

ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION:

**A QUANTUM LEAP FROM THE TRADITIONAL
TO THE ENTREPRENEURIAL**

by

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Hierdie studie word opgedra aan die nagedagtenis van

Louis Serfontein (1905 – 1988)

en

Phoebé Serfontein (1915 – 1997)

Erkennings en bedankings

'n Studie soos hierdie is sekerlik nie iets unieks nie. Vir my egter, wat in die laatmiddag van my loopbaan staan, is dit 'n hoogtepunt en 'n blyk van groot genade. Dit het vir my 'n geheel ander betekenis vandag, as wat dit vroeër sou gehad het.

Eie aan my aard was ek aan die begin van hierdie studie geneig om dit as net nog 'n uitdaging te sien. Namate ek myself gedurende die afgelope drie jaar hierin verdiep het, het daar groter begrip vir my eie behoeftes en motiewe gekom. Op hierdie alleenpad is ek ook telkemale gekonfronteer met die vraag: *Waarom doen ek dit?*

Nou weet ek dat die hele proses betekenisvol was omdat:

- die werk waarmee ek die afgelope dertig jaar intens besig was, tot akademiese status verhef kan word en so my werk as bestuurskonsultant aan 'n finale toets kan onderwerp;
- 'n stel uitsonderlike resultate op die terrein van transformasie en sakebestuur in die kollig geplaas kan word, veral m.b.t. die sleutelrol wat mense in organisasies speel en die verskil wat hulle aan die prestasie van 'n onderneming kan maak;
- 'n professionele bydrae gemaak kan word tot onder andere die terreine van Organisasie-ontwikkeling, Bestuurskonsultasie, Bedryfsielkunde en Menslike Hulpbronbestuur.

In hierdie studie maak ek gebruik van die kwalitatiewe navorsingsbenadering. Robert Stake (1995) sê hieroor dat ervaring die belangrikste vereiste vir 'n studie van hierdie aard is. Ek vereenselwig myself heelhartig met hierdie stelling, veral verwysende na sy opmerking oor die wese van ervaring: *"...one of knowing what leads to significant understanding, recognising good sources of data, and consciously and unconsciously testing out of the veracity of their eyes and the robustness of their interpretations"*.

Na al die jare in die konsultasiebedryf plaas ek my, in alle beskeidenheid, in die kategorie van *ervare bestuurskonsultante*. Ervaring word oor 'n lang periode opgebou – daar is nie kortpaaie nie. Dit is die resultaat van harde werk, die bereidwilligheid om risiko's te loop en die vermoë om te kan leer uit sowel suksesse as mislukkings.

Die leerproses by die volwassene is in die eerste plek interaktief. Dwarsdeur my loopbaan het talle mense my pad gekruis by wie ek, deur die wisselwerking met hulle, deurlopend kon leer. Wat 'n verrykende proses! Dit het my in staat gestel om my vakgebied te bedink, te ondersoek en met tye te bevraagteken; dit het daartoe gelei dat ek my aannames en motiewe moes aanpas, praktyke moes verfyn en waardes moes bepeins. Dit was 'n proses van *transformasie*,

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In die soeke na nuwe toepassingsvelde binne militêre verband, het ek die terrein van Organisasie-ontwikkeling (OD) ontdek. Dit was vir my van meet af aan 'n passie. My loopbaan en my lewe, is verder verryk deur die destydse hoof van die leër, Generaal Magnus Malan, en een van sy senior staf-offisiere, Brigadier (later Generaal) Raymond Holtshausen. Deur hulle bemiddeling en ondersteuning kon ek middel sewentigs die National Training Laboratories (NTL) in die VSA besoek. Dit was 'n eksponensiële leerervaring. Daar kon ek op 'n persoonlike vlak kennis maak met baanbrekers soos Richard Beckard, Ron Lippert, Tony Petrella, Charlie Seashore en Roger Harrison. Deur die jare het ek met Dr. Roger Harrison kontak behou en kon ek deel word van sy internasionale netwerk. Ek noem ook graag die naam van Dr Marilyn Harris, destyds verbonde aan NTL en die *Institute of Social Research* aan die Universiteit van Michigan. Ons is na dertig jaar steeds vriende. Sy het nooit gehuiwer om die heel nuuste denke en publikasies in die veld met my te deel nie.

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So kom Serfontein en Du Toit, in 1979 tot stand. Die maatskappy het stelselmatig gegroei totdat ons in 1985 verkies het om elkeen sy eie pad te loop.

Daarna het Sep Serfontein Genote en later Sep Serfontein Konsultasiegroep, voortgewoeker. Daar was onder andere Jan de Coning, Gerhard Beukes, Gerhard van Hoek, Elsabe Rude en Jacques Strydom, wat elkeen op sy of haar manier geslyp het aan my professionele ontwikkeling. Ook die verbintenis met *Situation Management Systems* in die VSA dien vermeld te word. Met hulle bestaan daar reeds sedert 1982 'n samewerkingsooreenkoms om sekere programme in Suid Afrika te bemark. Die geleentheid wat ek gehad het om met groot geeste soos David Berlew en Alex Moore op die terrein van program-ontwikkeling te kon saamwerk, was vormend en verrykend.

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Hierdie navorsing handel oor 'n suksesvolle transformasie binne 'n organisasie. So is die lewe ook 'n transformasie, 'n deurlopende proses van leer vir die wat gewillig is om te leer. In dit alles is God ook besig om ons gedagtes en optrede te slyp (Rom 12:2) vir die lewe wat vir ons voorlê. Daarom bring ek graag die eer aan Hom vir hierdie groot genade.

Sep Serfontein

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SUMMARY

ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION:

A QUANTUM LEAP FROM THE TRADITIONAL TO THE ENTREPRENEURIAL

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Today's global business environment requires organisations to adapt to increasingly complex technological, economic, political and cultural changes. Environmental turbulences are characterized by perceived dynamisms, hostility and complexity.

Organisations respond to this turbulence in many different ways. The popular ones involve outsourcing, leasing and renting, shorter product life cycles, downsizing and cost-cutting. Others enter into joint ventures, alliances, mergers and acquisitions. Popular response often result in more problems than profits; and on average the success rate of alliances and mergers is a meagre 53%. To go beyond improving an organisation's performance incrementally or entering into contractual alliances, activities need to be directed at the basic character of an organisation. Such changes are referred to as organisational transformations and imply fundamental changes to the way people perceive, think and behave at work.

Transformational change involves changing the different features of an organisation such as processes, structure, information systems, human resource practices and culture in a coordinated way. It is a transition from a control-based to a commitment-based organisation. The outcome is often the emergence of new organisational forms. These forms are mostly distinguishable by an emphasis on bottom-up entrepreneurship and a reliance on a cooperative network to allow for competencies to be shared.

The aim of this research is to conceptualise a transformational process and model for changing a traditional, functional organisation to a high performance, entrepreneurial unit in a corporate environment.

To achieve the aim a qualitative research study was conducted, which consisted of a survey of relevant literature and a case study. The literature review was performed to understand changes in today's business environment, the characteristics of an entrepreneurial organisation and the dynamics organisational change. The case study portrays the organisational transformation which occurred at Schumann-Sasol (Pty) Ltd over the period 1997 to 2003. The case study is a holistic picture of the transformation within its specific context and was guided by four research questions:

- Why was a transformation necessary?
- How was the transformation managed?
- What role did the project team and the consultant play in championing the transformation?
- What role did leadership play in championing the transformation?

The transformational model which emerged from the research is composed of nine explicit phases, spread over two distinct periods of the transformation: the period when the consultant-project team alliance championed the change, and the period when the new MD as entrepreneurial leader, championed the change.

The research generated sufficient evidence to conclude that Schumann-Sasol, redefined itself as an entrepreneurial unit in the Sasol Corporate environment. Distinguishing characteristics were its strategy, structure, new products and markets, management processes, systems human resources practices, culture and leadership. During the period of the transformation performance in EBIT terms increased from of R3.09 m to R187.70 m. Several key success factors characterized the transformational process: the transformation was strategy-driven; it was mainly a people process; the right measure of entrepreneurial leadership was involved; organisational learning formed an integral part; values were successfully entrenched, ownership and risk were shared and high energy levels were sustained.

Many of these learnings could find application in other transformations. Some of these are of particular importance to the South African context, and the way organisational change is being managed.

In the broader context the study proves that transformational change can unlock the potential synergies hidden in a merger, even where different national cultures are involved. The research is particularly valuable because of the meticulous way in which the process of transformational change was mapped, variables were identified and dynamics observed and interpreted. It also highlights the strategic role of the Human Resources function and the practices of Organisational Psychology in a transformation. Through these practices people's perceptions, thinking and behaviour can change fundamentally to become a key factor in the attainment of a quantum leap in performance.