 1994]. Though the focus of the research conducted has not, so to speak, been on the 'nature' of product-managerial work, it does provide a useful, if indirect, perspective on their activities. A tabular guide to the key empirical contributions to this strand of literature is provided in Appendix B.

The birth of the product management concept, and the various breeds of product / brand manager, is commonly reputed to have taken place in Proctor and Gamble during the 1920-30s. By the mid-1960s it was prevalent in the structural form of marketing departments [Buell 1975]. The product / brand management approach was felt to be an effective way of addressing the then growing difficulties that wholly functionally [i.e. sub-specialism] structured marketing departments were having in coordinating all aspects of the marketing mix around individual products/brands [Piercy 1985b Chapter 6].

" *The product or brand management concept evolved from earlier functional organisational structures in response to the increasing complexity of markets and the need for some degree of specialized management to ensure that individual products or brands were receiving comprehensive and adequate attention"*

[Cunningham and Clarke 1975 p129]

It also aspired to improve accountability for product revenue and profitability, an aspiration largely unfulfilled in practice [Luck & Norwak 1965; Buell 1975].

The characteristics of this particular marketing role bring into stark relief the peer dependence that Stewart's work [1967, 1979] highlights. The product / brand manager is held to be responsible for the crafting and sustaining of organization around his objectives, not only with other functions, such as Sales, Production, R&D and outside agencies, but also across the sub-specialisms of the marketing department itself, e.g. Public Relations, Advertising, Market Research etc.

"the interfaces which are important to a product manager's work are perhaps the most numerous and varied of any in middle management"
[Luck 1969 p33]

" the brand manager's job is to get good decisions made irrespective of who makes them"
[Buell 1975 p10]

"To a substantial degree his success depends upon his effectiveness in motivating others to implement his plans without direct organisational authority"
[Luck 1969 p34]

" a product manager must deal with diverse role expectations, not only from persons in other departments...but also from outsiders such as customers, the trade, consultants, advertising agencies."
[Lysonski 1985 p26]

Contact with customers is regularly cited as a crucial component of the product manager's role. However a majority of product / brand managers would appear to find it hard to allocate enough time for this activity [Murphy& Gorchels 1996, Lysonski & Woodside 1989 p180]. Additionally, time allocated to this boundary spanning activity would appear to depend more on the proclivities of the individual, than on any other factors [Lysonski 1985 p37].

Though with a markedly different focus of attention, Lien's quasi-ethnographic study of the product managers in a Norwegian food company serves to confirm the earlier characterisations of product manager work [Appendix B], and provide some more penetrating illumination:

"... consumers' attitudes were a subject of great concern. Uncertainty associated with what consumers want was ...a source of discomfort. As an attempt to reduce uncertainty in marketing decisions a considerable effort was being made to acquire and produce knowledge that might help to predict these matters.... yet interpretation is fraught with uncertainty as well. What is a good advert? How can creativity be measured? What is the value of a brilliant idea? ....As they strive to come to terms with such issues, product managers confront a broad range of dilemmas of a more general kind. This includes a struggle for order and a continuous effort to overcome ambivalence."

[Lien 1997 p5]

" *I started out following this process* [new poultry product introduction]..... *expecting... that I would be able to trace a logical course of events. What I* *encountered, however, was a long and complicated social process that, especially towards the end, twists and turns in ways that are increasingly hard to predict..... what is more striking is the intense effort expended by the actors on creating order out of chaos ... ... Final decisions are often based on an evaluation that goes far beyond the realm of rational deduction... decisions were made in a situation of considerable uncertainty."*

[Lien 1997 p161-162]

Although Lien's somewhat unproblematic utilisation of the term 'uncertainty' poses some problems, she usefully brings together the socio-cognitive and socio-political aspects of these managers' organising work.

2.6.3 Perspectives from Empirical Work on Marketing Planning, Budgeting, and Strategy Implementation

The peer, and external, dependence of most product/brand managers makes product/brand managing a prime exemplar of the socio-political practice of 'managing' [Gemmill & Wilemon 1972; Venkatesh & Wilemon 1975; Maute 1994; Lien 1997 Chapter 4].

Applying Pfeffer's [1981] perspectives, Piercy notes:

".. the contingencies typically surrounding marketing decision-making were frequently those favouring the emergence of political behaviour - primarily goal and technology dissensus" [1989 p30]

Piercy's numerous, survey based studies of marketing planning, budgeting and information handling [e.g. 1984, 1985, 1989] conclude that managing-in-marketing is, just as it is in any other specialism, an inherently micro-political social practice. Particularly as:

"..there is a lack of consensus about goals, and about the causal links between actions and results"
[Piercy 1984 p18]

and where:

"..[the] *corporate environment may be shown in some situations to be just as powerful a determinant of decisions made as is the external competitive or marketing environment.."*
[Piercy 1984 p14]

Bonoma's many case studies of marketing strategy implementation led him to characterise those managers-in-marketing that his criteria deemed to be successful, as those that *"subvert the system toward quality"* [Bonoma 1985 p116]. These *'marketing subversives'*, as he describes them, are managers who 'work' the structure, systems, policies, procedures and programs to achieve their goals. His subject managers were:
"stuck in the middle, charged with executing plans that the organization may not have the structural wherewithal to facilitate"
[Bonoma 1985 p116]

He proceeds to characterise the skills of such managers, as those of interacting, allocating, monitoring, and organizing. These conceptualisations have a resonance with the Fayolesque propositions of Hales [1989, 2001a], and in his analysis Bonoma strongly emphasises the socio-political character, and radical peer dependency, of managing-in-marketing. Bonoma's thinking could be characterised as being in what might be termed the 'Despite School' of managing-in-marketing:

- **Allocating -** Despite organizational inertia and risk averseness, marketing managers scrape together and sanction the time and money to *'save the firm from itself'*
- **Monitoring -** Despite the perversity and inadequacy of corporate information systems, marketing managers succeed in generating powerfully simple and persuasive situation analyses and causal reasoning
- **Organizing -** Despite the formal structure and lines of command, marketing managers mobilise cross-functional *'organizings'* [1985 p160] around their tasks.
- **Interacting -** Despite the lack of formal authority, marketing managers succeed through politically astute suasive practice up, down and across the enterprise

It would appear from Bonoma and Piercy's work, that product managers, in both the micro-political and peer dependency senses, are far from an unusual species in the genus of marketing manager.

2.6.4 Studies of The Functionality of 'Marketing Managers' - A Language Game of Two Halves

Several researchers have attempted to probe the 'functional' responsibilities of managers designated, by their enterprise, as Chief Marketing Executive [CME], [e.g. Hayhust & Wills 1972, Heidrick & Struggles 1985, Piercy 1986]. In most cases the 'functional' responsibilities of the firms' marketing departments were also characterised. The consistent conclusion of these, predominantly survey based, studies was that the CME came in many different guises, and that his / her functional responsibilities, and those of so-called marketing departments, varied dramatically firm-to-firm, even within the same industry. This finding prompted Piercy to reflect that:

".. 'marketing' is a highly ambiguous term in describing the organizations [departments] *found, and the functions fulfilled in practice"*
[Piercy 1986 p288]

It would appear the respondents had little difficulty in identifying the 'functionalities' of marketing in their firms [e.g. pricing, new product planning, market research, packaging, sales forecasting etc], but did not wholly locate them as the responsibility of the CME, or their 'marketing' departments.
"While the marketing department controlled a number of strictly 'marketing' areas [e.g. advertising, promotion], *the picture elsewhere is of control being held by others"* [Piercy 1986 p287]

Piercy found that when functionalities, e.g. pricing and product development, were deemed critical to business performance they were less likely to be under the control of 'marketing'. He comments:

"In terms of...the type and spread of CME managerial responsibilities, and the representation, status and perceived power of the Marketing Department, the actual position of marketing appears rather weak compared to the 'ideal' model in the marketing textbook"
[Piercy 1986 p288]

And, foregoing a potential Mintzberg style 'folklore versus fact' opportunity, he diplomatically concludes:

"Even if the established model is not overturned by our exploratory findings, it is at least slightly shaken" [1986 p288]

2.6.5 More Questions than Answers - a methodological minefield

Brownlie engaged in a quasi-ethnographic study of six senior marketing managers in a variety of industries. However his fieldwork did not lead him to the classical categorical analysis or conceptualisation of their managing that he may have once envisaged producing [Brownlie 1991], but to a deep methodological reflection:

" [At the start]..*I took for granted the safety of the assumption that what actually goes on marketing practice was available, or accessible to me. I*

also assumed that my observations of what marketing managers did would somehow be more reliable, richer and insightful than their talk about what they do... I had succeeded in providing another provisional account, another re-presentation of second- and third-hand experience"
[Brownlie 1997 p269-271]

Emphasising the judgement and creativity that he had come to see as being central to marketing practice he concludes:

" *We as marketing scholars must open our eyes to the issues of creativity, judgement and emotions. What is it about marketing management practices that we do not notice, that we cannot see and that of which we dare not speak; or that which we can see, but turn a blind eye to..."*
[Brownlie & Saren 1997 p159]

This is possibly a good note on which to turn to a review of what the so-called marketing management discourse and pedagogy have to say on the subject of managing in marketing.

Chapter 3

What is this thing called 'Marketing Management'?

"Notwithstanding its usefulness to those who manage, marketing precepts emphasise the marketing element in management, and not the management element in marketing"

[Bartels 1988 p177]

As has been noted, the academic literature has very little to say with regard to the everyday work of those managers characterised by their enterprise as performing roles in what they see as being 'marketing'. After some twenty years of practice my personal reflections mirror almost exactly the sentiments of King:

"*...I have scanned various marketing periodicals* [and books] *for* [twenty] *years with despairing incomprehension, failing* [with rare but notable exception] *to derive any benefit at all...I can see people emerging from various institutions with qualifications in marketing, but cannot imagine how many of them are remotely suited to,* [or trained for], *any of the jobs that I know about..."*

[1985 p 219 – author insertions highlighted]

This is despite the fact that a substantial and prominent component of the marketing discourse, most particularly the pedagogy, bears the label 'marketing management'. Clearly this begs the question as to what the vast quantity of text, talk and teachings, that constitute so-called

'Marketing Management', is actually all about. This chapter will attempt to provide a response to this question.

3.1 Origins of the 'Marketing Management' School of Thought

" *Marketing was seen as set of social and economic processes rather than as a set of managerial activities and responsibilities"*

[Webster 1992 p2]

Prior to 1950 academic work in the field of marketing was very much descriptive in nature. It was rarely prescriptive, in terms of guidance to managers of businesses, though there were visible aspirations in that direction.

The dominant commodity, institutional, and functional schools of 'marketing thought' [Sheth et al 1988] were still firmly rooted in their parent discipline of micro-economics. The commodity school approach concentrated on the characterisation of the 'objects' of economic transactions, the products, and the typification of the associated marketer and purchaser activity, whilst the institutional school characterised the various actors in the market, i.e. producers, wholesalers etc. and their complementary, and interdependent functionality and activity. The functional perspective focussed on the interconnected commercial processes that comprise market transactions e.g. selling, transportation, storage etc. It is within the latter functional school of thought, that the roots of the so-called managerial school of thought, and its progeny, the marketing management pedagogy, can most easily be discerned. In his seminal review of functional school thinking McGarry [1950] provided a functional categorisation that he felt addressed the shortcomings of the many previous functional characterisations of marketing:

- The contactual function, which has to do with the searching out of potential customers, or suppliers, and the making of contact with them.
- The merchandising function, which comprises the various activities undertaken to adapt the product to the users' ideas of what is wanted.
- The pricing function, which has to do with the prices at which goods are offered, or at which they will be accepted.
- The propaganda function, which includes all the methods used to persuade the potential users to select the particular product, and to make them like the product once they have it.
- The physical distribution function, which comprises the transportation and storage of goods.
- The termination function, which has to do with the actual change in custody of and responsibility for the goods, and is the culmination of the process.

This categorisation clearly re-characterised 'marketing' as an interconnected set of commercial activities in which firms engage, rather than as previously, a group of economic and social processes.

3.2 Delegation & Departmentalisation

- The Genesis of the Marketing Manager

& Marketing Management Pedagogy

It is frequently argued that the mainstream of the marketing management discourse emerged as a result of the confluence of two streams of thought, one of them commercial, the other educational [Hunt & Goolsby 1988; Sheth et al 1988; Bartels 1988]. Stimulated, it has been suggested, by dramatic changes in the global economic situation, top management in many U.S. companies [General Electric, Pillsbury and Proctor & Gamble being the most frequently cited early exemplars] began to describe their actions through a certain rhetorical construct known as the 'marketing concept' [Hollander 1986]. This is a business philosophy focused upon customer-defined value, and is most commonly attributed to Drucker [1954; e.g. by Brownlie 1991 and Desphande & Webster 1989], but most elegantly articulated by McKitterick of General Electric:

" *..the central meaning of the marketing concept to the decision structure of a business* (is) *that the major purpose of the venture is taken from the need to solve some problem in the outer environment - some betterment for the customer - and all subsidiary decisions dealing with the acquisition and allocation of resources within the business are bent to that objective"* [in Lazer & Kelley 1962 p10; original 1957]

As Brownlie & Saren [1997 p150] cogently argue this view connotes marketing as first and foremost a general management responsibility.

McKitterick, however, combines his definition with a description of what he sees as the role of the 'marketing function', the meaning of the word 'function' now clearly being used in the 'departmental' sense:

" *..the principal task of the marketing function, in a management team wedded to the marketing concept, is not so much to be skilful in making the customer do what suits the interests of business as to be skilful in conceiving and then making the business do what suits the interests of the customer"*

[in Lazer & Kelley 1962 p10; original 1957]

However, it was Robert Keith of Pillsbury who, in his famous 'Marketing Revolution' article, crystallises the putative role of marketing departments, and their constituent 'brand managers':

" *We needed to build into our company a new management function which would direct and control all the other corporate functions from procurement to production to advertising to sales. This function was marketing...*

[1960 p 37]

This substantial, and serious, attempt to delegate some of what up until then had been general management responsibilities, signalled the 'departmentalisation' of marketing. Hunt & Goolsby conclude that the 'adoption' of the marketing concept, its substance, or merely its 'trappings' [Ames 1970], by a substantial proportion of major American corporations:

".. led to the ...rise of the professional marketing manager in American industry [that is]*....The concept of the 'marketing manager', with the responsibility of integrating pricing, promotion, product and channels-of - distribution decisions...."*

[1988 p42]

And that:

"the rise of professional marketing management in American industry created a strong demand for managerially trained marketing executives"

[1988 p42]

As will be seen McGarry's [1950] re-conceptualisation of marketing would provide the template for this training.

3.3 The Marketing Pedagogy - the Academic-Analytic Turn

Dramatic changes in the business school approach to marketing education took place in the 1960s, coincident with the rapidly growing demand for 'professional' marketing managers.

" The study of marketing, as an interesting subject to think about and reflect on, gave way to a much more action-oriented view of the training of potential marketing managers"

[Myers et al 1980 p96]

This development is most commonly attributed to the strident criticism of American business education in reports commissioned by the Carnegie and Ford foundations [Pierson 1959, Gordon & Howell 1959]. These studies argued that descriptive material should be held to an "irreducible minimum" [Gordon & Howell 1959 p187], and that business education should be based on a *"rigorous, analytical approach to decision making"* [Webster 1992 p2]. As a result:

"All of the areas, including marketing, attempted to decrease the descriptive content of their courses, increase their analytical and intellectual content, and adopt a more professional/managerial orientation..."

[Hunt & Goolsby 1988 p41]

" .. the objective of a course in marketing is the preparation of students for responsible management positions......We must concentrate on developing analytical tools and ways of thinking about marketing problems regardless of institution, commodity, or function"

[Davis 1961 p17]

Up until this point, the case study teaching method developed at Harvard incorporated no systematic integration of case-descriptive and analytical-conceptual material [Copeland 1920], in what was reputedly:

" *a conscious effort to force the student to think on his own and develop his own analytical concepts..*"
[Davis 1961 p18]

In fact much of the descriptive case material was itself student generated, through 'participant observation' [Hackley 2003 p1333]. Sadly Davis, like most of his contemporaries, concluded:

" *...greater progress can be made by emphasising established concepts and <u>then</u> solving problems*"
[Davis 1961 p18 - emphasis in original]

" *The analytical frameworks of the new managerial approach were drawn from economics, behavioural science and quantitative methods. The incorporation of* [these]...*gave important legitimacy to marketing as a separate academic discipline*"
[Webster 1992 p2]

The trajectory of the marketing management pedagogy was set. How Drucker must have groaned, as the 'professionalisation' of the vocation proceeded apace:

" No greater damage could be done to our economy or our society than to attempt to 'professionalise' management...by limiting access to management to people with a special academic degree"

[Drucker 1954 p21]

3.4 The Marketing Management Pedagogy - The Mainstream Texts

Although preceded by many seminal articles and several substantial works (all targeted as core texts for academic courses in 'marketing management' e.g. Alderson 1957, Howard 1957, Lazer & Kelley1958), the text that was to have the most lasting impact was McCarthy's famous, some would say infamous, book *'Basic Marketing- A Managerial Approach'* [1960]. As Hunt & Goolsby comment:

" McCarthy organised his text along managerial lines....The emphasis was on the problems of the marketing manager, rather than looking at the characteristics of marketing systems and their functions"

[1988 p41]

McCarthy promulgated the sequential marketing planning approach of General Electric [p37]. Building on Smith's work [1956] he laid the template for the Segmentation-Targeting-Positioning orthodoxy [p25]. He put forward Forrester's [1959] conception of the product lifecycle [p332], and elaborated, at length, his conception of the 'marketing mix' - the famous '4Ps' of Product, Price, Promotion and Place [p38], where he elegantly added alliteration to Howard's [1957] areas of marketing decision. In addition, he incorporated supporting chapters discussing consumer, customer & channel behaviour, the cultural, political, social and legal environment, and market research. The contents of Kotler's first edition [1967] mirrored McCarthy [1960], but structured the content around the now famous framework that subtitles the book - Analysis, Planning & Control.

"..in 1967 Philip Kotler virtually cemented the turn to the managerial mainstream with the publication of his classic textbook...aimed at the burgeoning graduate programs of the time, with the famed 'Analysis, Planning & Control' framework"
[Wilkie & Moore 2003 p125]

One is hard pressed to locate a popular modern day 'Marketing Management' or 'Principles of Marketing' textbook that does not approximate the first editions of Kotler [1967] and McCarthy [1960], in both structure and content. [e.g. Armstrong et al 2001, Jobber 2004, Brassington & Petit 2003, Kotler 2003 & all the previous 10 editions].

" *Since the 1960's a generation or two of managers...have been educated in 'business schools' on the basis of 'marketing management'..* [being presented with].. *the marketing concept, with an approach, a set of tools and prescriptions. Therefore several hundred thousand 'managers, some of whom hold influential positions today, have been exposed to the textbooks of McCarthy [1960] or Kotler [1967] - to cite but the first* *editions...or to all the translated, adapted or even plagiarised versions of these works...."*

[Marion 1993 p144]

Over almost 40 years, the eleven editions of Kotler's textbook 'Marketing Management', and those of similar ilk from his 'competitors', have dominated the marketing pedagogy worldwide. The pedagogy is strongly normative rather than descriptive. It focuses on what marketing managers 'ought to be doing' and comprises, according to Hackley:

"...an eclectic collection of aphorisms, tautologies and platitudes, artfully crafted into normative precepts.."

[2003 p 1334]

This is a perspective with which I cannot disagree.

3.5 Three Perspectives on the Marketing Management Pedagogy

3.5.1 The Implicit Marketing Manager Job

"..conventional wisdom has it that the marketing manager identifies unfulfilled needs and wants; defines and measures their magnitude; determines which target markets the organization can best serve [and] *decides on appropriate products, services and programmes to serve these markets..."*

[Brownlie 1991 p31]

The inference of all the mainstream texts and teachings is that the marketing manager has this portfolio of responsibilities, is responsible for the execution of an inherently linear process, and that the constituent tasks comprise his work. In Kotler's terms the work in question comprises a logical sequence of activities - the analysis of marketing opportunities, the researching and selection of target markets, the design of marketing strategies, the planning of marketing programmes and the organizing, implementing and controlling of marketing effort. The Kotlerian marketing manager's role has, at its core, the planning and execution of the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of goods and services. A role that would appear to involve:

"...managing particular marketing resources with well-defined tasks and responsibilities in the areas of advertising, sales promotion, market research, distribution, product development and pricing."

[Brownlie 1991 p31]

Kotler's [1972] view of essential 'marketer' skills is reproduced below, together with a summary of the commonly held view of marketing manager tasks, as elaborated by Holland & Naude [2004 p169].

Kotler's Basic Tasks Of Marketing Management

A marketer must be skilled at two basic analytical tasks:

(1) Market Analysis: He must be able to identify the market, its size and location, needs and wants, perceptions and values.

(2) Product Analysis: The marketer must determine what products are currently available to the target, and how the target feels about each of them.

Effective marketing also calls for four major planning skills:

(1) Product Development: i.e. configuration. The marketer should know where to look for appropriate ideas, how to choose and refine the product concept, how to stylise and package the product, and how to test it.

(2) Pricing: i.e. valuation. He must develop an attractive set of terms for the product.

(3) Distribution: i.e. facilitation. The marketer should determine how to get the product into circulation and make it accessible to its target market.

(4) Promotion i.e. symbolisation. A marketer must be able capable of stimulating market interest in the product.

Effective marketing also requires three organisational skills:

(1) Organizational Design: A marketer should understand the advantages and disadvantages of organising market activity along functional, product, and market lines.

(2) Organisational Staffing: He should know how to find, train and assign effective co-marketers.

(3) Organizational Motivation: He must determine how to stimulate the best marketing effort by his staff

Finally, effective marketing also calls for two control skills:

(1) Market Results Measurement: whereby the marketer keeps informed of the attitudinal and behavioural responses he is achieving in the marketplace.

(2) Marketing Cost Measurement: whereby the marketer keeps informed of his cost and efficiency in carrying out his marketing plans

Holland & Naude's Marketing Manager Tasks

Market analysis and data collection: Analysis of external markets [size growth, competitors, profit margins, etc], also planning and/or executing market research.

Customer analysis, segmentation and targeting: Based on the macro-market information identified above, subsequent identification of target segments and/or individual customers.

Product marketing strategy and objectives: Based on the above, determination of the product/service offering(s) most likely to succeed in the chosen market(s), and identification of the strategies most likely to result in the objectives chosen being met.

Communication with economic partners: Communication with the chosen economic partners, to make them aware of the offering(s) available and the associated costs and post-purchase services available.

Implementation: Management of the offering in an on-going manner so as to maximize longer-term survival.

3.5.2 A Singular Functional Emphasis

In the opening sentence of the first edition of his book Kotler states:

"Marketing management is the study of how firms can best adapt resources and objectives to outside opportunities"
[1967]

And in his paper of 1973:

"Marketing management may be viewed generically as the problem of regulating the level, timing, and character of demand for one or more products of an organization" [p42]

Despite the huge variety, and ever increasing sophistication, of the definitions of 'marketing management' utilised in the eleven editions of Kotler, and the texts of his 'competitors' [Hackley 2003 p1339], the essence of the texts still reflects this guiding micro-economic perspective. In Fayolian terms the mainstream 'Marketing Management' pedagogy focuses on only one function of management. The managerial contribution of managers-in-marketing is portrayed as that of 'analysis & planning' or, more precisely, that of 'analysis & planning' with regard to external opportunities. The pedagogy deploys a quintessentially techno-rational image [Thomas 2003 p86, Simon 1979] of the processes in which marketing managers are purportedly engaged.

"Responsible marketing management calls for careful problem definition, followed by the development and evaluation of multiple decision alternatives, from which a course of action would ultimately be chosen that had the highest probability, based on analysis, of maximising profitability"
[Webster 1992 p3]

In Hales' [2001a p2] terms, attention is predominantly directed to the management functions of deciding/planning and resource allocation, not to the associated 'Fayolian' functions of organizing, commanding, controlling and coordinating, which are largely ignored. With one or two rare exceptions [e.g.Lazo & Corbin 1961], when the texts do pay attention to these latter functions it is cursory and superficial.

3.5.3 An External Focus

The Marketing Management discourse is primarily concerned with the understanding and manipulation of behaviour in, and of, markets.

Marketing research has traditionally looked out to the external market-industry context and:

"..it assumes that whatever answer the analysis throws up will magically be converted into action that will lead to satisfactory outcomes"
[Brownlie 1991 p48]

"When marketing organization is dealt with at all...the treatment is a description of the formal organization rather than how it works"
[Howard 1965 p16]

Little has changed in the pedagogy since Howard's comment. When the focus momentarily drifts away from the focal functionality of planning/deciding/resource allocating, there is an overwhelming tendency to concentrate merely on the structure and formal responsibilities of the 'marketing department', its position within the formal hierarchical structure, and on techno-commercial monitoring & control systems. 'Organisation' is dealt with, not 'organizing'. Which given what is 'known' of the nature of managerial work [Chapter 2 & Appendix A], the functionally integrative spirit of the marketing concept [Bell & Emory 1971 p39], and the scope of the 'implicit marketing manager job', is quite an omission for texts that purportedly deal with marketing management. Continuing with Howard:

"*..the alternative approach* [to discussing only formal organization] *has been to ignore organization... and treat the decision maker implicitly as if*

he were uninfluenced by the human pressures around him, making his decisions from information obtained through channels that possess high fidelity and that transmit his decisions pristinely"
[1965 p16]

Again little has changed in the years since Howard's comments. The mainstream texts continue to largely ignore the organizational context of the marketing process and its participant managers. The focus of attention is almost wholly external and:

" *...the assumptions which currently underpin our notions of marketing management take an impoverished view of the social processes and practices through which marketing management is enacted, or reproduced"*
[Brownlie 1997 p149]

This is evident even in the treatment of the focal functionality itself. It offers a highly simplistic treatment of the analysis, decision & planning processes that makes only superficial acknowledgement of the organizational context. It adopts a context free, techno-rational conception of strategy formulation and decision making, that the broader management discourse would appear to have slowly abandoned since the publication of Child's seminal work on 'strategic choice' [1972]. The marketing management discourse *"ignores the fact that most major marketing decisions are not made by owner-manager entrepreneurs who* *relate only to the market environment.....but by ...managers who make decisions within an organization"* [Piercy 1984 p14].

This predominantly external focus precludes the adequate treatment of a central component of the focal 'analysis-decision-planning' functionality itself, that of market sensing. Specifically it precludes the proper recognition of the social construction, or enactment, of the firm's markets and environment [Pfeffer & Salancik 1978 p71-88; Weick 1979], and the socially mediated sensemaking processes inherent within that process [Starbuck & Milliken 1988; Weick 1995]. As a result the pedagogy also has embedded within it an un-problematised acceptance of the 'out-there-ness' of the firm's market and environment.

Brownlie lays the blame for this wholly external focus of attention firmly at the door of what is, at times, a near fanatical promulgation of the 'marketing concept':

"...this ideology seems to have polemically downgraded internal managerial and organizational issues in order to sustain the legitimacy of its external focus"
[1991 p37]

3.6. Marketing Management 'in Theory' - A Viewpoint

In attempting to emulate the logico-nomothetic character of the physical sciences, marketing academe has denied the radically contingent, socioeconomic situational specificity and complexity of commercial activity. The mainstream texts put on display an apparently sophisticated cognitive toolkit for market analysis, decision and planning, which:

"...carry assumptions that marketing has a battery of techniques [or 'concepts'] that are important to organizational success...[and]..*that marketing management skills can be learned in the abstract..."*
[Hackley 2003 p1332]

The 'Marketing Management' discourse has, additionally, slowly but surely reified marketing, as an allocatable set of specific managerial responsibilities, a department, and a profession. It has not built true on the foundations of Fayol, or Drucker.

" Marketing... is not a specialised activity at all. It encompasses the entire business. It is the whole business seen from the customer's point of view. Concern and responsibility for marketing must therefore permeate all areas of the enterprise"
[Drucker 1954 p5]

"Management..is neither an exclusive privilege nor a particular responsibility of the head or senior members of the business; it is an activity spread..between head and members of the body corporate"
[Fayol - translated 1949; published in French 1916]

'Marketing' and 'management' are respectively described as <u>the</u> mission, and a pervasively embodied functionality of commercial enterprise, not as professions, practices, academic disciplines, or the activities of departments or particular individuals. Krohmer et al [2002] ask whether *"marketing should be cross-functional"*, and answer in the affirmative. Through the younger eyes of the founding fathers it could be nothing other than cross-functional, by definition. As Haekel [1999] comments, marketing is not <u>a</u> function of business it is <u>the</u> function of business. In that sense the attempted delegation of such a central general management responsibility was bound to end in tears.

Chapter 4
Research Methodology

"We multiply distinctions, then
deem that our puny boundaries are things,
that we perceive, and not that which we have made"
[William Wordsworth, The Prelude, Book III]

"However distinct the purposes of social science may be, the methods it employs are merely refinements or developments of those used in everyday life"

[Hammersley & Atkinson1983 p15]

To attack the research questions it was clear I would have to spend a lot of time both watching and listening to marketing managers, but listening and watching in a certain way. Only quasi-anthropological methods would be appropriate to the research questions, and certain steps would have to be taken to avoid the potential methodological pitfalls highlighted during the review of the managerial and marketing-managerial work literature.

4.0 An Emergent Research 'Design

"...over time the research problem is developed or transformed, and eventually its scope is clarified and delimited and its internal structure explored....it is frequently only over the course of the research that one discovers what the research is really all about"

[Hammersley & Atkinson 1983 p175]

With the outline research questions to hand, and several guiding principles in mind, opportunities for potentially suitable field engagements were screened, pursued and grasped as they arose. Serendipity played its usual strong hand. The combination and quality of empirical research opportunities captured was highly appropriate, and considerably exceeded initial expectations.

4.1 The Guiding Principles

4.1.1 Principle 1- Navigating the Discourse

" [The] *double hermeneutic is of considerable complexity, since the connection is not merely a one-way one; there is a considerable slippage of....concepts constructed....., whereby these are appropriated by those whose conduct they were originally coined to analyse, and hence become integral features of that conduct"*

[Giddens 1976 p162]

Though discussing sociology, Gidden's comments could be seen to equally apply to any social scientific endeavour, more critically and pervasively perhaps in the case of the marketing management arena, where, as Hackley puts it:

" *..implicit within the popular managerial school of marketing is the message that managers can constitute successful managerial action through the concepts, models, and philosophy of marketing"*

[1998 p95]

The legitimating utility of this language game has been strengthened considerably by the literal institutionalisation of the 'discipline', and its 'ascendancy' to royal charter status. Marketing is now 'officially' a 'profession', a British monarch has decreed it so.

"..marketing managers...through their education and wider professionalisation are socialised, or domesticated into the marketing management discourse"

[Brownlie 1997 p275]

Even if managers have no real faith in the techno-rational and quasi-scientific tenets of the discipline it often works to their benefit to profess such beliefs and deploy the associated discursive resources. This is particularly the case, one could surmise, when they are staging 'truth effects' [Jeffcut 1994] in their pursuit of a winning argument, a 'professional' image, and promotion. In the heavily value-laden context of the management of marketing it is therefore clear that the openly explicit interrogation of marketing manager respondents as to *'what they are doing'* is problematic, and requires methodological caution.

Indirect Methods and Covertness

" One's own life history, belongingness to a specific research community, and everyday experience inform how one thinks and acts in relation to the subject matter. These have an impact on the questions asked, the language used and, by implication, the results produced"

[Alvesson & Deetz 2000 p 63]

Managers will clearly wish to be seen as being professional, and their responses to questions from a supposedly expert marketing academic, however cleverly crafted, are most likely to be somewhat moulded by an ambition to appear knowledgeable and competent in the 'marketing profession'. The immense challenge of escaping the marketing and management discourses to formulate questions, and then pose them in such a way that somehow does not 'beg the answer' is therefore one better-avoided altogether. I therefore decided that questionnaires of any form were a wholly inappropriate technique, that directed structured interviewing was not a suitable approach, and that any explicit questioning of any respondent should be kept to an absolute minimum, and should not, when unavoidably deployed, utilise terminology prevalent in the marketing management discourse.

It was also clear that, even in the context of indirect methods, knowledge of the research question could possibly influence the exhibited behaviour of the respondents. The approach was therefore, if possible, to be one of covert inquiry, but of a form that avoided the ethical issues pertaining to its more radical variants [Gummesson 2000 p32]. In addition, therefore, the focal managers' awareness of the research question itself was to be negligible and vague

Confidentiality and Corporate Indifference

Personal factors such as pride, ego and the pursuit of social acceptance and admiration can clearly be underpinning drivers of responses to direct questioning. But ambition and the pursuit of careers in the moral maze of the modern corporation bring an extra dimension to the factors influencing 'behaviour under observation'. This is especially true when the observer potentially has the ear of top management [Brownlie 1997 p270]. How their managers perceive them is a central personal concern of most managers, and appearing professional and competent in their eyes is obviously one way of influencing the career-critical perceptions of their superiors. Clearly in the arena of marketing management, one with such prescriptive tendencies, accentuated conformity to the pervasive norms of the discourse is a strong possibility.

In this context, I therefore decided that the managers of the focal managers would receive no feedback or information whatsoever from the research engagement with the respondent; and that the focal manager would be very much aware of this fact. Additionally, all respondents would be made fully aware of the total confidentiality of the research exercise, and that all subsequent academic output would be completely disguised and anonymous. The research access to the enterprise concerned would, if at all possible, be facilitated by a purpose distinct from that of the research. The 'enterprise' of the focal manager concerned would have no interest in the research project itself; and the focal manager was to be very much aware of this fact.

Empathy

" Don't worry, I'm not a consultant...not really an academic, I know what its really like...I've seen it all before"

I was in an advantageous position in personally understanding the embarrassment and vulnerability working managers feel when being observed, and the reluctance to 'tell it as it is' when being interviewed, for fear of appearing 'unprofessional'. Full advantage was to be taken of my non-academic 'old hand' practitioner profile in generating empathy and openness in interaction with respondents.

4.1.2 Principle 2 - Diverse Contexts

The target set was to gain access to marketing managers operating in divergent contexts. 'Polar types' were to form ideal target cases [Eisenhardt 1989 p537]. There is, however, no pretence here of a pursuit of representative or theoretical sampling, a pursuit that often prefaces a claim to generalisability. With in-depth qualitative studies practicalities clearly militate against such 'methods'. In any case, given the indeterminacy of population boundaries and dimensions, the basis of such methodological contentions is deeply suspect. As Seale points out:

" [Qualitative research] *falls prey to precisely the same weakness of some quantitative research*....[where] *unwarranted assumptions are made* *about the characteristics of the population of cases not yet studied.."* [Seale 1999 p112]

It was simply felt, that given the limitation to the number of cases that could be handled in practice, that contextual diversity was potentially more likely to give rise to interesting contrasts, than would a homogenous selection of cases. In addition, it would be more likely that a reader of the research would have some familiarity with a *'receiving context'* of some similarity to the backdrop of one of the *'sending cases'* within the study [Seale 1999 p112]. Any generalisation, like beauty, will be in the eye of the beholder.

I also felt that a particular aim should be to acquire cases with contexts markedly different from the commercial background of the researcher. My tacit 'pre-judgements' and prior 'habiti' [Heidegger 1962; Bourdieu 1977] would clearly play powerful roles in my engagement with the generated empirical material. A form of retrospective 'subjective personal introspection' [Holbrook 2002 p6] would clearly pervade the interpretive process. Each case would act, unavoidably, as a 'stimulant lens' on my prior personal managerial experience. The proposition was that the more contrasting the contexts, the more stimulant a 'lens' it would be. In addition, the inescapable retrospective-introspective process would then represent, in essence, another context-marketing manager combination in the empirical portfolio, the one of my own career.

4.1.3 Principle 3- Longitudinal Engagement

Marples comes to the following conclusion from her studies of managerial work:

" *The manager's job can usefully be pictured as a stranded rope made of fibres of different lengths - where length represents time - each fibre coming to the surface one or more times in observable episodes, and representing a single issue. The higher the level of the manager the longer the average length of fibre, the more intertwined the issues become, and the greater the number of episodes per issue. A prime managerial skill may be to keep a number of 'issues' in play over a large number of episodes, and long periods of time."*
[1967 p287]

At any point in time only a few of the strands and threads making up this 'rope of issues' are 'visible'. That is, the manager, at any one point in time, is actively engaging with only a selection of the portfolio of issues 'to hand'; a certain 'content' so to speak. Given the 'live' content of a manager's job potentially varies substantially over time, it would appear that any study of 'content' should be longitudinal and prolonged.

It is also reasonable to surmise that the nature of the 'surfacing' issues, the 'live' content, may be of considerable influence on the character of the manifest managerial conduct. If this were the case, then in order to see a broad and potentially representative spectrum of managerial conduct longitudinal studies would again appear to be unavoidable.

It is clear from the above that prolonged longitudinal studies are essential if the objective of the research is to probe the 'substance of marketing management and managerial conduct', rather than simply the superficial aspects of managerial activity.

4.2 An Overview of the 'Realised' Research Design

The research design that emerged is illustrated schematically in Figure 1. The methods deployed are described more fully later in this chapter.

Each of the acquired field engagements adhered to the previously described guiding principles. All of the individual studies were extensively longitudinal and were set in contrasting contexts. As planned, observation and interviewing were unstructured. At no time were pre-set categories utilised in the capture of empirical material.

In all cases the unit of analysis was the individual manager. The three phases captured empirical material on five different managers.

The sequencing of the various fieldwork opportunities proved to be particularly apposite.

The Emergent Research Design

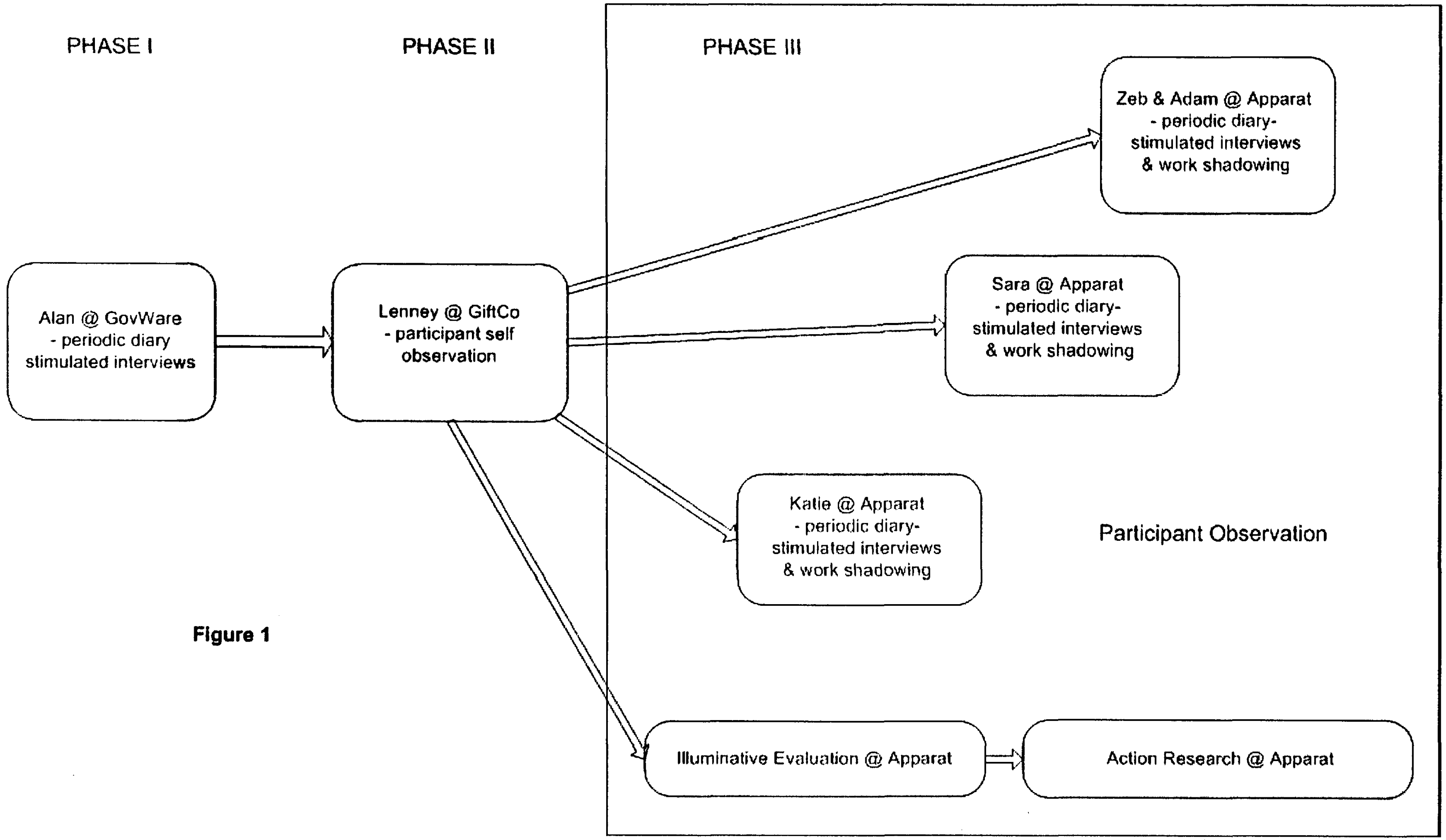


Figure 1

Phase 1 of the fieldwork programme started very early, and was the least intensive. It provided an ideal opportunity to refine the research question in dialogue with the most obviously pertinent literature, whilst listening to a practising marketing manager talk about his everyday life at work. This also proved to be a time of intense personal reflection.

Phase 2 proved to be pivotal. The inclusion in the study of a participant self-observation directly addresses Brownlie's [1997] key methodological concern with *'the re-presentation of second and third hand experience'*. This element of the study provided real-time access to 'first hand experience'.

Experts sit in serried rows
Filled the enormous plaza full
But only one is there that knows
And he's the man who fights the bull

- Robert Graves -

It could well be argued that the best way to begin, if not to conclude, the process of answering Hales' crucial question as to *'why managers do what they do'* [1999] is through this form of investigation. As Lombardo & McCall [1982] emphasise *'managers are purposive'*. The introspective approach employed surmounts what Snyder and Glueck [1980] identified as the crucial weakness in third party observations of managerial work - the failure to identify the intentions and motivations behind observable managerial conduct.

The empirical foundation of the developed categorisations thus lies in this component of the programme, with an embryonic set of categories and conceptualisations being developed during this field engagement. This emergent set of categories was not, however, utilised in the capture of empirical material in Phase 3. The 'data' capture process continued to be 'unstructured'.

Phase 3

" *The challenge becomes one of finding a way of getting close enough to managerial practices themselves to be able to research them whilst remaining free to engage critically with those practices"*

[Watson 2000a p204]

The final phase of fieldwork enabled the degree of organizational penetration, business comprehension, and 'proximity-to-subject' that was necessary in order to obtain the rich empirical material required for the elaboration and refinement of the conceptualisations initially developed during the self-observation of Phase 2. These are modes of research that Gummesson [2000 p39] refers to as 'manager for hire' and 'change agent' respectively. For some it would be technically inaccurate to term this stream of fieldwork ethnography, given the unit of analysis, but it deploys all the component anthropological methods – extensive longitudinal participant and non-participant observation, together with the longitudinal unstructured interviewing of respondents. [Hammersley & Atkinson 1983]

Diversity of Contexts

The diversity of the individual case contexts can be seen from Table II. The full extent of this diversity will become more apparent in Chapter 5 with the discussion of the 'content' of the managers' jobs. However, even at the current level of analysis, there are marked contrasts in many dimensions:

- Seniority - Top to junior
- Organizational Scale – Immense to small
- Geographic Scope – Global to national
- Fast Moving Consumer Goods to Slow Moving Industrial Goods
- Physical product dominated to service dominated businesses
- Market complexity - extremely simple to extraordinarily complex

In terms of generating stimulating contrasts it was particularly appropriate, given the pervasive emphasis on this arena within the marketing pedagogy, that a central component of the research programme was based in a business-to-retail-to-consumer F.M.C.G. environment, given my own contrasting industrial business-to-business background. The opportunity to study three different 'species' of marketing manager within the same organization added an interesting dimension to the case portfolio, especially with one of them belonging to the product manager category.

Table II

'Subject Manager' & 'Seniority'/ Number of Subordinates	'Type' of business & Product	Nature of Corporate Entity & Division & Organizational context of respondent
Alan @ SystemWare Senior/1	B2B/Government Software - 'Hi-tec' with very complex service surround	Government sector focussed division of European operation of global corporation Multi-dimensional global matrix
Lenney @ GiftCo Top/1	B2B Promotional Gifts - Simple with simple service surround	National privately owned company Hierarchical, functional & simple
Zeb @ Apparat Top/30	B2B2C Apparel- Simple with substantial service surround	National subsidiary operation of a global corporation Global matrix
Katie @ Apparat Middle/5	- ditto -	National subsidiary operation of a global corporation Global matrix
Sara @ Apparat Senior/4	- ditto -	National subsidiary operation of a global corporation Global matrix
Lenney @ International Paint Top/150	B2B Industrial Coatings - 'Hi & Lo-tec' with sophisticated service surround	Global division of a global corporation Global matrix

Table II (continued)

'Subject Manager' & 'Seniority'/ Number of Subordinates	Scale of Corporate Entity /Division	Subject Manager's Scope of Responsibility	Respondent's Job title
Alan @ SystemWare Senior/1	>$5000m >$1,000m	European	Marketing Manager
Lenney @ GiftCo Top/1	$5m	National	Marketing Director
Zeb @ Apparat Top/30	>$1000m >$400m	National	Marketing Director
Katie @ Apparat Middle/5	- ditto -	National	Trade Marketing Manager
Sara @ Apparat Senior/4	- ditto -	National	Senior Product Manager
Lenney @ International Paint Top/150	>$3500m >$400m	Global	Business Development & Marketing Director

4.3 The Field Engagements

After providing a brief profile of the 'research instrument' - myself, I will describe, in brief, the contexts of the marketing managers to which access was obtained, the nature of that access, and the methods and techniques that were deployed. In only one case were strict legal confidentiality restrictions demanded by the company involved in the fieldwork. However, given the methodological considerations above and the commercial and personal sensitivity of the situations encountered the location of all the cases, the case contexts, the identity of the subject managers, and the empirical material displayed, are heavily disguised.

4.3.1 The Research Instrument - 'Lenney'

- the beginnings of some first order reflexivity

"Once we abandon the idea that the social character of research can be standardised out or avoided by becoming a 'fly on the wall', or a 'full participant', the role of the researcher as active participant in the research process becomes clear. He or she is the research instrument par excellence."

[Hammersley & Atkinson p18]

In 1998, at the age of 42, I was made redundant from International Paint, the industrial coatings sector of Courtaulds, the then British multi-national conglomerate. I had worked in the company for twenty years, and had ascended the ranks through R&D and Marketing.

After four months on various consulting engagements with Shell Chemicals and the Olin Corporation, I started work for the main competitor of International, a Danish company - Hempel. The idea was that I would run one of their European sub-regions for a year or so the get a feel for the company, and the way it operated, before moving to their headquarters in Copenhagen, to take up the post of Worldwide Sales & Marketing Director. This latter move became impossible as my youngest daughter began to exhibit language-learning difficulties and I was too 'expensive' for the post in which I had been temporarily perched. The situation was clearly untenable, and in the culmination of a radical restructuring of the sub-region I engineered my own exit. I had decided that I was leaving 'management' for good, to attempt a second career in business education. It quickly became evident that a PhD was a strong requirement. So here I am.

I was initially drawn to Lancaster University Management School by elements of the then current web page of Professor Geoff Easton. Most particularly the following:

"...there is almost no research that examines what marketing managers actually do...... a radical re-examination of the nature of current research needs to take place if marketing academics are to live up to their often espoused goal of being an applied discipline dedicated to helping practising marketing managers."

[http://www.lums.lancs.ac.uk/marketing/profiles/166/]

At that time I had never contemplated the myriad interpretations that could be placed upon the maddeningly simple word 'do', nor mused on the ontological inference of the word 'actually'. As I write this, I have just about come to terms with the enabling-disabling character of language - there being no escape from language games, the linguistic immanence of categories and metaphor, and the socially constructed nature of knowledge. With my traditional physical sciences background it has been quite a struggle. It has been a long, and I am sure well trodden philosophical journey. I am now even older, hopefully a bit wiser, struggling with Wittgenstein, manfully resisting the linguistic turn, but no longer in search of a representational, correspondence to reality, truth.

4.3.2 Phase 1 - Alan @ GovWare

4.3.2.1 The Case Context

Throughout the fieldwork engagement Alan was the regional marketing manager of a major division of a global, multi-billion dollar software services corporation [SystemServ]. At the time of the study he had been with SystemServ for 10 years, and was 40 years old. His career had always been in sales & marketing. He is a Business Studies graduate and has completed an O.U. M.B.A. As I write Alan is still working within SystemServ, although in a different capacity, and in a different division.

4.3.2.2 Method - diary stimulated interviewing

I interviewed Alan 13 times, at 3-5 week intervals, over a period of 15 months from June 2002 to September 2003. The interviews were most usually around 90 minutes in duration. The interview method employed was modelled on that recommended by Kvale [1996]. The objective of this form of qualitative interview is to elicit, through a focussed dialogue, nuanced descriptions of specific situations and action sequences from the interviewee's life-world. The descriptions garnered should not, in principle, be moulded by any pre-formulated questions, nor captured in ready-made categories of the interviewer [Kvale 1996, Chapters 2 & 7].

The interviews conducted were therefore unstructured and non-directive, but were highly focussed. Focus was achieved and maintained through the use of the respondent's diary as a discussion stimulant. The dialogue achieved was one of interviewer-stimulated personal reflection by the respondent, on the work in which he/she had been engaged since the previous interview. Each interview systematically considered, day by day, the diary segment that had elapsed since the previous interview. At the start of each interview a large-scale printout/copy of the respondent's diary was provided so that both parties could view it simultaneously during the interview. As far as was humanly possible the questioning technique amounted to simply pointing to the next item in the diary and stimulating the respondent to talk with simple 'prodding' comments such as *"what's this then?"... "..And then you?"... "and in the afternoon?"... "...after that?"... "so how did Monday start?"..." onto Tuesday then?"*. In a sense there was no questioning of the subject. I simply endeavoured to keep the subject manager talking. Direct questioning was avoided, other than that of a probing nature when it was absolutely essential for clarification and comprehension.

All the interviews were digitally recorded, with contemporaneous notes being taken. The latter were in the form of brief research memoranda that were later utilised to stimulate more substantial 'theoretical-memo' work. [Glaser 1978 Chapter 4; Strauss & Corbin 1998 Chapter 14] Copies of Alan's diary and 'to-do' lists were captured, together with key working documents.

4.3.3 'Lenney' @ GiftCo

4.3.3.1 The Case Context

GiftCo is an approximately £3.5M turnover, privately owned U.K. Company. The firm is involved in the sale and supply of custom-printed promotional gifts, ranging from pens and mugs, to dated items, such as calendars and diaries. In the spring of 2002 they had been in touch with their local Regional Development Agency and had indicated that they needed some 'marketing help'. This led to contact being made with Lancaster University Management School. At that time they were set to post a loss of £350K for the year, despite the quite drastic re-structuring that had already been undertaken. They had also generated losses in the previous two years, and sales revenue was continuing to decline. I offered my help as an interim Marketing Director.

4.3.3.2 Method – Participant Self-Observation

I worked for GiftCo on a self-employed basis for 18 months, from July 2002 to December 2003. I usually worked 2 days per week, but sometimes 3 or 4. Throughout my time at GiftCo I maintained a diary of my activities. This diary comprised notes describing what I was doing and with whom; what I was endeavouring to achieve through each particular activity, and why. No pre-set categories were utilised. I made around twenty event-notes on most days. Event-notes varied in length, but were rarely more than 40 words of description. These event-notes were then further elaborated upon in a reflective 'theoretical memo' process that was conducted, most often, at the end of each of my weekly stints at GiftCo. A document history was also maintained. It comprised:

- Agendas, standing agendas and minutes of meetings attended and/or led
- Actions-arising notes and outputs from team sessions
- Action plan documents
- Personal and departmental working documents including business characterisation and situation analyses etc.
- Progress reports
- My personal 'to-do'/'to-get-done' lists.

In addition, digital recordings of many formal meetings and discussions were collected.

4.3.4 Zeb, Adam, Katie & Sara @ Apparat

4.3.4.1 Apparat UK - The Context of the Focal Managers

Apparat UK is the UK subsidiary of a major multi-national corporation that is involved in the supply of branded clothing to major national, regional and small independent local retailers. Within its 'sector' it lies third in terms of UK market share, behind two other global brands, with an annual sales revenue of approximately £250m.

4.3.4.2 The Illuminative Evaluation Project – the entry point

Over a number of years Apparat had conducted customer satisfaction surveys with its retail customers. As far as the managing director was concerned the process had achieved very little and had become a waste of time and money. As a result contact was made with Lancaster University Management School, and a new approach was conceived. An illuminative evaluation [Parlett 1981] project was designed with the overall aim of Apparat gaining a:

"better understanding of their retail customers, the relationships they have with them and, most important of all, their capacity to respond and improve their performance".

This project comprised two parallel integrated and sequential, but overlapping, investigations conducted by two different researchers. The first component of the research programme was the internally focused process targeted at providing 'illumination' as to Apparat's...*"capacity to respond and improve their performance".* I volunteered to conduct this phase of the project in return for ongoing and substantial access to some of their senior marketing managers.

4.3.4.3 Zeb, Adam, Katie & Sara – the focal managers

I was given broad ranging access to Apparat UK, and in particular to Zeb, Adam, Katie and Sara.

Adam had been with Apparat for around five years, having previously worked as a brand manager for blue-chip FMCG firms in wholly different sectors. He is a management studies graduate in his early forties. On my arrival Adam was the Marketing Director, and Zeb was his Consumer Marketing Manager. At a relatively early stage in this fieldwork Adam resigned and left Apparat UK. Adam kindly agreed to continue interviews after his departure from Apparat. With the departure of Adam, Zeb was promoted into the marketing director role. His previous position was eliminated and he maintained personal responsibility for the consumer marketing aspect of his department's work. He had been with Apparat for 8 years, is 38 and possesses a Chartered Institute of Marketing diploma. Zeb previously worked for one of Apparat's key competitors.

Katie reported to Adam, and thence to Zeb, heading up what, in Apparat, was termed Trade Marketing. She is 34, a business studies graduate and had been with Apparat for 7 years.

Sara was, and is still, the Senior Product Manager for one of the key product segments. She is 35, a politics graduate and had been with Apparat for 2 years. Sara was previously with one of Apparat's key competitors.

The unstructured diary-stimulated interview approach utilised with Alan at 'SystemWare', was replicated in the field engagements with Zeb, Katie and Sara. I interviewed Adam 5 times over a period of about 5 months, Zeb 8 times over a period of 10 months, at intervals of between 4-6 weeks; Sara 6 times over a period of 5 months, at intervals of 3-4 weeks, and Katie 6 times over a period of 4 months, at intervals of 2-3 weeks. All interviews were 60-90 minutes in duration, and were digitally recorded. Copies of diaries were retained together with copies of the respondents' 'to-do' lists. This process was embedded within a wide-ranging programme of 'contexting' interviews with their direct and indirect role sets.

Zeb, Katie and Sara also agreed to be work shadowed. This shadowing lasted between 5 and 8 consecutive working days. During this shadowing all conversations in which these managers became engaged, and meetings in which they participated, were digitally recorded. During the work shadow period I maintained an event log similar to that utilised in the GiftCo self-observation.

4.3.4.4 The Participant Observation/Action Research Opportunity

"...to rely on what people say about what they believe they do without observing what they do is to neglect the complex relationship between attitudes and behaviour: just to rely on observation without talking with people in order to understand their perspectives is to risk misinterpreting their behaviour" [Hammersley 1990 p597]

The illuminative evaluation framework that had provided the 'entry point' to Apparat UK had had no provision for intervention. The whole concept of the illuminative mode of research leaves the question of 'what next' hanging in the air, as did the urgent conference call from global HQ that brought the first feedback session with the Managing Director to an abrupt end. On reflection, it was clearly naïve to think that an arms-length illuminative intervention would have ever survived the first feedback session, if substantial issues were to emerge. The question, *"what do you reckon we should do"*, did not hang in the air for long. I was asked to come forward with a proposal for what should be done in response to the findings. The relevant section of the submitted proposal is shown below:

"...I propose we mobilise a cross-functional account development team comprised, in the main, of appropriate. ...managers from all the pertinent functions. The team would work on the development of a comprehensive and detailed Account Development Strategy/Action Plan for one of the key accounts. The Account strategy/action plan would not be a file-away; the intention would be for it to be deployed as an active working document throughout and across the business.."

The proposal was accepted, and I agreed to facilitate the team's work on the basis that I could have continued access to their senior marketing managers and, in addition, utilise the intervention itself as part of my empirical work. The team that was assembled became known as the Key Account Steering Group. It included the focal managers Zeb, Katie and

Sara, and comprised members of all the functions other than finance and upstream supply chain logistics, namely the:

- Consumer Marketing Manager/Marketing Director [Zeb]
- Senior Product Manager - Product Segment A [Brad]
- Senior Product Manager - Product Segment B [Sara]
- Trade Marketing Manager [Katie]
- Customer Operations Manager
- Deputy Sales Director - Product Segment A
- Deputy Sales Director - Product Segment B

It should be noted that it was shortly after this team began working together that the then current marketing director, Adam, resigned, with Zeb being promoted into the marketing director role. Additionally, just as the first steering group meeting took place, the UK Sales Director was promoted into a European role. The national sales director position remained unfilled for some time, with the deputy sales directors taking up many of the associated day-to-day responsibilities. I acted as chairman and flip-chart 'scribe' at the steering group's formal meetings, and as process facilitator within the organization. There were no formal or prescriptive frameworks for key account management deployed. I worked with this Steering Group, in a facilitation role, for over 15 months, from October 2003 to January 2005. During this time I worked in Apparat on average 1-2 days per week. Over a period of approximately 12 months this team met on ten occasions; each session lasting three to six hours. The team's meetings were digitally recorded. Copies of flip-chart work, agendas, actions arising notes etc. were collected. This participant observation/action research ran concurrently with the longitudinal diary-based interviewing and work shadowing of Zeb, Katie and Sara. The active participant-facilitator role in the Steering Group allowed my researcher role to slip from view, whilst the tape kept running. The opportunity to 'observe' the three focal marketing mangers engaged in so many extensive and wide-ranging meetings was particularly relevant for the research question. As Schwartzman and Boden conclude from their empirical studies:

"Meetings are significant because they are the organization writ small"
[Schwartzman 1987 p288]

"Meetings are where organizations come together...they are the occasioned expression of management-in-action, that very social action through which institutions produce and reproduce themselves"
[Boden 1994 p81]

Overall I worked with Apparat on the illuminative evaluation and key account management change projects for 21 months, from March 2003 to January 2005. The latter project ran for 15 months, starting in October 2003. The phased nature of this access proved to be extremely beneficial. As I had discovered in the field engagement with Alan @ SystemServ an enormous effort was required simply to penetrate the 'language game' of another business, not least the plethora of acronyms in play at any one time. The illuminative evaluation phase of the Apparat intervention allowed most of this necessary process of familiarisation to take place before the in-depth research engagement commenced. The process-facilitator role I played, and the depth, breadth and nature of access it enjoyed, enabled me to develop a deep understanding of the business and its market.

4.4 Talk & Technology

The availability of digital recording devices of small physical size and extraordinary capacity has transformed the process of capturing empirical material in participant and non-participant observation. This was a particularly serendipitous development given, as Boden comments:

"For managers talk is the work"
[1994 p79]

The size, sensitivity and mobile character of the device utilised enabled easy 'recording on the move' during work shadowing, and the non-intrusive recording of meetings. Literally weeks of 'talk' were captured in the work-shadows and participant observation elements of the study at Apparat. As a result, in substantial part, the study responds to Samra-Fredricks' call for research that:

" ... preserves the complex interpersonal interweaving of the taken-for-granted social/moral, political and economic threads of organizational members' lived experiences...ethnographies which are extended to include

audio recordings of the naturally occurring talk-based interactive routines of managers over a period of time"
[2003 p291]

Thankfully the availability of analytical-coding software such as HyperResearch [http://www.researchware.com] enables the efficient coding and re-coding of the digitally captured oral material, without recourse to mass transcription.

4.5 Engagement With The Generated Empirical Material

" *'Interpretation' implies that there are no self evident, simple or unambiguous rules or procedures, and that the crucial ingredients are the researcher's judgement, intuition, and ability to 'see and point something out'"*
[Alvesson & Skoldberg 2000 p248]

4.5.1 My Epistemological Stance

I set out on this study under the naive illusion that I would be able to produce an unproblematic description of marketing managerial work that was unmediated, un-coloured by my prejudices, not theory laden, nor value infused. I had the delusion of naturalistic inquiry. My original physical science background hung heavy on my shoulders. My view has changed quite radically. The adopted epistemological position is one of weak constructionism or 'internalism', what is sometimes termed 'perspectivism' [Fay 1996; Putnam 1981 Chapter 3]. This epistemological stance rejects the realist-representationalist view of knowledge, but does not take the radical linguistic turn, and thus does not wholly reject an ontology of the real. It is, in a sense, a subtle realist perspective [Hammersley 1992] that accepts that there may be phenomena that exist independent of our knowledge claims of them, but strongly denies that we can have any unproblematic and unmediated access to them:

"In this [perspectivist] *sense, constructivism means that human beings do not find or discover knowledge as much as we construct or make it. We invent models, concepts, and schemes to make sense of experience, and we continually test and modify these constructions in the light of experience. ... We do not construct our interpretations in isolation but against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, language and so forth"*

[Schwandt 2000 p197]

It is a non-objectivist stance that rejects any notion of a value free, theory free 'tabula-rasa' vantage point of 'observation', accepting that:

"The researcher composes the story; it does not simply unfold before the eyes of an objective viewer. The story reflects the viewer as well as the viewed....... [and] *each is a rendering, one interpretation among multiple interpretations, of a shared or individual reality"*

[Charmaz 2000 p 522-3]

It is a position that clearly demands an explicit acknowledgement of the problematic relationship between the researcher and the 'researched'. A basic level of epistemic reflexivity, that at least attempts to illuminate the influential 'embodied dispositions' of the researcher [Johnson & Duberly 2003; Jenkins 1992 p76], inasmuch as one can ever 'know' them [Linstead 1994 p1325; Polanyi 1967].

4.5.2 The Viewer – Purposive and Value Laden

" *In framing descriptions..we cannot be concerned solely with truth: what is to be included in the description must also be determined by assumptions about what is relevant. These assumptions are based...ultimately on purposes and the values that ground those purposes* [Hammersley 1990 p607]

In search of an appropriately reflexive response to this central problematic of 'judging relevance' when engaging with empirical material, it is clear I should respond to Watson's [1994a] exhortations, and continue to *'reveal the hand of the researcher'*.

By the time I arrived at Lancaster I had been on innumerable management training programmes, business school executive courses and had spent three months of my life at I.N.S.E.A.D. [some of it lost in non-metaphorical woods] on an executive mini-M.B.A. I now feel, even more strongly than I did at the time, that I may have learnt a lot, but that little of it was about 'managing'. Returning to the sculpting metaphor of

Chapter 2, a veritable sculptor's tool chest of hammers and chisels had been laid out before me, and at times pressed vigorously into my hands. From time-management to team-building, and from relevant cost accounting to benefit-based market segmentation the focus was on technical-business skills, the 'masonic' skills that enable appropriate conduct, and on supporting decision heuristics of one form or another. Some of this 'management education & training' proved of exceptional utility, and almost all of it did prove useful at one time or another. It just did not seem to constitute a coherent training for 'management'; that is, for the 'managing' that I did, and experienced, everyday.

As a result my inescapable predisposition has been to attempt to produce conceptualisations, at a level of abstraction that would be of some potential utility in the development of a pedagogy of managing 'in, and of,' marketing. [Carroll & Gillen 1984 p135]. My objective would be to generate a 'thick description' [Geertz 1973 p7] of the conduct and content of marketing manager work utilising, as appropriate, both 'experience-near' and 'experience-distant' conceptualisations [Geertz 1979 p226]. The target was to be a 'verstehen' that, through it's overarching pattern of interpretation, would reveal the deeper meaning of the particularities of the 'text' - its 'substance'. A 'verstehen' that would be built without a pathological preoccupation with conceptual 'newness' [Eccles & Nohria 1992 p2], and with the following in mind:

" [There is] *too great a reverence for difficult, obtuse theorising that does little to illuminate the realities of everyday social life"*

[Coffey & Atkinson 1996 p156]

" Real knowledge ought to be communicable. It should be possible to say it so it can be understood...a test of real knowledge is that it can be translated so that any intelligent person can see what it is about"

[Collins 1992 v.]

4.5.3 The Evaluation of Interpretations

" Just as in science [as the post-positivists have come to realise] there can be no 'experimentum crucis', which decisively verifies [or even falsifies] a theory, so there can be no ruthlessly critical process of verification in interpretation. The notion that one can 'test' interpretations and subject them to scrutiny in the light of relevant evidence such that objective conclusions can be reached is a purely utopian notion. There can be no science of interpretation"

[Madison 1988 p31]

However, as Madison argues, one might not be able to 'test' interpretations, but one can evaluate them. Working through a critique of Husserlian phenomenology and Gademerian hermeneutics Madison develops some 'canons of praxis' for the evaluation of interpretations. These principles are, of course, focussed on the interpretation of authored texts, but one can take 'the text' as being the empirical material, and the subject managers as its authors. Madison's principles are summarised below [p29-30]

- **Coherence** – the interpretation must be internally consistent and not self-contradictory; the interpretation must have harmony: whole-parts/parts whole
- **Contextuality** –the interpretation must take full account of the 'context of the text'; the totality of the situation of the text
- **Penetration** – the interpretation should penetrate, in that it brings out a *"guiding and underlying intention in the work...making various works or statements intelligible by seeing them as attempts to resolve a central problematic"* [p29]
- **Agreement –** the interpretation must not distort, and must attempt to build on previous accredited interpretations whilst not letting them blind one to new perspectives:

  " the point is not to follow previous scholarship but to adapt it and transform it in the interpretation of one's own data"

  [Coffey & Atkinson 1996 p158]
- **Suggestiveness** - it must be fertile, in that it raises further questions
- **Potential** – the interpretation should be capable of being extended and its implications should be manifest

In Madison's terms there may not be a right or wrong, correspondence to reality, interpretation, but there are some interpretations that are clearly of a 'better quality' than others. Hammersley simply states that for studies such as the one to hand the characterisation has to be:

" *sufficiently plausible given our existing knowledge*....[and] *that the phenomena described fit the categories built into the description"*
[1992 p70-71]

Madison and Hammersley have numerous fellow travellers on their quest for the Holy Grail of an 'interpretivist criteriology', a universal framework for assessing the 'quality' of interpretations [Seale 1999 p42-50]. This is a quest that, at the last count, would seem to have generated at least fifteen different conceptions of validity, together with dozens of 'quality' criteria checklists. In this context a choice had to be made, and Madison's canons provided 'guiding ideals' in the assessment of my evolving interpretations of the empirical material. However Hammersley's notion of *'plausible given our existing knowledge'* possibly connects, more practically, with the inherent reflectivity of this study.

As suggested earlier, no matter how 'open' a mind I strove to maintain, my tacit pre-understandings would pervade the assessment of interpretations. In the end, as Bernstein [1983] cogently argues, the evaluation of interpretations, and of their more 'serious' brethren – theories, is the exercise of practical wisdom in practical judgement. In the case of my engagement with the empirical material, whether tacitly, or explicitly, the question suffusing the evaluation-interpretation cycle was inevitably and unavoidably *"does this 'ring true' to me, 'Lenney', the ex marketing director'.* It became ever more clear to me as the research programme emerged that any study of marketing managers would be rooted in a study of myself, and, as Nagel comments in his seminal work

'The View from Nowhere' - "*..sometimes the truth is not to be found by travelling as far away from one's personal perspective as possible"* [1986 p27], even if such a form of travel were possible.

There is no such thing as a view from nowhere, and there is no escape from the equivocal nature of empirical material.

4.5.4 The Abductive Spiral

" *Empirical material cannot unambiguously falsify or verify theories, but it can generate arguments for or against the championing of theoretical ideas and a particular way of understanding the world"*
[Alvesson & Skoldberg 2000 p275]

Aristotle originally elaborated three forms of inference - deduction, induction and what is most often translated as 'reduction'. The last of these was refined, elaborated and renamed 'retroduction' or 'abduction' by Peirce [Hanson 1958 p85].

" *Deduction proves something must be: Induction shows that something actually is operative; Abduction merely suggests that something may be."*
[Peirce in Hanson 1958 p85]

Coffey & Atkinson elegantly describe the style of engagement with the empirical material that was employed within this study:

"...we find ourselves engaged in processes of abductive reasoning. We note something about the 'data' at hand. We speculate about possible interpretive frameworks - drawn from our general knowledge and from our specialised reading in the social sciences - that might help to account for these phenomena. We thus go beyond the 'data' themselves toward broader generic issues..."
[1996 p161]

This mode of inference, this process of colligation, the development and modulation of hypotheses in dialogue with 'data', captures the spirit of the grounded theory method of social scientific research propounded by Glaser & Strauss [1967]. Sadly, however, the original conception of grounded theorising carries with it heavy ontological and epistemological baggage. As Charmaz puts it:

" Like wondrous gifts waiting to be opened, early grounded theory texts imply that categories and concepts inhere within the data, awaiting the researcher's discovery.....Glaser assumes that we can gather our data unfettered by bias or biography"
[2000 p522]

This naive objectivist-inductivist position is clearly incompatible with the adopted epistemological stance, but the spirit of grounded theorising, and the essence of its constant comparison technique, strongly influenced my engagement with the empirical material. With Madison's 'canons of evaluation' to the fore, and my prejudices ever present, my work with the empirical material consisted of a hermeneutic spiral of interpretation–evaluation–interpretation-evaluation...........a juridical spiral of evolving pre-understanding and understanding [Gummessson 2000 Chapter 3; Alvesson & Skoldberg 2000 Chapter 3].

"..what the 'things themselves' say will be different in light of our changing horizons and the different questions we learn to ask"
[Bernstein 1983 p 139]

In this abductive spiral I consciously endeavoured to adhere to the spirit of the 'emergent versus forcing' tenet of Glaser's original conception of grounded theory production. This is a cognitive tightrope-walk of questionable negotiatabilty, stretching as it does between a requisite theoretical sensitivity and an 'open mind' [Glaser 1992]. However, the broad ranging character of the 'nature of managerial literature' can be argued to have assisted this pursuit:

" *One condition for reflection in the interplay between empirical material and interpretations is...the breadth and variation of the interpretive repertoire* [of the researcher]*....the trick is* [for you] *to control interpretive possibilities without letting them control you"*
[Alvesson & Skoldberg 2000 p250]

The 'nature of managerial work' literature is theoretically eclectic. It ranges from the intellectual heights of Marxian critical theory and cognitive science, through artificial intelligence, social psychology, the study of leadership, Weberian & Giddensian sociology and the instrumentalist consultant-speak of organization development & change management, to the lowlands of the ubiquitous 'how to manage' handbooks of airport bookshops. This literature necessitated the sort of broad engagement with the potentially pertinent surrounding literature that is advocated by Alvesson & Skoldberg as being an appropriate foundation for the pursuit of a requisite, but not constraining, theoretical sensitivity [2000 p251-253]. Through this process attempting to avoid either *"ending up in well read scholasticism or naive ignorance"* [p251].

My lack of a traditional social sciences background, and the concomitant enculturation into a particular language game and paradigm, could also be said to have been beneficial in this endeavour [Alvesson & Skoldberg 2000 p250].

4.6 A Reflection

" The end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time"

[T S Elliot 1944, Four Quartets, Faber & Faber, London]

The change in role from manager to researcher-academic proved to be a significant personal challenge. It was exceptionally difficult to maintain focus on the objective of the research, as opposed to the particular objectives and difficulties of the subject manager. Similarly, it proved almost impossible, at least at the outset, to maintain focus on understanding the nature of the issues and problems in play, rather than assisting in their resolution. The tendency to try to get involved in solution generation, and to become creatively engaged, was almost pathological. The participant observation phases at GiftCo and Apparat were a blessed relief; I could revert, almost, to type. The nature of this challenge of transition, from 'the field of action' to 'the field of knowledge' [Lupton 1984], potentially speaks directly to aspects of the research question itself. This will not, however, explicitly fall within the scope of what is attempted in the current study.

At one point the partner of a close friend, not someone of a philosophical bent or social sciences background, asked me what my research project was all about. I elaborated, and, given the paucity of my philosophical background at that time, was taken aback by the response:

"...so it's about you really...it's impossible for it to be anything else"
[Val McGraw – late 2001]

When I was a fulltime manager I never had the time to be 'reflective' in the Schon [1983] sense. This entire study could be viewed as reflective, as an extensive *subjective-personal-introspection* stimulated by field engagements.

"...don't be afraid of introspection......society has taken a lot of pains to construct me and you as instruments of observation and that society has every reason to trust the observations that we use our socially

constructed powers to offer, as subjective-personal-introspection based reflections on our own human condition"

[Holbrook 2002 p6]

My utilisation of the first person throughout the thesis is not a trivial linguistic sop to reflexivity [Fay 1996 p218-219] but is in straightforward recognition of the unavoidably introspective character of the study, and an attempt to keep this inherent reflectivity in the view of the reader.

Chapter 5

The Character of Content

" *Managers are purposive; we may understand leaders better if we look harder at* ***what*** *they are working on"*

[Lombardo & McCall 1982 p56- emphasis added]

In this chapter I will respond to the first component of the research question, and attempt to illuminate the 'content' of the subject marketing managers' jobs. In the process, through an interweaving of conceptual and empirical material, I will explore the nature of the core issues that confront the subject managers at the confluence of the content and context of their work.

5.0 Managerial Ropes, Strands and Threads

" *The manager's job can usefully be pictured as a stranded rope made of fibres of different lengths- where length represents time - each fibre coming to the surface one or more times in observable episodes, and representing a single issue."*

[Marples 1967 p287]

Paradoxically, the longitudinal nature of the diary-stimulated interviews and 'to-do list' interrogation process deployed in this study allows a cross-sectional view to be taken of Marples' 'managerial rope' [Chapter 4]. This metaphorical cross-section reveals all the 'issues' with which a manager is contending, if not 'visibly' engaging. In precise terms an 'issue' should be regarded *as 'a matter that is in dispute between two or more parties.....a point of debate or controversy...a matter not yet finally settled, and on which the settlement of something else depends..* [Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged, 2002]. The nature and character of the 'issues' with which the subject managers were contending will become a focus of attention within the concluding sections of this chapter; and in the following chapter, where a particular exemplar of a 'rope of issues' is developed and discussed. At this point, however, the rope metaphor will be utilised to describe the 'content' of the subject managers' work during the period of study. This 'content', the subject managers' 'endeavours' as I shall term them, are distinct from the issues with which they contend. Through their 'endeavours' the subject managers engage with the issues they confront; endeavours represent the content, the 'what', of 'action' taken to address issues, and of course other matters to hand. The metaphorical 'rope of content' cross-sections displayed in this chapter reveal all the 'endeavours' with which the managers had engaged during the period of study; that is, those threads of endeavour that constituted that particular length of 'rope', their portfolios of endeavour, as I shall term them.

Extending the metaphor, a rope is made up of strands that are themselves constituted of threads. Strands tend to run the whole length of the rope. Threads, however, do not necessarily nor most regularly, run the whole length. The categories of endeavour in which a manager is always engaged could be likened to the ever-present strands of a rope; the particular endeavours falling into these categories being the threads that make up the strands. These threads of endeavour, mostly coming and going over time, are of potentially radically differing scale, character and content. Often they are defined by their objective and are intention specific. In many ways they could be termed 'projects', but, to my mind, the word would connote too many unintended characteristics. Bonoma's [1984] conceptions of *'functions'* and *'programmes'* represent descriptive concepts that are the most comparable to strands and threads of endeavour. With these latter terms however, possibly even more powerful caveats would have to be applied as Bonoma's terminology is too easily associated with the legacy of the marketing management discourse.

5.1 Portfolios of Endeavour

"...[Managers] *do not deal with isolated discrete items but with portfolios of problems, issues and opportunities..which compete for some part of his or her immediate concern"*

[Isenberg 1984]

Although arduous, it was relatively simple, both intellectually and practically, to abduce the threads of endeavour of the managers studied, and to feel mostly at ease with their labelling. The process of identifying threads of endeavour, and their labelling, was carried out ahead of any systematic attempt at their aggregation into strands.

At this point seeking to contrive discourse-critical controversy, and linguistically engineered 'newness', was a tempting possibility. To counter this at origin, I purposively utilised, when labelling the emergent strands of endeavour, prevalent terms from the pertinent management/marketing management discourses where this could be justified. There was no attempt, and indeed as it turned out there was no need, to craft any new descriptive language.

The 'identified' threads of endeavour were run through the sieve of Howard's original areas of 'marketing decision' [1957]:

- Product
    - Interpreted as good and/or service 'total-product' [Levitt 1980]
- Price
- Channels
    - Distribution ['Place']
- Promotion – Advertising etc.
- Promotion – Personal Selling
- Location

The remaining threads were then subjected to a further grouping process, and the additional strands of 'marketing' endeavour that emerged were:

- Sensing
    - E.g. Business, Market & Performance Monitoring Systems Development

- Product Development
  - E.g. Product Line Design Brief development
- Service Quality Improvement
  - E.g. Customer Supply Service Standards Development
- Political Lobbying & Regulatory Affairs
  - E.g. Industry Technical Standards Development

The residue were identified as belonging to more general managerial categories of content:

- Formal Policy & Plans
  - E.g. Business Sales Budgeting & Forecasting
- Organization Development
  - E.g. Global H.Q. – purposing and design
- General Administration
  - E.g. Departmental Budget Development, Expenditure monitoring & modulation
- Human Resources Administration
  - E.g. Performance Appraisal
- Formal Reporting
  - E.g. Regular Mandated Status reporting

Alan was not predominantly engaged in activities that could be characterised as comprising a 'promotional' strand of endeavour. Many other, more substantial, strands of endeavour were clearly discernable in his activities. The 'Product' Development and 'Channels' strands posed a challenge to the labelling capabilities of the marketing discourse, and, as will be seen, the conceptual stretch involved use of 'the marketing imagination', so to speak [Levitt 1986].

For **Katie** the characterisation achieved was simple. It posed little challenge to the labelling capabilities of the marketing management discourse, and it would hardly be out of place in the form of a classical job description or the contents page of a textbook on trade marketing. Superficially it appears a relatively uncomplicated role, one that may be 'technically' challenging with respect to design and media utilisation, but managerially simple, and operationally unsophisticated. As will be illustrated later this appearance is deceptive, as are most formal job descriptions and the contents pages of marketing textbooks.

As in the case of Katie, the characterisation achieved for **Sara** would not be out of place in the form of a classical job description, or, in Sara's case, within the contents page of a primer on product management. However, her endeavours are much more narrowly focussed than those described in the classical literature pertaining to the product management concept [Cunningham & Clarke 1975]. The literature on 'product management in practice', summarised in Appendix B, suggests that there are probably as many manifestations of the product management label as there are firms which deploy it [e.g. Clewett & Stasch 1975; and see Roscow 1966, Clark & Fujimoto 1991]. It should be noted that Sara was not located in the 'marketing' department of Apparat UK.

There is little of surprise in the characterisation of endeavours for **Zeb.** The absence of endeavours that could be labelled 'product' and 'price' is notable, but explicable, given the responsibilities and reporting lines of the Senior Product Managers [see Figures 7 & 8].

Of all the portfolios, the breadth of endeavours engaged upon by myself at International and Giftco most closely encompass the full span of Kotler's [1972 p52] 'basic tasks of marketing management', though interestingly, so does that of Alan, albeit in a very different way.

The distribution of the various strands of endeavour across the different subject managers is summarised in Table III.

5.2 Context, Endeavours and the Character of Content

In the sections that follow the context of each of the subject managers is described, and their portfolios of endeavour are elaborated. In keeping with the rope metaphor, these portfolios of endeavour are displayed graphically. Sadly practicalities do not allow a stimulating artistic representation of the warp and weft of these 'managerial ropes', and much is asked of the reader's imagination in viewing these as their metaphorical cross-sections. These displays have been made as self-explanatory as possible and their contents are not discussed at length in the text. The text instead concentrates on what the graphics cannot convey by focusing on the most striking aspects of the 'character of the content' of the subject managers' work.

Strands Constituting the Portfolios of Endeavour of the Subject Managers **Table III**

Managers	Strands Of Endeavour							
	Product	Price	Promotion - Advertising etc	Promotion - Personal Selling	Channels	Sensing	Formal Policy & Plans	Product Development
Lenney @ GiftCo	X	X		X		X		
Lenney @ International	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Alan @ GovWare	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Zeb @ Apparat			X	X	X	X	X	
Katie @ Apparat			X	X	X	X	X	
Sara @ Apparat	X	X		X	X	X	X	X

Strands Constituting the Portfolios of Endeavour of the Subject Managers **Table III (continued)**

Managers	Strands Of Endeavour					
	Organization Development	Service Quality Improvement	Political Lobbying	Formal Reporting	Human Resources Administration	General Administration
Lenney @ GiftCo	X	X				
Lenney @ International	X	X	X	X	X	X
Alan @ GovWare	X	X	X	X		X
Zeb @ Apparat				X	X	X
Katie @ Apparat				X	X	X
Sara @ Apparat				X	X	X

5.2.2 Lenney @ GiftCo

In essence GiftCo offers an artwork customisation and promotional gift printing & supply service. All items other than flat plastic goods [e.g. document wallets] are sourced externally and printed in-house, with the exception of calendars, which are both sourced, and printed, externally.

The customer base is predominantly served through a direct sales force, and largely comprises small, highly localised, non-nationwide enterprises of a very wide variety, everything from Abattoirs to Zoos. GiftCo has thousands of customers with annual sales to an average customer being around £300-500. When I arrived the business was in trouble, sales were falling dramatically and overhead reduction attempts were failing.

I joined GiftCo as a part-time marketing director and member of their management executive. They had a workforce of approximately sixty people. When I arrived the organization chart looked as laid out in Figure [2a], and when I departed as in Figure [2b].

Some eighteen months after I started, in November 2003, Elaine, the Financial Controller, ran towards me smiling and waving a sheaf of papers exclaiming: *"We've done it, we've done it...We've hit invoiced sales target"*. *"Have we broken-even"* I asked. *"Well, it'll be a few weeks before the books are closed and audited, but we'll be damn close."* It felt fantastic, a phenomenal sense of achievement. The linkage between one's own endeavours and business outcomes was so much more clearly evident in GiftCo, than it had been in the bigger commercial operations in my past.

5.2.2.1 Lenney's Portfolio of Endeavours @ GiftCo

"When we said we thought we needed some help with marketing, this isn't quite what we had imagined"

[GiftCo Managing Director – February 2002; noted not recorded]

They got someone who bought salespeople a not inconsiderable amount of beer, and came up with a situation analysis and recovery plan that only just about covered one side of A4. I noted in retrospect that this resembled the 'simple generalisations' Bonoma suggests are used by 'good implementers' [1985 p153, 1986]. It was a document that contrasted more than somewhat with the onerous Chartered Institute of Marketing influenced pro-forma marketing planning documentation that the Regional Development Agency would have inflicted upon GiftCo.

So what had constituted my seemingly successful 'marketing' engagement at GiftCo? My portfolio of endeavours is illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 2a **GiftCo Organization – 'on arrival'**

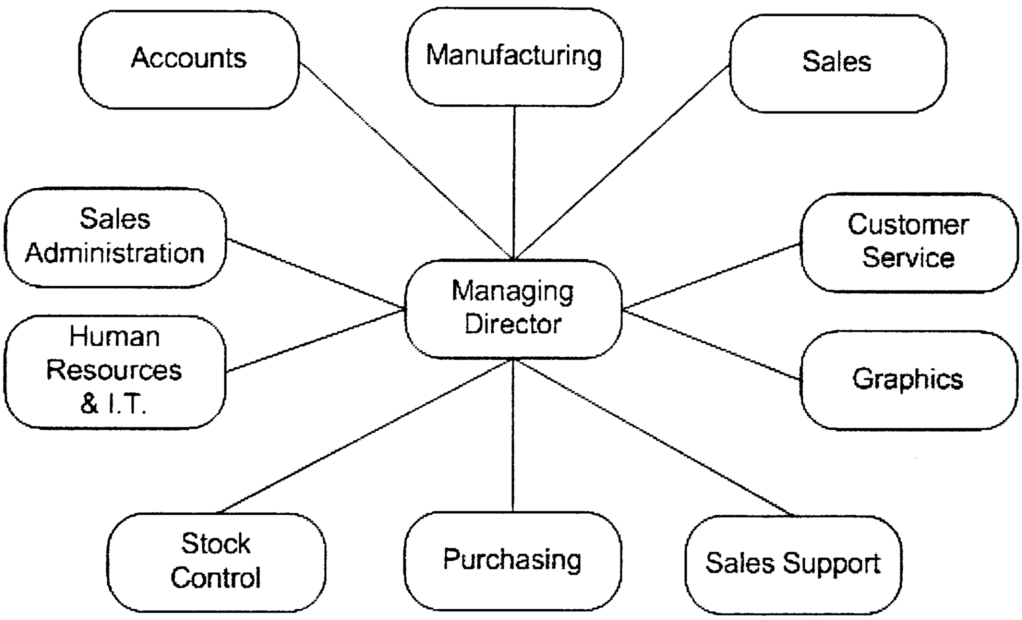
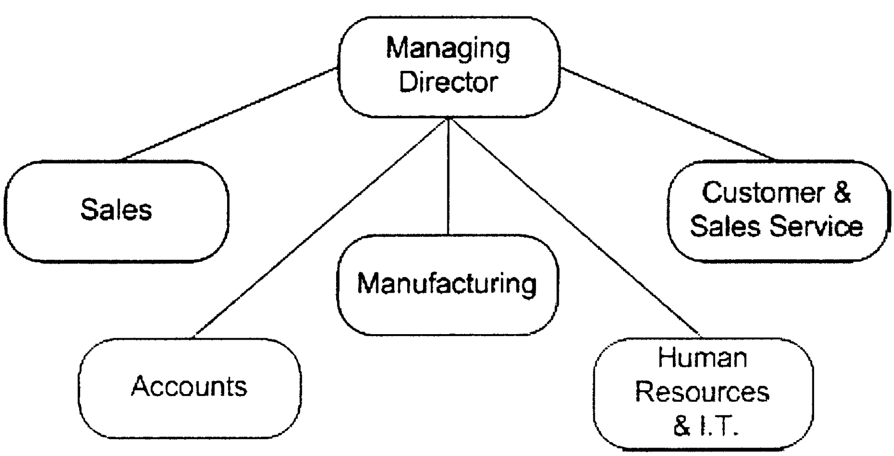


Figure 2b **GiftCo Organization – 'on departure'**



5.2.2.2 Lenney's Endeavours – Character of their Content

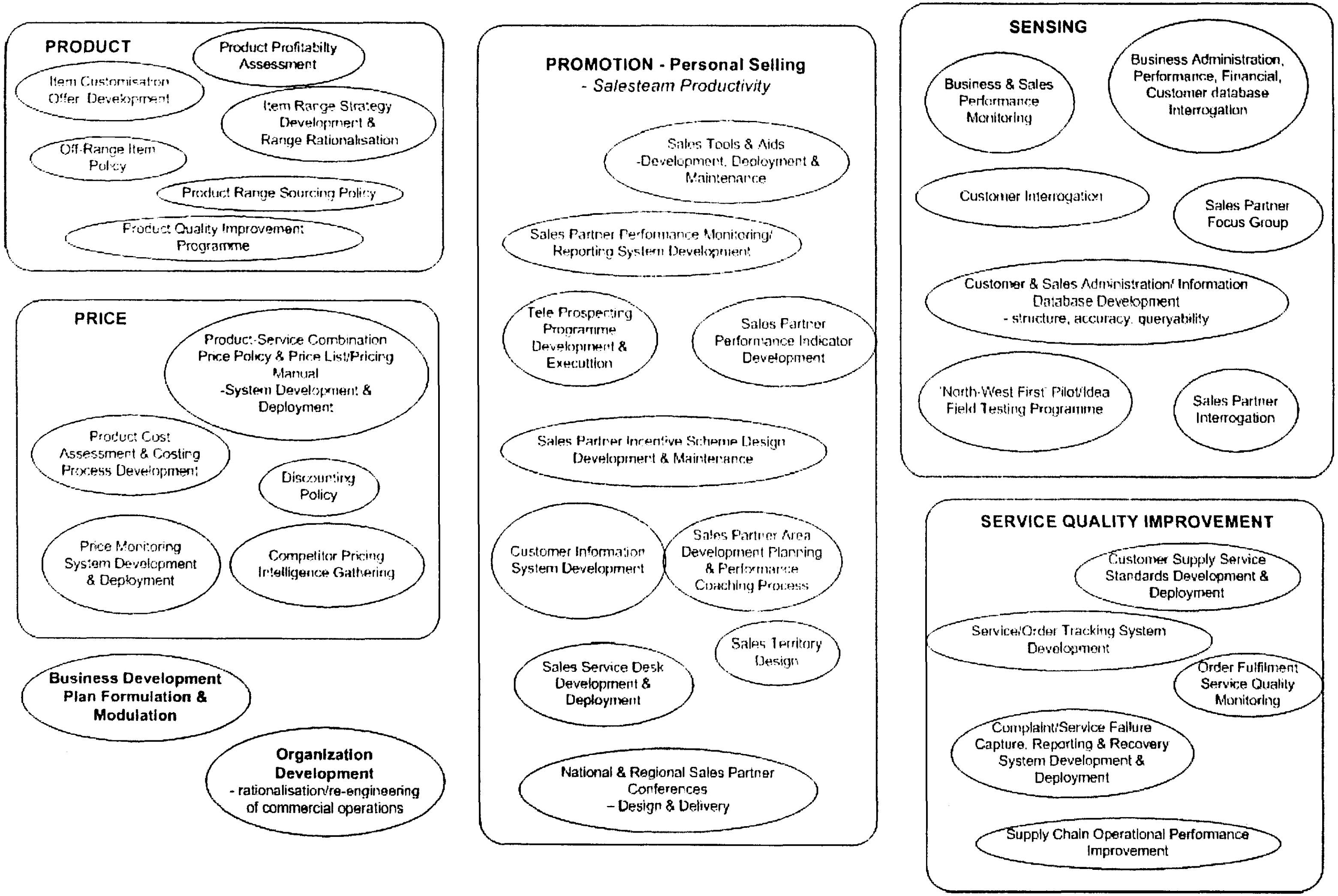
I had had no real difficulty in distilling the pervasive, and what I hope will prove salient and interesting, features of the character of content of the other subject managers' work. The same was not true in this case. I sat staring at the computer screen for many hours thinking 'there's nothing to write about here'. Then, of course, it struck me; it was 'the nothing' that deserved some attention.

It was not that there was 'nothing', it was just that the character of the content was just so strikingly different to anything I had experienced at first or, as in this study, at second hand. Hence it is on the origins of this distinctiveness that I will briefly elaborate.

No Significant Co-Commitment & No Personal Risk

Although stock market falls had put a dent in my investment income, it was only of personal concern to the extent that it constrained the number of skiing holidays I could take. The income from GiftCo was welcome, but not essential. From the beginning I had insisted that that GiftCo paid me on a daily basis and with no contractual commitment. I did not want them to feel trapped with me, or vice versa. The rule was *'that if you're not happy, or feel you cannot afford it anymore, then just tell me not to come in tomorrow. I will not be offended, indeed I might be relieved'.*

FIGURE 3 PORTFOLIO OF ENDEAVOUR – LENNEY @ GIFTCO – MARKETING DIRECTOR



I always went to work knowing it could end that day, but did not care. I saw myself merely as casual intellectual labour. I was simply a hired hand, who was without the usual cares of sustenance and career or a contract of employment.

Not once did it ever cross my mind, not to speak my mind, no matter who the audience.

No Careers to Worry About

The scale of the GiftCo operation ensured that there was very little opportunity for significant career progression. There was therefore no perceptible jostling for promotion among the supervisory team and the usually associated politicking. Clearly, even if there had been, it would hardly have affected me personally.

A Singular Simple Objective & No Shareholders

If you discount the V.A.T. man and the Inland Revenue there was no one to please other than the M.D., who was also the majority shareholder. She had worked for her father in the business, both before and since leaving school. She wanted the firm to survive. She could have cut and run but it appeared she saw it as her duty to preserve his legacy, not least for the staff, many of whom she knew personally and rather well.

Her simple objective was merely to achieve a return-on-assets that came close to that achievable from a low risk investment account, and to draw a very modest personal salary. There was, as a result, neither the complexity of stakeholder perspectives or demands, nor the plethora of conflicting targets, to which I had become accustomed.

Certainly there was no global or regional management to worry about.

No Long Run & Goal Congruence

There was no delicate balancing act to perform in the reconciliation of short and long run business goals. If GiftCo did not break even within 18 months they were almost certainly out of business. The cash surplus from disposals would have run dry.

Other than for the I.T. person, and the accountant, there were few other desirable opportunities for employment in the immediate area. They were 'all in it together', and they knew it.

Small was Beautifully Simple - When it came to Change

One Wednesday morning I attended a session of the small cross-functional team I had set up to examine supply chain efficiency, and rapidly pursue what we had identified as vital improvements in customer lead-times. Within a couple of hours we had sketched out how we felt we should change GiftCo's sales order processing and stock management system. It required significant organizational change, re-allocation of responsibilities, substantial change in procedures, and the demise of an entire department. By Friday the change had been executed. Over the weekend the various necessary physical moves took place and on the Monday when I came in again it was all systems go. This did not quite match my previous experience of operational change programmes. It was a pleasurable experience. One that was repeated innumerable times in my short time at GiftCo; Schumacher was right, small is beautiful [1974].

5.2.3 Alan @ GovWare

The division of SystemServ, in which Alan worked [GovWare], itself a multi-billion dollar operation, serves Europe, Middle East and Africa [E.M.E.A]. GovWare is involved in the sale, development and deployment of bespoke software systems for public and private organizations. Alan's customer portfolio comprised Government and Government Agencies. Other parallel 'customer verticals' included, for instance, financial services and manufacturing. At the time of the study the E.M.E.A. structure consisted of a confederation of national profit centres. Each of these national entities served all the 'customer verticals', and were coordinated and serviced by a functionally organised regional headquarters team, within which sector specific business development groups, including Alan's, resided. A chart locating Alan in the SystemServ organization structure is provided in Figure 4.

It would appear that SystemServ had been resting on its laurels for some time:

"..with no serious competitive threat,...[and]... *infrastructure business keeping sales and license revenues moving"*
[Interview-0 (02/06/02): Field-note /no recording]

At the time of the study, however, things were changing; and it was a fraught time in SystemServ, particularly within GovWare. A serious competitive technology [RivalSoft] had evolved, and their main competitor [CompetA] was aggressively exploiting it. This emerging technology offered a real alternative to customers of GovWare.

5.2.3.1 Alan – A Regional Marketing Manager

Alan, when I first met him, and when the study concluded, was formally responsible for, as he put it:

"marketing...that's marketing communications...market research, projects and programmes that support the sales activity...a road-show or an event,...the branding, all those supporting things,...that's really what I do"
[Alan – Interview 13 Part 1: 51.40]

Alan had only one subordinate – a shared secretary. All the promotional *'legwork'*, as he termed it, was done for him by contract agencies of one form or another.

My conversations with Alan started on the eve of his annual performance appraisal. The meeting was not going to be easy. This was not because of poor performance, but because he was going to reject the career path that was being anticipated for him:

"..the proposition is.. I'll end up [the] *manager ....think I would be an average manager and want to reach my potential as a marketer.......see myself as a creator not a harvester."*
[Interview-0 (02/06/02): Field-note - no recording]

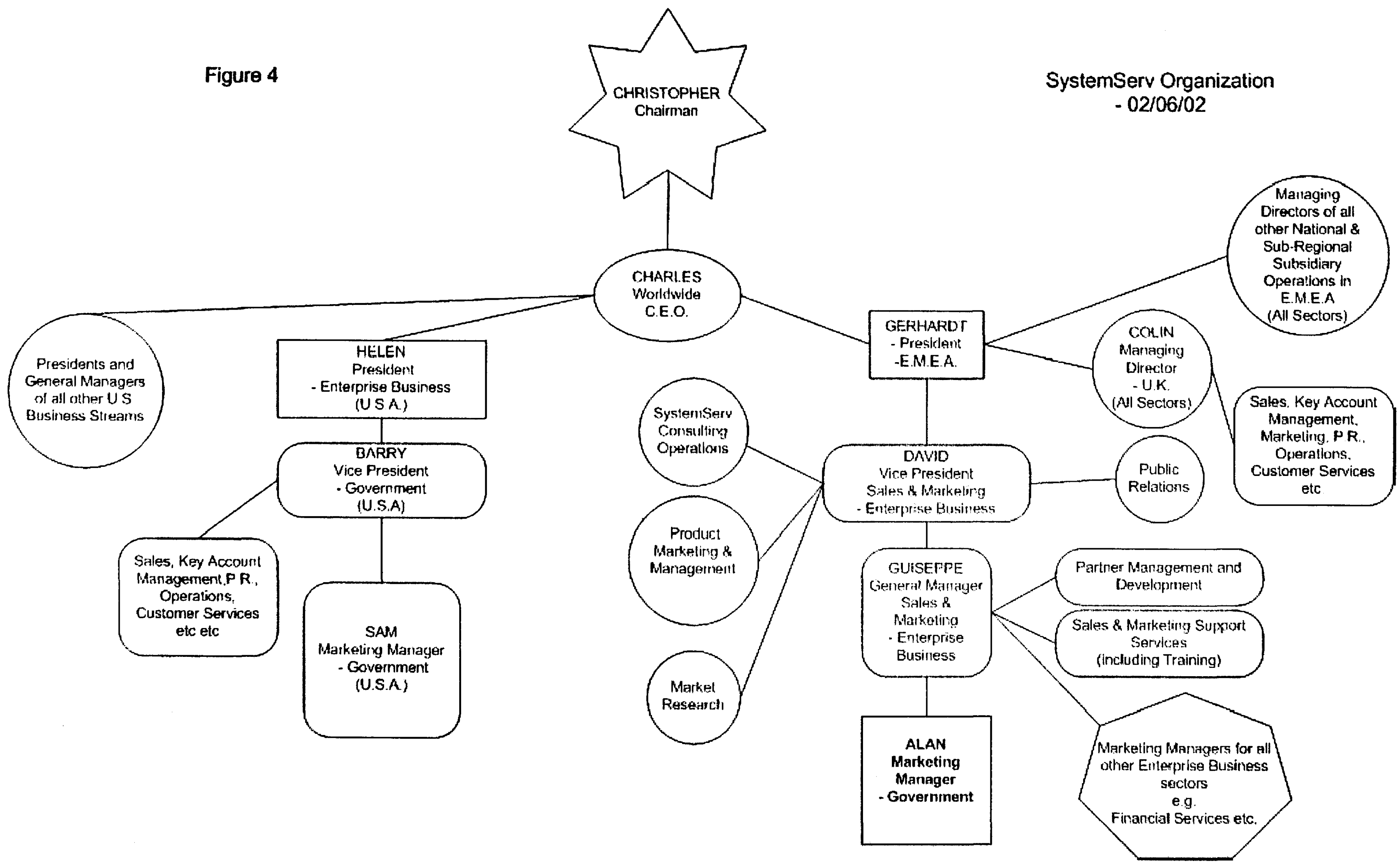
As we shall see, these perceptions of management and marketing provide an interesting backdrop to the characterisation of his endeavours.

5.2.3.2 Alan's Portfolio of Endeavours

Many threads of endeavour were clearly identifiable within Alan's activities. The portfolio of endeavours constructed for Alan is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 4

SystemServ Organization
- 02/06/02



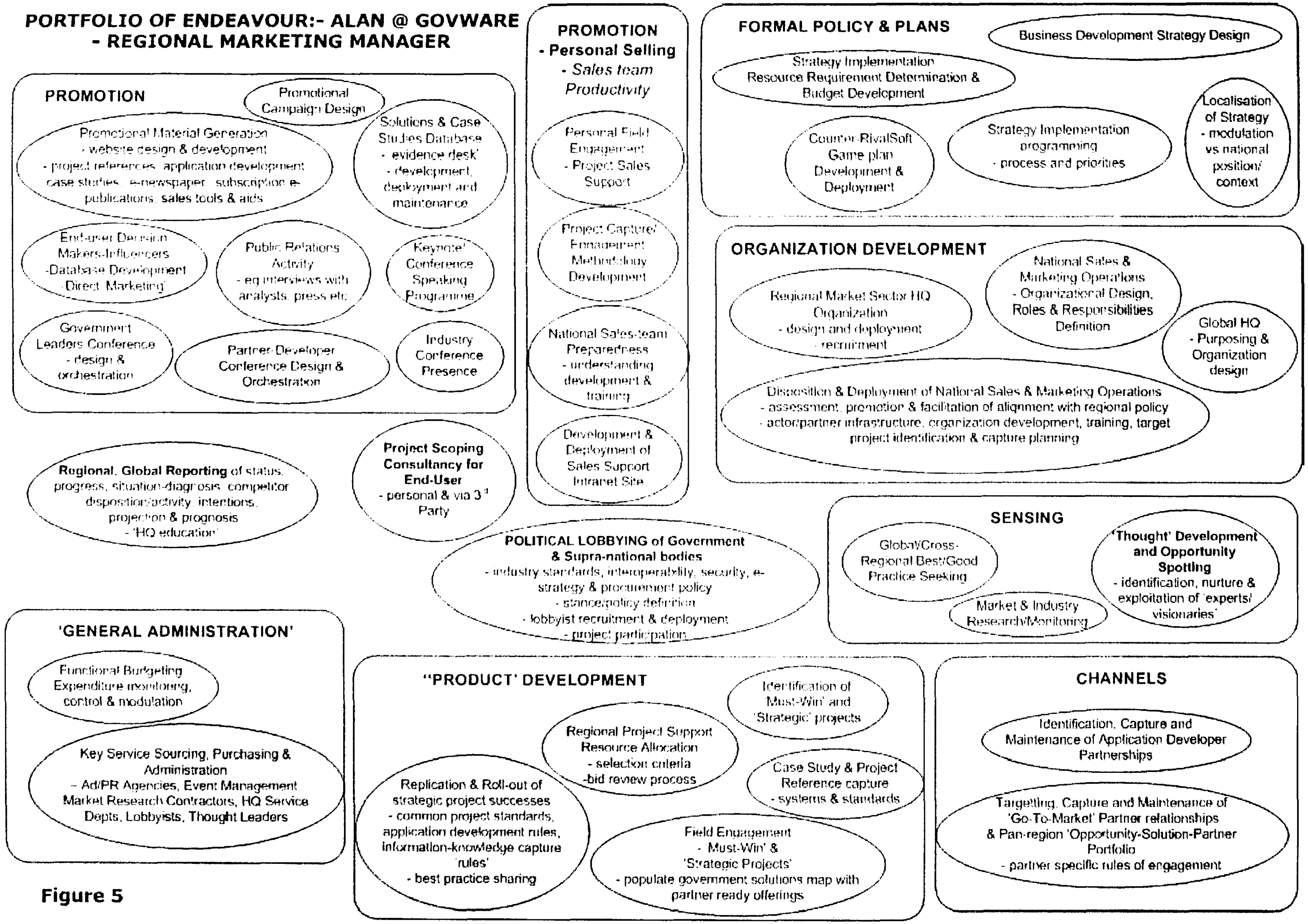

PORTFOLIO OF ENDEAVOUR:- ALAN @ GOVWARE - REGIONAL MARKETING MANAGER
PROMOTION
Promotional Campaign Design
Promotional Material Generation - website design & development - project references, application development case studies, e-newspaper, subscription e-publications, sales tools & aids
Solutions & Case Studies Database - evidence desk' - development, deployment and maintenance
End-user Decision Makers-Influencers -Database Development -Direct Marketing
Public Relations Activity - eg interviews with analysts, press etc
Keynote' Conference Speaking Programme
Government Leaders Conference - design & orchestration
Partner-Developer Conference Design & Orchestration
Industry Conference Presence
PROMOTION - Personal Selling - Sales team Productivity
Personal Field Engagement - Project Sales Support
Project Capture/ Engagement Methodology Development
National Sales-team Preparedness - understanding development & training
Development & Deployment of Sales Support Intranet Site
FORMAL POLICY & PLANS
Business Development Strategy Design
Strategy Implementation Resource Requirement Determination & Budget Development
Counter-RivalSoft Game plan Development & Deployment
Strategy Implementation programming - process and priorities
Localisation of Strategy - modulation vs national position/ context
ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT
Regional Market Sector HQ Organization - design and deployment - recruitment
National Sales & Marketing Operations - Organizational Design, Roles & Responsibilities Definition
Global HQ - Purposing & Organization design
Disposition & Deployment of National Sales & Marketing Operations - assessment, promotion & facilitation of alignment with regional policy - actor/partner infrastructure, organization development, training, target project identification & capture planning
Regional, Global Reporting of status, progress, situation-diagnosis, competitor disposition/activity, intentions, projection & prognosis - 'HQ education'
Project Scoping Consultancy for End-User - personal & via 3rd Party
POLITICAL LOBBYING of Government & Supra-national bodies - industry standards, interoperability, security, e-strategy & procurement policy - stance/policy definition - lobbyist recruitment & deployment - project participation
SENSING
Global/Cross-Regional Best/Good Practice Seeking
Market & Industry Research/Monitoring
'Thought' Development and Opportunity Spotting - identification, nurture & exploitation of 'experts/ visionaries'
'GENERAL ADMINISTRATION'
Functional Budgeting Expenditure monitoring, control & modulation
Key Service Sourcing, Purchasing & Administration - Ad/PR Agencies, Event Management Market Research Contractors, HQ Service Depts, Lobbyists, Thought Leaders
"PRODUCT' DEVELOPMENT
Identification of Must-Win' and 'Strategic' projects
Regional Project Support Resource Allocation - selection criteria -bid review process
Case Study & Project Reference capture - systems & standards
Replication & Roll-out of strategic project successes - common project standards, application development rules, information-knowledge capture 'rules' - best practice sharing
Field Engagement - Must-Win' & 'Strategic Projects' - populate government solutions map with partner ready offerings
CHANNELS
Identification, Capture and Maintenance of Application Developer Partnerships
Targetting, Capture and Maintenance of 'Go-To-Market' Partner relationships & Pan-region 'Opportunity-Solution-Partner Portfolio - partner specific rules of engagement

Figure 5

5.2.3.3 Alan's Endeavours – The Character of their Content

<u>Dealing with a Complex 'Product' & Channels</u>

One of SystemServ's core businesses is the supply of platform-software developments. The industry comprises a complex multi-dimensional network of numerous different types of vendors, many of which have several different modes of operation. Bespoke-system project sales, development and implementation are done in collaboration with other software engineering firms, systems integrators, hardware companies, and management consultants; all the preceding possessing complementary and necessary capabilities. Projects are sold and delivered to customers through transient collaborative groupings of these various network members. A typical example of such a transient grouping is shown in Figure 6.

GovWare's success depends wholly on the successful mobilisation of such groupings around project tenders that are based on GovWare's platform developments, and which:

"..... develop and deploy ..solutions......everything we do....is all around making this happen"
[Alan – Interview 3 Part 1: 19.05]

In essence, Alan's primary objective was the development of a core network of collaborative deals with 'partners' that would facilitate the effective mobilisation of transient groupings around those projects that were targeted. As a key component of this pursuit he was endeavouring to develop:

" *a portfolio of partners through which we can build and deliver a set of solutions and services which populate all areas of our government solutions map,..across the geographies within E.M.E.A....developing relationships with partners who we don't currently work with ..migrate partners over from competitors....expand partnerships beyond national boundaries"* [Alan – Interview 9: 00.31]

GovWare – A Typical Transient Project Sales, Development & Systems Implementation Grouping

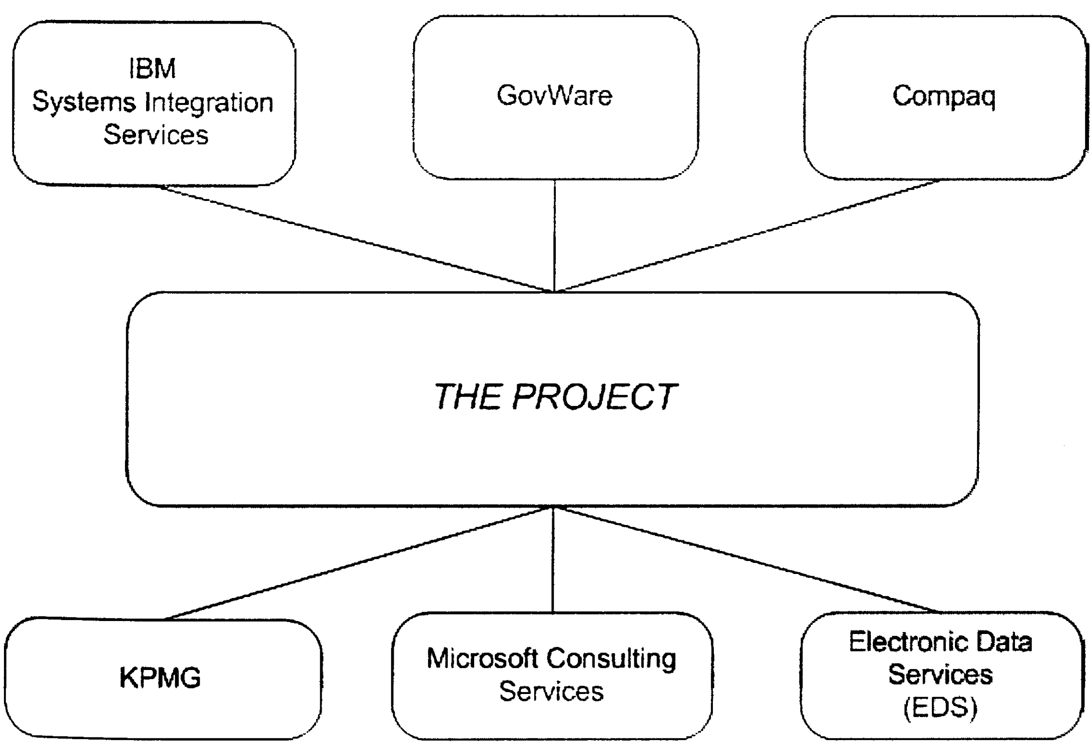


Figure 6

Alan developed and negotiated individual 'rules of engagement' with this selected portfolio of 'partners', and when possible, formalised these in commercial memoranda of understanding. He then orchestrated considerable investment in these relationships:

" ...we train partners,... their bid teams, we create opportunities for them, we run conferences with them, we focus on their solution-set for government...we go into it in an awful lot of detail"

[Alan – Interview 3 Part 1: 17.06]

These 'partnerships' could not be simple pan-E.M.E.A. arrangements. They had to be negotiated across the geography, taking into account the particular disposition, capabilities, project legacy and histories of each 'Partner'-GovWare combination, country-by-country. This was a task that required extensive and deep knowledge of the industry, together with considerable attention to commercial and technical detail.

<u>Handling A Complex Organization</u>

To add further complexity Alan's crafting of his portfolio of partners had to be done in the context of GovWare's matrix organization. As well as having parallel vertical business development teams, such as the one in which Alan resided dealing with different customer/end-user groupings, they also had regional operating structures, and horizontal teams that dealt with the development of different categories of 'partner' across all the customer/end-user groupings:

"... the partner groups outside of our government team are responsible for Systems Integrators, another area looks after the Independent Software Vendors, the software developers, another one the ones on the service side; that's both within country, across E.M.E.A. and also at a global level" [Alan- Interview 9: 04.26]

Dealing in A Complex 'Marketplace'

The network of formalised 'understandings' in an industry that is so suffused with interdependence and legacy could not be exclusive. It amounted to a set of negotiated 'preferences of partnership'; simply a fertile ground for the rapid formation of effective groupings that favoured the utilisation of GovWare. Almost all participants continued to simultaneously compete and collaborate. This generated considerable problems:

"..*the government decided they wanted* [CompetA] *and us to be partners on this project...didn't please* [our key partner]... *'what the hell are you doing GovWare..they're the enemy'...it's difficult...they're in the same position though, as they work with* RivalSoft....*Chinese walls everywhere"* [Alan – Interview 8: 35.09]

Dealing with A Complex Customer

This considerable complexity within the solutions industry, together with GovWare's internal complexity, was further compounded by the obviously immense complexity of Governments as an end-user/customer, given the number and interdependence of potential influence points in each level of government. It was, in Alan's words, *'a bloody nightmare'*.

Maintaining A Focus On The Long Run - A Long Run Sale

However, despite all this, Alan did not see the compounding complexities alluded to above, as the biggest problem that faced him. He had several much more diffuse but related issues with which he was contending. The first of these was the impact of the timeframes of project tendering, capture, development and implementation:

"...the thing is everyone sees the win, they don't necessarily, even some 'partners', realise that it takes two or three years...on the political side, some always think it's too early.."

[Alan – Interview 9: 13.02]

"...no strong link to the sales engine...all this fantastic activity but if you can't quantify it...."

[Alan Interview 1: 18.57]

The underlying problem here is the lack of attribution of the result to the influencing activities deployed, with potential foresight, in what has become the dim and distant past.

Maintaining A Focus On The Long Run - A Long Run Threat

Another complicating factor is encapsulated in the following statement:

"..you need to cover all these different areas... but there's a tendency to put all the resources on new areas... its the tendency to focus on the new battle...but meanwhile back at base [RivalSoft] *is eating away at us...it's so tempting just to focus on the nice things..where the competition are not so strong"*

[Alan - Interview 1: 20.48]

Alan was not only fighting to maintain resource deployment on what he saw as the necessary long-run and undervalued end-user/partner relationship development, but also for SystemServ to maintain a proactive stance against RivalSoft's progress. This was especially important given the projected changes in the procurement policies of governments precipitated by SystemWare's own growing dominance in certain areas.

He had played a major role in getting this issue taken seriously in global H.Q. and in preventing it being treated like some minor local difficulty in Europe. He fervently believed that the strategy to counter RivalSoft had to be driven from the very top of the company if the appropriate focus of attention was to be generated across all divisions, on what he saw as a serious threat to all SystemServ's business. His reasoning was not just about the time and necessary expertise of those with the required seniority, but also concerned the more 'cultural' nature of the problem:

"*..people who have just joined the company ....in the last* ['X'] *years, joined on the crest of a wave,...great company to join..always doing well.. what they forget is that back in* ['9X] *we hadn't got base, we didn't have* ['X'], *we didn't have a* ['Y']...[CompetA] *dominated*...[in some key respects] *they were the name of the game..and we were the upstart company with a big market share....in a small sub-segment...we were the second best in everything...it was an* ['N'] *year battle to get to our* [current] *position...they've forgotten or not learnt how to fight...they've come in when we were pushing at an open door,...open door because it* [GovWare1] *was novel..now they're losing...people in government who've got the knowledge, know its not because of a technical argument,...the competition in this area know their customers, know their market, ..sell solutions and benefits.. they've got.. relationships..and that same competition all has in its kitbag* [RivalSoft]"

[Interview-7 Part B: 32.26]

Alan had ended up in the driving seat on this issue:

"*....... this whole tangle to do with the* RivalSoft *issue..I'm ....leading a task force...to review this and I've just responded that I don't mind ..but whose job is it to do this!!?"* [Alan – Interview 7 Part B: 31:02]

Techno-political Bricolage

- Crafting Understanding, Credibility & Constituency -

Throughout my time with him, Alan was engaged in the crafting, repeated submission, and discussion of a formal marketing plan for GovWare E.M.E.A. The plan that evolved, and received support during that time, required the deployment of substantially more resources, and significant organizational change, both at the E.M.E.A. centre, and within the national operations, with the re-structuring, re-training and revitalising of their sales-teams.

"*..as my boss .. would say we* [E.M.E.A. HQ] *are going from being free consultants to being.....drivers of change and taking some ownership of the implementation"*

[Alan – Interview 1 Part B: 35:01]

The structure that was utilised in the formal planning process bore the hallmark of what is still strongly promoted in the 'marketing planning' discourse [e.g. McDonald & Keegan 1997 p16], and the language utilised deployed all of the legitimating rhetoric of the marketing management pedagogy. However, the reality of this 'marketing planning process' was somewhat different, as evidenced in the last paragraph of the final submission:

" *GovWare has already demonstrated its knowledge and capabilities within a number of subsidiaries and within various Governments and* *partners. Our aim is now to spread this success across E.M.E.A. and have a common and standard engagement model ....across all geographies"*

And clearly in the following quote:

" ..what is now the model...in the middle of the strategy...partners, services, marketing....the detail within those, that's where I've put in experience....all that's changing is it's becoming a structure, we were doing it anyway"

[Alan – Interview 2 part 2: 30.36]

The 'strategy' that had been crystallised in the formal planning documentation had its roots in Alan's extensive and deep 'field-engagement' in support of the national subsidiary sales teams:

"......I spent three years just supporting them, delivering to them marketing collateral, getting involved whenever they said [Alan] *need your help...major project...would you come over and give a presentation..helped win a lot of projects...".*

[Alan – Interview 13 Part 1: 1.02.20]

Prior to taking up the role in E.M.E.A. H.Q. he had been working on the Government sector, but within the U.K. operating unit. Upon taking up his new role a couple of things came to pre-occupy him:

"Where we've done an awful job in places like [Country X]....*where we've traditionally relied on infrastructure salespeople, people who sell technology"*

[Alan – Interview 2 Part A: 22:34]

"..the U.K. did a really good job ...how can we re-use that knowledge or that programme, or partner, or that solution, or that whole approach"

[Alan – Interview 10:10.13]

Alan's proactive and supportive field engagement allowed him to penetrate the national subsidiary operations, explore his experientially generated perspectives, and pursue his understanding of the issues and opportunities that the subsidiaries faced:

" ...we're not gonna get exactly what you want but tell me your ideal, your gaps...tell me where you are being harpooned in the side by the competition and you can't respond...we'll see what we can do."

[Alan - Interview 13 Part 1: 1.01.50]

A process that could be termed 'strategic bricolage' [Harper 1992 p74; Levi-Strauss 1966, Wright 2005 p94] had evolved:

"...I reviewed what's been done already...the shortfalls...reviewed in comparison with the competition...done a comparison with the other verticals..."

[Alan – Interview 12: 13.24]

"...you can see the holes...and you fill in the holes and put it into a structure...that's what creates the picture....and then you can start testing it out...."...

[Alan – Interview 12: 52.34]

"..helped them write the tender. We won it....now looking to replicate it across E.M.E.A....there have been good things in [X,Y,Z] *countries...combine the four and we automatically got a European programme"*

[Alan – Interview 5 Part 1: 41.37]

Over a period of time Alan facilitated the sharing of successful practices. A model of 'best-practice' was developed, and Alan encouraged its enactment by selected subsidiaries, either in full, or in part. He then observed the resulting 'performance' of those subsidiaries:

"....I looked at countries that had implemented the model fully or implemented parts of the model; ..at those parts that had worked well and noted where you put it all together how much better it worked...you only need to look at [x, y, z] *countries, how they have grown"*

[Alan – Interview 13 Part 5: 03.09]

In essence, Alan had embarked on a collaborative process of trial and error that explored the effectiveness of various approaches, and had simultaneously built a constituency that would be supportive of the allocation of the necessary resources for their comprehensive implementation:

"...... got a number of subsidiaries to buy into it so it's basically seen as being their thing as well...so I can say this was built in conjunction with [X,Y,Z] *and made sure these subsidiaries think we're doing a good job at H.Q."*

[Alan – Interview 10: 28.50]

During all this time there was no formal organizational commitment to Alan's endeavours and there were very few flexible resources to-hand for deployment in support of his bricolage. This appears to be a form of working similar to that of the *'marketing subversives'* 'identified' by Bonoma [1986].

Throughout this process, Alan was keen not to disappoint his 'developing constituency', and wished to accelerate further the accrual of 'project wins' that were being achieved with the adoption of the new approach, not least to continue to add weight to his argument for the appropriate support resources, and to continue to build the credibility of the centre with the national operations. He became desperate for assistance, and in the absence of his projected team he had to leverage all his relationships, to bring resources to bear on his programme. This was particularly the case with respect to the demands of the national subsidiary operations that related to the ongoing implementation of the sales development component of the strategy, ahead of the deployment of the central supporting resources that were critical to their rapidly evolving modus operandi.

At around this time Alan participated in a workshop of all the Government 'marketing-leads' from around the world. This had been instigated by the Global H.Q. government team in order that they could all share information, and discuss how they could best collaborate. However Alan attended with a very different agenda, and one that ran counter to the very interests of the Global H.Q. team:

".. I was being the corporate good citizen [at the meeting] *but why I went at the end of the day..I was with the* [H.Q. Country national business unit] *team ....I'm fixing short term... I need them to help me today....we agreed the plan..where* [they] *will help us in certain areas.. they will offer services to E.M.E.A...to ensure it's not just 'spread-cheese'"*

[Alan - Interview 6: 42:45]

The global team, though it was formally the function he should have been calling on, did not, in his eyes, have the capability of the H.Q-Country national business unit. It was also increasingly apparent that the latter were making a play for a global leadership role on government, and to capture the resources of the global H.Q. Their ambition served Alan well in moulding their response to his requests. His support was vital to their success and he easily acquired the support he needed in return:

" *I worked extremely hard with* [the H.Q. country]...*they had the resources..it makes sense to work with them...that's why I had no issue with support* [resources]"

[Alan – Interview 13 Part 1: 1.04.10]

Alan's strategic bricolage was successful, and eventually the formal marketing plan was approved and the new resources allocated. The strategy had 'emerged':

"*...we got the approval for the headcount...*[1xx] *people.....accepted on the organizational design I put in...and the detailed job descriptions...*"

[Alan – Interview 13 Part 1: 54.18]

Reflecting on the several months of activity that had culminated in this position, Alan commented:

"*...this last year.....has been like a lawyer building a case....building a case for what we want to do...*"

[Alan – Interview 10: 21.05]

I hesitate to disagree but as can be seen from the quotes above nothing could be further from the reality. The behaviour of a lawyer preparing a case would at least have some vague resemblance to the sequentialist constructs of the marketing management and planning orthodoxies highlighted in Chapter 3. In the bricolage through which Alan 'emerged' his strategy I see little parallel.

5.2.4 Katie, Sara & Zeb/Adam @ Apparat

As previously noted Apparat UK is the UK subsidiary of a major multi-national corporation that is involved in the supply of branded clothing to retailers.

A simplified organization chart locating Katie, Sara and Zeb/Adam, in the Apparat UK structure is provided in Figure 8. Zeb, Katie and Sara are highlighted, together with their colleagues from the Key Account Steering Group that had formed the centre of the action research. The internal organization of the 'marketing' department is illustrated below in Figure 7.

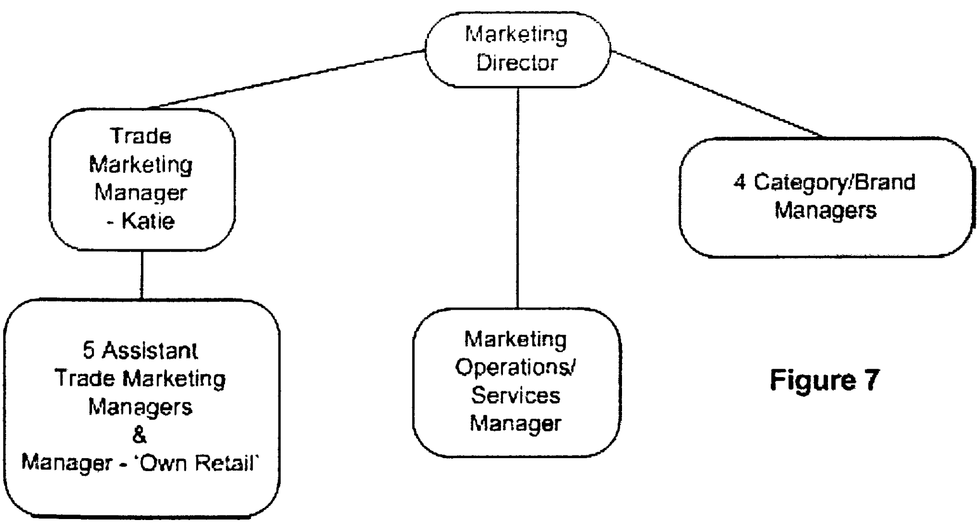
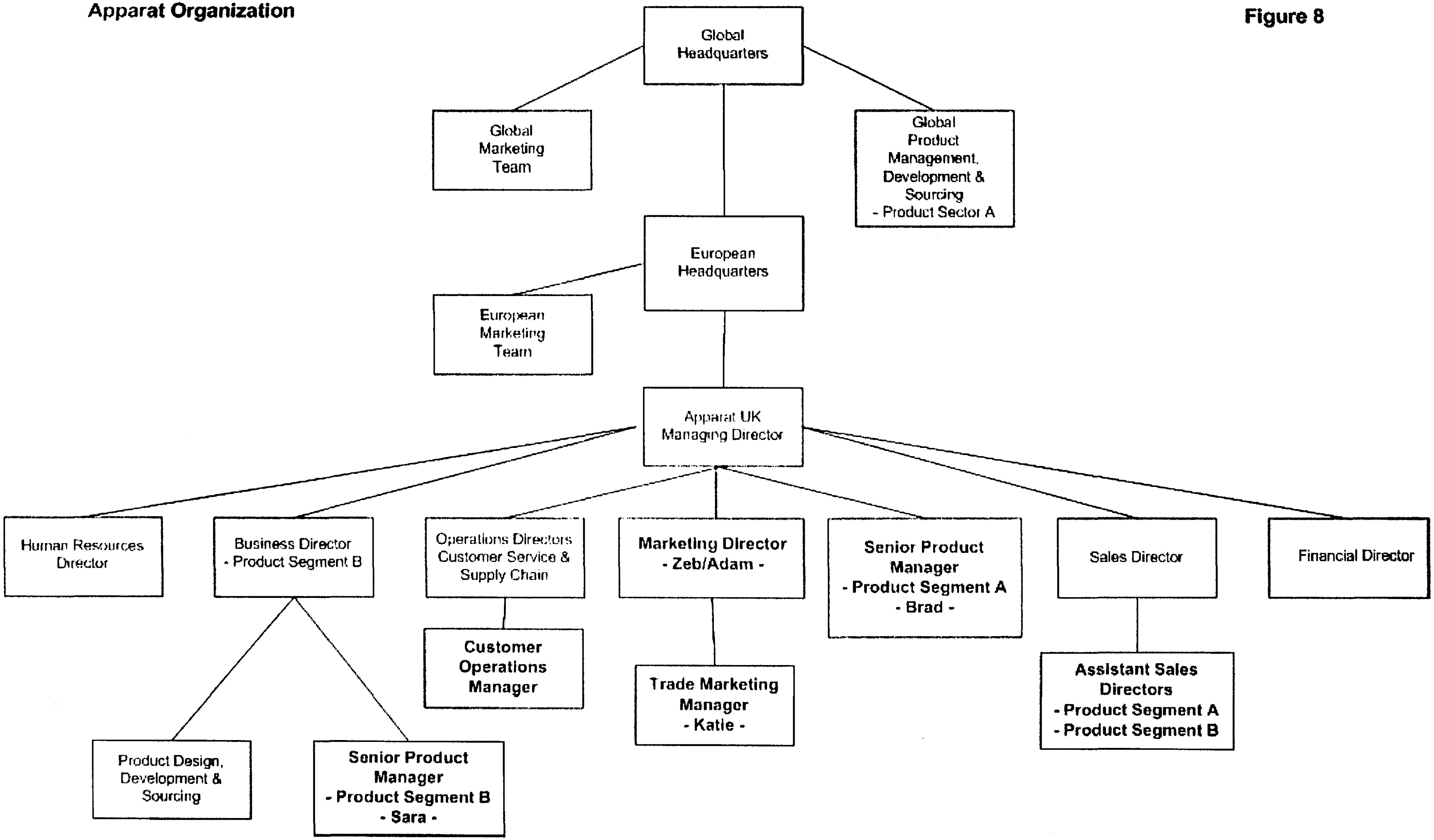


Figure 7

Apparat Organization

Figure 8



Katie's Portfolio of Endeavours

Several strands of endeavour were clearly discernable in Katie's activities. The portfolio of endeavours captured for Katie is shown in Figure 9. As you would expect from her formal responsibilities she was predominantly engaged in work that can be characterised as 'promotional'.

Katie's Endeavours – The Character of their Content

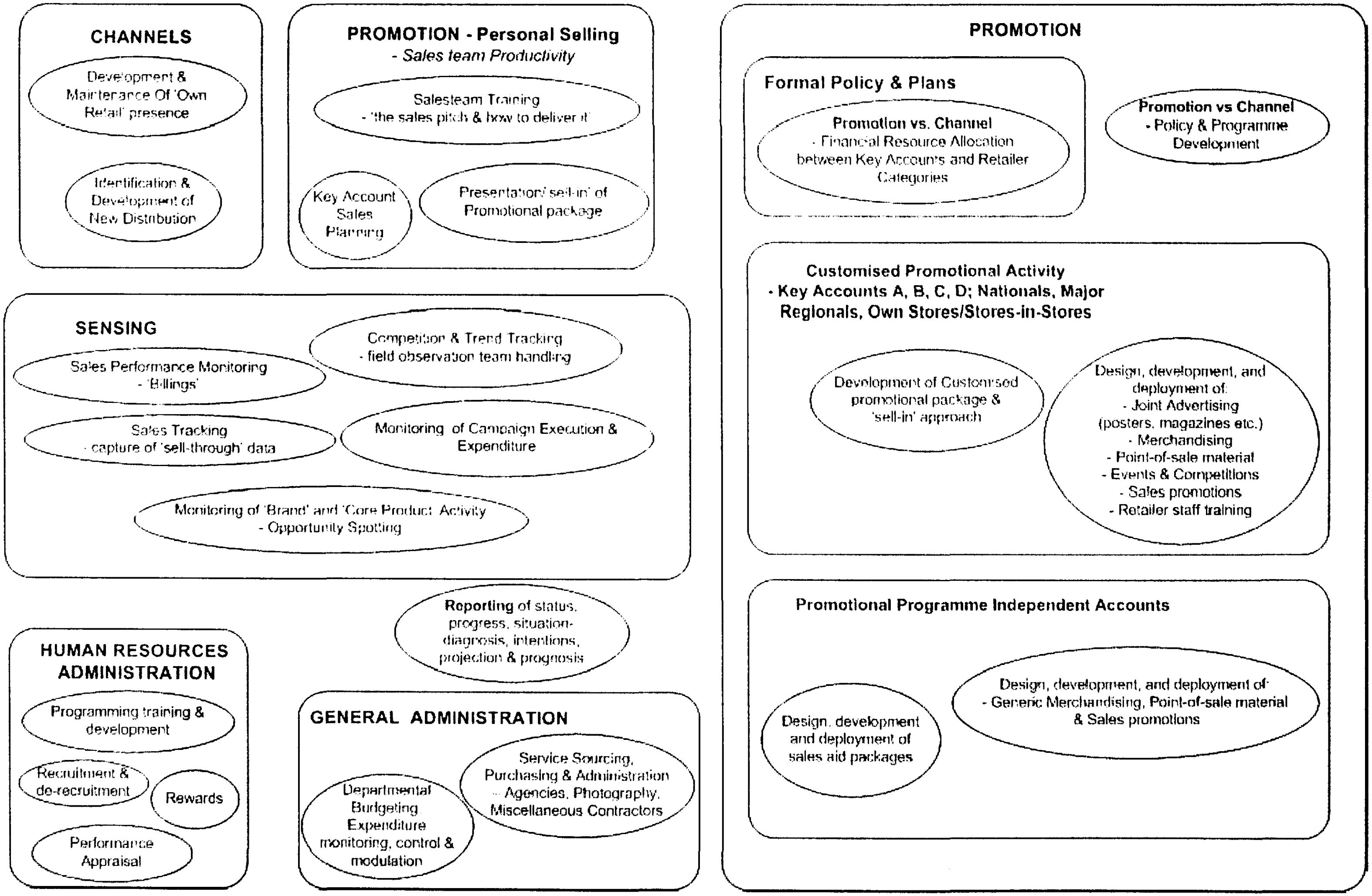
"Trade marketing kind-of sits in between consumer marketing 'n sales, and the retailers, we're kind of like that lynchpin, we have to work closely with sales and the retailers themselves to make sure, that whatever we are trying to deliver as a brand, that it actually works at retail"
[Katie Interview 1: 03.16]

'Techno-Creative' Intensity

Katie spent a huge amount of time in technical consultation, with her staff and external agencies:

"...lots of [Katie's] *time is spent checking over artwork, making sure logos are correct,..looking at photos saying that's fine, talking through creative ideas....with me, with creative agencies, with accounts..."*
[Katie Subordinate-C Interview: 01.27]

Figure 9 **PORTFOLIO OF ENDEAVOUR-KATIE @ APPARAT - TRADE MARKETING MANAGER**



"...with creative agencies so they don't decide to go off and do their own thing...so they keep within the brief they've been given"
[Katie Subordinate-C Interview: 02.41]

"..bouncing ideas off her..getting her approval...thinking of doing this..is it OK..needs to be 'right for the brand' so we have to bounce..ideas off [Katie] *before we go further...she's a sounding board for us...we can't do anything without her approval really"*
[Katie Subordinate-B Interview: 03.53]

She was constantly involved in an array of techno-creative decision making across a wide variety of 'disciplines' – photography, press relations, advertising, graphic design, store 'installation' design, 'event' management and celebrity sponsorship:

"..sometimes you might have press or..advertising, then you have 'creatives' to deal with and through, and all the stages that are involved in that, sometimes you take it to the store level so you've got all the logistics, the mechanism of it, of wall units and stuff....or a whole load of other elements" [Katie Subordinate-A Interview: 07.42]

In the context of the demanding multi-disciplinarity of her role Katie did not give the impression of being a jack of all these 'trades' and a master of none. If anything, rather the reverse appeared to be a necessary trait:

"..in a lot of what we do we use agencies to come up with creative solutions..the actual physicals..but actually if we don't get our creative brief right..you're never gonna end up with that fantastic execution."

[Katie Work Shadow B – Period 25: 15.31]

All of these judgements were being made in an arena where, as Katie put it:

"...lots of people have lots of different views...they look at the same piece of 'creative'..somebody says that's fine...somebody else says no it isn't"

[Katie Interview 3: 04.30]

Her involvement was not superficial in any sense:

"...a lot of time is spent with the team,..I'm constantly giving them input....as to what I think we should do, on what they are doing,...how to overcome an issue, what we should present to a particular account, constantly having interaction to ...y'know keep things on track"

[Katie Interview 4: 15.46]

"..there are a lot of different activities and a lot of detail in each of these different initiatives...you have to keep your eye on it"

[Katie Work Shadow B - Period 6: 1.00.00]

A major driver of this detailed involvement was clearly a desire to ensure the technical quality and timeliness of execution. But this did not form the sole driver.

Katie's super-ordinate concern was with the coherence of the total trade-marketing programme, and its success in delivering distinction between the key accounts, whilst still getting the targeted brand message across, despite the "[the retailers] *being such an obstacle for us in communicating to the* [final] *consumer"* [Katie Subordinate-A Interview: 23.28]

" *..there's so many elements* [with which to deal]*, especially because we try to integrate and weight the campaigns..."*

[Katie Subordinate-A Interview: 07.40]

She was working concurrently, at both the detailed operational-techno-creative and brand-strategic levels, whilst operating simultaneously in laminated timeframes:

"we're putting activity in for the here-n-now, but were also planning the next piece..that maybe will happen in three months time,.. but at the same time planning the 'sell-in', 'n the annual launch..it's a continuous cycle"

[Katie Interview 3: 19.10]

Handling a Central Paradox

" ..what are we gonna do with this account...what are we gonna focus on....this is what 'the brand's' doing..so how do we superimpose this onto which accounts..what are we going to pitch for?.."

[Katie Interview 4: 18.40]

The quote above crystallises the essence of Katie's role in crafting account-specific trade-marketing activity out of the emergent consumer-brand marketing programme. In doing this she had to craft, as the following quotes exemplify, some delicate trade-offs in a fabric of clearly contradictory requirements:

" ...the retailers are very sensitive to what their competitors are doing...we can't be seen to be out there with a brand campaign, or a particular [product], *that isn't available to all the retailers...its about seeing the big picture"*

[Katie Subordinate B Interview: 18.40]

"...it's a balancing act...you have to make sure there are not too many overlaps [between the major retailers]"

[Katie Interview 6 Part 1: 15.28]

"...the activity has to be more and more bespoke..[the major retailers] *want points of difference..."*

[Katie Subordinate-A Interview: 09.33]

She had to engineer the situation so that the key accounts perceived significant differentiation in the delivered 'total product', and did this through the deployment of differing interpretations of the 'brand message', mediated through distinctive, collaboratively constructed, trade-marketing executions. How could individual retailers complain that they *'didn't get what others got'* when they had co-developed the execution?

" *.we would go to them with an idea..this is what we're looking to do with you...then it's quite collaborative..what about this, what about that...it might link visually with the brand* [programme] *but the activity has to be specific to them"*

[Katie Interview 6 Part 1: 09.32]

It took an enormous effort to realise this in a co-ordinated simultaneous fashion across five accounts, and after all of this Katie despairs:

"..we'll kinda sit here and think 'Hey! That's gonna be fantastic, great..it'll really work at retail, and you go in [the stores], *and it's in the cupboard, it's in the bin, or the staff don't know anything about it"*

[Katie Interview 1: 09.15]

<u>Dealing with the Short Run versus the Long Run</u>

Given the market context I could possibly be forgiven for being confused by the talk of *'The Gap'* within Apparat. For several weeks I thought they were referring to the retail chain of that name. When talking about the 'problem with the gap' they were, however, engaged in that perennial managerial pastime of discussing the origin of, and potential remedies for, the reported difference between budgeted sales revenue and achieved sales revenue.

With the downturn of their market fortunes, and the rigidity of the parent company's expectations of sales growth, 'the gap' now always appeared at the end of the first month of the financial year. Sales revenues were based, of course, on 'sell-in' to the retailers, not 'sell-thru' to actual consumers.

Merchandising and retailer linked street advertising forms such an influential part of the retailer 'expected product' [Levitt 1980] that its potential impact on 'sell-in' was considerable.

"...trade marketing is absolutely fantastic...it has the most respect from the customer..they do a fantastic job..the results ..the evidence is there to see"

[Sales Director Interview A: 10.00]

Given the nature of the promotional activity, lead times for its design, development and deployment are short. Trade marketing endeavour has high responsiveness, and high-perceived impact. It can respond on a timescale commensurate with immediate term pressures on the business, and is perceived to have a substantial positive impact on sales generation.

Trade Marketing could respond to the call for *'gap filling initiatives',* whereas, because of its nature, 'brand-consumer marketing' could not. Given that 'gap filling' initiative requirements were now endemic and substantial, the demands on Katie for immediate term support for *'gap-filling'* commercial sales deals was immense and continuous:

" *we're now always busy..all the time, doing a lot of things for like now!"*
[Katie Diary Trace Interview 3: 57.32]

Katie was struggling to make difficult decisions:

...I kinda control the budget..it always filters through me,.. this is what we can and can't do"
[Katie Work Shadow B – Period 30: 24.48]

"..it's a balancing act 'cause sales want to sell as much as they can..it's weighing up that..we do have to hit this sales number...against what [consumer] *marketing want as well..things they want to protect"*
[Katie Interview 6 Part 1: 23.30]

These decisions were being made on a largely ad-hoc basis, against a rapidly ticking corporate clock, with a sales director, whose very job depended on *'hitting the number',* sitting on her shoulder:

" [Sales] *come to us and say we got a gap with this account,... a product opportunity here, is there anything you can do to support it..there's a big gap with what we're trying to achieve..need gap filling initiatives...we try to work to the big plan... but there's often this thing where... 'we gotta land that now!'"*

[Katie Diary Trace Interview 2: 12.45]

Operating in a Deeply Political Milieu

- Between a Rock and a Hard Place -

The consolidation of Apparat's customer base had dramatically changed the balance of power in the value chain. They were now dealing with five huge key accounts that were *'throwing their weight around'*:

"...[certain retailers] *strongly believe that they know how we should run our brand and communicate to customers...that's the conflict"*

[Katie Subordinate-B Interview: 31.51]

This evolution of the channel-to-consumer had drastically altered the nature of Apparat UK's business. Katie now sat, as many people put it, between *'a rock and a hard place'* - facing ever more confident retailers on one side, and the image aspirations of *'the brand'* on the other:

"...it's hard isn't it...you've got to make yourselves a cool brand but at the same time you have to hit this huge sales number which by its very

nature means you have to sell big to [certain retailers that don't help to] *'cool the brand'"*

[Katie Diary Trace Interview 3: 42.10]

Katie was in an unenviable position confronting this latter dilemma, under immense personal pressure from the Sales Director, with one 'agenda', and the Marketing Director with another:

" [Marketing] *don't want to hear what the retailer says but just what the consumer says..."*

[Sales Director Interview 1: 14.46]

"..the [Sales Director's] *view is that anything that drives sales* [i.e. sell-in], *then that is the rationale for investment in trade marketing..."*

[Katie Work Shadow B Period 30: 25.34]

In effect the sales and marketing directors were attempting to represent quite different 'markets' within the organisation, and were reconciling their differing 'agendas' within and across various functions. This process of reconciliation, if it could be termed that, manifestly surfaced in the Trade Marketing area.

"..we feel so in the spotlight all the time, not only do we implement the campaign,.... not only do we have to communicate it internally, and get 'buy-in' internally, you need to win support... almost market it internally, you need to get 'buy-in' from the sales team, from the consumer

marketing guys as well, but then you have to get 'buy-in' from the accounts, and then eventually the consumers going to these accounts"
[Katie Subordinate-B Interview: 24.12]

Responsibility for the 'sell-in' rested with the sales director, and in effect, that for 'sell-through' with the Marketing Director. The allocation of resources between consumer-brand promotional campaigns and retailer specific campaigns was clearly a contentious issue, and decisions on this were in the hands of the Marketing Director, to whom Katie reported. The two directors did not see eye-to-eye on this subject:

"..the biggest division... is between sales and marketing, between [the Sales Director and Marketing Director]*......"*
[Financial Director-Interview 1: 25.20...35.00]

In the short run the only thing that counted towards paying the wage bill was the 'sell-in'. But, as someone put it, if the products *"get stuck like glue on the retailers' shelves we are just fooling ourselves".* The sales directors short run pre-occupation with *"hitting the number"* and the longer run brand image aspirations of the marketing director were clearly the origin of a critical tension in the business. However, addressing this critical tension was something the Apparat UK leadership team frequently avoided:

"...I'm not sure that these really key issues have ever come up at the board meeting" [Sales Director Interview 1: 23.45]

It is within this highly ambiguous and politically charged context, that Katie found herself making decisions on the nature of, and resource allocation between, the retailer specific campaigns now so critical to successful 'sell-in', and, consequentially, the short-run success of the Sales Director.

"the sales guys never want to say no to the key accounts"
[Katie Diary Trace Interview 5: 58.51]

" ...[the retailers] *are starting to flex their power....we have to make some strategic calls....how much do we bow to them,...how much do we say 'no' or 'you've got to take it or we'll give it to someone else'"*
[Katie Subordinate-B Interview: 30.49]

Katie lamented:

"..there isn't an agreed strategy on how we spend our money...that everybody understands"
[Katie Work Shadow B – Period 30: 24.45]

In what is, at first sight, a relatively simple 'junior' marketing management role, Katie is making decisions on resource allocation that are of major significance to sales and that also have potentially serious impacts on brand-image, with no clear policy or decision frame on which to rely for support.

5.2.4.2 Sara @ Apparat – A Senior Product Manager

"...hybrid of design 'n sales..sticking nose into every single part of it...giving sales everything they need to sell...challenging sales 'n making sure design...do not go off into wonderland..making sure...marketing.. are marketing the product"

[Sara – Diary Trace Interview 1 Part A: 44.05]

In her role Sara was formally responsible for the design, development, wholesale pricing and retail deployment of one of the two core product lines of Apparat. She had a direct staff of four, each of which had been given specific responsibility for a sub-category of the product line e.g. 'mens'.

Sara's Portfolio of Endeavours

The portfolio of endeavours captured for Sara is shown in Figure 10. As you would expect from her formal responsibilities she was predominantly engaged in work that can be characterised as 'product' related.

Of the four individual managers that were studied at Apparat, discussion of Sara presents the most difficult challenge with regard to the maintenance of the required confidentiality. There are, in several cases, potentially better indicators of the character of content within the empirical material, both from interviews and work shadowing. However their use is precluded because the detail and technicalities are so embedded in the empirical material that disguising their origin, whilst maintaining their utility, becomes impossible. If they were used the identity of Apparat, and their customers, would become self-evident. As a result much of the discussion that follows is made clumsier than I would like.

Sara's Endeavours – The Character of their Content

"...the way I see it is we are the buffer between design, and their perfection, their dreams, their...aah y'know... and the reality of sales"
[Sara Interview 1: 10.24]

'Techno-Creative' Intensity

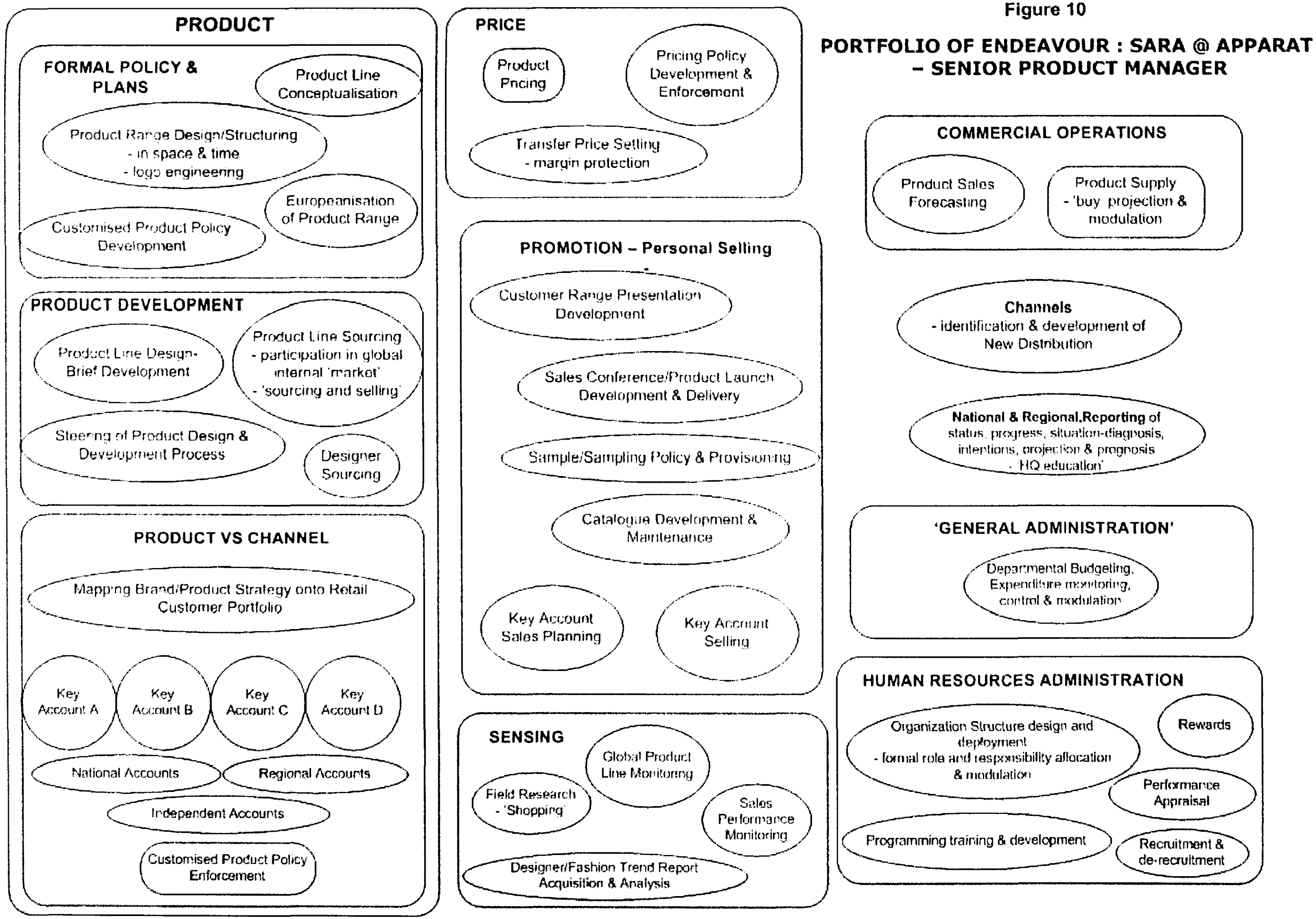
The following quotes crystallise the essence of Sara's endeavours:

"...product management's role is to sit and look at the range and say what's missing...be close enough to the accounts, close enough to the market, close enough to the competition...bring all that together and make an educated decision.."
[Sara Diary Trace Interview 1A: 1.12.15]

"...to take all sorts of things into account...look at sales history..look at trend...look at what other brands are doing...catwalk fashions...listen to what the accounts are saying...."
[Sara Interview 1: 21.17]

Figure 10

PORTFOLIO OF ENDEAVOUR : SARA @ APPARAT – SENIOR PRODUCT MANAGER



These quotes suggest endeavours of sensing and synthesis, some elements of which can, at least in certain aspects, have foundations that rest on firm techno-rational ground. There are, however, some areas where there can clearly be no techno-rational 'data-based' foundations at all, if for no other reason than there is not enough time:

"...we have to decide, looking at the high street, is that a one season wonder, or is it gonna stick around..."
[Sara Interview 1A: 32.34]

She was constantly involved in an array of techno-creative decision making across a complex of interwoven design, development and commercial considerations:

"... how many zips...if you take that thing off we can adjust the margin to whatever...won't work in that fabric..etc. etc."
[Sara Diary Trace Interview 3A: 29.41]

Though the content differed dramatically from that of Katie's endeavours, the making of detailed techno-creative judgement-calls similarly pervaded Sara's day. Sara did not give the impression of being a jack of all the 'trades' and a master of none of them. If anything, as with Katie, the reverse appeared to be a very necessary trait.

Crafting A Product Range at a Nexus of Tensions

In crafting the product range, and its evolution, Sara had to take into account a multitude of different factors, many of which were in opposition. These conflicting commercial requirements raised several dilemmas, each of which had to be negotiated.

Customer Differentiation - Balancing Act Number 1

"..different retailers want different looks, 'cause they have different consumers,..for example [X] *attracts one type of woman...*[at Y] *it's all about* [another type]*...functionality might not be so important* [in T] *so you might want something more edgy...more aggressive.."*
[Sara Interview 1: 23.30]

Although all the retailers wish to stock the Apparat brand(s), they require the ability, within the ambit of the brand(s), to distinguish themselves from their competitors. Sara's range had to enable the engineering of this distinction, whilst avoiding the complexity and breadth that could destroy its commercial viability e.g. economies of scale, sourcing options, supply chain efficiency etc., and preclude the allocation of design & development resources for rapid response to competitor action and *"fads & fashion"*:

"..reducing the amount of ranges that we offer 'cause we wanna...free up some time to do some more responsive stuff....some edgy stuff....some gotta have that..."

[Sara Diary Trace Interview 4: 35.00]

This complex dilemma would not necessarily be either onerous, or particularly problematic, if it were not even further compounded:

"....the way the accounts see themselves...and the way we see them...can be very different"

[Sara Interview 1: 29.58]

The retailers had certain aspirations and a view of their position in the marketplace, which did not necessarily coincide with Sara's perception.

Where the Apparat products were 'seen', and when, was to Sara as much of a positioning signal to consumers as any associated promotional activity. Consequently:

"...our role is to protect the product and... to make sure [the product] *is where we as a brand, wanted it to be..."*

[Sara Diary Trace Interview 4; 05.52]

So whilst the range had to provide the requisite scope for retailer distinction it had, at the same time, to control retailer choice. The prospective 'sub-ranges' had to allow the bottom and middle tiers of retailer, as perceived by Sara, to differentiate themselves appropriately, but allow enough scope for retailer-consumer 'trade-up', in order to enable potential margin growth for Apparat. Sara had to accomplish all of this without allowing any potential distortion of 'product/brand positioning' to take place, through an undesirable channel presence:

"..[certain] *ranges ... go to different distribution...much higher prices...cool, limited distribution...very important for that sort of trickle down effect...if you are in* [X] *and* [Y] *flogging* [Z] *at* [£5 for 20]*...you gotta keep that top end to balance it"*
[Sara Diary Trace Interview 1A: 23.10]

But simultaneously it demanded not risking volume, whilst still enabling 'brand evolution':

.."in each collection... not a lot of high prices, but a few pieces..retail might say it's too expensive,..but invest in a few styles that are a bit more statement....use in advertising...get buyers used to seeing higher price point stuff...but not compromise on our volume"
[Sara Diary Trace Interview 1A: 38.58]

Thus, as Sara puts it, she had to:

"...achieve.. a product range... that people can dip in and out of...so in essence the high street does not look the same because different retailers

are able to buy different pods...also generate...business 'cause you've not just got safe things.... [Retailer A] *can say I'll have my two that I know but I'm gonna try a bit of that........some of the pods will be off the wall but some of the pods the colour story'll link back to what you've got as the core line...so* [they] *can dip into that one...buy one or two pieces...and put that with that..."*

[Sara Interview 1: 24.09]

And, as if all of that were not enough, all of this had to be accomplished with, what could be termed, a less than close relationship with the retailers:

"...I want to present our ideas, our concepts to accounts but....they change their mind everyday..... some have got their own brand"

[Sara Diary Trace Interview 1A: 1.10.00]

"....this [X retailer] *product...is where they've ripped off our styles..that* [Y product] *there you can't tell the difference between the two...ripped it off..charging half the price...then they're telling us our styles won't sell...I have that there to remind me what bastards they are"*

[Sara- Diary Trace Interview: 1.29.34]

Politics of Globalisation - Balancing Act Number 2

Concurrently Sara also had to contend with the globalising ambitions of the Worldwide Headquarters. This is a particularly difficult requirement given her own strong views:

"....don't ever think we could have a global line because the differences...[the regions] *are so different.."*
[Sara Diary Trace Interview 1A: 23.10]

However, as Sara pointed out:

".....got to be seen to be....working towards a global line.."
[Sara Diary Trace Interview 2: 41.49]

In her words she had to be *"carefully upfront"* as:

"..there's a lot of political stuff goes on around 'cause you have to be seen to want them...even when the [Region A] *line is crap, and the* [Region B] *line is, well,... the quality is just not good enough for us..."*
[Sara Diary Trace Interview 1 Part A: 09.49]

She had to continually make careful trade-offs in her approach to this dilemma, particularly as there was considerable headcount restructuring underway within Europe, and she was very much enjoying her job, the travel, and the money. She clearly felt it was not the time to upset H.Q.

Evolving the Range - Balancing Act Number 3

In attempting to develop her product range Sara had, in addition, to contend with the risk averseness of the Apparat sales-team:

".... sales will never move product on, sales will always want to sell what they sold last time 'cause they've got some history on it,... design always wanna be creative and move it on too fast, so you've gotta kind of manage the two "

[Sara Interview 1: 10.50]

And the inertia of the retail 'buyers':

"...disadvantage of [re-building the range regularly]...*the buyers don't get any confidence...they don't get to know the styles, means you are fresh but...."*

[Sara Diary Trace Interview 1A: 41.30]

Again she had to strike a tricky balance, this time between the 'edginess' of the brand, the evolution of its positioning, and shorter run commercial expectations:

".. so the balance I am trying to strike with our product line is that we move it on, that we're challenging in certain areas, but that we still maximise our volume potential and satisfy sales"

[Sara Interview 1: 10.37]

Long Run versus Short Run - Balancing Act Number 4

Just as in the case of Katie earlier, the perennial 'Gap' between actual revenue and that promised to H.Q., wielded its influence:

"...no matter what the market's doing,... regardless of whether interest rates have gone up...every year it is just...'10% that's what you've gotta achieve'"

[Sara Diary Trace Interview 1A: 1.09.08]

"...you've got [H.Q.] *breathing down your neck...saying we've gotta have this number.."*

[Sara Diary Trace Interview 3A: 53.08]

However, though the impact of modulating the product offer is potentially high, unlike trade marketing activity, its responsiveness is relatively low, due to the expert-resource constraints and timescales of the design & development cycle. However although responsiveness is low, the areas of flexibility are far more strategically sensitive:

"...we go out to present Q'3 [Quarter 3]*...revved up really pleased ...everyone's delighted with the product then they start messing around with it saying what can we pull forward..."*

[Sara Interview 1: 01.51]

...*"I fear they'll go to..* [a retail discounter]*... to make it* [the revenue] *up and they'll go big style...and ..stitch us up for the next year..."*
[Sara Diary Trace Interview 2: 31.00]

The two options that were open to sales were the massaging of 'sell-in' figures, through the manipulation of the timing of the deployment of product or the broader than planned distribution of 'protected' product.

Sara's energetic handling of dilemmas and her thoughtful bricolage of the 'where and when' of the product mix was continually challenged from the close of the first quarter. She seemed, as she saw it, to be in a permanent struggle to *'protect the firm from itself'*. This is reminiscent of the characterisations of Bonoma's 'Despite School' of marketing management. [Refer Chapter 3]. It represents a fraught political struggle that seemed, at times, to be of career threatening proportions.

5.2.4.3 Zeb & Adam @ Apparat – The Marketing Director(s)

Zeb/Adam's position in the Apparat organization structure is illustrated in Figures 7 & 8 above.

Zeb's Portfolio of Endeavours

The portfolio of endeavours displayed in Figure 11 is that constructed for Zeb. The empirical material from the study of Adam was not extensive enough to enable the construction of a portfolio of endeavour. However the 'Adam material' has been used to supplement and enhance the character of content discussion.

Zeb's Endeavours – The Character of their Content

Intense Techno-Creativity and 'Subjectivity'

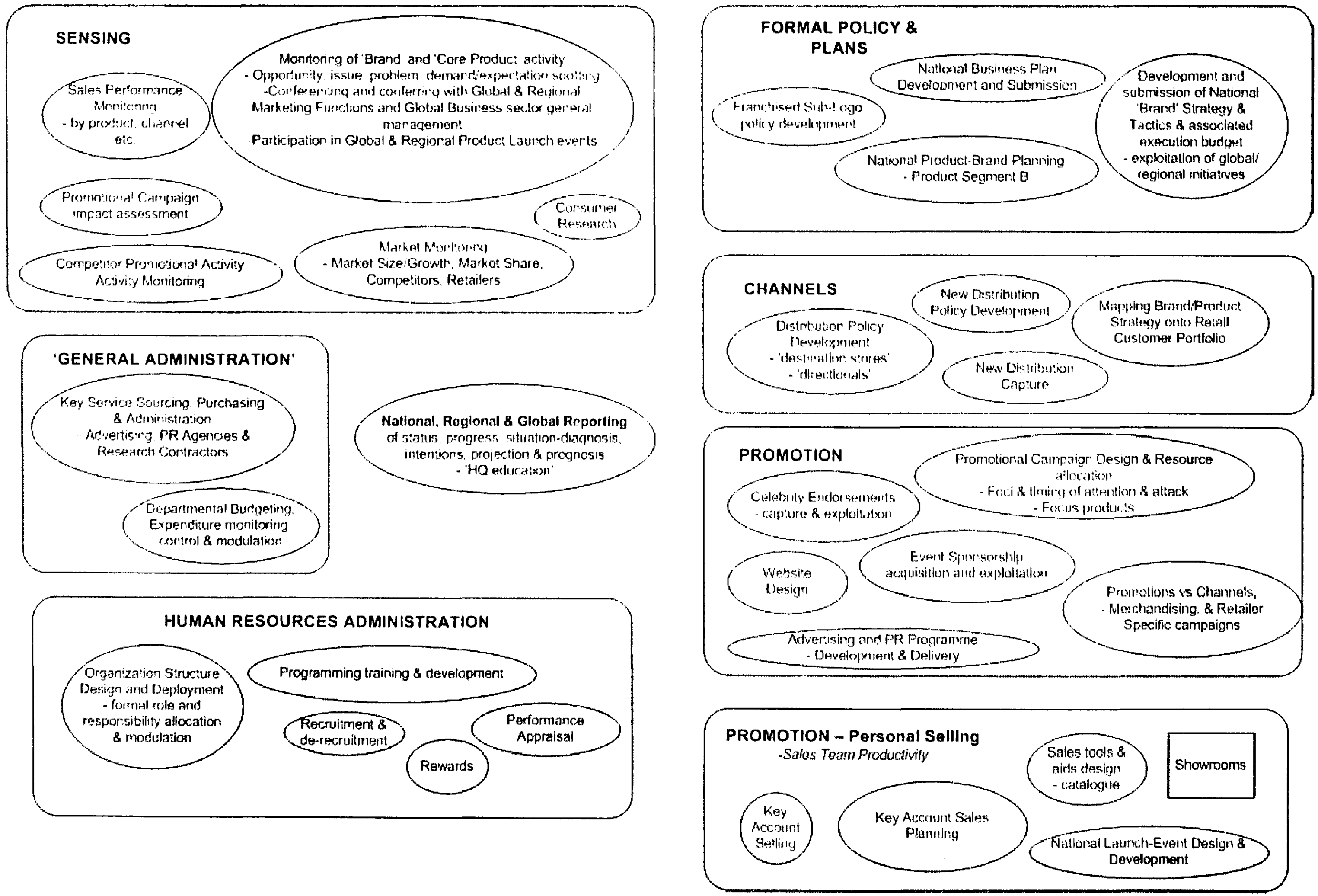
Just as with Sara and Katie, Zeb's workday was pervaded with a highly detailed level of technical decision-making, in his case largely with respect to the media promotion of Apparat and its sub-brands. However the most striking example of this techno-creativity rested in the higher-level strategic thinking with regard to brand-image development:

".. what we've got to do is to figure out what are the four of five things that will go to make a real difference to the brands and to the way we want to portray the brand at retail"
[Zeb Diary Trace Interview 3:1.50.22]

This is quite a remarkable responsibility put as simply as that, and extra-ordinarily demanding within the social fabric of the organization, given:

".. There's not a right answer... our decisions are quite subjective.. to one person that new [X] *is a real new fashion statement, to another it's just another bread-and-butter* [X].. *let's just go and milk it ...you can't prove it one way or the other....."* [Adam Diary Trace Interview 3:19.55]

Figure 11 PORTFOLIO OF ENDEAVOUR: ZEB @ APPARAT – MARKETING DIRECTOR



This was particularly problematic given the apparently asymmetric assessment of these sorts of judgements utilising the classical techno-rationality of management accounting; evidently perceived by Zeb as 'irrational' in its 'rationality':

"...... *that's all very well* [Zeb] *but you've got to come back and tell me.. you've gotta make an real compelling case for that* [X] *million investment which says what's the ad gonna look like, why's it gonna drive sell-in in the short term what' your return gonna be etc. etc.' ....that's nigh-on impossible to do"*

[Zeb Diary Trace Interview 1: 56.00]

This is most problematic, one can surmise, when 'marketing' are doing what they are exhorted to do to be successful:

"... we wanna go where people are uncomfortable.. Everybody wants to go into a safe place.. we wanna go in the opposite direction.. that's what good marketing is"

[Zeb Diary Trace/LD Interview: 43.15]

In deference to certain epistemological meanings I hesitate to use the word 'subjective' in describing the nature of these judgements; however my subjects had no such hesitation:

"..it's subjective...we're subjective...our retailers are even more subjective...you present stuff you are really proud of and they just think it's pants!"

[Adam DT Interview 3: 19.58]

Not surprisingly, therefore, in this particular manifestation of 'marketing management', there is a somewhat contested ownership of the pertinent 'interpretive territory' [Brownlie 1998 p122]:

"... marketing [product & promotion] *is.. very visible.. most people are interested ...whether they are FD's or logistics, or whatever, they all quite like it ..Let's just say 'you get an awful lot of help'!!..."*

[Adam PD Interview A: 1.28.48]

<u>Dealing with a Core Tension</u>

- Brand image development versus Sales generation -

If the stakes were small, and the horizon of return short, the context of the judgements discussed above would not necessarily be too burdensome. However the timescales that pertain to brand-image development among consumers are long, and short-run pressures to 'hit the number' exert a heavy influence:

"... pressure comes on the local businesses.. MD 'gets' [Sub-Brand A]*, he wants to spend on* [it]*, but he also sees his sales are going down.. and in the short-term* [it] *isn't gonna drive any sales so...."*

[Zeb Diary Trace Interview 2:36.01]

".. it's the area that people would feel we should cut back ..as it isn't gonna give huge returns straight away.. "

[Zeb Interview 1:35.06]

Given the prevalent 'subjectivity', and the potential time horizons of evidenced payback from such brand-image development, any associated investment Zeb had budgeted and planned, was always highly vulnerable:

"MD is saying to me.. the sales guys talking about [product X] *number.. Problem is that there's not enough marketing behind it and so were gonna have to come up with stuff ...bigger and better for it"*

[Zeb Diary Trace Interview: 43.06]

"... yes, they say, we got this and this and this but the numbers aren't great yet are they, is it really worth putting in all the [X] *million dollars....why don't we cut that back 'n put it there instead...."*

[Zeb Diary Trace Interview 1: 45.33]

The *'there instead'* is the highly product and retailer specific promotional campaigns that drive the 'sell-in'. In Zeb's eyes, these have their place, but do not *'move the brand(s) on'* in the way that he sees as being imperative. The same short run pressure to *'hit the number'* for 'sell-in' that impacts the deployment of investment on high profile media campaigns also affected the intended modulation of distribution patterns in pursuit of brand-image development:

"...need to....get the brand seen more...in more aspirational retail distribution...and be less reliant on the 'big uglies."
[Adam PD Interview A: 17.51]

".. great looking new [X]... *to nurture them, that's give* [X] *an elevated image,.. might just want to keep the distribution to those kinda more fashionable retailers but* [the Sales Director] *quite reasonably might be saying 'yeah but that trend is very current let's open it out to everybody and pump some volume'..* "
[Adam Diary Trace Interview 3: 17.18]

On both the channel selection and media-advertising fronts, Adam and Zeb together expended a substantial amount of energy defending their brand-image development plans. Adam commented:

"...if you're taking a big salary every month you've kinda got a duty to pipe up and fight that corner"
[Adam PD Interview A: 1.05.50]

<u>The Long Run versus the Short Run</u>

"You've got to.. for two or three years invest heavily [in brand image promotion]*...and nothing we can put anywhere will ever convince the FD or anybody you're gonna get a return on it... OK well we'll get half of them wrong....all you can do is to try to minimise the risk by doing a bit of research and checking as you go"* [Zeb Diary Trace/LD Interview: 43.20]

As a result both Zeb and Adam spent a considerable proportion of their time capturing support from 'the board' for various longer run 'brand building' initiatives.

"... very often talking about the next three months..one of my jobs is moving the agenda on to spend more of the senior time talking about the longer term"

[Adam Interview 1: 43.06]

This was frequently an operationally difficult task in itself:

"...at the board we tend to be under time pressure...tend to put too many things on the agenda...we kinda say 'right next'..without coming to a conclusion...putting it off to another meeting"

[Financial Director Interview 1: 21.53]

<u>Dealing with The Global-Local Tension</u>

"..quite a lot of things now globally driven...we have to be interfacing... and influencing the output..or arguing for alternative courses of action"

[Adam Interview 1: 58.08]

Not only did Zeb & Adam have to negotiate the difficult terrain of Apparat UK in endeavouring to deploy longer run brand-image development campaigns, they had to contend with the globalising ambitions and attitude of H.Q. 'marketing' and the newly emerging European regional marketing team. Zeb felt strongly about his role in directly attempting to influence the global marketing team, and was frustrated by the emergence of what he saw as a superfluous regional marketing management function:

*".. *[MD] *says* Zeb *stop having your conversations with H.Q. let the* [regional team] *do that... he doesn't see it from my point of view...you want to be influencing them.. strategy needs to come from the local markets not people in between"*

[Zeb Diary Trace/LD Interview: 53.00]

Zeb was clearly suspicious of the motives of the new European management team:

"... some of the Europeans they tell people [in global HQ] *what they want to hear ..which will help them in their careers rather than what might be best for the business"*

[Zeb Diary Trace/LD Interview 42.27]

The European team was growing in confidence and wielding increasing power:

".. you've got a meeting with me... you know you got a meeting with me.. if you think you're an island.. if you just see yourself as an island..you need to think about getting another job"

[Zeb Diary Trace Interview 1:39.41]

In the context of continuing re-structuring this was not a threat Zeb took lightly, especially given that figuring out what the global HQ view actually was, was often not that simple:

"... [in global HQ] *this guy believes we are about* [X] *this guy believes the future is* [Y].. *this guy's a trader 'n all he cares about is in-store and rooftops.. what you actually get in various different points right at the top... the hard thing is no one is prepared to say where are the priorities..."*

[Zeb Interview 2: 49.55]

5.2.5 Lenney @ International Paint

For five years I was the Global Marketing & Business Development Director of the Marine Coatings division of International Paint, a $400M turnover global business. An outline organization chart of the division is provided in Figure 12. It was a classic matrix of global market direction and regional & national operational control. Much of the confusion often associated with such split responsibilities was mitigated by the business-critical global coordination necessary to serve global customers with what were literally mobile physical assets.

The business is involved in the supply of protective, decorative and specialist paints, together with various associated services, to the commercial and military shipping, and ship building industries. The market comprises many thousands of customers worldwide, but approximately

250 of them make up around 60% of consumption. The division is now exceptionally successful, a fact largely attributable to my previous managers and, not least, to my own endeavours. None of the four of us remain with the company. Given some potentially emerging aspects of the character of content, this point may be of some reflexive importance.

I do not intend to attempt an elaboration of the character of content during my tenure as Marketing Director at International Paint. It would be a retrospective-reflective work of doubtful provenance given the notoriously fragile nature, and distorting effects, of memory.

This problem of cognitive provenance does not however apply to an attempted elaboration of my portfolio of endeavours, as I have to hand considerable documentation, including some original 'self-management' artefacts, some of which Kotter [1982], though they are written, would possibly term 'agendas'. The portfolio of endeavours illustrated in Figure 13 is constructed from this empirical material, and is effectively five years in length. Some of the threads had emerged only a few months before my departure; some are however the same length as the rope, but all of the identified strands of endeavour persisted throughout the five years. This material clearly speaks to the research questions, however it is also provided in the spirit of continued first-order reflexivity.

International Paint Organization Chart

Figure 12

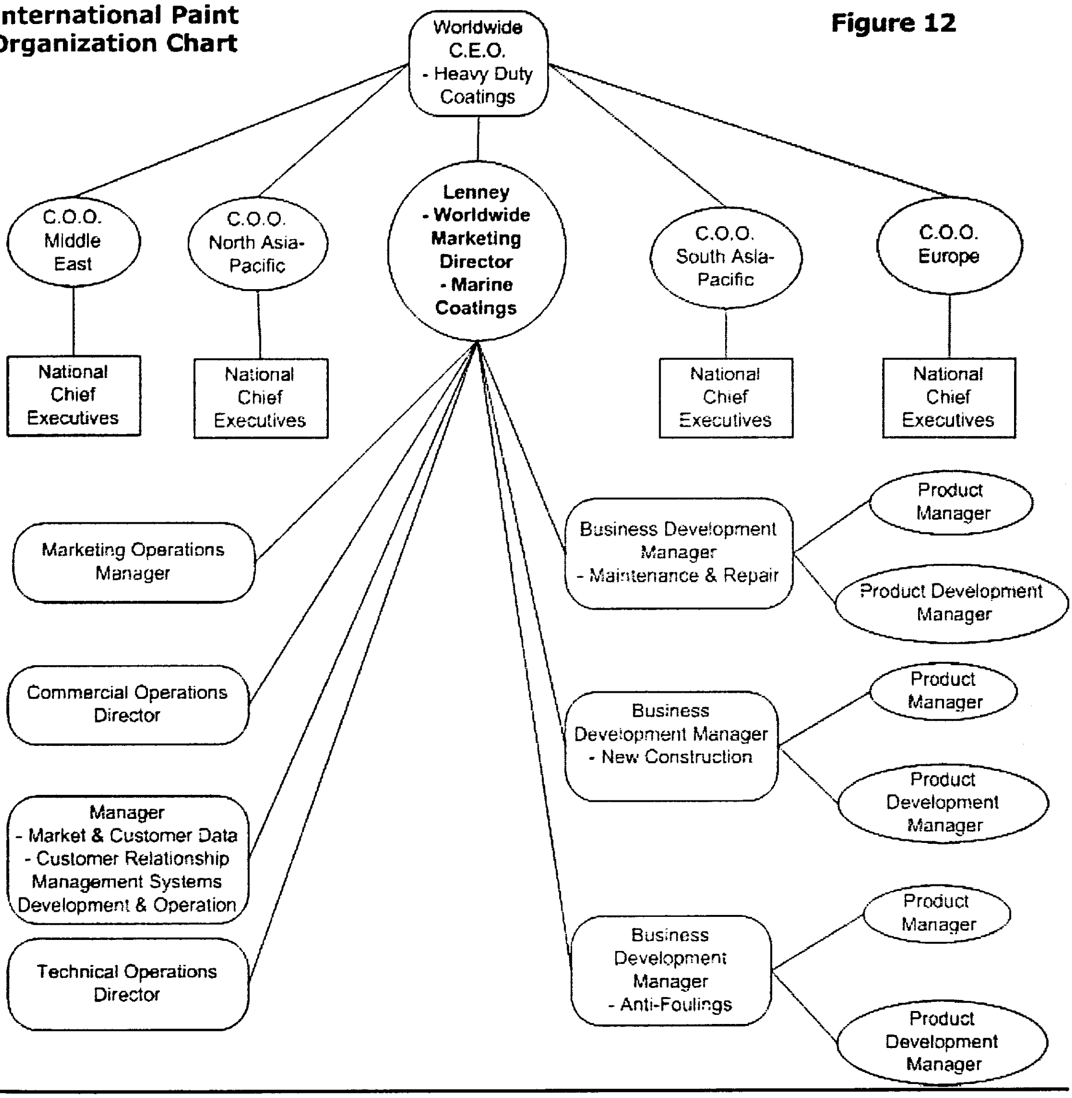
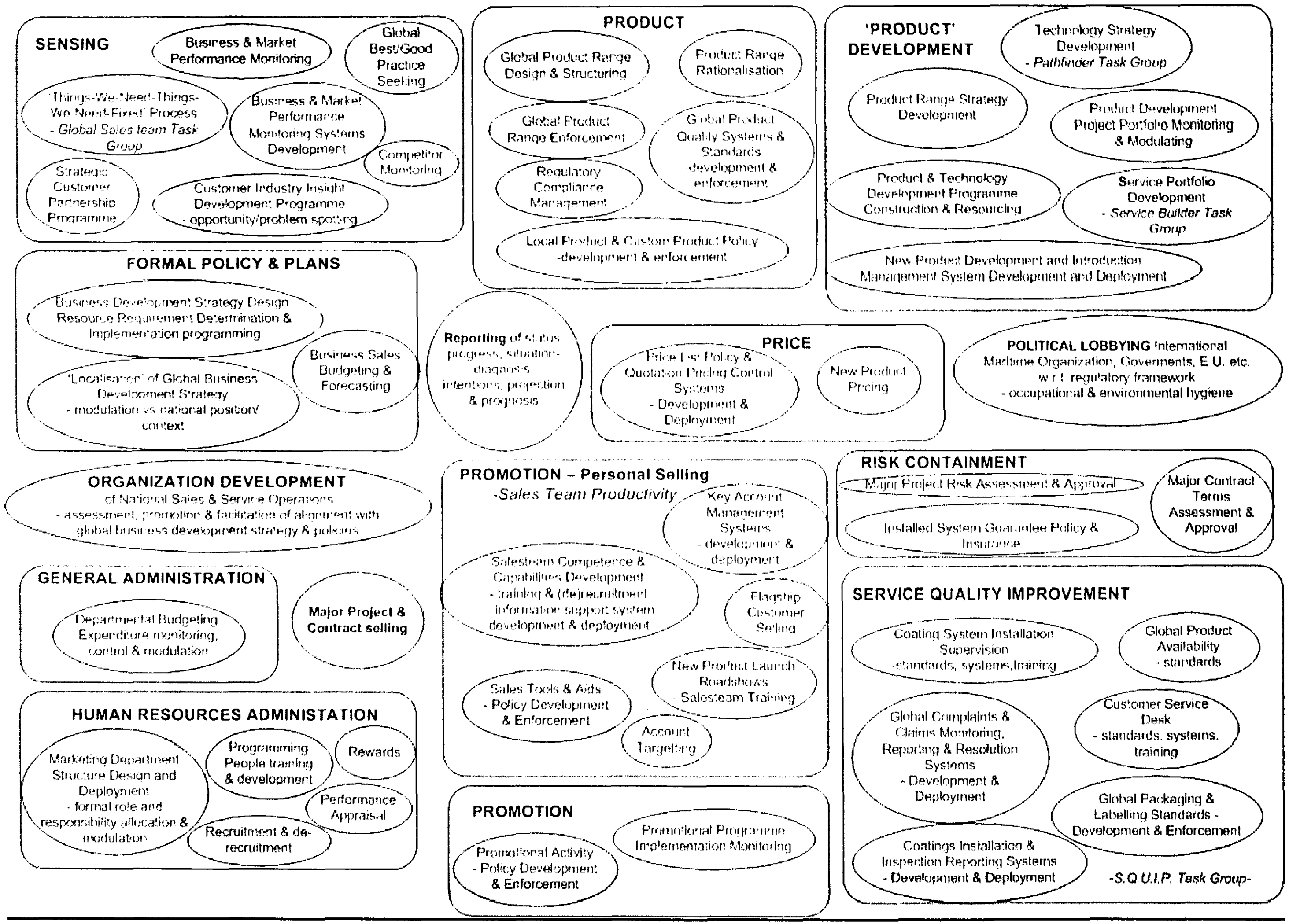


Figure 13 **Portfolio of Endeavour: Lenney @ International – Worldwide Marketing Director**



5.3 Portfolios of Endeavour – A Reflection

5.3.1 Marketing Management Endeavours?

There is no real doubt that the labels extracted from the marketing and management discourses are appropriate for the 'thin' description [Geertz 1973 p7] of the subject managers' endeavours. Ironically, as noted in Chapter 3, the previously mentioned normative discourses are the result of a deliberate academic 'turn' away from a descriptive approach. Even with its 'normative turn' and consequent focus, the marketing management discourse provides a wealth of efficient descriptive language, of high communicative utility to practitioners and academics [Brownlie & Saren 1997 p151]. As a result of Brownlie's, largely un-reported, quasi-ethnography of six marketing directors, and reflections on the extant literature, Brownlie & Saren conclude that:

"...at one level managers do engage in many of the practices prescribed by normative theory.."
[1997 p 155]

They have a strong point, in that there is no doubt that the portfolios of endeavour of all the managers studied comprise content to which the marketing management discourse and pedagogy have direct relevance and linguistic connection. However Brownlie & Saren continue:

"they do not go about those activities...do not engage with them...in ways prescribed by the theory"
[1997 p155]

Brown speculated in support that:

" ..like the creative artists that they undoubtedly are...marketing practitioners....the individuals we lionise in our lectures...do not follow the rules, guidelines or the conventional wisdom of marketing textbooks"
[1996 p257]

This field research supports the contentions of both Brown, and Brownlie & Saren. The adequacy of the labels for the thin-descriptive task herein, does not denote any necessary connection with the associated normative-prescriptive and processual sub-discourse(s).

However, throughout all the components of the fieldwork, verbal and textual interactions were peppered with terminology that would not have been out of place in the textbooks. This was particularly the case in textual forms [e.g. Alan's 'business plan'], where one can surmise the techno-rational posture of the discourse provides a framework for the staging of 'truth' effects [Brownlie 1997 p276, Jeffcut 1994]. In the particular instance of Alan's 'strategic bricolage', the 'analysis and planning' in which he engaged represented a post-hoc rationalisation of conclusions that had already been reached, couched in the legitimating linguistics of 'professional' marketing. It is a fascinating document to read.

Kotler and his fellow travellers would be proud of it, with its elegant usage of the heuristics central to the pedagogy. It is of course, mostly fascinating for what it does not say:

'...*We tried this here and it worked, but this didn't work anywhere; this was really problematic organizationally so we abandoned it, even though we still think it is right; this we know we should do but we know you won't swallow it as it would make you look stupid since you turned it down before; this we have not tried at all as it was too costly to try out without you lot at H.Q. spotting what was going on, so we have just woven it in to this request for resources and hope it just gets the nod anyway and we'll see if it works when we try it; and by the way we're not telling you this other thing even though it looks amazing 'cause we don't want global stealing it and pretending they came up with it before we have got it up and running...*etc. etc'.
[A simplifying and summarising rendition of empirical conversational material captured over the period when Alan was developing his formal business plan]

The actual strategy formulation process more closely resembles the 'logical incrementalism' characterised by Quinn [1980 & 1981], and the associated deep immersion in situational particulars highlighted by Ardley [2005 p123].

The marketing management discourse may enable labelling in, and of, marketing management practice, but does it enable the practice itself?

Clearly, as the above illustrates, in some senses it does. As Brownlie & Saren comment:

"...marketing managers mobilise the concepts and language of marketing as a symbolic resource in order to intervene in social situations in pursuit of particular ends"

[Brownlie & Saren 1997 p151]

It is clear that the discourse provides a treasure chest of symbolic resources, a veritable rhetorical lexicon, and a wealth of heuristics and checklists. However, beyond the rhetoric, content-wise and process-wise, the logics of the discourse and pedagogy were barely visible in the fieldwork and my practice. Perhaps, one could argue, because it is hard to distinguish 'it' from 'common sense', 'it' being only, as Hackley sees it:

"...an eclectic collection of aphorisms, tautologies and platitudes artfully crafted into normative precepts.."

[2003 p 1334]

I have observed what my several brothers-in-law can create with the technology now available at B&Q, and what Michelangelo created with a technology somewhat more primitive. The available tools, whether linguistic or mechanical, do not make the work. It's not in the hammer; it's in the hammering, and the imagination of what might be. As I believe Brown quite correctly suggests:

"...in endeavouring to emulate the [seemingly] logical, rigorous, model building, law seeking, nomothetic standards of the physical sciences, academic marketing has effectively downplayed and de-emphasised the creativity, spontaneity, adaptability and individual insight that often characterise successful marketing practices."

[Brown 1993 p 28]

Possibly it is in description, and in their provision of symbolic rhetorical resources, where the practical utility of the discourses and pedagogy begins and ends, given the character of the content, and organizational context, of marketing managerial work. The subject managers are bricoleurs, that is to say people who: *"make things work by ingeniously using whatever is at hand, being unconcerned about the 'proper' tools or resources"* [Thayer 1988 p239].

5.3.2 Marketing Management Jobs?

"Me?...I'm not marketing!'....."

"Sorry...I didn't mean it as an insult"

[Sara/Author – Pre-Interview 1: Field-note/no recording]

Through his endeavours, Alan @ GovWare could be seen to have responded to McKitterick's exhortation:

" ..the principal task of the marketing function.. is not so much to be skilful in making the customer do what suits the interests of the business

as to be skilful in conceiving, and then making the business do what suits the interests of the customer"

[in Lazer & Kelley 1962 p10; original 1957]

In this spirit, and from my perspective, he had just done 'whatever it took' [McCall & Kaplan 1990] to execute this marketing 'function'. However Alan did not see it like that. As far as he was concerned he was not at that time 'doing' marketing:

"..this job I've ended up doing...it's an HR job, it's a planning job....it's not a marketing job.. not the job I'm doing at the moment...it's marketing, it's sales, it's consultancy, it's technical,..it's the whole organization for government..marketing's part of it..it's one of the functions of it....it wouldn't be traditionally the disciplines which you would see within the role of a marketing manager...if a marketing manager's doing it, you're not strictly doing a marketing job"

[Alan Interview 10: 37.32]

"... the overall strategy is wider than [just marketing] *...it's far wider, it's company culture, it's the product groups. ..you have experts for each of these areas.."*

[Alan Interview 10: 42.03]

His view was that only the 'promotional' threads of endeavour were truly 'marketing'. This was a perspective that was echoed by Sara:

"...marketing's things like campaigns...what you see on the telly,..in magazines, on billboards...I think of marketing as 'I've got a tin of soup..how do I encourage you to buy it..without you actually tasting it...or trying it on'..."

[Sara Diary Trace Interview 4: 1.24.24]

Sara's perspective was particularly interesting given that she was deeply involved in threads of endeavour that encompassed sophisticated product, price and channel decisions.

As Doyle points out:

"...marketers have generally made the mistake of seeing the subject as a functional discipline rather than as an integrative business function"

[Doyle 1995 p23]

The 'disciplines' with which 'marketing' is conflated are most often those of the media-studies/advertising ilk (apparently even by those with MBAs [Alan], CIM qualifications [Sara] and Business Studies Degrees [Katie]). Along the way somewhere, the marketing concept has got lost.

5.3.3 Seriously Technical & Detailed Endeavours

All of the managers studied were predominantly engaged in activity of a technical character, singularly, or in collective groupings of one form or another. This technical work had a highly multi-disciplinary character. A substantial 'mastery' of many subject areas was required, the vast majority of which having no connection whatsoever with the marketing management discourse. As King, I believe rightly, contends:

"...what is needed for managing Real Marketing is polymaths"

[King 1985 p18]

The subject managers' jobs were primarily technical in content; a perspective that Glover [1979] argues is the case at all levels of 'management' other than for those at the very top. This is a contention that my own experience, as a marketing director only 'one-step' down from the board of a multi-national, strongly supports. All the managers were heavily involved in the technical detail of their endeavours; their involvement was not 'high level', it was deep and intense. There was no sign of an emergent 'Mintzbergian' [1973 p5] 'necessary superficiality', in any of the behaviour observed, or in that personally experienced.

In his reflections on the post-modern fate of the marketing discourse Brown [1993 p28] laments its logico-nomothetic ambitions, and goes on to promulgate the view of *'marketing manager as artist'*. However, my contention is that this metaphor, in a way, reinforces a functionally asymmetric and potentially dysfunctional image of 'marketing':

"...marketing...talking thin edge...they wanna talk the sexy stuff, they wanna do the cool stuff, they wanna be hanging out with the dudes, 'n drinking their skinny lattes..." [Sara Interview 1: 46.42]

The image of the oily-handed 'whatever it takes' technical bricoleur that emerges in Harper's [1992] quasi-ethnographic study of a 'backwoods fix anything and everything workshop', is possibly a more productive metaphor. The workshop owner emerges as a 'technical jack-of-all-trades, and master-of-most', deploying a multi-disciplinary, deeply technical, and not very glamorous, 'thick understanding' of the endeavours before him.

".The bricoleur is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks; but unlike the engineer, he does not subordinate each of them to the availability of raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the purpose of the project. His universe of instruments is closed and the rules of the game are to make do with 'whatever is at hand', that is to say with a set of tools that is always finite and also heterogeneous, because what it contains bears no relation to the current project, or indeed to any particular project but is the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions" [Levi-Strauss 1966 p17]

This is a perspective, that seems to have resonance in the later personal reflections on their studies of general managers, of both Mintzberg [1991 p118] and Kotter [1986 p xi]; particularly, with respect to the criticality of the specificity of experience to executive effectiveness

5.3.4 Tight Lists and Loose Agendas

In many ways the elaborated portfolios of endeavour could be seen as a conceptual parallel to the potential 'Kotteresque-agendas' [Kotter 1982] of the subject managers. These displays, of course, represent a synthesis of interview interpretations and 'to-do list' interrogations. Given the latter, the parallel is clearly explicit.

The 'tightness' of the subject managers 'lists' contrasts, however, with the apparent looseness and vagueness of the general manager 'agendas' elaborated by Kotter [1982]. This distinction is possibly simply due to the 'lower level' of the managers studied. The temporal-technical specificity, interconnectedness and detail of the subject managers' 'lists' were fundamental to the pursuit of their 'middle-rank' endeavours. The behaviour of the subject managers did not in anyway resemble the latter element of the description of Boden:

"organizational members pursue local issues, maintain and advance departmental positions, and occasionally even follow a slated agenda"
[1994 p156]

They, almost religiously at times, followed innumerable slated 'lists', if not slated 'agendas'.

5.3.5 Frenetic Endeavours?

"..managerial work is hectic and fragmented, and requires the ability to shift continually from person to person, from one subject or problem to another"

[Sayles 1989 p17]

In Chapter 2 I indicated that I agreed with the spirit in which Hales coined the F.R.E.N.E.T.I.C. acronym and much of its content. The acronym, however, possibly conveys an unfair impression of frenzied and frantic behaviour given its etymological roots in the Middle English *frenetik* for insane, and the Greek *phrenikitos*, meaning inflammation of the brain. [Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged. Merriam-Webster, 2002. http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com (20 Oct. 2005)]

Doubtless interaction-hopping, endeavour-switching activity, conducted across laminated timeframes could convey to many an observer, who is not deeply familiar with the subject matter of the endeavours to hand, an apparently frenetic behaviour pattern. However, the cool-headed, tightly controlled, purposive, systematic 'list-ticking' behaviour I encountered and experienced, contrasts sharply with the image conjured up by the acronym. It was at times very hectic, but not frenetic in character.

As I will argue later, the Ancient Greek Socratic term *phronetic* may provide the skeleton of a somewhat more appropriate, but similarly concise acronymic description of managerial work, especially given the substance of conduct ideas that will be elaborated in Chapter 7.

5.4 The Character of Content – Reflections

5.4.1 Weak Situations

".. judgement will always be more important than technique in marketing. The data which is marketing's raw material will always be dodgy, consumers will always be irrational, cause and effect will always be partly impenetrable."

[King 1985 p 18]

"...marketing data are by their nature less precise and cause-effect relationships are time lagged and hard to pin down"

[Webster 1981 p16]

King and Webster make the same strong point, but I believe even they radically understate the situation in which the subject managers find themselves. Mischel's [1968] concept of weak situations, as developed by Finkelstein & Hambrick [1996], though possibly still tainted by the same naive objectivism that affected King, would seem to capture the character of the situations in which the subject managers find themselves, and the constellation of issues that they face, more effectively. The situations involved are not ones of uncertainty, in the traditional sense [Huber et al 1979], driven by a lack of information, but situations where:

" *...there are too many meanings not too few..*[where]*..the problem is confusion not ignorance."*

[Weick 1995 p27]

These are situations of fundamental indeterminacy where:

"...the characteristics of the situation are not clear-cut enough to dictate a course of action...[where]*...the decision maker's personal frame of reference, not the objective characteristics of the situation, become the basis for action"*

[Finkelstein & Hambrick 1996 p20]

The cases presented clearly exemplify certain characteristics of 'situational weakness'. The inherent indeterminacy of the situations in which the subject managers find themselves engaged are driven by complexity, futurity, ambiguity, equivocality, and equifinality [Donnellon 1986].

Attempting to place oneself in the shoes of the particular manager in question, and considering the statements below, provides a useful way of illustrating weak situations. All of the following comments are wholly grounded in the empirical material, but are not direct quotes. The conversations from which they are distilled were extensive, fragmented, and involved multiple voices. The statements represent simplifying-summative renditions of empirical material:

- *'...the buyer at* [Hi-Street] *is insistent that these tops fit with the merchandising approach but I think it just won't work...it'll bomb and we'll just end up taking it all back.. and that ain't cheap..., I mean they're green for God's sake.... Would that celeb' ever have worn them..but then again I've been wrong before.....mmmm?'*

- *'...how on earth did they win that project, everything was against them, I thought, what did we miss, what didn't we do?'*

- *".. I'm nervous about the benefit they have homed in on, in the advertising that is,.. I feel we were over promising to the consumer they've focused on lightweight cushioning,...it's not really that light weight even though we say as a business yes, it's lightweight cushioning it's not going to stack up against the lightest ..I don't feel comfortable with it.. There's light, and there's light!, ..I think from a consumer perspective you would pick it up and say 'that's not light!'"*

- *"...the* [Lo-Street] *women's buyer is saying one thing and telling us to go jump, their marketing guy is out of the loop, but according to our account manager their MD is with us on this, even though their market research findings run largely contrary to it...but our sales guy ain't the most trustworthy..what to do..I could push it but if I upset the buyer she'll possibly stuff us next month...but we need the order..or do we really?....'*

- *"...for years we had assumed that they were strategically determined to gain market share in Greece...and clearly would drop their pants to do it...it all seemed to fit...turns out their local MD was out of control, all the time they were trying to rein him in..it all seemed so logical....but their behaviour in Singapore, well it just seems so similar...I wonder.?......"*

- *"...those puffed sleeves just seem to be flying off the shelves, but for how long...* [Competitor X] *are due something I'm sure..well not sure sure.... it really is just flying at the moment.. what the hell do we do?."*

As Lien [1997 p5] amusingly points out in his ethnography of product managers in the food industry, some marketing people even have to judge *"what poultry should really taste like"*.

A radical degree of indeterminacy would appear to be at work in almost every thread of the subject managers' endeavours. In these type of situations, as Ardley found during his 'phenomenological interviews' of marketing managers, the enactive sensemaking processes elaborated by Weick dominate [Weick 1979 & 1995]:

"..[the]...*interpretation of the business and market environment..was not found to be a fixed objective entity but embedded in the local rationality of marketing managers' worlds"*
[Ardley 2005 p122]

As Weick puts it:

"..the manager literally wades into the swarm of 'events' that surround him and actively tries to impose some order"

[Weick 1979 p148]

He puts it mildly. At times, I believe, the subject marketing managers could be well described as 'ontological sculptors', a perspective to which Grint alludes:

"...contingency theories...are premised on securing independent and objective accounts of the context/situation...these essentialist approaches are fundamentally flawed and we should pay much more attention to the role of leaders and decision-makers in the construction of contexts that legitimate their intended or executed actions"

[Grint 2005 p1472]

This subject will become a focus of attention in Chapter 7.

5.4.2 Wicked Problems

"..there's so many factors, how can you have a policy...how can I make a decision!"

[Katie Work Shadow B Period 32: 03.06]

The weakness of the situations in which the subject managers find themselves can be seen, in the presented cases, to be further compounded by the nature of the issues that face them.

The nature of these issues is possibly most usefully and succinctly characterised by Rittel & Webber [1973], and by Mason & Mitroff [1981, Chapter 1], in their conception of 'wicked' and 'tame' problems. Problem 'wickedness' is probably best described by comparison with its antithesis, problem 'tameness':

- Tame problems are easily definable; wicked problems have no definitive formulation.
- There are a finite number of potential permissible solutions to tame problems; for wicked problems there are not.
- Tame problems can be defined independent of potential solutions; wicked problems cannot.
- Tame problem solutions are testable and are definitively right or wrong; wicked problem solutions are not, and evaluative criteria sets are often incommensurable.
- Tame problems have closure; wicked problems are never solved. Their 'solutions' are, as Mason & Mitroff [1981] observe, *'Faustian Bargains'*.
- For tame problems there is a clear explanation for the discrepancy between extant and desired situations; for wicked problems there is no such causal clarity.

- Tame problems have clear boundaries and only weak connections to other problems; the opposite is the case for wicked problems. The latter are strongly interconnected with other problems.
- Tame problems are abstractable from the 'real world' and repeated attempts at solutions are therefore possible; wicked problem solution attempts are effectively one-shot.

With one significant exception this closely represents the essence of the Rittel & Webber's conception, the exception being the following:

- Tame problems repeat themselves; wicked problems are essentially unique.

In some detailed sense this may well be true. However, the 'form' of the problems facing our managers clearly repeat themselves, they would say ad-nauseam. Their persistent nature often, though not exclusively, originates in the perennial business tensions, such as those described by DeWit & Meyer [2004], e.g. global versus local control etc., and the types of administrative dilemma elaborated by Aram [1976], Ready [1967] and Clegg et al [2002] e.g. unitary versus individual ends. The subject managers have to deal with 'simultaneities' [Pye 1993 p163], where the only option is 'and-and', not 'either-or'.

The most useful way to illuminate the wickedness of the issues exemplified in the presented cases is again to utilise simplifying-summative renderings of empirical material:

- '*...we could almost certainly land this project with* [Partner X], *but if we do they would gain understanding that would help them on that other project that they are doing with* [RivalA], *not a problem long run but short run it doesn't help us with our development of that customer's preference for us over* [RivalA] *on that other thing we are working on...tricky!'*

- '*..I know it's crucial we keep this lobbying process going on with regard to the* [RivalSoft] *issue in Germany, where the heart of the procurement policy problem resides, but they need more resources on customer development, and on that front they've made the least progress of anyone in Europe..it's a real bugger'*

- '*..this project in Dubai is technically really attractive, a real possible angle on a key customer problem, but it's set up all wrong, with the wrong partners, counter to policy, supporting it would send all the wrong messages... I'm already short of support funds and there's no shortage of other 'horses to back'...but it's so so attractive in many ways, it might just fly...and the Middle-East GM has the ear of the CEO, went to INSEAD together I think....???'*

- '[Lo-Street] *are desperate to have the new* [Zest] *line...,they'll take volume that's for sure, and we need the sales, but the impact on the targeted brand image of that channel will really not be helpful..but if it gets it on the street, well maybe....?'*

- *'...for sure if we spent the extra $4M on customer specific trade marketing we would get sell-in on the back of it...but would it get off the shelves... God knows if the planned brand advertising will make any difference to that though...help!'*

- *'Why the hell do we bother with this new technology development, it hardly ever pays off, yeah sure when it does then yeah.. but the returns on that value engineering are so attractive, small in comparison but nearly a dead cert,, surely we should really be putting the spare cash we have there?'*

- *'...the only guy that can fix this pain of a problem is Jack, its for an important customer, but can I really justify taking him off the crucial longer run task he's on for even a few days, can I?'*

- *'..we could fire the East-Anglian sales-partner, and* [David] *could pick up the existing customers I'm sure, but he'll be retiring soon and we would have to go through the whole thing again in a year or so...but we do need the cost saving now'*

- *'it's going really well at the moment.. the retailers are screaming for us to hold back-up stock on call direct to store, easier for them and more operationally and cash efficient for us, but just look where the risk lands...the demand could vanish overnight with a competitor design launch..but well?"*

There is one form of dilemma that clearly suffuses almost all the issues encountered within the subject managers' portfolios of endeavour. This is a wicked problem type that has the particularly problematic dimension of weakness - futurity. This pervasive paradox is one with a classical economic pedigree: the long-run versus the short-run investment decision, in the context of scarce and/or limited resources:

"...a lot of it...the talk...is about the trade off between the short run pressures and the medium term objectives...particularly with my responsibility for brand image..."

[Adam – Interview 3: 16.15]

"there's a lot of short term pressure..think one of my jobs.. is to move the agenda on to spend more of the senior time talking about the longer term...to try to be looking at the X months out, Y months out..."

[Adam Interview 1: 43.29]

Interestingly King, an ex-practitioner, many years ago commented in his famous critique of the marketing discourse and pedagogy:

"...marketing education should concentrate more on the genuine conflicts that there are between the short term and the long term"

[King 1985 p18]

The feedback loop on longer run marketing investment is clearly concomitantly long. It is also, however, what could be termed as very slack. The linkage of cause and effect is temporally tenuous and easily contestable; the situation is weak and memory fallible. This state of affairs puts one in mind of the primitive tribes, to which Ilgen et al [1979] refer, who were unaware of the linkage between sexual intercourse and childbearing. As McCall & Kaplan [1990 p94] point out, many other things extraneous to the pregnancy take place in the intervening time between the cause, and the final effect. In the organization, if not in the primitive tribe, many are lining up to take the credit for any fruitful final effect, and fundamental causal indeterminacy allows an infinite number of causal cases to be made. A self-reinforcing cycle of causal indeterminacy results. Similarly failure can be attributed to any causal factor but oneself.

As a result, as Mason & Mitroff [1981 Chapter 1] point out, achieving innovative reconciliations of these types of wicked problems will not always be appreciated, or rewarded, despite the courage, conviction and creativity it might demand; one might not, after all, still be there, by the time the reconciliation bears fruit.

5.4.3 Inherent Politicality

The subject managers, including myself at the outset of this study, had a clear view of politics as the use of underhand influence tactics in the pursuit of individual, as opposed to unitary, ends:

".. see politics two ways ...politics from the point of view of the capital P..like Tony Blair and all that... then politics with a small p... how people

pursue their careers...how people pursue their organizational success... its lobbying, its influence, pressure..... it's downright lying... and that's repulsive"

[Alan Diary Trace Interview 5 Part 2: 00.14]

" in big corporations some people only measure their personal success by 'do I secure the most senior job'.... that's their driver, they will bend with the wind and do whatever they need to do to achieve that"

[Adam PD Interview A: 1.13.08]

Among the subject managers politics, organizational not governmental, is a very dirty word, and this perspective has resonance in the mainstream organizational behaviour literature where Buchanon, I believe rightly, observes:

"...the term political is typically used, loosely and pejoratively, to distinguish a category of interpersonal behaviour which includes a range of influence tactics, more or less covert, and more or less cunning...Political behaviour in organisational contexts is thus normally equated with the informal, parochial, divisive, illegitimate, devious, underhand and unsanctioned"

[Buchanon 1999 p S73]

However, as pointed out in Chapter 2, with the 'organizing' activities of managers being largely lateral, and not proceeding through formal hierarchical channels, 'managing' is inherently a suasive micro-political social practice:

" the political aspects of life in organisations, the struggle of reasonable men to have what they consider to be right and proper prevail, derive from the basic processes of human association. Political behaviour, from this perspective, is not a reflection of the darker side of humanity, but a necessary consequence of individuals coming together and seeking to achieve a particular goals"
[Mangham 1979 p xii]

"....individuals in organizations are often in conflict... differences between organizational participants over the means and ends of organizational activity constitute one of the most, perhaps the most, pervasive facts of everyday organizational life"
[Mangham 1979 p10]

This study strongly supports Mangham's contentions. However, as pointed out, the term politics is used by managers to mean getting your own way, usually for your own good, by underhand means.

It is clear that dissensus with regard to ends, means and their linkage is the norm in the subject managers' work lives [Thompson & Tuden 1957; Wildavsky 1964]. The resolution-dissolution of 'ends, means and causality' issues is the subject of perpetual inter-manager discussion and negotiation, with any position reached only ever being transient. Conflict and compromise are the essence of their work. They prove inevitable, as differential points of view, dilemmas and differential objectives are 'worked-through' in a context of limited resources, power differentials, causal-equivocality and equifinality.

The, often extreme, weakness of the situations in which the subject managers find themselves, combines with the pervasive wickedness of the problems that they face in their endeavours, to engender a deeply political character in the content of their work. This situational weakness possibly accentuates the personal risk considerations of the subject managers.

"...I've got a clear view of where we should be going.. there will come a time when this disagreement with Global is going to come to a head.. then y'know it may become.. you either execute or ..you stand up and say no; quite a decision given [Adam]'s *sudden departure"*
[Zeb –Diary Trace/LD Interview: 50.52]

The personal risk perspective is largely understated in the literature, where the focus is on career/personal agenda promotion, rather than on its opposite - career preservation. As I understand from my own experience, and particularly that of Adam, having the courage of your convictions does not necessarily pay off. The advocacy of certain views can be 'career threatening' in organizations.

The subject managers clearly inhabit a 'weak' situational landscape littered with 'wicked' problems, that they approach with one eye on their own personal survival. This potentially engenders an intrinsic, deep politicality in the endeavours of the subject managers, which is possibly not so deep in the endeavours of managers in other business functions.

"...because you know different people have different agendas..even though you can roughly work out what different people's agendas are.. you have to be very careful what conversations you have... it's very difficult within an organisation to have an open conversation with anybody"

[Zeb Diary Trace Interview 4: 48.09]

Zeb's comment exemplifies an aspect of the sort of practical wisdom with regard to organizational practice that resides in a zone of knowledge regarding a capacity to act in social situations; one that Aristotle termed Phronesis:

"..a reasoned and true state of capacity to act with regard to human goods"

[ex. Nichomean Ethics in Tsoukas & Cummings 1997, p665]

This is clearly the type of philosophical terrain that the subject managers are negotiating; a terrain on which some more light will be cast in Chapter 6, with a richer description of the organizational milieu of Apparat UK.

5.5 A Further Reflection on the Marketing Management Discourse

Thomas comments, when reflecting on the findings of Watson's [1994a] famous ethnographic study:

" *managers are...embroiled in an all too human struggle to keep .....themselves intact in the face of uncertainty and incipient chaos"*
[2003 p41]

This struggle was, for much of the time, clearly etched on the subject managers' faces, and they were not reaching for textbooks for help:

"..marketing is common sense...it's mostly hands on experience...you can't learn it in the classroom..it's quite different when you get in the workplace"
[Katie - Interview MEC: 00.05]

The marketing management discourse and pedagogy has de-humanised and de-contextualised the marketing management process; it is asocial.

" *the received marketing literature has tended to portray marketing decision making as something isolated and independent of the organizational context in which actual marketing decisions are made"*
[Piercy 1989 p25]

Marketing Management continues to be portrayed as a technology [Fisk 1986]; in effect as "a set of control algorithms" [Brownlie 1997 p149] and linear processes, despite the fact that even 'analysis, planning & control', alongside all the other largely ignored functions of management, occurs within the socio-political and economic 'mess' of a human collective enterprise [Ackoff 1981]. So much so that one tends to rapidly gain the image of a marketing manager as some techno-rational, omniscient, omnipotent 'brain in a vat', connected directly to the firm's E.R.P. system. Neither the bricoleuric technicality nor politicality of the subject managers' endeavours, or the wickedness of the issues and weakness of the situations they confront are captured by the marketing discourse. The knowledge and insight required of the subject managers is highly specific, and a 'black art' in the eyes of some researchers and practitioners:

"...black art...the knowledge...is not easily acquired, being secretive and esoteric in nature. To fully understand the codes and ways of the industry, one would have to be initiated into it and learn from others"
[Ardley 2005 p122]

If only 'marketing management' was as simple as the pedagogy implies. The marketing management discourse is a simulacrum of marketing management practice. The words are in the 'work', but the 'work' is not in the words. The discourse critical work of Brownlie and his co-workers elaborates on this simulacrum [Brownlie 1991, 1997, 1998; Brownlie & Saren 1997; Brownlie & Spender 1995; Brownlie et al 1994]. However, this stream of literature acknowledges, but does not dwell on, the socio-political deficit of the discourse:

". the process of arriving at a view of a organizational SWOT, or a definition of its business and markets may then be less an analytical than a political task, involving the exercise of power through negotiation and conflict resolution.."

[Brownlie & Spender 1995 p43]

In their attempt to give proper voice to the agency of marketing managers in the enactment of their markets and industries [Pfeffer & Salancik 1978] the traditional individualistic notion of the marketing manager re-emerges [Brownlie 1998]. The focus becomes their exercise of judgement in situations of radical uncertainty – fundamentally weak situations as I have termed them [Brownlie 1998]. A conception of judgement and its exercise that would appear founded in the highly individualistic notions of Vickers [1965]:

"...the marketing manager is redefined as the person having a talent for finding a basis for making good decisions in the absence of the necessary data....a creative resolver of uncertainty in pursuit of self-interest"

[Brownlie 1998 p124-125]

Though passing reference is made to the 'sensemaking' [Weick 1979, 1995] in which marketing managers are engaged, the core characteristics of this process are substantively ignored [Brownlie & Spender 1995 p42], and as a result, the deep socio-political character of marketing managerial work, illuminated by this study, is lost from view. In contrast the discourse-critical work of Piercy [1984, 1986b] highlights the potentially deep politicalty of managing-in-marketing, but the individual agency, the 'managing', of marketing managers is lost in its quasi-institutional/sectional interests treatment of politics.

A more than passing reference to the 'sensemaking' literature will be necessary when I attempt to craft a model of the substance of conduct of the subject marketing managers in Chapter 7.

Chapter 6

The Substance & Milieu of Marketing Management

- The Case of Zeb & Adam @ Apparat -

"We need more rich description of what leaders of organisations are up to, especially of the problems, the contexts, the guts of managerial life. Such is the stuff of which new models should be made"

[Lombardo & McCall 1982 p67]

Though I have endeavoured to avoid the wholesale dismemberment of the subject managers 'endeavours', the method of conceptualisation and exemplification in the previous chapter is necessarily analytical and, to a substantial degree, unavoidably acontextual. In this chapter I will attempt to contextualise the character of content perspectives developed in Chapter 5 through a somewhat thicker description of a particular case and context of 'managing in marketing', that of Zeb & Adam @ Apparat. This description will comprise a richer portrayal of the Apparat UK milieu and elaborate, what I will term, 'the substance' of Zeb & Adam's marketing management. As will be remembered both of them fulfilled the role of Marketing Director at Apparat UK, Zeb succeeding Adam on his departure.

This richer description is enabled by the character of the organizational penetration, and contextual understanding, that was achieved at Apparat UK through, what some might term, the 'action research' component of that fieldwork:

"...an involvement with members of an organization over a matter which is of genuine concern to them"

[Eden & Huxham 1996 p75]

6.1 The Nature of the Organizational Engagement

As far as the Apparat UK managing director was concerned the annual customer satisfaction survey that they regularly conducted with their retailers had achieved very little:

" *...it all comes back very pretty, different ratings, you could analyse it to death......a nice pretty booklet we sent back out to the retailers..but we didn't go forward....to be honest nothing ever happened in real terms".*

[Managing Director - Interview 1: 00.05]

The results of Apparat's satisfaction surveys had always been largely negative or ambivalent, with the exception of the feedback regarding customer service. Many customers made it clear that they would like to do more business with Apparat, commenting that they were responsive, flexible, a "*partner rather than just a supplier"* and not arrogant like the top brands. However, many went on to complain that Apparat "*just have not got their act together"*. This was a source of huge frustration to the Customer Operations Director who, as a result, commissioned the illuminative evaluation project, with the aim of Apparat-UK "*better understanding their retail customers, the relationships they have with* *them and, most important of all, their capacity to respond and improve their performance".*

The illuminative evaluation process incorporated a series of interviews with all board directors, their direct reports and all the customer contact and service personnel deployed around a selected key account. The conclusion of this phase of the action research is summed up in the extract from the proposal for further, more action-based, work that is shown below:

"It is evident that the complete business-functionality of account strategy development & implementation, and the multi-functionality of the total B2R product only converge as an integrated issue in the director group. The requisite multi-functionality of the total B2R product is not perceived or managed at any junior level....[and combined with] *the failure of account strategy to be a persistent and central aspect of* [the director team]'s *agenda... would seem to indicate an opportunity for the rapid development of current management practice"*

The aim of the key account change process that then ensued, and the task of the Steering Group which I then facilitated, was the following targeted development in organizational practice:

"To develop and implement, for a single key account, an integrated 'total-product' marketing and customer relationship development plan; together with the supporting management processes; and the development of an

action plan to enhance [Apparat]*'s ... customer relationship management & development practice with all key accounts"*

The method deployed was one of 'online immersion and offline reflection' [Eden & Huxham 1996 p81]. A process, which I believe generated a quality of 'contact with subject' and insight that surpassed that achievable through the more traditional methods that have been deployed in this study [Rowan & Reason 1981].

In an attempt to convey the flavour of the milieu and substance of marketing management encountered in Apparat UK this chapter is written, as far as is possible, in the 'voices' of the respondents.

6.2 The Milieu of 'Marketing Management' @ Apparat UK

" *...the routinisation of marketing activity is difficult because every situation embraces context-specific particulars."*
[Hackley 1998 p100]

A milieu can be seen as the atmosphere, environment, or medium in which something may function or flourish, or not, as the case may be. The milieu in which Zeb & Adam are immersed is both the medium of, and climate for, their 'managing-in-marketing'. In many ways this milieu could be likened to the water in which a fish swims. However, this metaphor fails in one key aspect. Unlike the water the milieu does not remain unchanged by the 'swimming' of the managers. The milieu, and the managers' managing are in a structurational relationship [Giddens 1984].

Highlighted in the following sections are those aspects of the Apparat UK milieu that were observed to be in a particularly striking structurational relationship with the 'managing-in-marketing' of Adam and Zeb.

6.2.1 The Market & Business Position

As has already been described Apparat UK is a subsidiary of a major multi-national corporation involved in the supply of branded clothing to major-national, regional and small independent local retailers. Within its 'sector' it lies third in terms of UK market share, behind two other global brands. Though Apparat UK's sales volume had been reasonably stable, their average selling price had degraded substantially in recent years. As a result profitability was in serious decline as the fieldwork commenced, despite the drastic cost saving measures that had been taken in response:

"...numerous structural changes have had to be inflicted....in a six month period we lost 60% of our senior management"

[Managing Director Interview 1: 35.59]

Apparat UK's customer base had consolidated dramatically in the recent past. Some years previously their customer base had numbered around 3,500 retail outlets. As the fieldwork concluded Apparat had only 600 accounts, with 120 being served directly, the remainder being handled by tele-sales. Fifty of these accounts contributed 90% of Apparat's sales, with the top 5 accounts generating approximately 75% of total revenue. The balance of power had shifted dramatically towards the customer with the emergence of the 'Big 5' retailers. However, the business performance expectations of the parent corporation were undimmed, and remained very focussed on the immediate run:

"...medium term for [Apparat] *globally is sometimes the next six months...this is a scarily short term focussed business...there's relentless pressure on for the delivery of next quarter's numbers"*
[Adam Interview 1: 41.30]

The power of the brand in generating consumer purchase at retailers [known in the trade as 'sell-through'] was clearly important to driving sales with the retailers in this market. It could be argued that brand strength had grown even more important given the power of the 'Big 5' retailers [Wood & Tandon 1994 p21]. In this respect, however, Apparat were a relatively weak third player, and this difficult situation was accentuated by the emergence of the 'Big 5's own-brand products. These latter products were eating away at the sales of all the major brands, but were particularly impacting those of Apparat. With Apparat's relative brand strength with consumers apparently stagnating, they were under increasing pressure from retailers to supplement their product offer with customised products, and evermore sophisticated, and costly, merchandising & point-of-sale promotions. The business appeared to be locked into a self-accelerating market share decline, with falling sales &

profits precipitating cuts in promotional expenditure, and the demands of retailers diverting an increasing proportion of these limited resources away from consumer-brand promotion.

"...we've got ourselves into a position where tough decisions need to be made and we've left it too late...we're losing strength..haven't got the freedom to do it..[HQ] *saying we've still gotta do that number and I think we need to totally pull back and regroup and spend a year or two doing that...'n stop doing stupid deals..we don't have that luxury..it's a dream scenario."*

[Sara Diary Trace Interview 3A: 1.22.03]

As Kent comments:

"...the marketing manager does not usually begin with a clean slate"

[1986 p149]

'Not usually' puts it mildly to say the least. Sara's dream scenario, I would contend, is only ever encountered in marketing management textbooks.

6.2.2 The Manifestation of Marketing

The manifestation of marketing in Apparat UK falls into what Hooley et al [1990] would term the *'sales support department'* category. Apparat UK had, as Ames [1970] would have perceived it, *'all of the trappings but non of the substance of marketing'*:

" ...marketing...... people here have the perception it's something to do with advertising, communication and stuff.. hoped that we would be more at the heart of the business in trying to set the forward agenda ...that's not the reality"

[Zeb Interview 1: 48.02]

As the action research programme got underway Apparat did not demonstrate a dedication to the substance of marketing, as they did not, as the illuminative-evaluation process had revealed, *'require cooperation from all functions, invest for long term goals, and face up to deficiencies in product, price or service'* [Ames p96]. In this sense it might be argued that *'marketing had never really been tried'* in Apparat UK [King 1985]. However there was a lot of trying going on, in what was not a climate conducive to the 'marketing concept'.

In the case of Apparat UK the disposition of the marketing function in the business had clearly been immensely influenced by the perspective of the managing director [Hambrick & Mason 1984].

"...the [MD] *has this view, definitely..about aligning things like this* [draws several parallel lines]*...so y'know things start with product development, then with the product teams...then you have marketing, then you have selling, OK, then customer operations etc, and what it does is create real fragmentation...I think his view of marketing actually...is you guys just promote...you guys..you come in at the end of the process..so you don't start at the beginning."* [Zeb Interview 2: 1.03.18]

Adam, Zeb's predecessor, reflected on this situation at length:

" marketing is just another label isn't it... some organisations give a broader definition to marketing than others..... Some marketing directors' remits are very focused, quite narrow.... others are quite broad..... I see marketing as having quite a broad remit, product, design, and development.... strategy, strategies, the presentation of the product .... the route to market.... where and when the product should show up I mean.... it really should be having a strong impact over all of this.... in some organisations it does in some others.... it doesn't [at Apparat]*,.... it often depends on the history of the organisation.. It depends on the most senior team running that organisation and where their bias is...some organizations have chief execs who have come up through a sales and marketing route... some organisations do not even have a marketeer on the board... a lot depends on their bias and the experience of the people who are setting the direction of the business... the relative importance of marketing and how broad a remit it's given I think is determined by that ... by their backgrounds"*

[Adam PD Interview A: 24.13]

As Workman concludes from her empirical study of product and marketing managers:

"..the definition of what is considered to be marketing is constructed through the social interaction among people in the organization......marketing is defined by the people in each firm"
[1993 p417]

And some of the construction workers, as we have seen, have bigger 'hammers', and more 'clout', than others.

The social construction that results is most often, according to Piercy [1986], the manifestation of the marketing function that had emerged at Apparat UK; in Zeb's words, that of the *'promotional arts and crafts department'*. In this sense Zeb and Adam's predicament may be said to be somewhat typical, or at least not unusual.

6.2.3 A Climate of Heedless Interrelating

".. we are still very much a functionally aligned business... there are fiefdoms... we are still not focused on process.... I'm product and therefore I'm gonna think about anything to do with it... it's none of your business.. grateful you're interested but this is my area I'll go away and fix it..I might do something about it or I might not .. but whatever we do it will probably be in isolation from marketing or sales or anybody else for that matter" [Customer Operations Director Interview 1: 40.46]

The predecessor of Apparat UK's managing director had enthusiastically embraced a consultant driven total quality management [T.Q.M.]

initiative. However the means had become ends, with the initiative generating a major additional administrative burden and, as the managing director had discovered, formal agendas and action lists do not necessarily drive inter-functional collaboration:

"....we used to spend a lot of time in cross-functional meetings with enormous action lists that were just passed from one meeting to the next meeting..."

[Managing Director Interview 1: 42.25]

This experience had given formal cross-functional teamworking a bad name almost throughout Apparat UK. The managing director had quickly ended the T.Q.M. programme. With the exception of upstream supply chain operations, any attempt at formal cross-functional team operation had been dissolved, and such formality was actively discouraged.

"..we try to reduce the silos and work cross-functionally...but we try to do it as a natural process..rather than a very structured process.."

[Managing Director Interview 1: 42.20]

During the illuminative evaluation many interviewees indicated that a lot was being said about the importance of cross-functional collaboration but little done. As one wag put it *"NATO - no action talk only"*.

" Everybody has their own objectives in their departments....nobody goes to another department for any assistance to achieve their

objectives...everybody has similar objectives but they're working on their own"

[Steering Group Meeting 1: 37.17 – Sara]

This behaviour appeared to be impacting Apparat's disposition with respect to its customers:

"..what we do is..different areas talk to a customer..the customers are sharp..they pull us to pieces..They'll go to one place and that person will say 'no..you're not playing ball so I'm not going to do this thing'...they'll go somewhere else and they'll say 'Ok we'll do that'..it means we're not operating as one in the customer"

[Steering Group Meeting 1: 1.21.35 – Zeb]

This operational trait would appear, however, not to have had its sole origin in a dysfunctional implementation of TQM. There were substantial team-working problems even within the leadership team itself:

"..we kinda put too many things on agendas..we kinda say right next without coming to a conclusion..it's a trait we have here...a lot of meetings...I mean a lot...but not arriving at a conclusion..then putting it off to another meeting"

[Financial Director Interview 1: 21.57]

This was a problem that was exacerbated by the style of the managing director:

"...I'm not one to dictate to management.....just try to move things through"

[Managing Director Interview 1: 12.30]

"..we're debating to a standstill ...[the MD] *tries to let us sort it out between ourselves...he tries not to be an autocrat..but we sit in no-man's land"*

[Financial Director Interview 1: 34.00]

This style, and the lack of formality in cross-functional working, overlaid an organizational structure highly differentiated horizontally, vertically and geographically:

"..there are too many different functions in the corporation..too many different silos who've got their own little destiny.."

[Sales Director Interview 1: 25.38]

"...there's the Brand president...so many brands in Apparat...you've got [A 'n B 'n C 'n D etc.] *..then in here in* [our sub-brand] *you've got the Worldwide VP, then the Chief Marketing officer, then you have someone else, then group communications and PR, and marketing of course; then Europe.."* [Zeb Interview 2: 49.50]

This was a context in which the managing director had wholly delegated the responsibility for effective inter-functional collaboration to his senior functional managers but to no one in particular, and definitely not to either Zeb or Adam:

"...if I've told them once I've told them twenty times where the responsibilities lie...they've got to grow up and understand they're all part of a team"

[Managing Director – Illuminative Evaluation Feedback Session 2: 24.30]

"..the [MD] *just doesn't seem to want to get us round a table and have a bit of a fight....I'm sure* [the MD] *thinks this a lot....why can't they just sort themselves out"*

[General Manager Product Sector B Interview 1: 1.07.42]

The leadership team was not generating a context that stimulated co-operative action:

" Departments go their own sweet way, one department carries on doing what they wanna do, another department carries on doing what they wanna do...and they're going further and further apart..."

[Financial Director - Interview 1: 35.45]

This was despite the implementation of some formal cross-functional communication processes:

"there's a formal process of objective sharing, there's a whole lot of objectives and they've been shared"

[Steering Group Meeting 1: 36.30 – Zeb]

The formal and regular 'objective sharing' process was in essence an attempt to generate a form of mindfulness of the objectives of each functional department that, it was hoped, would propagate the required degree of 'heedful interrelating' [Weick & Roberts 1993] between all the managers involved. However, as Zeb observed:

"..people just nod their heads...there's been an opportunity to challenge...consensus and alignment is the goal ...but people do not align or consent"
[Steering Group Meeting 1: 36.35 – Zeb]

A lot of information sharing took place, but little consensus was achieved, and little, if any, cross-functional collaboration was crafted at these gatherings. The form of mindfulness that the managing director had targeted was certainly not being generated:

"...y'know..this whole objective sharing thing is a load of nonsense...I've seen some peoples' objectives that are just totally out of line with our company objectives.....everybody has a set of objectives but they don't seem to match" [Sales Director Interview 1: 25.40]

"..they're still all busy doing their own thing...ploughing their own furrows. Very few of them lift their heads up and say I've got to devote more time to the wider aspects of this business if I'm going to make things shift..."
[Managing Director – Illuminative Evaluation Feedback Session 2: 53.47]

The repeated chief executive exhortations, and the formalisation of various communicational fora, had had little impact:

" everyone has a set of objectives, but they don't seem to match, we don't get around the table and say 'are all these objectives talking to the same piece'...."

[Sales Director Interview 1: 26.42]

In the words of the 'Zest' brand manager working on the Zest sub-brand implementation cross-functional working in Apparat UK was *"... like platting jam"*. Hutt comments:

"Occupying an...integrative role across functional areas, a central challenge for the business marketing manager is to minimise interdepartmental conflicts whilst fostering shared appreciations of interdependencies"

[1995 p351]

The manifestation of marketing in operation at Apparat did not place this responsibility for cross-functional leadership with Zeb or Adam, or with any other functional head for that matter. The leadership team was abdicating not delegating. The all-encompassing ambitions of Keith for the 'marketing function' were far from being realised:

"Marketing plans and executes the sale-all the way from inception of the product idea, through its development and distribution, to the customer purchase" [Keith 1960 p 37]

And the marketing function was seen as being a perpetrator, not only as one of the victims, of the inter-functional 'heedless interrelating':

" ...brand strategies, advertising campaigns, product campaigns, are considered and built very much from a brand perspective, without any thought for the practicalities around how we execute that operation"
[Customer Operations Director Interview 1: 05.25]

6.2.4 A Milieu of Discord

The marketing function was felt to exhibit a strong bias in product line terms:

" ..marketing is totally focussed on [Product Sector A], *even though the business is 50%* [Product Sector B]!....[Product Sector A] *is always the big thing but the* [Product Sector A] *market is much bigger...we have very little* [Product Sector B] *marketing...when trying to cool the brand it's* [Product Sector A]...xxxxxs *me off"*
[Product Sector B General Manager Interview 1: 39.14]

And a particular focus of attention:

"..as I read it...we always market just to consumers and not to retailers..it's almost like they don't care about the retailer...they care about the consumer"

[Sales Director Interview 1: 02.40]

"..Across directors..90% would say marketing are out of touch with our retailers"

[Managing Director Interview 1: 21.33]

The marketing function was seen as 'not being on the same page' as the other functions:

... see marketing as ....not joining in.. not contributing.... that to me is where we are.... you've got sales, or operations, finance, myself, wishing that this marketing section was on the same page as us.."

[General Manager Product Sector B Interview 1: 45.05]

This failure to achieve concord Zeb saw as related to the manifestation of marketing in Apparat UK:

"...in marketing we've being trying to drive the brand in a way and where the rest of the business had no understanding about.. marketing's been very much separate to the business..not been integral to the overall business really" [Zeb Diary Trace Interview 3: 1.03.20]

There was certainly little prevailing consensus amongst the directors as to how Apparat UK should respond to their worsening commercial situation:

".[we need to] *be agreeing some top line things and buttoning that down from the highest level..coz the stuff that goes on y'know..he said that and he said this.... everybody is not singing off the same hymn sheet"*
[Katie Diary Trace Interview 5: 1.01.05]

Even when consensus was achieved the top team were failing to drive the envisaged action:

" *Even when me, 'n* [rest of the directors] *say right we'll do this... decision made.. we'll do it!! ... it goes into the business and there's huge debate about it, the product team say they're not convinced it's the right strategy.. account managers say we won't get the sales on this you can't do it etc. etc.. so the whole business just goes round and round in circles"*
[Zeb Diary Trace Interview 2: 19.14]

"..departments go their own sweet way..carry on doing what they want to do...and they are going further and further apart"
[Financial Director Interview 1: 34.05]

This failure may be seen as unsurprising given:

" *We're not very good as a board at having a good ruck around the table and walking away and having a beer afterwards...we seem to get to a* *point where it gets really interesting, and well...we tend to be scared to go in where it really hurts..."*

[General Manager Product Sector B Interview 1: 1.04.53]

"..[In the leadership team] *we don't seem to want to address any of the kinda meatier issues that we should be talking about*...[the MD] *tries to let us sort our own issues out... we sit in no-man's land"*

[Financial Director Interview 1: 30.05]

Action plans that addressed the serious commercial issues that faced Apparat UK, rarely crystallised around the board table:

"..the big issues sort of get discussed.....some debates..but the degree of closure isn't sufficient to drive action"

[Financial Director Interview 1: 1.08.45]

6.2.5 The Marketing Management Milieu - A Reflection

The above characterises the milieu into which Zeb stepped when he replaced Adam as Marketing Director at Apparat UK. It was a milieu in which 'marketing' was perceived as *"the promotional arts and crafts department at the end of the process"* [Zeb Work Shadow 2004.05.04/10.07; 03.38]. It is a deeply political context, one that was suffused with individual concerns for personal survival, awash with heedless inter-relating, inter-functional conflict and discordance, and fenced in with stark commercial constraints and demands. It is a milieu of some immense contrast with that assumed within the mainstream marketing discourse and pedagogy. As Hackley points out:

"Marketing management texts work up a managerial world devoid of discordance and awash with manufactured consensus"
[Hackley 2003 p1327]

At the outset of the action research, the climate of inter-functional heedless interrelating was clearly not conducive to the mobilisation of collaborative effort around the wicked and commercially urgent problems that faced Apparat UK. Certainly the milieu was, at that time, fertile ground for the emergence of the form of leadership that Grint [2005 p1477] speculates as being paramount in situations where there is great uncertainty as to the mechanism for problem resolution, and where, in addition, the requirement for collaborative problem resolution is high:

"...the leaders' role with a wicked problem is to ask the right questions rather than provide the right answers because the answers may not be self evident and will require a collaborative process to make any kind of progress" [Grint 2005 p1473]

But as Zeb commented:

"..in your heart and your head you know what's the right thing to do....but...actually... the easiest thing to do is to forget it"
[Zeb Diary Trace Interview 1: 37.12]

Some of the inter-functional discord was undoubtedly due to the pervasive turf, interpretive and communicational barriers between the various departments within Apparat UK [Hutt 1995 p352]]. This was particularly true given the Managing Director's failure to lead in the 'Grint sense', his abdication of any functionally integrative role, and hence the leadership team's failure to provide a frame of reference for senior manager deliberations and collaboration. However, I believe Landsberger [1961], quite properly, locates the fundamental roots of this inter-functional discord in the differential perspectives the different business functions take on the reconciliation of the fundamental commercial dilemmas facing a particular firm. The cusps of such dilemmas provided a somewhat uncomfortable seat, for the Apparat UK Marketing Director.

"..I have a lot of sympathy for marketing 'cause they get a pincer movement from everywhere"

[Managing Director - Illuminative Evaluation Feedback 1: 28.50]

6.3 A Warp and Weft of Dilemmas

"..all of the tensions go back to one area...marketing"

[General Manager Product Sector B Interview 1: 1.06.52]

As has been illustrated when Zeb started in his new role as Marketing Director his fellow directors and colleagues perceived the marketing function as merely 'the promotional department', and as a function out of alignment with the rest of the organization. The origin of this discordance was laid, by many of his colleagues, firmly at the door of Adam, his predecessor.

"[Adam]..*he doesn't like confrontation...also when we do have a debate round the board table...everybody has an input...we arrive at a conclusion...we are gonna go with* [Sales Director]..*with his view...what then happens is the execution don't happen quite like that*...[Adam] *puts his own spin on the execution"*

[Financial Director Interview 1: 25.30]

It was 'in' the milieu characterised above that Zeb was confronted with the full array of commercial dilemmas that may have led to this particular aspect of Adam's behaviour. This array of nested dilemmas, or 'issues' as Marples may have termed them [Chapter 5], is displayed in Figure 14.

Although this conceptualisation, like the one utilised earlier in the characterisation of the subject marketing managers' portfolios of endeavour, deploys in its visualisation the cross-section of a metaphoric rope, its temporal morphology possibly more closely resembles that of a double-skinned cable. In this so-termed 'cable of contradictions' there are no threads that come and go with time, as do the previously elaborated threads of endeavour. This 'cable of contradictions' possesses only continuous strands, with the commercial dilemmas faced being immanent, persistent and intrinsically interdependent. The rope of endeavour deployed in Chapter 5 illuminates the content of Zeb's marketing management. The 'cable of contradictions' illuminates the array of nested commercial dilemmas that Zeb confronts, and the substance of his marketing management.

This conceptualisation, in combination with that of the rope of endeavours, speaks directly to, and puts some 'meat on the bones' of the 'issue-streams' terminology deployed in the organizational decision-making process conceptualisations of Langley et al [1995 p270].

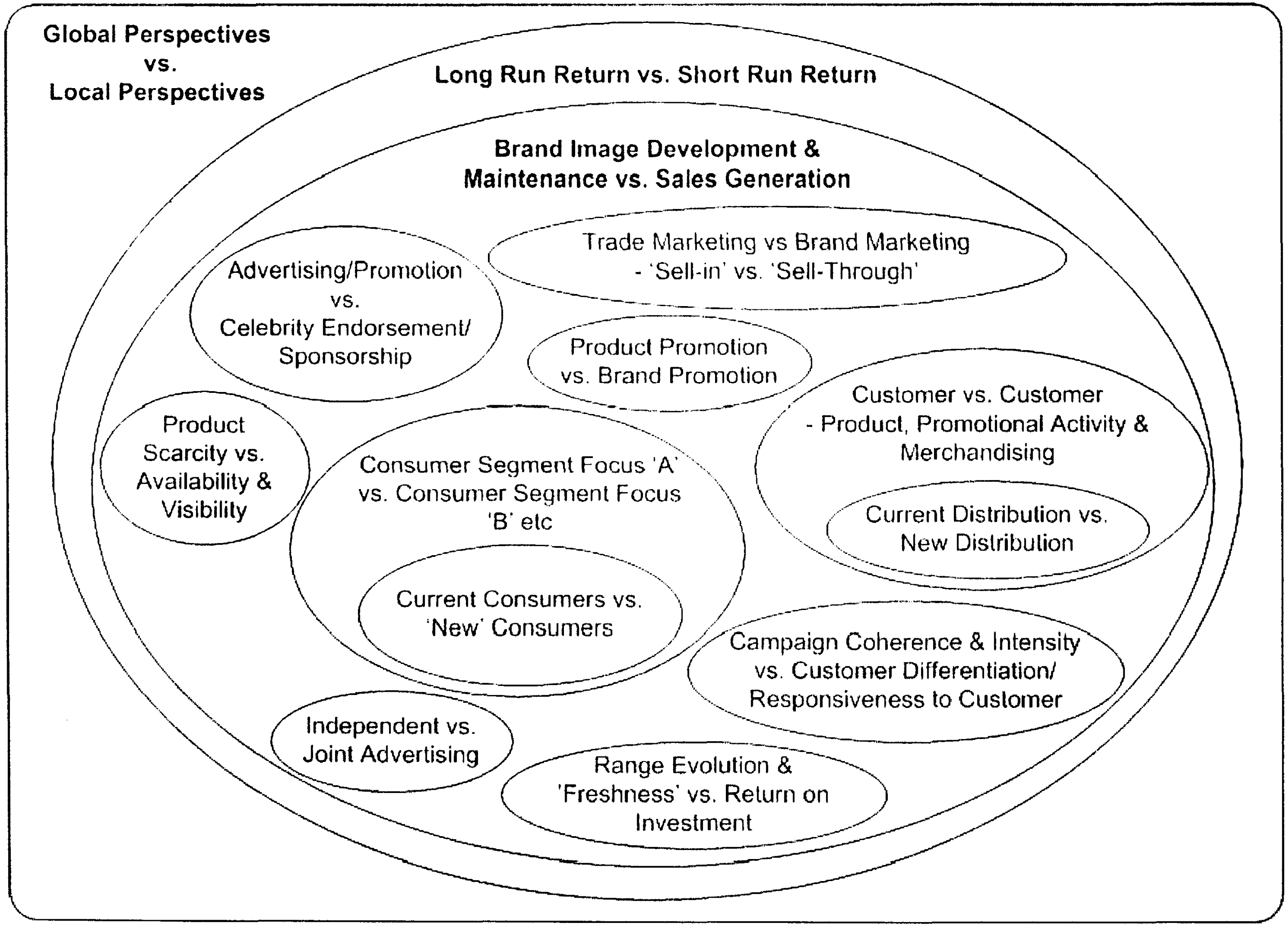
6.3.1 The Core Dilemma

The central strand in this cable of commercial dilemmas is 'Brand Image Development & Maintenance vs. Sales Generation'. This represents the core dilemma for which Zeb, and Adam before him, continually pursued effective innovative reconciliations. The content and character of this strand is conveyed by the quotes below:

"...the marketing teams are.....about trying to move the brand forward...which...can sometimes be at odds with what some customers'll want"
[Zeb Interview 1: 35.21]

"...we have marketing always looking for a consumer reaction..but.. we have this bloody thing called a customer..not a consumer.. we have to get by" [General Manager Product Sector B Interview 1: 19.49]

Figure 14 **Zeb & Adam's Cable of Contradictions**



"...we're always making a lot of pragmatic decisions about where we put products, what products we promote, ..about doing more cooperative advertising than we'd like to do...all about forcing through short term volume"

[Adam Interview 3:18.35]

".. we've got a customer who wants certain things from Apparat, we have to decide whether we want to do some of those things.... or we can be holier than thou and talk about the brand and this and that and the other"

[General Manager Product Sector B Interview 1: 56.14]

" ...thick end of the wedge about volume,.. thin end about image.. you have to put to a disproportionate amount of effort and money here [thin end] *to make sure that down the track your delivering here* [thick end]*."*

[Adam Diary Trace Interview 3: 42.55]

"..a lot of attention is paid to the thin end of the wedge but the volume comes from the other end and that's where we're not spending the money and that's causes a big conflict..we have to do some thin end yes... but the proportions are wrong"

[Financial Director Interview 1: 38.58]

As can be seen in the visualisation, this central strand encapsulates all of the highly specific commercial dilemmas with which Zeb & Adam wrestled every day. These dilemmas are highlighted in the empirical material below:

"..difficult...at the end of the day [a high Z%] *of the numbers come through* [the Key Accounts]...*if you're not pumping it there you're gonna find it hard to hit your targets...there's nobody else can deliver that sort of volume..but can you be addressing the underlying brand and image issues if you are... reliant on those guys"* [Adam PD Interview A: 19.22]

"..we've got too much money in [consumer marketing]...*when really what we ought to be doing is more 'n better trade marketing..in-store stuff that'll pull product through the stores"*
[Financial Director Interview 1: 58.30]

"..the retailers they're seeking differentiation, there's far less of them now, they don't want the same as everybody else..we need to be adaptable" [Sales Director Interview 1: 54.06]

" [Marketing] *has this thing about driving this particular part of his marketing they want to drive ..that just don't sit with what I'm doing..i.e. ...might say let's get hot with* [Segment B]... *and the way to get hot with* [Segment B] *might be to sell only* [YY numbers] *of that...and not let* [Retailer A] *have that or not let* [Retailer C] *have that..or just let* [Retailer B] *have that..that is we should keep it in tight 'n that way we'll get lots of PR.."*
[Sales Director Interview 1: 27.01]

"..the sales director feels a certain nervousness...about the reaction of our core retailers if we opened up with new accounts [Z] *and* [Q]...*in a*

different channel...but the target consumers are turning away from the [core] *retailers...we have to address where we are gonna go to pick up that consumer again"*

[Adam Interview 3: 14.35]

"..marketing trying to cool the brand...get hot with [Segment A]*...they're chasing this thin end of the wedge....that's were this disconnect is coming in..*[with our core consumers]*"*

[General Manager Product Sector B Interview 1: 40.33]

"..the idea seems to be to sell out in [x] *weeks* [fast]*...the idea's to sell out...but if I was a retailer why would I put it in the window...window space is premium space and we've got* [x] *stores and only* [y] *of the product..is it worth putting in in the window if we have no real stocks of it"*

[PAR Meeting Recording Sales Director 23/03/04: 11.20]

"[Marketing] *...think we should be cooler....I think they forget what pays the mortgage...they're trying to get the alpha consumer ...a conflict there because our volume retailers are not hitting those consumers.. so the amount of work and effort and spend that goes into trying to create a cool product for the consumer seems to me as disproportionate to the volume that you need to pay the wages.."*

[Financial Director Interview 1: 38.62]

The inter-functional conflict to which the reconciliation of these immanent dilemmas gave rise is clearly evidenced in all the exhibited empirical material. Such tensions were hardly surprising given the difficult commercial situation, and the lack of strong ownership of the interpretive territory [Brownlie 1998 p122]:

".the guy stands up to do logistics and everybody just goes 'thanks very much'.... the guy stands up at a board meeting to do a marketing presentation and everybody's got an opinion"

[Adam PD Interview A: 1.28.16]

And particularly unsurprising, given responsibility for the 'sell-in' rested with the sales director, and in effect, that for 'sell-thru' with Zeb/Adam. The balancing of resource allocation between consumer-brand initiatives and retailer specific promotional campaigns was clearly a central tension and decisions on this strategic contingency [Hickson et al 1971] were in the hands of the marketing director, Zeb.

"..[the Sales Director] *doesn't control the trade marketing budget..and he wants money for stuff with the retailers..but* [Marketing] *control those purse strings"*

[General Manager Product Sector B Interview 1: 1.06.22]

When Apparat had faced a fragmented customer base, and brand competition had been less intense, the 'sell-in' process had been a much simpler selling operation supported by mass merchandising. With the dramatic consolidation of the customer base the 'expected product' [Levitt 1980] of the retailers had become more extensive. As the size of the deals had grown so had their demands. Retailer specific promotional campaigns, both in-store and out-of-store together with 'exclusives' had become prevalent in the 'sales-pitch'. The 'sell-in' was now a tough process and with Apparat's relative brand strength with consumers in apparent decline they were under relentless pressure from retailers to supplement their product offer with ever more sophisticated customised, and costly, merchandising and promotion. As a result, the multiple dilemmas that constituted the Brand Image/Sales Generation strand, had become markedly more wicked and business critical. It was an array of dilemmas for which innovative reconciliations were proving elusive in Apparat UK's commercial context:

" *we are trying to compete on a shoestring... we fall between two stools ..can't do* [brand image] *well enough or spend big enough to compete really with* [Competitors A & B] *...we kinda detract from the ..bread and butter....we are doing neither.... kinda split down the middle"*

[Financial Director Interview 1: 1.02.11]

The numerous dilemmas that constitute this core 'brand image vs. sales generation strand', each individually possess many wicked problem characteristics. However, it is in their weaving together, their interdependence, and with their embedding within two further strands, that the profound wickedness of the constellation of issues that Zeb & Adam faced on a daily basis becomes fully apparent.

6.3.2 The Encapsulating Tensions

"...sales 'n marketing come at things..from a different point of view...one can be very much focussed on the short term and the 'sell-in,...try to make marketing teams concerned with that too but..the marketing team's also concerned with how we drive the brand forward in the long term."
[Zeb Interview 1: 35.18]

Overarching this competition for resources was the fundamental business tension of 'the long run versus the short run'. The sales directors pre-occupation with *"hitting the number"* and the longer run pre-occupation with *"getting hot with* [Consumer Segment B]*" and cooling the brand"* of Zeb/Adam was clearly the critical tension in the business:

"...a lot of it is ...about the trade-off between the short-term pressures and the medium term objectives for the brand image....tension of these two objectives"
[Adam Interview 3: 16.15]

" [Marketing] *has this thing about driving this...*[image]*....but I'm saying hang on here we've gotta do 450 million of sales dollars this year..we gotta sell something........ when you're driven by quarters.....then...it's me that gets the pressure"* [Sales Director Interview 1: 27.01]

"..repeatedly not able to take decisions that allow us to address some of the medium term brand issues...'cause there's constantly a trade-off...we've gotta hit this quarter's number"

[Adam PD Interview A: 16.40]

In the short run the only thing that counted towards paying the wage bill was the 'sell-in' to the retailers, not the 'sell-through' to consumers, and the weight of this short-term consideration very often won out:

".. if [a big retailer] *says 'I want that story'...there's important and worthwhile debate about is that the right place for that story...but usually the answer is.. if they write a big enough order....most principles can be traded if there's enough on the order form.."*

[Adam Diary Trace Interview 3: 40.42]

But, as Zeb repeatedly pointed out, *"if in the longer run the products get stuck like glue on the retailers' shelves we are just fooling ourselves"*. The interleaving of the long-run/short-run and brand image/retail 'sell-in' dilemmas, propagated by Apparat's specific business-to-retailer-to-consumer context, rendered the co-reconciliation of these fundamental commercial dilemmas a particularly wicked problem. It was a challenging reconciliation, that itself was being pursued in the context of the relentless and ambitious business performance expectations emanating from the Global Headquarters:

" marketing's mantra is that we have got to invest for a period of time and it will evolve into mainstream business....but we've got a parent company that isn't prepared to wait..we've got a parent that wants the evolution to happen in a quarter.. not in two or three years"

[Financial Director Interview 1:41.50]

These expectations were compounded by the Global HQ's parallel demands for compliance and alignment with worldwide brand marketing policies and programmes:

"..Apparat's attempting to become a global organization...but the [HQ] *perception of global is* [HQ country]*....they think if it works in* [HQ country] *it'll work everywhere"*

[Financial Director Interview 1: 06.12]

"..this will work globally they say...don't mess about with it...it's a one size fits all mentality"

[Adam Interview 2: 30.25]

"..this centralised control..this global brand custodian sort of stuff...it's almost crippling us in terms of our ability to move and make things happen"

[Adam Interview 1: 44.12]

Certain policies and programmes were, at times, seen to run counter to the business interests of Apparat UK:

"..most difficult moments are around this sort of tension between local and central control..particularly when you genuinely feel a route that is being taken by the centre is going to be detrimental to your local brand 'n business..they're currently in a think global act global mode"

[Adam PD Interview A: 1.04.06]

Such local interests were often very difficult to promote to HQ:

"...if we kinda get on the front foot and try to tell them what's wrong or give them an opinion we get classed as being difficult..that we're building a wall....that we're an island..the person that gets the most shit from global is [Adam]*"*

[Financial Director Interview 1: 06.15]

"..the two most senior marketing people globally have different opinions as to where I should spend most of the money...it's sticky at the moment and have fallen out with them.....managed to disagree with both of them"

[Adam Interview 3: 53.40]

"....there are constantly difficult discussions...certain individuals just don't really want the feedback.... they go into George Bush mode...you're either with us or against us!"

[Adam PD Interview A: 1.04.08]

"..look! I don't care what any of you think...you're here to take back to your markets and do what we tell you to do...people are scared to death"
[Zeb Interview 2: 49.02]

Adam had stood his ground in discussions with Global HQ and had, most of his colleagues surmised, paid a very heavy personal price:

"..I didn't really see as it as a personal risk...just thought about it as doing the job"
[Adam **PD** Interview A: 1.20.48]

The 'PD' stands for 'post departure'.

6.4 The Substance of Marketing Management

"..implicit within the popular managerial school of codified marketing knowledge is the message that managers can constitute successful managerial action through the concepts, models, and philosophy of marketing..."
[Hackley 1998 p95]

The particularity of the commercial and socio-political milieus of which the subject managers are part, the deeply specific bricoleuric technicality of their endeavours, the weakness of the situations in which they are immersed, and the wickedness of the problems they face is illuminated in Chapter 5, and further emphasised by the description developed above.

Clearly these issues are not reflected in the marketing management discourse. The subject managers pervasively deploy the rhetorical technologies of the discourse, but not its logics. The discourse and pedagogy do not speak to the character of the milieu, or to the substance of the subject managers' marketing management. As Hackley comments:

"...abstracted rules can never entirely capture the experiential particulars of a situation, and managerial expertise resides in the 'common sense' [i.e. experientially common to a particular lifeworld]... The extent to which situational particulars drive reasoning behaviours would seem particularly strong in a relatively non-routinised professional activity such as marketing management.

[1998 p100]

The essence of the subject managers 'marketing management', rests in their milieu-mediated socio-cognitive deliberative engagement with the weak situation embedded *'cable of contradictions'* that they confront. This represents a raft of fundamentally interdependent dilemmas for which there are no Aristotelian Golden Means [Kramer 1975]. As Reed notes:

"...[Managers'] *ability and capacity to negotiate acceptable performances in the face of competing, even contradictory, demands were necessary pre-requisites for the successful managerial negotiation of social order"*

[1989 p75]

The substance of the subject managers' marketing management is their crafting and pursuit of a portfolio of endeavours, whose super-ordinate and pervasive purpose is to seek the innovative reconciliation of the cables of contradictions that confront them; a techno-political process that is suffused with personal risk.

It is to this process of the 'crafting and pursuit' of endeavours to which we now turn our attention.

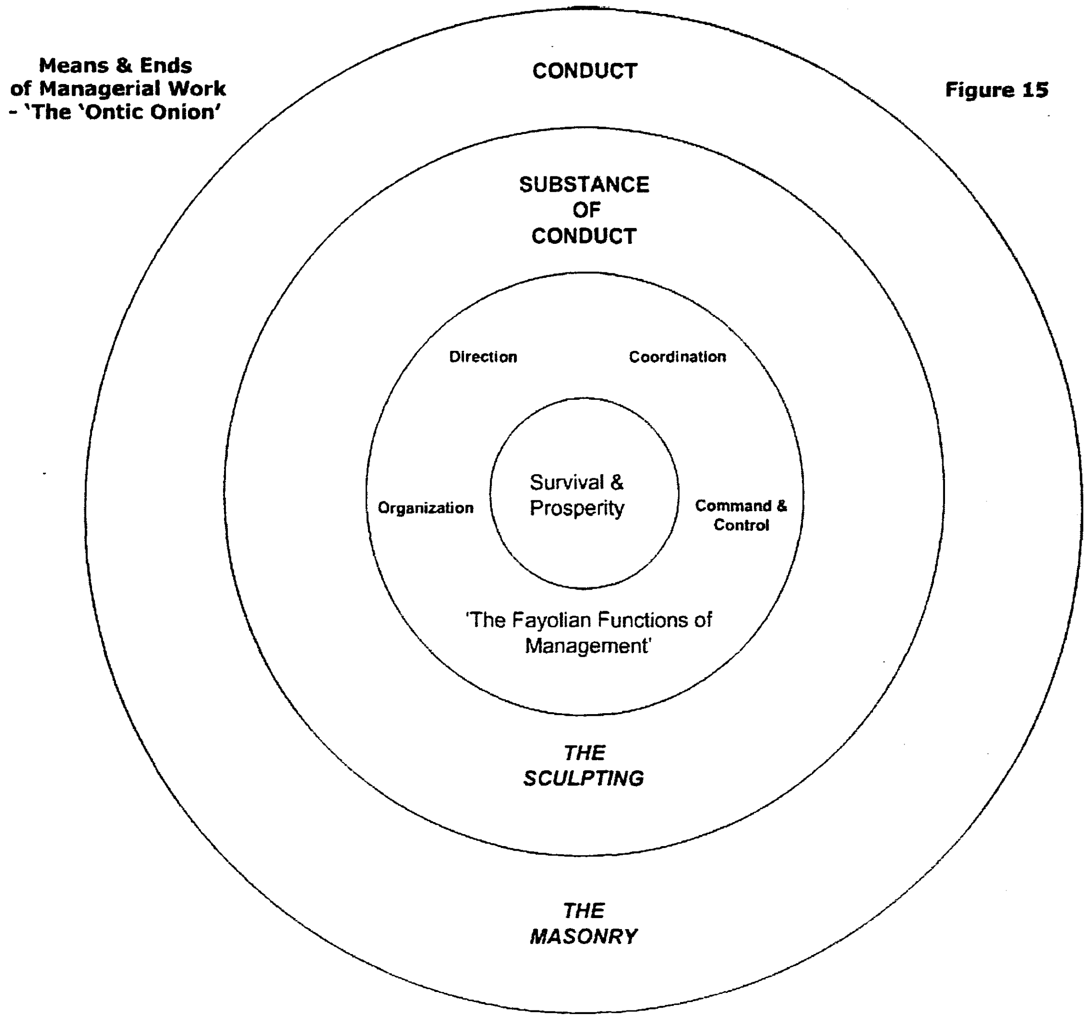
Chapter 7
The Substance of Conduct

- Organizing Behaviour <u>not</u> Organizational Behaviour -

"*...what is lacking in this body of work* [the managerial work literature] *is an explanatory account of the generic characteristics of managerial work...there is a danger that certain fundamental...characteristics of managerial work are being overlooked*"
[Hales 1999 p336]

Managerial work is teleological. It has the character of being directed according to an end, of being shaped by a purpose. Managers are purposive. Managerial 'conduct' is the simply observable means in a means-ends chain, the ends of which are the survival and prosperity of both the individual and the enterprise. This 'means-ends' / 'means-of-means' chain is visualised in Figure 15.

In this conceptualisation 'management' is taken to be a set of collective achievements, or states, commonly held to be foundational to, and necessary for, organizational performance. These states are commonly presented as direction, organization, co-ordination, command and control. The function of 'the management' [i.e. the managers] is to achieve and maintain these aforementioned states through their 'managing'. The so-called 'functions-of-management' are simply the labels we give to the effects we want 'managing' to have in an organization [Vaill 1989 p113-115].



Carroll & Gillen [1987] observed that the seminal and influential conceptualisations of managerial work elaborated by Mintzberg [1971, 1973, 1975], Stewart [1976, 1982] and Kotter [1982], though 'helpful', do not:

"*..provide us with the ability to grasp the essential essence of the large numbers of discrete activities* [conduct] *in terms of larger ends.....*"
[p49]

To pursue an account of managerial work, whether labelled marketing management or not, that adequately makes this 'conduct-function' connection would appear to require a somewhat 'thicker' description [Geertz 1973 p7] of managerial work. This description should be at a level of abstraction that falls somewhere between that of classical management theory, and that depicted in the mainstream managerial work literature [Hales 2001 Chapter 1]. It would appear to require the production of descriptions at an intermediate position on the means-ends chain, at an 'ontic level' [Tsoukas 1994 p295], somewhere between the 'visible' conduct of managers, and the Fayolian 'functions' of management. This is a form of theoretically eclectic description that Mangham [1979], Mangham & Pye [1991] and Pye [1995] have endeavoured to create. It is one that attempts to 'expose' the underlying coherence of the myriad, seemingly unrelated, activities of phone calls, coffee machine conversations, memo writing, presentation making and formal meetings.

In this chapter I will endeavour to craft such a description, interweaving empirical and conceptual material to *'peel the ontic onion'* in response to the second component of the research question, regarding the 'substance of conduct' of the subject managers. The attempted description will comprise a model of the kind suggested by Hales:

"Models are ways of conceptualising, representing or depicting complex processes...in order to render that complexity more simple, coherent, and hence understandable"
[Hales 1981 p114]

7.1 The Empirical Foundations Of The Model

The primary foundation for the elaborated model is the self-observation event-diary study at GiftCo. The skeleton of the 'substance of conduct' model emerged from the abductive processing of the empirical material captured in this simple case-context. This emergent categorization then formed the basis for the analysis of the extensive audio and textual material captured during the three work-shadow studies of Zeb, Katie and Sara, three managers whose case-contexts were far from simple, and the extensive participant observation at Apparat. The 'final' model emerged from this last interpretive engagement.

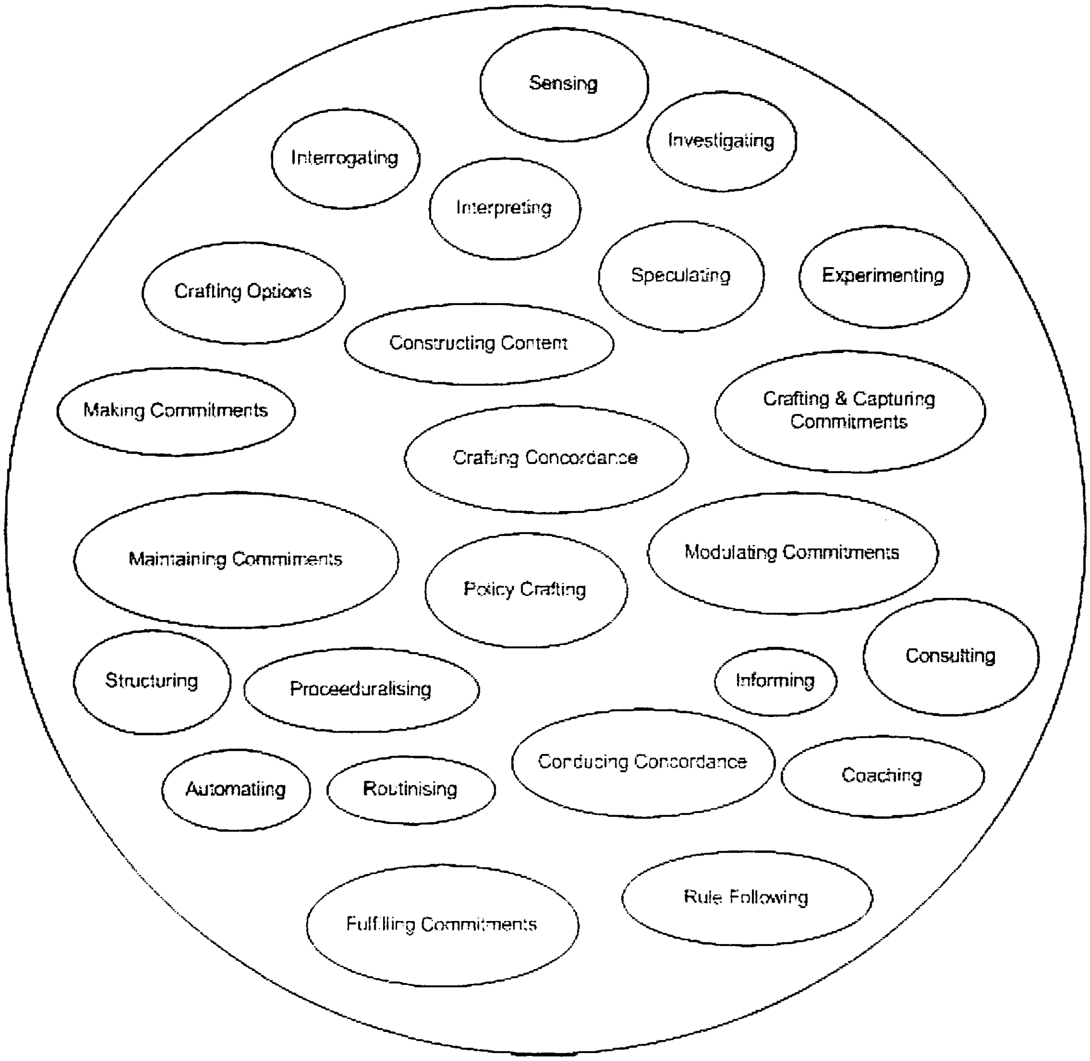
7.2 The Substance Of Conduct Model

7.2.1 Character of the Model

This model can again be likened to a temporal rope, with the strands and threads of the rope now representing processes in which the subject managers are engaged, rather than, as in Chapter 5, the endeavours that they are pursuing. Each of the processes becomes 'visible' when the subject managers engage in them, just as the strands and threads of a rope become visible as they surface repeatedly over its length.

The metaphorical cross-section of the 'rope of conduct' that emerged from the initial engagement with empirical material is presented graphically in Figure 16.

Figure 16 **The Preliminary Rope of Conduct**



At this stage the 'threads of conduct' had not been grouped into strands, but simply represented a preliminary category set. The abductive spiral continued throughout the second phase of engagement with empirical material generated by the three work-shadows and participant observation at Apparat. This second engagement was combined with a parallel re-engagement with the literature, which was steadily more and more focussed by the emerging language/categories. This second phase resulted in the refinement, extension, and grouping of the initial categories.

The preliminary 'thread' labelling displayed is included, not only as methodological elaboration, but also with a reflexive-ontological purpose:

"..all these words inevitably come up short. They impose discrete labels on subject matter that is continuous. There is always slippage between the words and what they refer to. Words approximate the territory......... sensemaking never stops..it's the editing and labelling of continuity..."...
[Weick 1995 p107]

The words certainly '*come up short'*, and so will the graphical displays. I have attempted to 'make communicable sense' of the substance of conduct of the subject managers, and create a model that fulfils Hales' criteria. This labelling process is, however, fundamentally categorical in nature [Lackoff 1987; Lakoff & Johnson 1999], and this always works against the '*continuity'* of the subject matter. As the model emerged it became increasingly evident that the 'wrong sense' could easily be conveyed unless substantial caveats were added.

"...a practice is always richer than any formal account of it...just like the experience of driving through a place cannot be captured by a map"
[Tsoukas 1996 p18]

I must therefore stress that the subject managers appear to 'hop' between the processual threads of conduct in as seamless a manner as they 'hop' between their threads of endeavour and at often much greater speed, and with far greater frequency. The separateness of the metaphoric strands and threads should not be taken to mean that there exists a clear temporal separation of the strands and threads of conduct, and this should not be inferred from the structure of the model.

7.2.2 The Problem of Exemplification

Though the subject managers' engagement in threads of conduct, even with regard to a singular endeavour or element of content, is most often highly protracted, the everyday life of the studied managers remains highly episodic. As a result the conversational interaction that dominates their conduct is most often highly disjointed and extremely heterogeneous, in terms of content, conduct and process. The self-observation, longitudinal engagement and deep penetration of context of the field studies allowed the frenetic 'talkaholic' appearances to be penetrated, and the processual substance of conduct to 'become apparent'. However, the fractionated character of the empirical material remains, along with its all-pervading technical detail. As a result, a classical exemplification of the model, though still attempted, proved somewhat problematic from both technical and confidentiality perspectives. The latter arises from the specific technical character of the subject managers' conversations, and is a problem previously highlighted in Chapter 5.

7.3 The Rope of Conduct

7.3.1 The Model's Core Foundation

"...diversity of purpose affects the institution's division of labour, including not only what tasks each person is is expected to accomplish but also how he manoeuvres to get them accomplished. Since very little of this can be pre-figured...the attainment of one's purposes requires the cooperation of fellow workers"
[Strauss et al 1963 p156]

The central foundations for the totality of the elaborated substance of conduct model are located in the seminal and groundbreaking work of Strauss et al [1963] reported in the book: *"The Hospital and Its Negotiated Order"*. Strauss and his collaborators studied staff behaviour at two psychiatric hospitals in an attempt to ascertain:

"..how a measure of order is maintained in the face of inevitable changes [as]...*students of formal organization tend to underplay the processes of internal change, as well as overestimate the more stable features of organizations - including its rules and its hierarchical statuses"*
[p148]

They point out that only in a very few areas are there relevant and explicit rules to guide concerted staff action in the selection and effectuation of patient treatment. Their central conclusion is simple:

" The hospital can be visualised as a place where numerous agreements are continually being terminated or forgotten, but also continually being established, renewed, reviewed, revoked, revised...at any moment those that are in effect are considerably different from those that were, or will be."

[p164]

Through the lens provided by Strauss et al one can visualise the organization as a web of innumerable temporary 'agreements' that are constantly being constituted and re-constituted between staff members. These 'agreements' are similar in concept to the 'commitments' of the 'substance of conduct' model developed below. In the conceptualisation developed I will attempt to 'unpack' Strauss et al's conception, and produce an elaboration of the nature of these 'agreements' and the processes of their achievement, and maintenance, in a commercial context.

7.3.2 An Overview of the Model

" Administrative life seems to be filled with minor things, short time horizons, and seemingly pointless and endless commitments"

[March 1984 p20]

Commitments are indeed endless in administrative life but are far from pointless. They are, I am tempted to claim, the whole 'point' of managerial conduct, the actual *'business of talk'* [c.f. Boden 1994].

"The doing of management is a process of shaping and sustaining mutually expected response, of controlling shared meaning"
[Mangham & Pye 1991 p45]

Mangham & Pye, in their reference to the *'shaping and sustaining of mutually expected response'* possibly exhibit similar thinking to that embedded in the substance of conduct model. The developed model, however, makes the more specific and explicit claim that *'the doing of management is a process of shaping and sustaining commitments'*; or more precisely *' the inter-subjective processes of shaping and sustaining commitments represent the substance of managerial conduct'*.

Boden concludes:

"By producing a complex matrix of actions and interactions spun simultaneously and collaboratively across time and space, actors create and re-create their organizations......Their talk may be differentially occasioned and occasionally even forbidden but it is the centre of their coordination"
[1994 p205]

'Coordination is the centre of their talk' may have been a better conclusion. Verbal interaction, though clearly the dominant form of conduct, is not the substance of conduct. Weick & Browning rightly caution that:

"...Managers should not take conversation for granted, because what they say, and to whom they say it, creates the working structure of the organization"

[1986 p255]

At the centre of their talk, at the centre of their myriad formal and informal conversations and communications, is the crafting and conducing of commitments. These inter-subjective 'commitmenting' processes are the foundation of direction, organization, coordination, command and control. Re-phrasing Boden:

" through the timing, placing, pacing and patterning of <u>commitments</u> [verbal interaction], organizational members actually constitute the organization as a real and practical place"

[Boden 1994 p15]

Weick comments that managers:

"need continual interaction, phoning, and meeting to re-assure themselves and others that yesterday's routines are still in place and that

the organization is unfolding today pretty much the way it unfolded yesterday"
[Weick 1987 p11]

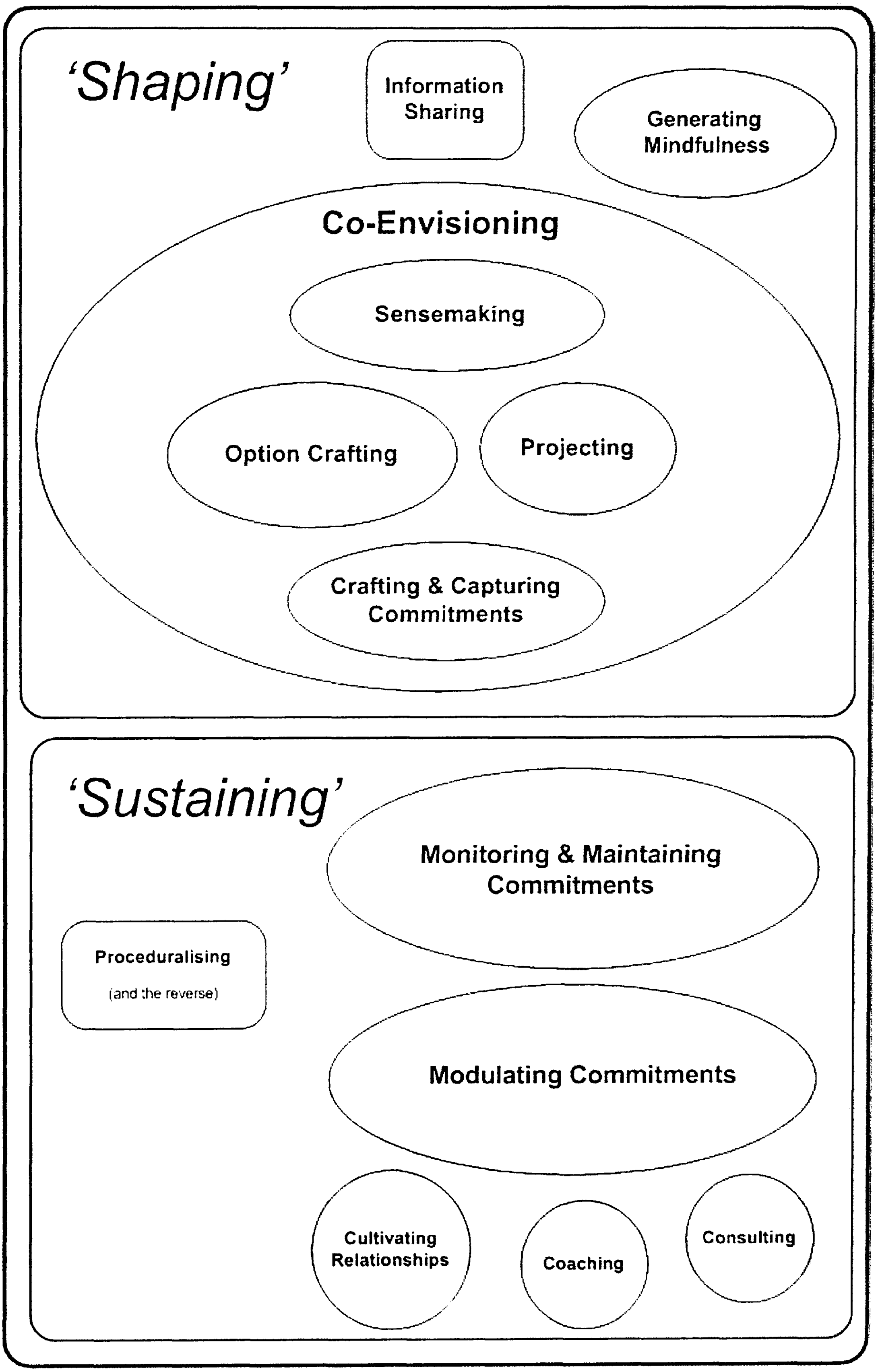
I would put it somewhat differently. The interaction, phoning and meeting are not for the purpose of reassurance, but of re-accomplishment. The managers are the 'unfolders' not the mere observers of 'organizational unfolding'. Weick's 'unfolding' is the substance of the managerial conduct of phoning, meeting and interacting; it is its objective not its object. The 'managing' of managers is the *'source of order in under-organized systems'* [Weick 1985]. Mangham comments:

"...organization may be conceived as a process of creating, maintaining and occasionally dissolving relationships, and the organization, at any one time, may be a seen as a network of such actions"
[1979 p71]

In the terms of the model organization is conceptualised as the process of crafting and conducing commitments; and the organization is seen as an ever-evolving web of commitments.

The 'fully' developed model is graphically displayed in Figure 17. The graphic is again the cross-section of a metaphorical rope, though this time not one of content. This temporal 'rope of conduct' comprises only two strands: the shaping, and the sustaining, of commitments.

Figure 17 **The Rope of Conduct**



Although there is no simple temporal sequential connection of the 'shaping' and 'sustaining' strands they do have a particular type of interdependency. Commitments have to emerge before they can be conduced. It is clear, however, that the crafting of commitments can be interpreted as simply the extreme form of commitment modulation. There is no 'beginning'; the 'shaping' strand merely has a 'goal seeking' character, whereas the 'sustaining' strand a 'goal directed' one [Sharifi 1988]. In the conceptualisations that emerge from Brunsson's [1982, 1989] studies of local government decision-making, 'shaping' would be designated the arena of 'politics' and 'sustaining' the arena of 'action'.

It is at this point that the apparent absence from the model of 'decision-making' as a process in which managers are engaged should be explained. Where are the 'decisions' in all of this? The response is that they are everywhere and in abundance. As Nicolaides puts it:

"..organizational decision is in reality a constellation or galaxy of numerous individual decisions"
[quoted in Mintzberg & Waters 1990 p2]

These individual decisions are pervasive, though not always so easy to discern: ' *I'll attend that meeting; I'm going to support that investment in advertising; I am not going to tell the MD that just yet; I'll let her do it on her own this time; it's rubbish to my mind but I'm going to keep stum; it's not perfect but it's good enough; I'm going to call the FD and tell him these numbers just don't make sense* etc. These 'decisions' could be said to have the form of intra-subjective commitments. Organizational decisions are, however, a different matter. They are inherently inter-subjective, and in the eyes of some, chimeras:

" *Decisions are constructs built by the observer for his or her research purposes, or by organizational members for symbolic purposes"*

[Laroche 1995 p66]

In Brunsson's analysis [1982 p32, 2002 Chapter 4], organizational decisions are not things that are 'made' but are 'transitions'. In his terms 'decision-making' is how we label the transition from politics to action.

"..given that action was taken, and that broad support preceded it, we must find out when and where consensus emerged – for that must be the real point of decision...it may not be a point at all, but a gradually unfolding and subtle process"

[Mintzberg & Waters 1990 p4]

In the terms of the substance of conduct model 'decision-making' labels the transition from the 'shaping' to the 'sustaining' of commitments. That is, the point when commitments emerge. The image of managing-in-marketing that comes into view in the empirical material is not the one of the techno-rational choice-making conception, and the 'logical' sequence of analysis, planning, implementation and control that pervades the marketing management pedagogy.

"In the day to day business of organizational life decision making is seldom the logical, rational, systematic process suggested by management textbooks. It does not unfold in identifiable stages where a problem is defined, alternative solutions are generated, the alternatives are weighed against known criteria, and a choice is made. The stages are inextricably intertwined; discovering what exactly the problem is all about is conjoined with the identification of alternatives and their evaluation"
[McCall & Kaplan 1990 p7]

There is simultaneity [Mangham & Pye 1991 p159]. The subject managers' threads and strands of conduct are as tightly and pervasively intertwined, as were their threads of endeavour. The thread boundaries are diffuse, and they merge into each other. It is as if I have attempted to craft a model of an imperfect, but good, mixture of different coloured molten plastics, utilising a set of Lego bricks. The substance of conduct is not a bundle of highly distinct processes; it is a processual gestalt. There is no simple techno-rational sequencing. In the substance of conduct, decision-making is a way-mark, not a process, a way-mark that is very often hard to locate.

7.4 'Commitments'

7.4.1 commitments - Their Definition

Given the extensive use of the word commitment in the management literature, it is clearly necessary to adequately distinguish the meaning of this fundamental component of the model.

The commitments of the model are commitments with a small 'c'. They represent the substance of the work carried out in the subject managers' long hours of labour, and bear no conceptual relation to the behavioural form of Commitment with a big 'C' [Brickman 1987, Locke et al 1988, Sull 2003], which motivates such dedication in the studied marketing managers. Neither are these commitments necessarily underpinned by any of the fundamental characteristics ascribed to them by Salancik [1977] and Weick's [1995] conceptions: individual choice, explicitness, irreversibility and public awareness. They are not behaviours that become *"an undeniable and unchangeable aspect of the person's world"* [Weick 1993 p11].

In the context of the model a commitment is an undertaking; a pledge or agreement by which someone binds him or herself to do, or forbear, something [Merriam-Webster, 2002. http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com (20 Oct. 2005)].

commitments are the seeds of action, not actions that bind.

7.4.2 commitments in The Literature

"...managers engage in conversations in which they create, take care of, and initiate new commitments within an organization"

[Winograd & Flores 1986 p150]

Though Shotter [1993 p149], Sayles [1964 p27], Watson [2001 p223], Carroll & Gillen [1987 p44] and Brunsson's studies of local government [1982 p32-33] make very fleeting mention of commitments, their role in managerial work has only received any substantial attention from researchers and system developers in the field of computer supported co-operative work - 'C.S.C.W.' [e.g. Flores & Ludlow 1980, Winograd & Flores 1986, Flores et al 1988, Medina-Mora et al 1992, Denning & Medina-Mora 1995]. This is despite the conversation-analytic turn taken in the studies of managerial verbal interaction undertaken by scholars such as Boden [1994] and Samra-Fredricks [2000], and the central place of commitments in the classical speech act theory of Austin [1962], and in its seminal elaborations by Searle [1979 Chapter 1] and Habermas [1984]. In its fine-grained analysis of conversational conduct, the micro-linguistic turn in the study of managerial work would appear to have jumped this 'ontic level'.

The Winograd & Flores [1986] inspired *'language-action perspective'* on co-operative work [Winograd 1987-88] has provided the basis for the development of electronic communication systems that aim to facilitate the capture & conducing of commitments [for example see http://www.actiontech.com]. However, this C.S.C.W. systems-development driven treatment of commitments has really only room for the simplest types of commitment and an extremely thin, naive, and highly formalistic treatment of their solicitation, acceptance and fulfilment [McCarthy 1994 p80]. This treatment does not do justice to the sophistication and subtlety of the shaping and sustaining strands of conduct. As Suchman [1987 & 1994] comments, when critiquing the approach for it's formalism, and its potential for stifling individuality and creativity:

"....we might embrace instead...an appreciation for, and engagement with, the specificity, heterogeneity and practicality of organizational life"
[1994 p78]

Flores et al themselves comment that the 'language action perspective' based systems will succeed:

"...in organizations in which users are relatively confident about their own position, and the power they have within it...[where] *there is clarity about what is expected of people and what authority they have..where everyone is working for the good of all..*[and]*...parties recognize that honest dealings with each other will be the best for their shared benefit."*
[Flores et al 1988 p168]

These conditions are seldom met in practice. The richness of the substance of conduct, particularly in the previously described weak-wicked situations that characterise the context of the studied marketing managers, is clearly not an easy hunting ground for computer programming. Commitments are simple only in essence, and their shaping and sustaining are socio-political processes; processes which are often of a highly sophisticated nature.

7.5 commitments - Forms And Character

"... the interpretive effort begins from a position of awe: it is amazing that collections of people can be organized at all"

[Smircich 1983 p221]

Viewing the everyday conversation of the subject managers from the perspective of Searles' taxonomy of speech acts [1979] confirms the pervasiveness of the complementary 'commissive' and 'directive' components of dialogue that constitute the conversational making, and capturing, of commitments. 'Commissives' are those speech-acts that commit a speaker to some future course of action. 'Directives' are their complement; those speech-acts that solicit 'commissives'. Though the style is somewhat different, given the lack of immediate complementary response, directives and commissives similarly pervade the written communication of the subject managers. This is most clearly and classically manifest in their email correspondence, in the ubiquitous, often barely decipherable or interpretable 'to-do' lists they utilise and in the less common 'actions arising' notes circulated after meetings. The latter would possibly be better termed 'commitments arising' notes.

The following selection of quotes is incorporated to demonstrate, through the highlighting of some typical 'directives', the sorts of conversational conduct to which the model refers:

"So...what they've said to me is that if we put it up to twenty sites they'll strengthen the Zest branding...so.. can you work with [the Media Agency] *today and get back to me with a cost...it'll have to come out of your* [Zest] *budget though! "*

[Zeb in Katie Work Shadow B Period 29; 12:30]

"...what I would like to see is then, to help this process,..you should email it to the team...I would like to see a shot [photograph] *list in priority order..you can then tell the photographer to spend time on the priority shots"*

[Zeb in Katie Work Shadow B Period 29; 12:03]

"..what will really annoy me ..is that the same will happen with this unless I get a commitment from Paul, that before the orders are put up, that he lets me know so I can....."

[Sales Manager in Katie Work Shadow B Period 4; 48:45]

"...don't you think you need to give a bit of an intro' to Zest.....I think you might have to show what it means in the UK...and put in some shots of [Celebrities A B C & D]*...Jo can help you!"*

[Assistant Trade Marketing Manager in Katie Work Shadow B Period 6; 25:52]

"..you know we had that one-liner last time with [Music Event A]*....need you coming up with another clever one-liner that we could use as part of the campaign...OK?"* [Katie Work Shadow B Period 6; 48:32]

"..So .... if we're making bespoke product for any [celebrities]...*I want to see a list ....a recommendation of 'this is what we want'* "

[Zeb in Katie Work Shadow B Period 29; 07:13]

"..on [Retailer A] *are we spending or aren't we..on* [Retailer B] *I've said don't spend any money.... these are the ones we're gonna invest in..yeah....and these are where we're not gonna spend money"*

[Katie Work Shadow B Period 30; 26.58]

"...y'know we have to do a review of the whole budget..of what we have left...you need to do that analysis again and figure out where we need to draw the line"

[Katie Work Shadow B Period 7; 41:40]

"...good..if we can get back to doing the nine-thirty calls..they help me especially given all the work we're doing on [Zest]"

[Zeb Work Shadow 2004_05_04; 08:48]

"...I expect you and her to come in and go through that...I want an overall review from you two..how many rooftops did we get into, what worked what didn't, what we need to do better next time..."

[Zeb Work Shadow 2004_06_14; 1:24:06]

"..let me summarise the things I put down...follow up on [Retailer W] [Zest] *area...need* [Retailer T] *to invest, that's Gareth's; 'n you need to be involved Katie,...regions we're saying needs to be more targeted and we*

have to bring the total number down and have less generic packages in there... [Retailer Y] that's a 'hold' on money...right, next...the field-team...we'll review their current activity and re-look at the brief for '04 with Simon...we're to provide a full breakdown of spend within each account to include brand marketing activity etc...and we'll do a quarterly statement of that.....[Retailer Q] no investment "

[Zeb in Katie Work Shadow B Period 40: 1:54:04]

Given that organizations are manifestations of purposive collective endeavour it should come as no surprise that this 'commitmenting' form of interaction comprises a large proportion of the subject managers' communication. It is therefore not my intention to revisit and rehearse the well established, though not un-critiqued [Allwood 1998], speech-act characterisation of conversational action but I want to pay more detailed attention to the character and forms of commitments encountered in the fieldwork.

7.5.1 Forms of Commitments

Four forms of commitment appear to be predominant in the empirical material captured. Commitments to:

1. Execute a physical act e.g. *'Mail that letter will you Becki'*
2. Allocate resources
    a. Financial e.g. *'Zeb OK!!..I'll authorise the* Zest *ad' spend'*
    b. Human e.g. *' I'll put Stewart on it full time'*
    c. Priorities/sequencing e.g. *' Tony, let's kill this off first eh?"*

d. Attention

e.g. *'we will need to watch the numbers at* [Hi-Street] *carefully '*

3. Exhibit a certain behaviour

e.g. *'not quite the way I see it, but I'll support you at the board'*

And last, but most fundamentally, commitments to:

4. Engage in the process-threads that constitute the substance of conduct:
    a. Information Sharing
    b. Generating Mindfulness
    c. Co-Envisioning
        i. Sensemaking
        ii. Option Crafting
        iii. Projecting
        iv. Crafting & Capturing Commitments
    d. Monitoring & Maintaining Commitments
    e. Modulating Commitments
    f. Proceduralising
    g. Cultivating Relationships
    h. Coaching
    i. Consulting

At its heart this last category encapsulates the multiple levels of the 'commitment-commitment', i.e. commitments to craft commitments. The following 'commissives' are typical of this category: *'I'll talk it through with Barry and persuade him to......"; 'Don't worry I'll fix it, I'll get Simon* *to go into Hi-Street and convince them that they should pull the order forward into this quarter'.*

The following simplifying-summative rendition of empirical material [see Chapter 5] serves to illustrate, in context, the various forms of commitments, particularly those of the fourth category. This vignette takes the form of the opening of a fictive [Watson 2000b] meeting of the Apparat UK marketing team. Zeb, the marketing director, attempts to summarise the upshot of an annual 'planning' meeting with, among others, the Managing Director, and, as he would have said, *'get things moving'*. The simplifying-summative rendition approach allows the compression of the empirical material into a digestible form, enabling the efficient exemplification of this particular category of commitments. It is, however, though entirely representative of the enumerated commitment forms encountered in the empirical material, wholly unrealistic. Zeb would never have been able to deliver such an extended soliloquy. Such a summative attempt would have been far more fragmented. His staff would have interrupted him innumerable times and there would have been much questioning, argument, contention, banter, and laughter, a key reason why this form of exemplification is the method of choice. This particular rendition is grounded in the observation and analysis of a number of meetings, both formal and informal, between Zeb and his staff over several days around their *'annual planning time'* and is modelled on the last, wholly empirical quote, in the previous section [Zeb in Katie Work Shadow B Period 40; 1.54.04]. For ease of understanding it is crafted wholly in the 'directive', with the forms of commitments exemplified being highlighted throughout the text.

' *Right guys!...as I said I would I'm gonna go through what I think was agreed,... shout if you think I'm off-the-mark; take your own notes.., Chrissy'll do a note afterwards* [Physical Act], *but that'll take a while, and I want you to get on with it all pronto I'll talk us through the priority stuff first* [Priority Allocation]...... *So here goes!..Take a look at these.....they're the latest sales figures, they came out just after we met, you can see the situation is far worse than the sales we were projecting, the growth trend in* [Lo-Street] *is fantastic, but the margin is not good, even if we landed 30% of their business, 'n that'll never happen, the generated profit wouldn't make up for our decline in the other retailers, I want you guys to watch the monthly sales reports more carefully and make sure your teams are aware and understand what's going on* [Allocate Attention/Share Information/Generate Mindfulness] *..this is not a situation that we can impact in the immediate run, it'll get a lot worse before it gets better ...we need to start to think about operating cost reductions if we are going to protect the planned promotional spend on Zest,..for sure we need to get ahead of the game 'cause I can see us being asked to save at least half a million and I want to keep the Zest spend up close to where it needs to be. and I need you to tell the agency that....but I need you all to go away and figure out exactly where you are now on committed expenditure, what flexibilty we have and how the hell we could possibly save some cash whilst still delivering for Zest* [Co-Envision: Sensemake, Option Craft, Project, Craft Commitments].. *Oh* *yeah, Paul, whilst we're on that subject, you need to check that we got that revised brief to the agency..,*[Monitor Conmmitments] *'n if not make sure that it gets there before Friday,*[Maintain Commitments] *we mustn't slip up again .. you need to implement that checklist and sign-off - responsibilities thing we developed to make sure the same thing doesn't happen next time around,* [Proceduralise]*...ask Helen, sure she'll do the legwork of operating the system for you* [Capture Commitment]*.. So where were we.. yeah...I want you all to take a good hard look at your budgets over the next couple of days and come up with ways to take out 15%, that's a minimum...Jane, we'll need you to get hold of all the latest expenditure numbers from accounts immediately, for us all to look at, so we are all starting from the right place* [Share Information]*.....ask them nicely this time!* [Behaviour Commitment] *now, ah yes!...Steve'll have to look at how we can terminate several celebrity contracts mid-term....talk to John about how we handled the agents last time* [Coaching Commitment] *Put a stop on the discussions that are in-hand now 'n look at the contracts and get back to me, I'll call Alistair and try to get him to trim back on the exploitation that I signed off last week;.. you might be stuck with some of them but you probably don't have to fully utilise them the way we planned* [Modulate Commitments] *...by the way Steve you've got to be careful how you handle some of the agents involved, some've got a straight line to the boss remember* [Behaviour Commitment]*....Katie, next thing, you and your team have to figure out what the hell is really going on at Hi-Street, how come that last initiative just fell flat on its face?... the sales guys just aren't making any sense,... get the account-servicing team together and see if you guys can figure* *out what's really going on* [Sensemaking Commitment] *and get some agreement on some things we might be able to do to sort it out* [Craft Options/Project]...*it's really important that we keep these cross-functional teams at the centre of things, right* [Generate Mindfulness] *Paul, given the Zest spend will be up there in lights make sure that weekly report hits the exec on the button this week* [Maintain Commitment] *..What Tony? Yeah, understand..OK..the rest of us'll break for a coffee now,.. and we'll all get back together again around eleven 'n we'll start working through next year's product launch plan in detail.....Wait! Just before you all dash off ..don't forget all appraisals have to be done and be in by the nineteenth.. Oh yeah,...Sara! I forgot to tell you, I've fixed that day in London with the global Zest brand guy for the two of you to shop Carnaby St and all that* [Cultivate Relationship] ,.. *you must go and look at that place in Camden, I think that Japanese stuff is possibly an angle you should pick up on with that guy Takahashi* [Consulting Commitment]......*eleven then!....God do I need a coffee...."*

[Crafted with particular reference to the empirical material captured in the meetings in which Zeb participated that were specific to the annual 'planning' process, the contemporaneous weekly meetings with his managers, and his regular Monday conference calls with his media & advertising agencies in London]

7.5.2 The Character of Commitments

7.5.2.1 Dimensionality

Obviously, as well as coming in the forms illustrated above, all commitments have at least the first two of the dimensions encapsulated in the Ralph Coverdale [Taylor 1979] inspired *'What, Who, When, How & How Much'* note-taking approach. The 'what' simply refers to the content of the commitment e.g. *'we'll take the retailers logo off the 'available-at' tag that's been put on the* 'Zest' *Adshel poster'* and the 'how', its mode of implementation e.g. *'I'll talk to the customer tonight and the agency first thing tomorrow'.* The 'when' and 'how much' dimensions demand no further elaboration. However, the 'who' dimension is only at first sight simple. The frequency and rapidity of organizational change in Apparat, SystemWare, and at International, often made it highly problematic, with carefully crafted arrays of commitments rapidly disintegrating when key personnel 'moved on, or out':

"When I was in H.Q. the rumour was that [Global Chief Marketing Officer] was going to resign... came back.... having convinced people in H.Q. that it was the right thing to do... everyone convinced about that ...then the C.M.O. resigned, and his number two! So people here started to get nervous... so we are in this state.. need to get the brand hot; we've got [X media-event sponsorship].. need to put in [Y] million dollars to deliver it, and now in a position don't know if I've got the money... global had

committed to some money.. nobody more senior than me will make any decision now 'cause they're all so nervous"

[Zeb Diary Trace Interview 1:35.34]

7.5.2.2 Lability

Labile: characterized by a ready tendency toward, or capability for, change

[Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged. Merriam-Webster, 2002. http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com (26 Oct. 2005)]

The commitments of the model do not have the characteristics of irrevocability and stability that infuses many of the forms of usage of the term [Noble & Mokwa 1999]. As has been highlighted commitments are not *'"states of being"* [Salancik 1977 p63]. They are the deceptively simple everyday promises that are made, crafted, solicited, conduced and fulfilled in the not-so-simple context of collective endeavour. As the following typical quotes well illustrate, commitments are labile:

"even though it was all agreed....short of actually physically going out and putting it into every store ourselves there's no way you can guarantee it's gonna happen!"

[Katie Subordinate-B Interview: 14.21]

" *..we actually put our bid in for* [Celebrity Y Endorsement & associated event]*...and got it over* [Competitor A]*...now in a state where we've got* *it, but I'm sat here thinking should we have it...'cause not sure people support it now"*

[Zeb Diary Trace Interview 1: 37.55]

"Activity was due to start middle of July, that's what we'd told the retailers,... but then there was feedback from the factory...there was problems..wouldn't hit UK 'til end July...all the media had been booked so..."

[Katie Diary Trace Interview 6 Part 2: 15.04]

"..the budget we set out with,.. for the field team.., they're saying they now can't work to that budget"

[Katie Diary Trace Interview 6 Part 2: 29.01]

".....we didn't get to know when they were placing the order which is what I was waiting for....spoke to virtually everyone involved...I'd said you'd have to let me know"

[Katie Work Shadow B Period 4; 46.57]

The accidental, or deliberately malicious, lack of fulfilment of commitments does, of course, contribute to the vulnerability of collective endeavour. However, most of the commitment lability that the subject managers face derives from the 'changes of mind', 'changes of situation' and 'unexpected outcomes' inherent in the 'wicked problem infused weak situations' with which they deal, and within which they operate.

The lability that one discerns from the quotations above would, at first sight, appear to be a wholly negative attribute of commitments. This is not surprising given the fundamental place of fulfilled commitments in the achievement of collective endeavour. However, the inherent unreliability that derives from this labile character of commitments is clearly the reverse-side of the prized attributes of flexibility and responsiveness of the subject managers' operations. The price of the necessary flexibility and responsiveness that their 'weak situations' demand is the higher potential unreliability of the crafted webs of commitments. In his study Strauss concludes:

"..the administrative attitude is affected by a profound belief that care of patients calls for a minimum of hard and fast rules and a maximum of innovation and improvisation...Hence the area of action covered directly by clearly enunciated rules is really very small."

[1963 p152-153]

The marketing managers studied would appear to work in a context not too dissimilar from a psychiatric hospital.

7.5.2.3 Commitment Webs - tightly coupled, but loose

"..... we sort of end up in this, well is it agreed or isn't it, did we agree it or didn't we.."

[Zeb Interview 2: 54.11]

Webs of commitments constitute the ubiquitous action plans of managerial life and are also similar to Boden's *'cooperations-of-convenience'* [1994 p193], the *'organizings'* of Bonoma [1985 p160] and the *'nets of collective action'/'action nets'* of Czarniawska-Joerges [1992 p32; 2004 p779]. These 'webs of commitments' are very often extensive and complex. This complexity is clearly exemplified in the discussion of the character of content of Alan's endeavours at GovWare [see section 5.2.3.3]. Webs of commitments are pervaded by connectedness and interdependency in all their dimensions. Their constituent commitments can be, and very often are, tightly coupled, not least in the temporal dimension:

"global went off their timeline again...everything kinda feeds off advertising 'n what global are doing..y'know..if you're not clear on that then that will knock back on everything else that you do...how do we get right and ready all the relevant materials to do a compelling account presentation for the sell-in that's due if we haven't got... well everything....there's a real knock-on effect"
[Katie Diary Trace Interview 2: 38.15]

"..I can't go it alone...it's a team...we''ll only get this one opportunity..when we get through this [retailer's] *door it has to be a fully integrated approach and concept...it has to be marketing, us* [Product sector B], *the* [Product Sector A] *guys..oh yeah 'n sales...need to go in all as one with an integrated concept"*
[Sara Diary Trace Interview 4: 07.48]

" ..the big problem with Zest *is that we don't know what we're supposed to make...I can come up with some ideas... but if it doesn't tie into what marketing are going to do then well......time's up..tell me who is this product marketed at...who do you want me to target.."*

[Sara Diary Trace Interview 3 Part A: 42.22]

However commitments are very rarely comprehensively or rigorously specified in all their dimensions, because, as Isenberg puts it:

"..like the proverbial manual for riding a bicycle, an action plan can never be entirely spelled out, because there is always another level of operational specificity"

[Isenberg 1986 p259]

And as Ford & Ford put it:

"People regularly make requests and promises, set deadlines, show evidence of completion...but seldom set clear conditions of satisfaction, insist on accountability for fulfilling these conditions, or communicate straightforwardly to renegotiate the performance agreement"

[1995 p550]

Individual commitments suffer, as a result, from what might be termed 'looseness':

Joe: *You know we've missed it!?*

Katie: *But we knew about that..how the hell!?*

Joe: *Yeah, we knew about it, but we didn't get to know when they were placing the actual order, which is what I was waiting for...'cause there were loads of amendments and changes to make..didn't you know that?*

Katie: *No I didn't but...*

Joe: *Well it was almost a total re-design we had to do..but anyway I'd spoken to the purchasing and commercial guys about it back then..told them I needed to know when the order was getting placed OK...so I could put up the amended customer orders against it before....then wham!.. saw Chris last Thursday..said hey you'd let me know when the order had been put up..told me it had been done..and that it had been bought!!*

Katie: *So we can't.....?*

Joe: *No!.. but I didn't think what we were doing was right anyway!*

Katie: *What!!?*

[Katie Work Shadow B Period 4: 46.57]

Commitments, given their predominant forms, can, and frequently have, a low degree of specification, and are, as a result, often unreliable.

"...just fed up of people agreeing then doing exactly the opposite...I'm gonna get some kind of electrocution system....."

[Sara Diary Trace Interview 2: 30.53]

It is an unreliability that is particularly problematic for the subject managers given the externality of many of their commitments.

"..it's hard out there with the customer when we can't quite pinpoint what 'the brand' is doing..you can't give any clarity on what the execution is going to be like.... or when it's gonna happen"

[Katie Diary Trace Interview 2: 20.14]

The degree of specification of the individual constituent commitments of an array of commitments that constitutes a particular 'web', may even, individually, be reasonably tight. But the overall degree of specification of 'webs of commitments' is most often somewhat 'loose'. This is a result, one might say, of the commitment web equivalent of 'engineering-tolerance stack-up':

"..there's been a load of confusion [Jim]*..it's not turned out the way we envisaged..basically now it's too late to fix anyway, we've got to use what's approved not what* [Retailer F] *wants now..they should be here on Friday, if we get them back you will be able to use them...but* [Simon] *isn't in 'til Friday now so can't ...don't know when* [Retailer C] *coming back on it now anyway so can't hang it together now,* [Paul] *may know..the windows are due in on the fifteeenth..*[much laughter]"

[Katie Work Shadow Period 10: 11.21]

"..things get complicated..plans get added to and new plans get added..we end up with so many plans...so many different things we should be working on..so people are not sure what's their priorities..what

should they be working on...'cause they have this list and that list and the Q4 launch..'n...well.!."

[Zeb Diary Trace Interview 1: 34.11]

The loosely specified but tightly coupled character of 'webs of commitments' means they are highly precarious – they afford no ease or assurance in any dimension. They require constant attention.

7.6 Sustaining – The Conducing of Commitments

Conduce: to lead or tend, especially with reference to a desirable result [Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged. Merriam-Webster, 2002. http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com (20 Oct. 2005)]

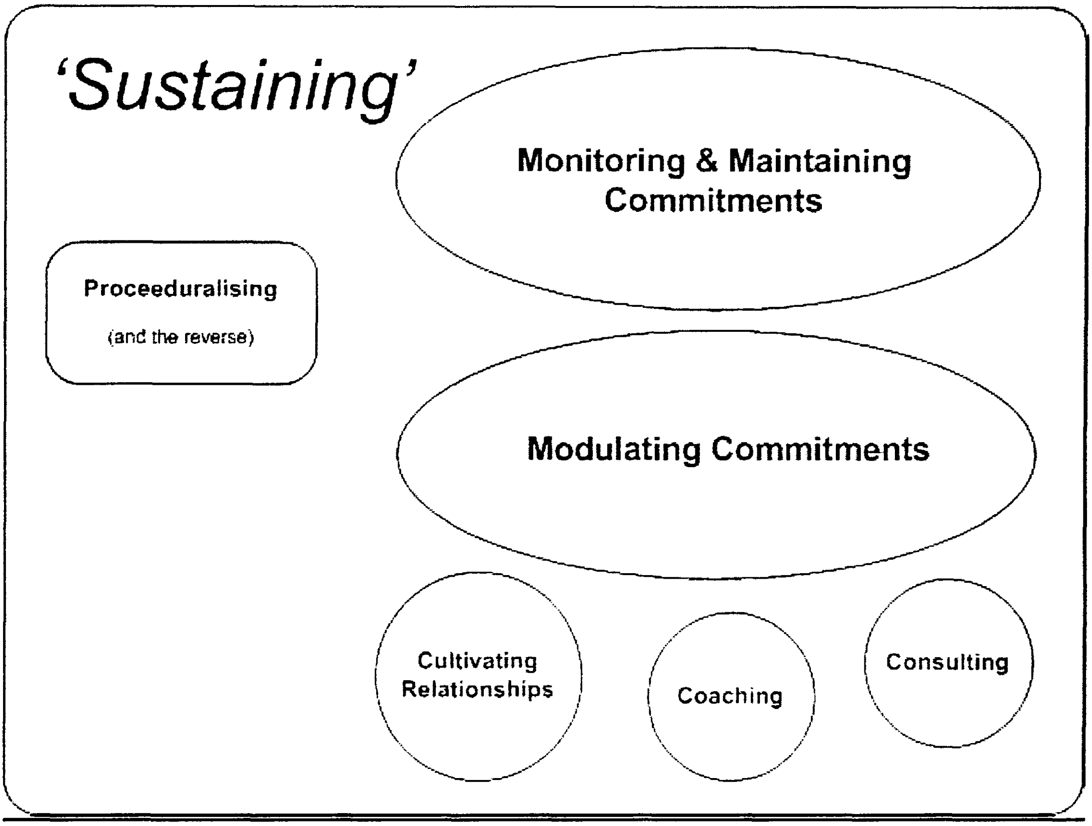
It may appear counter intuitive to embark upon the discussion of the sustaining of commitments before elaborating on their 'shaping', but I do this for two reasons. Firstly to work against the tendency, highlighted earlier, to see 'sequentialism' and not 'simultaneity' of conduct through the lens of the model, and secondly to emphasise the predominance of this strand of conduct in the everyday lives of the subject managers.

"centres of stable social practice have to be sustained in existence by the efforts of those involved in them to regulate and repair them; they do not settle or endure out of their natural state"

[Vico 1725; as translated by Bergin & Fisch 1968 paragraph 134]

The sustaining strand of conduct is reproduced again below:

Figure 18 **The Sustaining Strand of Conduct**



The following conversation between Zeb and his Zest brand manager [ZBM] is typical of the sustaining, commitment conducing, strand of conduct, incorporating, as it does, several of its constituent threads:

Zeb: *"So when will we get all this signed off then?"*

[Commitment Monitoring]

ZBM: .. *"July second is the deadline"*

Zeb: .. *"You're gonna work with Katie to deliver the....?"*

[Commitment Maintenance]

ZBM: *"Yeah,..actually doing two things, one am putting together the presentation now, the agency are gonna do some mock-ups for me"*

Zeb: *"Which we'll show on Friday..yes?"* [Commitment Maintenance]

ZBM: *"Yeah!...I've got a brief presentation..and I've spoken to Katie as agreed and she's going to pull together the brochure.."*

[Commitment Monitoring]

Zeb: *"Be careful...I think that ...I know how we started out,...we wanted to produce standardised brochures...which is nice but....but* [Zest] *has to live with its 'street' image so we can't have the standard cover.."*

[Commitment Modulation & Consulting]

ZBM: *"Pleased that you say that 'cause I felt strongly it should have its own identity...Katie wants it all the same style including* [Zest]"

Zeb: *"Yeah..right..agree"*

ZBM: *"For me it just isn't.."*

Zeb: *"People..when they pick it up have to instantly 'get'* [Zest]*!!"*

[Consulting]

ZBM: *"I'll explain to* [Katie]*...she's definitely briefed me to....."*

Zeb: *"I think it is very important!..but handle it carefully.."* [Coaching]

ZBM: *".......OK I'll sort it"*

Zeb: *"Thanks"*

[Zeb Work Shadow - 20_06_16/14.43; 00:05:10]

The subject managers spent the vast majority of their time in the sustaining of commitments. They exhibited considerable resilience and determination in their *"keeping things on track"* under a veritable hail of 'change' from the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. This sustaining strand of conduct is a relentless and demanding task. I concur with Peters' perspective of the centrality of *'the mundane'* in effective managerial conduct [1978], and when he comments:

"The value of brute persistence may be vastly more important than the scarcity of references to it in the management literature would suggest"
[1980 p 12]

7.6.1 Monitoring, Maintaining & Modulating

The precariousness and complexity of the webs of commitments in which the subject managers are engaged necessitates their constant conducing. Commitments are constantly being, both formally and informally, monitored and *"chased"* [maintained] in all their dimensions:

" ...lots, 'n lots, 'n lots of calls...a whole day of calls..talking to people, getting things done, making sure things were happening, chasing and chasing things..."
[Alan Interview 5 Part 1; 35.27]

"...constant interaction to keep things on track...constantly I am saying ' what has happened with this and what has happened with that, and where are we up to, 'n what needs to happen now..."
[Katie Interview 4; 15.50]

"...spend a lot of time making sure my facts are right, getting up to date reports and double checking...is this really the case...and is this really happening"

[Sara - Diary Trace Interview 2; 35.11]

" did the regular review with the whole team this week...said right - need to establish where we are now, where do we think we are gonna be at the end of the year, and what do we think we've got spare..."

[Katie Interview 6 Part 1; 11.30]

This monitoring, maintaining and modulating of commitments is a perpetual activity, which at times does not necessarily receive what might be seen as the requisite level of attention:

"..sometimes there are very dangerous assumptions about what is or is not being progressed"

[Adam Interview 1: 26.33]

It was strikingly clear from the fieldwork that very often the achieved result of action taken, and even the action itself, differed substantially from that that was envisaged in its initiation. As Boden rightly concludes:

" What 'looks good' or practical or desirable at T1 often looks different a few days or weeks later, in the light of intervening information and events."

[Boden 1994 p191]

And as Clegg et al comment:

"Organizations are complex entities where causal relationships are seldom simple, transparent and bi-directional. Most managerial policies spawn a set of unintended consequences, not only because of this complexity, but also because of the imperfections of language as a means of communication"

[2002 p491]

The monitoring and maintenance of commitments is therefore accompanied by their continual modulation in the face of exigencies, discrepancies and unintended consequences of one form or another:

"...we originally said we were gonna put their [retailer's] *logo on the advertising..but we became less keen because as it ended up it was part of a bigger brand campaign and we had to back-track a little bit...we counterbalanced it with a real positive..we've sited the 'six-sheets'* [posters] *outside their sites.."*

[Katie Diary Trace Interview 5; 42.23]

"..planned spend based on turnover with the accounts, but throughout the year so many things change ..you have to flex it all the time"

[Katie Work Shadow B Period 29; 17.13]

"...the numbers aren't great yet are they, is it really worth putting in [all the] *X million dollars....why don't we cut that back 'n put it there instead...."*

[Zeb Diary Trace Interview 1: 45.33]

"..activity actually due to start middle of July but there was feedback saying the factory hadn't finished with it...there were problems...it wasn't gonna turn-up until end July....all the media had been booked for mid-July...can we change it..asked if we could look at extending the media campaign another two weeks to cover it...load of work with media company to say right let's look at the options etc etc...we've bought the media anyway"

[Katie Diary Trace Interview Part 2: 15.04]

"..what I'll try to do then is on the basis of this, I'll try to bail us out of the second lot of product..if I can..this is another one where we'd probably have ordered just 200 but when everyone gets in a room and gets excited it goes to 1500..and everyone was right up for it at the time..then now all of a sudden!..."

[Product Manager Sector A (Brad) in Zeb Work Shadow 2004_05_04/10.26; 1.10.31]

Modulations can at times represent a re-crafting of an entire commitment web:

"[Thursday].. *manage to get the MD to say yes, to sign off two and half million pounds, got the FD to say yes, got the Euro-Marketing Director to say yes. so we all said yes. went to London.. said to the agency book the TV 'n let's be really clear on the outdoor, went off and started to book things.. by the Monday we then had to find a £1 million saving..."*
[Zeb Diary Trace Interview 3: 14.02]

As Torrington & Weighman point out, what is observed is not:

" *the coordination frequently mentioned in textbooks, where the task is the planning for coordinated activity in a theoretical future: but the day-to-day coordination to make things happen in the here and now, and to influence the plans being made for the future so that they take into account the evolving reality".*
[1987 p87]

This is a 'reality' that is enacted; a deliberatively evolving 'sensemake' [Weick 1995]:

" *if a plan of action involves more than one person, and we encounter a 'thing' whose meaning for this plan of action is unclear - not consensual among those involved - the meaning must be hammered out by collective effort in the rhetoric of interaction"*
[McCall & Simmons 1966 p61]

7.6.2 Proceduralising

Systems, rules, policies, and procedures, among other mechanisms, are all utilised to mitigate the precariousness of commitment webs in any repetitive activities. This proceduralising was evident in the work of the subject managers, and is captured in the model.

"..we need to make sure that we've got a proper sign off process...let's agree a process of what we can't do..so before we go to production with anything like that again that we've got signature [A] *and signature* [B]*.."*
[Katie Work Shadow B; Period 20: 32.26]

"..astonished that we haven't managed the process better....marketing must always be involved in this sort of product...from now on before we make any bespoke product for any celebrity I want to see a list..I need a better process in place"
[Zeb in Katie Work Shadow B; Period 29: 17.13]

".they don't understand the damage that another de-specced product is gonna have..I'm making a new rule the only retailer we'll de-spec for is [C]*"*
[Sara Diary Trace Interview 2: 06.52]

However, simple repetitive work is very sparse in the contexts of the subject marketing managers and the procedures when developed were more like dance routines than military marches, well rehearsed but with substantial scope for improvisation [Feldman 2000]. As Mangham points out even the sustaining of these rules and procedures:

".. are not automatic occurrences but rather must be worked out and sustained by the repeated acts of participants"
[1979 p74]

7.6.3 Consulting, Coaching & Cultivating Relationships

" ..lots of time is just spent with the team...constantly giving them input, not just imposing myself on them, but constantly giving them my input on what we should do, giving my view on what they're doing, on how we overcome an issue"
[Katie Interview 4; 15.46]

The commitment sustaining strand of conduct, as a process of interaction, is pervaded by the giving and receiving of input [guidance] in the 'what' ['technical'], and 'how' ['method'] commitment dimensions, consulting and coaching respectively.

This strand of conduct also incorporates the cultivating of the personal relationships that underpin the effective crafting and conducing of commitments [Kaplan 1984]. A thread of conduct that Kotter termed 'networking' is:

"..[the] *developing* [of] *a network of co-operative relationships to and among those people they felt were actually needed to accomplish their emerging agendas"*
[1986 p67]

Or, as is the case with the subject managers, those relationships that are needed to enable the execution of their 'tight lists' [see Chapter 5] of commitments. The cultivation of relationships evident in the observed managerial conduct, and captured by the model, does not have the predominantly personal agenda driven, 'politicking' character, ascribed to 'networking', by Luthans [1988]. Luthans concludes from his study that:

"Networking had by far the strongest relationship to [personal career] *success, but the weakest with effectiveness"*
[Luthans 1988 p131]

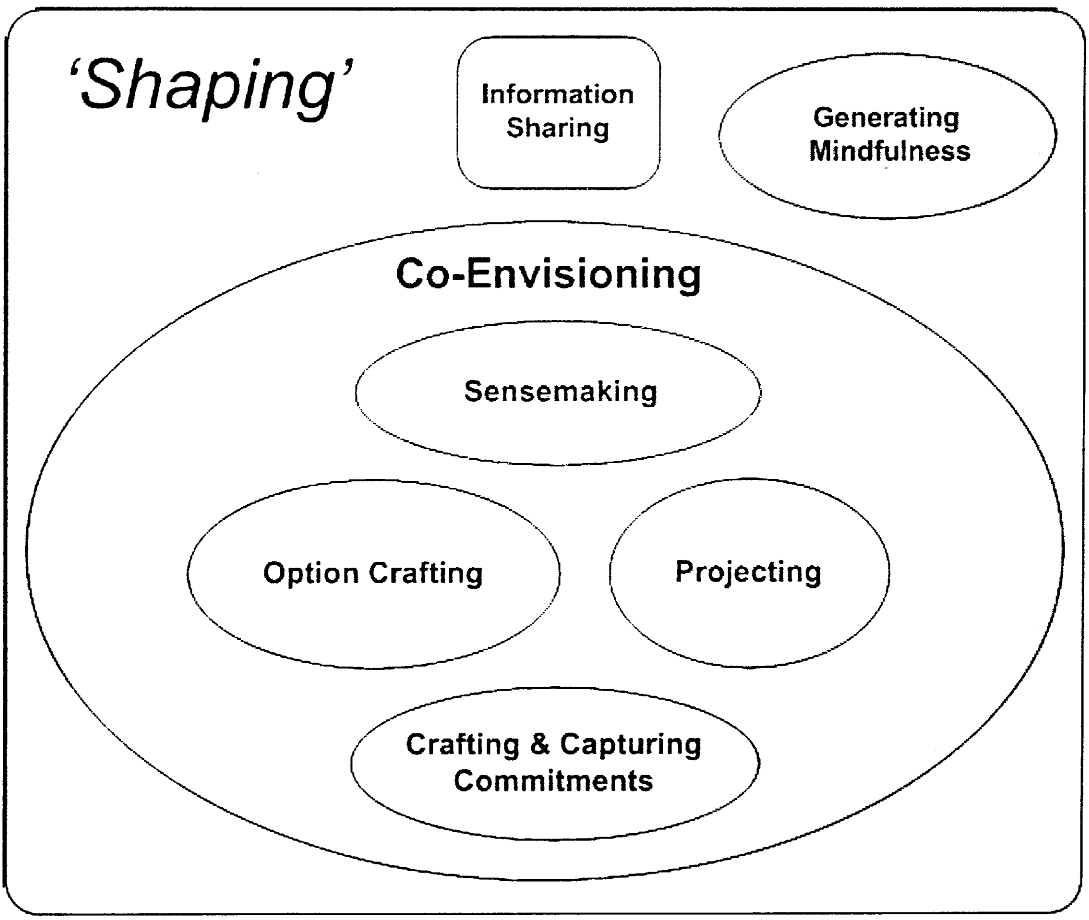
In contrast the observed 'cultivating of relationships' by the subject managers, encompassed their own subordinates, had an almost wholly 'Kotteresque' networking character, and was fundamental to their effectiveness.

7.7 Shaping – The Crafting Of Commitments

" *much of the literature on decision-making....depends on cognitive models of individuals, whereas what seems to be needed are interactional models of people 'thinking out loud together."* [Boden 1994 p 84-5]

The subject managers certainly did a lot of thinking out loud together when shaping commitments and *'passing the way mark termed decision-making'.* I hope the substance of conduct model provides at least the beginnings of an integrated response to Boden. Figure 19 reproduces the 'shaping' strand of conduct.

Figure 19 The Shaping Strand of Conduct



7.7.1 Generating Mindfulness

Information sharing requires no explanation as a component of the substance of conduct model. However, the mindfulness generating thread of conduct requires some minor elaboration. The following extract is from a presentation Zeb gave to his entire marketing team as part of his quarterly departmental briefing session. It exemplifies this particular thread of conduct.

"This is not to worry any one... but I want you guys to know where the business is... you can see from this that it is not in a fully healthy shape ...our operating profit is now....... we are worse than we were last year at this point..product development costs are up selling costs are up and marketing costs are up...we've got a higher fixed cost base now and sales are not growing as predicted .....you need to think very carefully about how and where we spend money and we've got to get the sales line going again..... we don't want to get into a negative spiral of sales going down pushing down promotional expense in response and sales then going down again.... we have to have a way of controlling cost to focus cash on supporting sales"
[Zeb Work Shadow 2004_05_04:10.07; 7.14]

Zeb is, of course, sharing information in this endeavour, but that is not his central purpose. He is endeavouring to make his team 'mindful' of certain aspects of Apparat's commercial situation, in order that they modulate the substance of their own conduct. His purpose is to exert a form of premise control as Perrow terms it [1986 p130], and influence the frames of reference [Goleman 1985, Goffman 1974] that his subordinates employ in their shaping and sustaining of commitments.

7.7.2 The Co-Envisioning Strand Of Conduct

"...we were discussing what should the worldwide team do, and how should they be judged, what should the E.M.E.A. H.Q. do, and how should they be judged and what scorecard the subsidiary market managers have, and how we judge their success"

[Alan Interview 11: 32.01]

The highly tangible output of the co-envisioning process is the 'who, what, how and when' of commitments. The essence of its output is concordance as to the 'why'. Watson concludes from his extensive participant observation study:

" Individuals argue out with themselves, and with others, what is the case and what is to be. They have to persuade themselves and they have to persuade others of the appropriateness of what is to be..."

[1994b p S82]

Or not, as the case may be:

"we're being very tactical...there's lots of different points of view across the business...'n were not all going in the same direction"

[Zeb Diary Trace Interview 1: 51.29]

This study strongly supports the conclusion of Watson above, and Mangham & Pye, in their contention that:

"Order and consensus is discovered and created through the very act of seeking consensus on what needs to be done"
[1991 p66]

Co-envisioning is a rhetorically-responsive [Cunliffe 2001] form of managerial conduct.

"..you're in so many meetings where you've got to get people onside..you have to sell people your idea..internally and externally..if you don't get their buy-in, their support to see it through..to make it happen..well you're dead...you live or die by how you project yourself, what you say..the way you sell an idea..that's key..you might have the content but presentation can make it sound so different.."
[Katie Work Shadow B – Period 25: 08.08]

This concordancing process comprises the following four threads of conduct:

- Option Crafting
    - Ideating with regard to what could and should be done; generating, assessing and selecting options
- Sensemaking
    - "[the] *placement of items into frameworks; comprehending, redressing surprise, constructing meaning, interacting in pursuit of mutual understanding and patterning"*
      [Weick 1995 p7]

- Projecting
    - Forecasting & estimating with respect to future possibilities, options & impacts

and

- Commitment Crafting
    - The design & assembly of commitments in their various dimensions – What, Who, When & How etc.

In an interesting parallel Thayer points out that leaders' stories are:

" *always about four things: about what is going on, about what will happen as a result of what is going on, about what* ***should*** *be going on, or what* ***should*** *happen as a result of what should be going on, and about what to do about one thing or the other"*

[Thayer 1988 p259; emphasis in bold in original]

Three of the threads: projecting, option crafting and the crafting & capture of commitments, are simple 'common sense' labels for processes that are easily discerned in the empirical material and exemplified in the conversations displayed. Little further elaboration would appear to be necessary with regard to these threads of conduct.

However, the remaining thread of conduct in the co-envisioning strand, that labelled sensemaking, requires more substantial attention.

7.7.3 The Sensemaking Thread

Sensemaking is not a synonym for interpreting.

"..interpretation better explains how people cope with 'entities' that already exist, whereas sensemaking better explains how 'entities' get there in the first place"
[Weick 1995 p30]

As has been indicated the foundation for the substance of conduct model rests in the empirical work at GiftCo, and the formative categorizations to which it gave rise [Figure 16]. It will be have been noted that at that point 'sensemaking' had not made an appearance as a thread label, though 'interpretation' and its close associates sensing, investigating, and interrogating had made an appearance. The problem was not unfamiliarity with the seminal work of Weick and his fellow travellers [Weick 1969, 1979, 1995; Gioia 1986, Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991, Gioia & Thomas 1996] with respect to the concept of managerial sensemaking, but a serious discomfort with one of the concept's core attributes, and the thence problematic linguistic imperialism that was being perpetrated in its name. The meaning of the term sensemaking has been stretched in many directions by many scholars, but possibly most problematically into the future.

7.7.3.1 Sensemaking - A Social and Enactive Thread of Conduct

"Actors create and constitute the environment to which they react; the environment is put there by the actors in the organization and no-one else. This re-asserts the argument that the environment is a phenomena tied to the processes of attention, and unless something is attended to it doesn't exist"

[Weick 1969 p28]

This foundational enactive aspect of the sensemaking concept [Weick 1979 p147; 1969 p63] is one of the two characteristics that render sensemaking a more appropriate label for that group of initially identified threads of conduct: sensing, interrogating, investigating, and interpreting.

" people attend to and encode salient material events that are unpleasant deviant, extreme, intense, unusual, sudden, brightly-lit, colourful, alone, or sharply drawn. In the world of organisations, salient information includes unanticipated drains on cash flow, new taxes and regulations, predictions of best and worst outcomes, disruptions of routine and emergencies and publicity and iconoclastic executives. The behaviour and outcomes of competitors, of course, are sharply drawn.."

[Kiesler & Sproull 1982 p556]

Weick's conception of sensemaking [1995] explicitly accepts that the four activities of sensing, interrogating, investigating, and interpreting are inherently linked in the focussing of managerial attention. What the subject managers sense, investigate, interrogate and interpret, i.e. what they make sense of, is determined by what they pay attention to, their 'appreciative system' [Vickers 1965, Pye 1995 p454]. The determination of the foci-of-attention of the subject managers is not a simple techno-rational process:

"..nobody wants to sit in front of a retailer and hear them say that the product's crap..we're very good at sitting in front of a load of youth off the street and sitting them in a room buying them a beer and saying what do you think of that..oh that's fantastic...or that consumer focus group said this and therefore this is a great hot product..well my view is that it only becomes hot if a customer buys it..the retailers are closer to the consumer than we are..they have experience of what's sold and what works for them...first reaction is barriers go up..marketing don't want to hear what the retailer says"

[Sales Director Interview 1: 11.17]

"...so if we don't get on-board it'll become one of those things that get fed back to [Headquarters] *and you'd get your bollocks chopped off"*

[Zeb Diary Trace Interview 1: 04.39]

"..information we get from sales..they say what you want to hear..they don't tell you if they're having a problem with a line"

[Sara Interview 1: 16.43]

"if you had more time and more money you'd be able to do a whole lot better... I've got a problem on time and budget..we just don't have the time and the money to do this stage one then stage two stage three consumer research stuff and then to do nine focus groups ..it just doesn't happen"

[Adam Interview 1: 14.49]

"..don't do any real market research [on Product Sector B]...*no budget...we'd just have to go out on the street and do it ourselves suppose.....could get marketing involved ...but danger is they'd take over..."*

[Sara Interview 1: 27.37]

Sensemaking, as Lyles & Mitroff [1980 p113] rightly point out, is at its very base a resource constrained socio-political process.

"...management realities are not created internally in the manager's mind, nor externally by the organization and its structure, but constructed dialogically between managers and others in everyday conversations"

[Cunliffe 2001 p354]

" ..sensemaking is a fundamentally social process: organizational members interpret their environment in and through interactions with others, constructing accounts that allow them to comprehend the world and act collectively"

[Maitlis 2005 p21]

It is the intrinsically social nature of the sensemaking concept that forms the second key part of its attraction as an appropriate thread label within the co-envisioning strand of conduct.

"On vague and complex issues ...managers interactively anchor their sense of reality. They validate their perceptions, opinions and conclusions in conjunction with the people around them...managers come to a common view by talking through the situation with others important to them..."
[McCall & Kaplan 1990 p30]

As has been described in Chapter 5 vagueness and complexity are prevalent characteristics of the wicked problem infested weak situations of the subject managers. There is little certainty, but much ambiguity and equivocality in their situations, and a lot of *'talking things through'*. As Festinger points out:

" [The] *tendency to compare one's beliefs with others depends on one's relative certainty...It follows that the less 'physical reality' there is to validate the opinion or belief, the greater will be the importance of the social referent, the group, and the greater the forces to communicate"*
[Festinger 1950 p273]

The prevalent 'thinking out loud together' illustrated by the conversations quoted at the end of this chapter is typical, and demonstrates the perpetual collision of ideas, insights, perspectives, judgements, information, presumptions, expectations and explanations that suffused the everyday co-envisioning conversations of the subject managers. Through their deliberations they are melding the multi-subjective into the inter-subjective [c.f. Wiley 1988].

"..they interact with others in their everyday lives to construct a reality of meanings which for them represents the world as it really is"
[Kent 1986 p150]

The subject managers collaboratively craft the degree of cognitive concordance as to 'what is', and 'why what is, is', that they perceive as necessary for their collective action; i.e. their crafting and fulfilment of webs of commitments:

"..probably in a business....people need a shared point of view on the key things in the business...once you have a shared understanding you may not all agree about what to do about it...but you can at least discuss it..."
[Zeb Diary Trace Interview 4: 1.02.10]

The subject managers are the contract labour in the social construction of 'alternaties' [Thayer 1988 p254] and alternatives.

Sensemaking is also a more appropriate label for this thread of conduct because the sensemaking process is enactive in a second sense. 'Weickian' sensemaking acknowledges that 'the world' is 'enacted' not only through the foci of attention that emerge in the activities of managers, but also by the lens through which these foci are attained. This includes the frames of reference [Goffman 1975, Goleman 1985], pre-judgements [Heidegger 1962] and conceptual devices that are deployed in the process of interpretation, the prejudicial spectacles through which the subject managers view the world.

"..what people notice becomes input to their sensemaking, and in turn, the sense that people have made appears to influence what people notice"
[Starbuck & Milliken 1988 p45]

"...each individual under the influence of different training and experience...attends to somewhat different aspects of a task, and interprets the data in different ways"
[Huff 1988 p79]

There are no innocent interpretations. The sensemaking process is as much one of the inscription of meaning, as it is one of the illumination of meaning. As Shotter points out, when managers are involved in sensemaking they are as much *'authoring'* situations as reading them [1993 p148]:

" [The task of the manager] *is not one of choosing but of generating, of generating a clear and adequate formulation of what the problem situation 'is', of creating from a set of incoherent and disorderly events a 'coherent' structure within which both current actualities and further possibilities can be given an intelligible place'* [Shotter 1993 p152]

7.7.4 The Co-Envisioning Label

"..we select what we will treat as the 'things' of the situation, we set the boundaries of our attention to 'it', and we impose a coherence which allows us to say what is wrong and in what directions the situation needs to be changed"

[Schon 1983 p40]

7.7.4.1 The Sensemaking Label and Futurity

"In trying to make something happen...we are effectively using our verbal world to predict the future: that is, making and using a map 'despite the fact that the territory it stands for is not yet an actuality'"

[Pye 1995 p451]

With prospective sensemaking [Donnellon et al 1986 p49; Gioia et al 1994 p378] and future perfect thinking [Gioia et al 2002] in particular, attempts have been made to broaden the sensemaking concept to encapsulate the pervasive *'what nextness'* [Boden 1994 p193] of the managerial deliberations that were encountered in the empirical material, and exemplified below. Based on the extant literature a case could be argued for labelling the entire co-envisioning strand of conduct 'sensemaking'. However, to my mind, these theoretical elaborations and their labels, though possibly linguistically and philosophically sound, struggle to adequately capture the speculative ideational character of the option crafting and projecting threads of conduct. Nor do they give them the prominence and emphasis they deserve. As Bruner comments:

"[The second universal of human reflexivity] *is our dazzling capacity to envision alternatives, to conceive of other ways of being, of acting, of striving. So while it may be the case that in some sense we are 'creatures of history', in another sense we are autonomous agents as well"*
[1990 p109]

At one point in his discussion of *'future perfect thinking'* Gioia et al comment:

"..people envision a desired or expected future event and then act as if that event had already transpired"
[2002 p623]

In a cognito-linguistic sense this might well be a fair argument. But if the subject managers and I had 'acted' in the way Gioia indicates, not only would the envisioned future never happen, but also the (co-)envisioning process itself would never have started. The sensemaking process, as conceptualised by Weick, is explicitly and intrinsically retrospective [1969, 1979 1995]. As Gioia et al themselves emphasise, sensemaking is 'past-focused' [2002 p 622]; I will leave it so.

Sensemaking is the appropriate conceptual label for the retrospective-enactive gestalt of sensing, investigating, interrogating and interpreting that comprises a central thread of conduct in the co-envisioning strand-of-conduct, but not for the strand itself.

7.7.4.2 The Authoring and Problem Setting Labels

" *human beings cannot gather information without in some way developing alternatives. They cannot avoid evaluating these alternatives immediately.......This is a package of operations"*

[Witte p180 1972]

The pervasive futurity-focused option crafting character of the observed managerial conduct commented on by Witte above, is implicit in the *'problem setting'* perspective of Schon [1993 p40] and explicit in the concept of *'manager as practical author'* developed by Shotter [1993 p148], and further developed by Cunliffe:

" *What makes managers authors is that they are concerned with....creating new possibilities for action...in indeterminate, ill-defined realms of activity..they are more like artists than engineers"*

[Cunliffe 2001 p352]

The latter 'authoring' label may somewhat obliquely even encapsulate the crafting of commitments:

"[The role of the manager as practical author] *is to argue persuasively for a 'landscape of next possible actions' upon which the 'positions' of all those who must take part are clear'*
[Shotter 1993 p157]

Both the above conceptualisations were strong contenders for the labelling of the co-envisioning strand of conduct, particularly 'authoring', given the brief mention of 'co-authoring' by Shotter & Cunliffe [2003 p20]. However, each was felt to ascribe too individualistic a character to this strand of managerial conduct; just as did the managerial judgement conceptions of Brownlie discussed earlier [Chapter 5].

7.7.5 The Crystallisation of Commitments

The co-envisioning strand of conduct is a gestalt of sensemaking, option crafting, projecting and commitment crafting. It is a phronetic endeavour:

" *Phronesis is a form of reasoning that is concerned with choice and involves deliberation. It deals with that which is variable and about which there can be differing opinions. ....there are no determinate technical rules by which a particular can simply be subsumed under that which is general or universal"*
[Bernstein 1983 p54]

It is a fundamentally collective deliberative process for which, as a chemist, I cannot resist a chemical metaphor. The co-envisioning of the subject managers leads to the crystallisation of webs of commitments from a seemingly amorphous mass of 'sensemakes' / 'alternaties', options and projections. In both Long's, and Grint's terms, this crystallisation is fundamental in the leadership process:

"..leadership is concerned with the transformation of doubts into the psychological grounds of cooperative action"
[Long 1963]

"..leadership involves the social construction of the context that both legitimates a particular form of action and constitutes the world in the process"
[Grint 2005 p1471]

And just like the crystal formation process itself, the content of the amorphous precursor is not the only influence on what types of crystals emerge. The conduct of the chemists, or managers in this case, has a substantial influence on what emerges, as they are involved in a shaping process. In the terms of this model, leadership is the deliberative process of shaping and sustaining a *'co-envision'*, of which the shaping and sustaining of a *'sensemake'* is part [Pye 2005].

7.7.6 Co-Envisioning - Exemplifications

The traditional incorporation of individual quotes cannot do justice to the co-envisioning strand of conduct in which the subject managers engaged.

Selected conversations are therefore quoted at some length in support of the preceding argument. Even so, despite their careful selection, when extracted from their protracted and extensive conversational and textual context, they still only provide a barely reasonable exemplification.

The first conversation is a relatively simple example of co-envisioning. Zeb, Katie, and the Zest sub-brand marketing manager, are conversing with regard to a projected series of radio advertisements, and their potential 'tagging' with an 'available at' sound-bite. This tagging had been proposed as a part of the campaign to position Retailer C as the *'destination'* store for the new sub-brand Zest. This retailer had been selected on the basis of the appropriateness of their high street image. However, the situation had evolved rapidly since then, with the response of certain other retailers to the Zest concept, and products, having been far more positive than had been expected. The lure of faster volume growth is strong:

Zest Brand Manager: *..weren't there three options...you either do a generic 'n don't tag it, you do* [Retailer C] *'n* [Retailer F]*..they have the products anyway, but* [Retailer C] *'n* [Retailer D] *having it will be a little political...a little sensitive...*[Retailer C] *won't like it one bit*

Zeb: *With* [Retailer D] *we talked just about doing something in-store there..so we need a* [Retailer D] *execution,* Hey! Katie! *got a minute?...with* [Retailer C] *you promised them radio ad' tags?*

Katie: *Well, three months ago the way we left it...we were doing radio, whether it was going to be tagged was tbc* [to be confirmed] *but that we* *were committed to radio...they said if we were doing it that they would want it...but when we met them two weeks ago we didn't remind them about it...and we haven't brought it up since*

Zeb: *My view is that radio is a good driver to store...it's not so image critical*

Zest Brand Manager: *You want people to know where it is available for sure*

Katie: *Think it's a good thing for* [Retailer C]*...and then we'll just do in-store for* [Retailer D]*....*

Zest Brand Manager: *Then the* [Retailer C] *thing is outside what we're doing for other accounts..which is right...we need* [Retailer C] *to really feel like they're the destination for* Zest

Zeb: *Based on the meeting with* [Retailer D]*..how will they react to the radio...if we do something in-store for them then....*

Katie: *We can do something else for* [Retailer D] *in Q1..in outdoor maybe...but I think it would be good to do* [Retailer C] *now... making them the destination*

Zeb: *We probably need both* [Retailer C] *and* [Retailer F]*, then you would do available at* [Retailer C] *'n* [Retailer F]*......so our recommendation is that we tag it like that...on a specific product?*

Zest Brand manager: *We could probably do a combination of both products in July and August or we could do....*

Katie: *Depends when they hit the shelves though..*

Zeb: *OK the product has gotta land everywhere at the same time hasn't it...think that sticking with* [Retailer C] *is key but if we land the product two weeks later at* [Retailer D] *they'll be completely pissed off with us*

Katie: *It's just going back to that whole thing, that issue of* [Retailer C] *being the destination and...*

Zeb: *Think we're sticking with* [Retailer C] *as the destination store, they've got more stores, better presence, more marketing spend*

Zest Brand Manager: *Both products will be available in both July and August...we just need to look at the creative to see if we can combine the two in the radio*

Zeb: *Well OK you two can follow-up now...you two talk to* [the Sales Director]*...just say around the radio that our recommendation is that we do tag it...for both products 'cause radio is a specific store driver..issue for us is do we tag it for* [Retailer C] *and* [Retailer F] *we think yes...and does he have a point of view, and can he talk to the relevant salespeople..*

Zest Brand Manager: *Then there's the high profile independents we don't want to upset..I'm worried about specialists like* [Retailer Q]

Zeb: *Could we find a way to say* Zest *stockist somewhere..on outdoor stuff maybe....*we *could drive people to the website or something like that to find other* Zest *stockists, ...so.. yeah.. OK.. we're saying we're supporting* [Retailer C] *on radio who are our destination store, really driving this in there, and in this stuff saying that there is a group of* Zest *stockists....make sense??*

Katie & Zest Brand Manager: Yup!

Zeb: *OK..thanks ..go to it..call* [the Sales Director] *now!*

[Zeb Work Shadow 2004_05_05: 08.28; 04.46]

In the second conversation displayed Zeb, the Apparat UK marketing director, and 'Brad', the senior product manager of Apparat's main product sector, are discussing the position of a particular product-style sub-brand 'Trad', with a view to its future development. This represents a far more sophisticated example of co-envisioning.

Zeb had been given, just prior to the quoted discussion, Europe-wide responsibility for Trad's marketing, though quite what that meant was, as Zeb put it, *"somewhat vague".* 'Brad' had been the product manager handling 'Trad' product in the UK, for some considerable time. This particular product-style represents a very important 'cash-cow' for Apparat. At the heart of the quoted conversation is the question 'what is Trad'. Is it a product-line? Is it a brand? Is there a consumer identity? Concordancing on this is confounded by the equivocality of the commercial and market situation. Zeb had been charged with getting Trad moving again, but 'what' Trad is, 'where' it is, 'who's' putting it there and how it should be 'moved' are questions for which Zeb and Brad only have the vaguest of start points, even in the so-called 'data'. The only thing Zeb and Brad were certain of was what 'getting it moving' meant, and that meant 'make more money out of Trad, and as fast as possible!' The wicked problem they were confronting was how to *"move the brand on"*, and capture new younger consumers, whilst not alienating the product-style's faithful, high volume, consumers and retailers.

The following represents only a small part of a deliberation that went on over several days, face-to-face, over the phone, and by e-mail, as Zeb, Brad, and several of their colleagues struggled with 'co-envisioning' with regard to Trad.

Zeb: *... A while ago we did some stuff on the* [Trad] *segment*

Brad: *Yeah I was looking at it again last night and thought....*

Zeb: Brad *we've updated it and put some more stuff in so I thought it would be quite good for* Natalie [from the market research team] *to share that with you, it might provide some thoughts*

Brad: *Yeah okay*

[With that Natalie talked Brad through the figures that she has assembled on Trad from the several external market analysis sources available to the industry, and internal accounting, market and sales data]

Zeb: *So in the* [Trad] *segment business we're a little bit behind the previous year* Brad

Brad: *I think we'll get a massive lot through at the end of the year*

Zeb: *From stock run-down?*

Brad: *No from crashing stuff in*

Zeb: *Really?*

Brad: *Sell-thru is good, they'll all be coming back for more...*[Retailer Y]'ll *pull in a massive December number on it*

Zeb: *OK...now it's up to 80% of the business in* [Trad] *is in* [Retailer Y] *and our share is currently about 40% of the total in* [Trad]*...you can see it on the market share graphs..now the careful thing is what we define as the* [Trad *sector*] *...there's a clear trend though...our share is back up*

Brad: *A couple of things I would say are happening..I think* [Competitor C]'s new product *has cooled right down.... if you take* [Retailer C] *as a* *good example they're not talking it up like they were a while ago...we've taken some of that and I think* [Competitor A] *has pulled out of it on purpose..Strategically they've pulled out from that area so you would expect us to have come back in...so they've limited* [Product Q]

Zeb: *In a way they're trying to take the fashion end of this segment*

Brad: *Well yeah but..they'll just re-energise it when they need the volume, they'll just bring it back through this distribution again*

Zeb: *The concern for us is...*[Natalie]?

Natalie: *You can see the darker line is the average price..they're all going down but we must be particularly driving that obviously as we've got the major share of the segment so..*

Zeb: *We're the lowest average price but the market leader in this segment*

Brad: *My guess is that ...In a way that's not surprising is it!*

Zeb: *Well no..well.. that's the interesting thing isn't it?..because we should..well....we've got to turn it round haven't we?*

Brad: *Agreed*

Zeb: *Well how do we do it?*

Brad: *Well I think there's a combination of ways... I think we have to start building back in a bit of a premium ..we've gone away from that a little bit... for a while when we were leading before we used to charge* [X] *for* [Product F]*.. you'd get a premium for the* [F]*, which we couldn't really sustain back then because we were being taken out of the game here in* [Retailer B]*.. all we've got to do now is build more of that back in but there's a real risk on volume... that's the big issue really.. of saying to the* *retailers that's what we're gonna do.. and they'll say well we're not gonna buy then.. and well, we'll just have to be brave..*

Zeb: *..let's write down some thoughts..that is one thing..if you think of the next three years that's one of our biggest issues isn't it?..how we re-build average achieved retail price in the* [Trad] *segment*

[Natalie takes Brad and Zeb through some more detailed material analysing the 'Trad' segment by product and consumer gender etc.]

Brad: *There's a couple of things running through my mind.. how to rebuild... in my mind the big driver of the volume and the reduction of the average selling price is that war between* [Retailer A] *and* [Retailer B].. *Now what I think we can do is we can... well you can't just sustain the* [Trad] *business that we're doing by just keeping pricing and pricing so we've got to find other product styles.. Strategically we have to sell the business a different way of managing the retailers... we gotta find stuff that's as strong selling as* [Trad] *but is only* [Trad] *related in a way.. we have to switch the emphasis.. because until we can reduce the number we're doing you're not gonna build the premium...that's my view. though I might be wrong*

[At this point Natalie showed, and discussed with Brad and Zeb, street-photography of what she saw as archetypal 'Trad' wearers. There was a lot of amusing banter!]

Zeb: *What* Natalie's *showing must reflect what the consumer thinks of the* Trad *products*

Brad: *Erm..yes 'n no..what it does it say about* [Trad] *is it's a real strength..it's the market's equivalent of the Mars bar*

Zeb: *It can give you the imagery of what* [Trad] *is...this stuff is most of what you're selling.. in three years time do you want these to be your top sellers again?*

Brad*: ..Wouldn't mind*

Zeb: *Ok!..right.. mmmm.. well!*

Brad: *It wouldn't bother me...I think that's a massive strength*

Zeb: *That's fine...that's fine...yeah well!*

Brad: *OK look...the difficulty is that* [Retailer A] *can just have their way with us...they're just wrapping it up..it's scary 'cause the other retailers are slipping out of this game..the punters just don't see them..for them to dominate like that is not all right..is it?...we're selling our best lines to them at discounts beyond their normal discounts and they're just passing it onto the consumer..they're just racking up their market share.. which is good for them..but don't know whether it's bad for us or not.....*

[Natalie then took Zeb and Brad through detailed data on product styles split out by consumer segment]

Zeb: *the next sheet here is quite interesting 'cause if you go back to 1999 you can see how big* [Trad] *was with the 24 and unders.. yeah?.. if you take that whole bar there you can see how big* [Trad] *was and how that's tailed off if you like.. so actually what has happened to* [Trad] *is that it's* *got older and lost a following with the 12 to 17 year-olds.. it now seems to be getting them back again doesn't it? But that would appear to be with girls so it's switched from being a... see?*

Brad: *That just doesn't feel that right to me. What you're saying there*

Zeb: *Why doesn't it?*

Brad: *It just doesn't*

Zeb: *That would mirror what people say in focus groups and things like that.. it says exactly what you're saying that* [Trad] *had a following but it just got older.. but what's happened with the women's is really surprising back in its heyday over 50 per cent of the business was coming from males it's now virtually switched*

Brad: *Doesn't feel right*

Zeb: *In what sense?*

Brad: *It just doesn't seem to check out with what our retailers are telling us*

Zeb: *What are our retailers telling us?*

Brad: *Well there.. hang on a second.. one of the reasons you'll have seen that over the last two years is* [Competitor C] *isn't it that's why you will have seen it.. I think one of the reasons why we're getting a lot of demand coming in for quick-to-shelf n gotta get more stuff.. is that the males are picking up on it again but the retailers haven't been buying at the levels they need so* [Retailer C] *all of the sudden are coming back ..we wanna buy more ..*[Retailer A] *are saying the same thing..* [Retailer B] *just can't keep up and it's not women's and female stuff it's all men's product they want.. so what that says to me is that it's probably a* *combination of things but you can't underestimate what* [Competitor C] *have done to us in terms of..*

Zeb: *Taking the male share?*

Brad: *Yeah!*

Zeb: *I also think women's.. you remember a lot of the women's stuff comes from kids so they can report they're selling a lot of kid sizes but actually selling to women.. when you walk around you see a lot of women wearing* [Trad] *product so in a way the second big thought is.. should* [Trad] *be more male-dominated?*

Brad: *Not necessarily!*

Zeb: *I'm just..*

Brad: *No! I would say not necessarily.. the one thing I do think you've got to do is treat the women's side of the business separately.. you've got to make it distinct. this business of women's.. I've been asking this for a couple of years now*

Zeb: *Look at what Natalie is wearing*

Natalie: *This is cool this!!*

Brad: *Yeah..flash...fantastic..we can't sell that..that's just absolutely failed at retail*

Natalie: *Really?*

Zeb: *That could just be the place where we're putting it though?*

Brad: *Probably*

Zeb: *So where did that fail at retail*

Brad: *Everywhere!!..well where we've put it that is*

Zeb: *Yeah that's right..so we put it somewhere else!*

Brad: *Yeah...the old nugget of new distribution again!???..mmmm!*

[A protracted discussion then took place about the distribution of the Trad product line, which product lines were in which distribution, and where particular consumer segments shopped]

Zeb: *So in three years time you wanna have rebuilt the product mix...so what things do we need to do then?*

Brad: *Need to get Paul to further develop his ideas on premium styles of* [Trad] *as a start point now*

Zeb: *So premium* [Trad]*??*

Brad: *I don't know..I think....what we'll do is separate the volume lines from the rest and we'll give certain retailers access to stuff they don't now see or get and with* [Trad] *branded areas in store*

Zeb: *Would core* [Trad] *be in the areas*

Brad: *No...the better stuff... the premium treatments...you'd have your table tops with the standard stuff, 'n units with the big programmes, then we'd have product that would elevate it all, the* [Trad] *category, on the wall and ...you'd not try to change the perception of core* [Trad]...*we'd just work harder on the other things we wanna capture*

Zeb: *'N over time that will change the image won't it...it must do?*

Brad: *You would hope so but.........*

[Zeb Work Shadow 2004_06_18:12.12; 22.51 & 2004_06_18; 13.06]

Chapter 8

'Rounding-Out' the Marketing Managers Job

- The 'Ontic Onion' of Managerial Work -

" *One picture is worth ten thousand words"*

[F.R Barnard 1921]

"..[Further developments should]...*permit a clarification of, and synthesis between, managers' behaviour and the management functions in order to provide a more rounded picture of managerial work.."*
[Hales 1986 p112]

In the following illustration [Figure 20] I respond to Hales' call for conceptual synthesis, and follow Mintzberg's [1994] example, in attempting to *'round out the manager's job'* [1994 p11]. As Hales & Tamangani succinctly point out, studies of managerial work have failed to adequately distinguish between managerial work, jobs, behaviour, tasks and functions and wholly failed:

"to explain, other than in reductionist terms, the characteristics of the managerial activities described..".
[1996 p733]

The illustration 're-assembles' the 'ontic onion' that I have attempted to peel through the study, and brings together all of the conceptualisations developed, in an integrated model of 'managerial work'. This model hopefully responds to many of the core criticisms of the previous conceptualisations, through its provision of an integrated descriptive-conceptual language, and its 'exposure' of the substance of 'managing-in-marketing'.

The subject managers' conduct, their 'masonry', is phronetic in character, and not usually frenetic. They are phronetic bricoleurs; their conduct is:

P – Political

H – Hectic

R – Recursive & Repetitive

O – Oral

N – Negotiative

E – Experimental & Expedient

T - Technical

I – Improvisational

C – Creative

The substance of the subject managers' conduct, their 'sculpting', is the shaping and sustaining of commitments; the crafting and conducing of the commitment webs that constitute their endeavours. The medium of their 'sculpting' is the array of commercial dilemmas, the weak-wicked situation embedded 'cable-of-contradictions', that they confront. The substance of their marketing management, their 'marketing sculpture', their marketing 'work' so to speak, is the never-ending innovative reconciliation of these immanent and persistent commercial dilemmas. This quest is often conducted within an organizational milieu that is not wholly conducive to such a collaborative-deliberative endeavour, and where the marketing manager's role is far from that envisaged by its 'founding fathers'. It is a deeply technical, but intrinsically socio-political activity in which they are engaged. Their 'managing-in-marketing' is an inherently dialectical process that is suffused with personal risk.

Figure 21 attempts to pull all the above together in a visualisation of this characterisation of managing-in-marketing, and 'rounds out' the marketing manager's job.

The marketing management discourse and pedagogy does not speak to the substance of the conduct of the subject managers' managing-in-marketing. Nor does it speak to the milieu or substance of their marketing management. I hope this study has.

Rounding Out the Managers Job

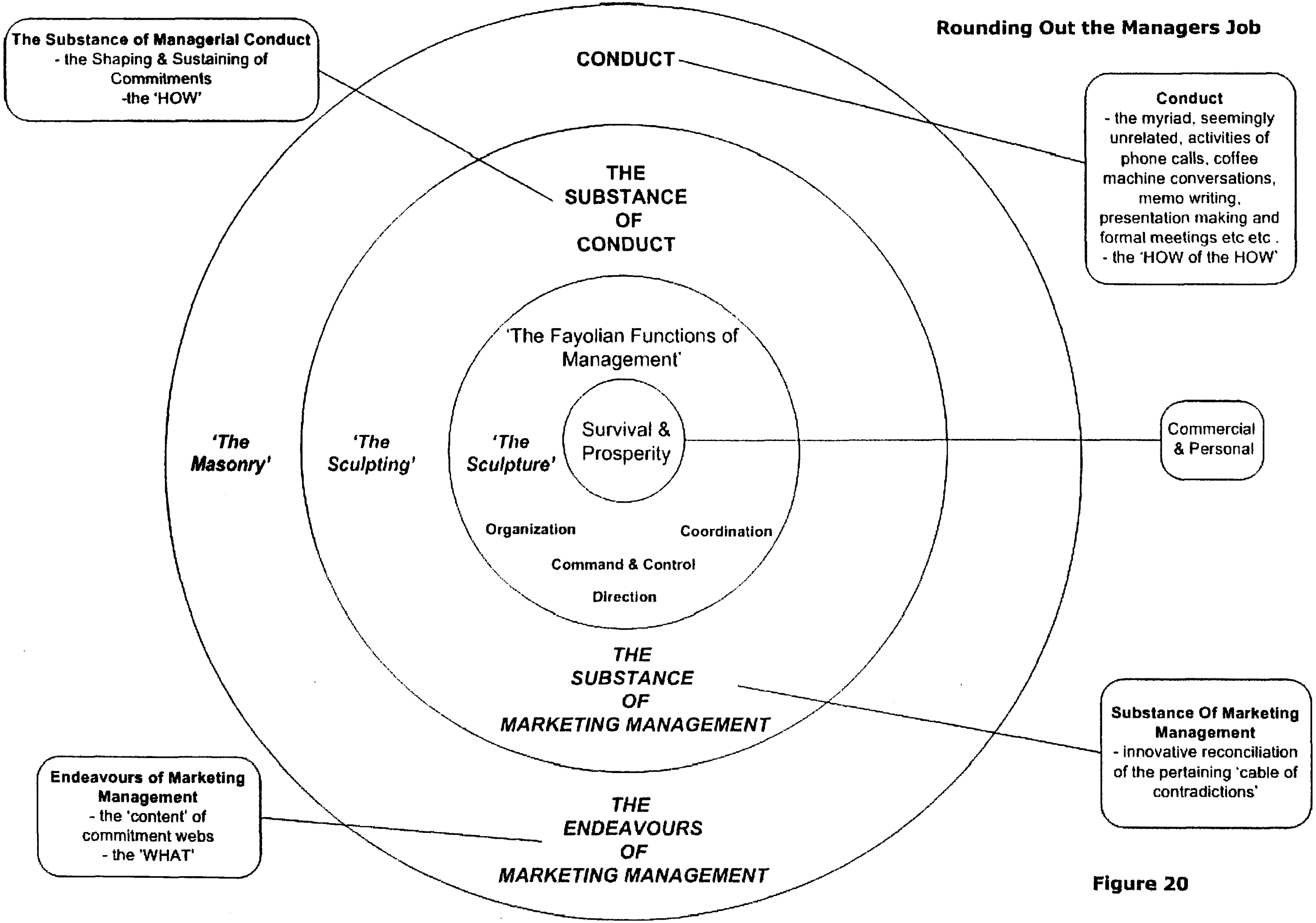
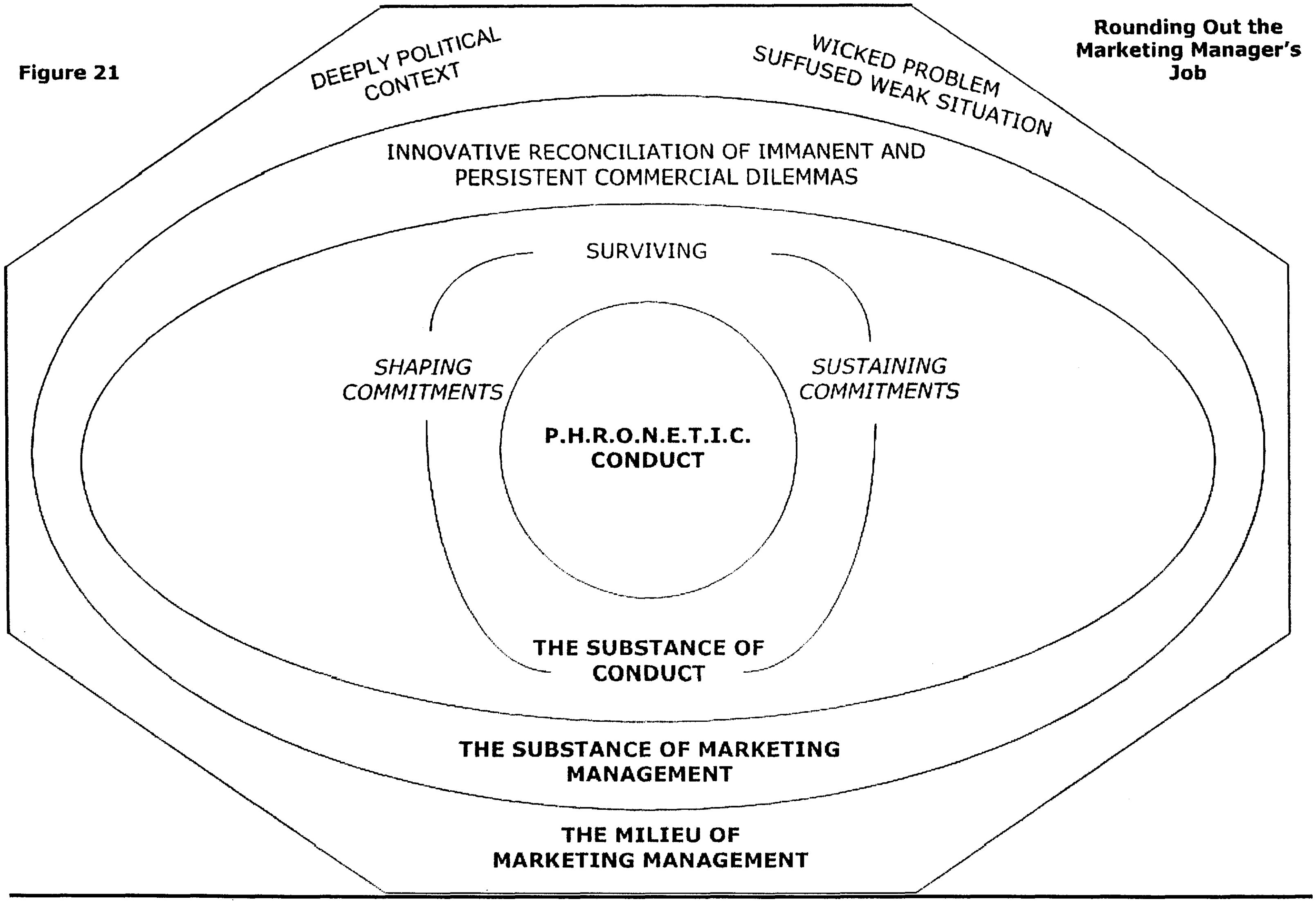


Figure 20

Figure 21

Rounding Out the Marketing Manager's Job



Chapter 9

A Concluding Reflection

" *What is missing is an examination of the behaviours that actually connect the skills and traits that constitute competencies with performance outcomes.....The overall result is a suggestion that certain traits, attitudes and behaviours may promote certain favourable organizational outcomes but little sense of* ***how*** *they do so."*

[2001 p52 & 55 - emphasis in original]

Though the empirical work in which this study is grounded rests wholly with marketing managers, it is my firm belief that the conceptual developments of this thesis substantively contribute to addressing the lacuna in the mainstream managerial work literature highlighted by Colin Hales, and answering his somewhat earlier question as to *'why do managers do what they do'* [1999], i.e. conduct themselves in the way they do.

Unlike the most prominent explanatory accounts of managerial work, Mintzberg's 'Rounding-Out' [1994] and Hales' 'structurational model' [1999], the substance of conduct model does not attempt to provide a framework to explain the impact that the innumerable factors contingent to managerial conduct, have upon that conduct. The developed model responds to Hales' question at the 'ontic' level at which it is asked; at the 'actual level', as the critical realists may term it, attempting to reveal the 'deeper processes'/ 'mechanisms' of managerial work. [Sayer 1984]

In Hales' terms *'the shaping and sustaining of commitments'* represent the behaviours that link the *'competencies of conduct'* to performance outcomes. Managers 'do what they do', that is they conduct themselves in the way they do, in order to shape and sustain commitments. The skills and traits to which Hales alludes are the mundane to the magnificent ones that our proficient techno-phronetic bricoleurs require for that endeavour. In this sense the substance of conduct model may represent at least the beginnings of the much-sought explanatory account of the nature of managerial work. It is an account that appropriately conveys the processual dynamics of managerial work, and one that eschews the highly static explanatory concepts of roles, responsibilities & expectations [Hales 1999], and demands, constraints & choices [Stewart 1976] that constitute the two most well developed models of the managerial work literature. All of the preceding being concepts that are clearly explainable through, and simply encompassed by, the developed model. It is notably, and purposefully, a model that responds to Weick's critique of organization studies and *"stamps in verbs"* rather than nouns [1995 p187].

The conceptualisations developed bridge the sadly persistent gap between organizational behaviour/social psychology theorising, particularly that of the sensemaking and organizational politics genres, and the managerial work literature. In this bridging process the *'substance of conduct & content'* model provides a link between the former theorising and the *'competencies of conduct'* that are the focus of the managerial skills arena. I believe the model therefore provides the foundation for a coherent pedagogy of 'managing' that would, as a result, properly engage with the **p**olitical, **h**ectic, **r**epetitive and recursive, **o**ral, **n**egotiative, **e**xpedient, **t**echnical, **i**mprovisational and **c**reative character of effective managerial conduct. Though university management/business schools may not be the place for extensive socio-political skill development, the *'substance of conduct'* model provides an easily communicable conceptual framework that could be used to draw together and cohere, in an enlightening and demonstrably practical way, the insights of the organizational behaviour & politics, organizational sociology and social psychology disciplines, with the insights of the managerial work literature.

In his seminal article of 1989 Whitley cogently argues that the uniqueness of the problems that managers face, and the diversity of situations they encounter, is such that the diverse 'content' of managerial work precludes the possibility of any generalised form of business education beyond that of basic technical skills & knowledge. The insight of this study into the intense bricoleuric technicality of the subject managers' endeavours strongly supports this contention, but only at a certain ontic level. As has been illustrated for marketing managers, and as I would argue pertains to all managers, at the level of situation and problem character there is much commonality in the wicked-weakness of the managerial context. The *'content'* of different managerial jobs may differ markedly from firm to firm, and from function to function, but the form of the *'substance of* *content'*, the innovative reconciliation of immanent commercial dilemmas persists.

It would help aspiring managers if the wicked problem / weak situation character of the managerial context was faithfully and systematically reflected in the business school pedagogy, and an engagement with philosophy and the sociology of knowledge was de rigueur for their students. However, as one of my colleagues commented, *'teaching students about management in a lecture theatre is like trying to teach swimming in a damp room'*. I suggest that the thoughtful pedagogical deployment of the developed models of managerial work could, however, make the classroom just a little more humid.

However, to re-craft Orwell's phrase, *'all managerial contexts may be weak & wicked, but some are more weak & wicked than others'*. In her 1976 study, *'Contrasts in Management'*, Rosemary Stewart investigates the effect of a managers necessary contact pattern, and its nature, on managerial behaviour. Her conclusions emphasise the behavioural impact of the internal-external balance of their contacts, their peer dependence vs. independence, and she alludes to the influence of the congruence of their authority and responsibility. To these three contingent factors I would add two more – situational weakness and problem wickedness. Different managerial roles/specialisms could be argued to have diverse coordinates in these five bipolar dimensions of contact externality, peer dependence, authority-responsibility congruence, situational weakness and problem wickedness. A factory manager may reside at [1,1,5,1,1] on a putative 0-5 Likert scale, whereas a marketing manager may be located around [3,5,1,5,5]. To this dimensional set it might be useful to add 'knowledge-power/technical legitimacy' – the accountants, lawyers, and R & D scientists may rest at 5 on this scale, marketing managers might score 1. These [3,5,1,5,5,1] coordinates highlight the necessarily and intrinsically political *'ontological engineering'* character of marketing manager work, and the centrality of the co-envisioning strand of conduct in that work.

" *Weick* [1995 p53]... *suggests that to 'talk about interpretation without discussing a politics of interpretation is to ignore context...Yet Weick* [& the 'sensemaking' literature] *leaves the role of power in guiding the negotiation of meaning largely under-theorised"*
[Marshall & Rollinson 2004 p S74]

Despite a burgeoning literature on organizational/managerial politics, *'a politics of co-envisioning'* has not really emerged, and hence the role of power & power-knowledge in privileging one *'co-envision'* over another has not been a focus of attention. Given the centrality of the co-envisioning strand in the substance of marketing managerial conduct, this is a lacuna that demands further attention.

Taking Grint's [2005] perspective, given their weak-wicked *'coordinates'*, marketing managers have no alternative but to exercise *'leadership'*, in a context of high peer dependence and low authority; whilst lacking any real technical legitimacy/power-knowledge for their endeavour [Foucault

1980]. The *'marketing leadership'* evidenced in the study is characterised by courage, creativity, and perpetual co-envisioning. It bears no resemblance to the image of marketing leadership conjured up by the marketing management discourse & pedagogy. In fact exposure to the tenets of the latter may actually inhibit the emergence of *'marketing leadership'* and ironically, as a result, any possibility of market leadership. Not quite the outcome Kotler and his followers had anticipated!