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The role of sense-making in working across internal interfaces in a multi-national organisation

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Degree of Doctor of Business Administration

by
Miranda Bromley

Henley Business School
University of Reading
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Abstract
The role of sense-making in working across internal interfaces in a multi-national organisation

In a world of accelerated pace and increased globalisation, managers are responding with organisation designs that are often matrix managed, geographically diverse and reliant on interdependency between groups. Interfaces are a fundamental part of that design. The ability to work across both internal and external interfaces has become increasingly important, but rather than utilising diversity and collaboration to the organisations advantage, it is often an inhibiting tension; a place where teams get "stuck". In today's complex environment managers are interested in identifying the drivers which enable effective action across internal interfaces.

This thesis seeks to identify the components of an effective interface and explores the role of sense-making as an enabler or inhibitor in working between groups and creating effective movement across internal interfaces. In exploring the topic it asks three key questions: Why do teams get stuck at the interface? What holds them there? What might help create movement?

Considered from a complexity perspective, which acknowledges the messy, unpredictable and non-linear nature of organisations; it takes a phenomenological and interpretive approach. It employed a 'bricolage' approach as a means of researching in this context; which pragmatically uses multiple tools and methodologies. The primary methodology used was that of a Case Study, where three case studies were conducted in the same multi national organisation. These provide an empirical view of different types of interfaces in their day to day context. It took an Action Research orientation as the author worked with teams at organisational interfaces in exploring how they might work together more effectively. A semi Grounded Theory approach was taken for data analysis.

The thesis presents six core findings. The first two findings relate to interface effectiveness; namely that: the components of inter- team effectiveness have the same basis as team effectiveness, and secondly that interface effectiveness might be considered a variant of team effectiveness but can be differentiated from 'boundary spanning' These two findings enabled the development of a framework to consider interface effectiveness. A further four findings related to sense- making at the interface; these were that there are a number of key triggers at the interface where

sense giving and sense making occur; that there is a critical interplay between sense giving and sense-making at the interface which can enable or impede action. This can be seen both in terms of hierarchical sense giving and peer to peer sense giving and making. The fifth finding concluded that although sense-making is a live and dynamic process happening in the moment; there is a time lag between sense-making and sense-giving which needs to be appreciated. Finally this research supports findings elsewhere that skills in dialogue and narrative are key enablers in the sense-making process.

The thesis concludes with a discussion of the study limitations and identifies areas for future research.

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Interface Challenge

In a world of accelerated pace and increased globalisation, managers are responding with organisation designs that are often matrix managed, geographically diverse and reliant on interdependency between groups. Interfaces are a fundamental part of that design. An interface is defined as '*a common boundary or connection between two parts of the same system*' (Chambers, 1988).

The ability to work across both internal and external interfaces has become increasingly important, but rather than utilising diversity and collaboration to the organisations advantage, it is often an inhibiting tension. Time and potential (of share or innovation) lost at a poorly managed interface can run into millions of dollars. In today's complex environment, managers are interested in identifying the drivers which enable effective action across internal interfaces. '*Ultimately the acid test of organisational integration lies in the collective action*' (Ghoshal & Gratton, 2002 p.35). Research is emerging which attempts to look at the impact of working across both internal and external boundaries (Gratton, 2007) and how tensions such as local / global dynamics play out (Hope Hailey et al., 2005). For as organisation executives' attempt to achieve the benefits of global scale, synergy and local adaptability, collective action needs to work with the inherent tensions of two seemingly different sets of objectives and priorities.

1.2 Journey to the Question

The start point of this thesis was a curiosity as to why groups of people get stuck; where rather than resolving issues they circle endlessly in a debate without moving forward. The problem I observe is a phenomenon where teams expend enormous energy (and time and money) in a paradox of movement without achieving the desired objectives. There are numerous conversations across internal interfaces (be they cross-functional, cross- team or cross-region) where the outcome is often one of 'stuckness' (Luscher & Lewis, 2008). Despite seemingly good intent or apparent common objectives, the conversations don't result in action or goal achievement but rather inertia, dysfunction and even animosity.

Teams are a collection of people, who are interdependent on each other to achieve collective aims (Smith & Berg, 1987, Gratton, 2007). Tensions appear amplified when

two or more teams come together, each with their own group agendas, priorities and perspectives. Smith & Berg (1987 p.636) ask the question; what is it that gets a group stuck and unstuck and what is it about people in groups that contribute to such apparently self defeating cycles?

Their example is one that resonates with what I observe in my practice;

> '*when subgroups form, it is most common for each side to describe its actions as being caused by the other sides and for the only way for the situation to alter is if the other were to alter its behaviour. ....Each side abdicates responsibility for its own actions and makes the other the 'cause'.* (p.649)

Argyris et al. (1985), also consider what it means to be 'stuck';

> '*From the participants perspective it means that they cannot find a move from their repertoire of skills that yields the acceptable consequences.' (P.319)*

I have worked for several years as an internal Organisation Development consultant in large global organisations; working with groups both as part of their on-going agendas and during organisational change. The phenomena of 'stuckness' is one that has intrigued me since completing my master's degree. My dissertation explored what generated change or persistence in organisations when faced with significant re-organisation. What emerged was the theme of 'stuckness'; of an inability to move from intent into action. As managers face new and often complex challenges existing approaches seemed insufficient.

> '*Problems are tough because they are complex in three ways. They are dynamically complex, which means that cause and effect are far apart in time and space, and so are hard to grasp from first hand experience. They are generatively complex, which means that they are unfolding in unfamiliar and unpredictable ways. And they are socially complex which means that the people involved see things very differently, and so the problem becomes polarized and stuck.'(Kahane, 2004 p.1)*

What I noticed in my current organisation was that 'stuckness' appeared most prevalent at interfaces. There were two dimensions to what I was noticing; the first was a consequence of problematic relationships; the second was a locational one; that in complex organisations, deeper organisational contradictions such as structures and ambitions emerged at 'weak points', such as interfaces.

The questions I asked myself tended to be around 'sense-making'; what was happening in the way the two groups were making sense of each other and their mutual ambitions that were resulting in the inertia or conflict being experienced? But as I started my research it became apparent that this question was premature, there

was another that preceded it; why do teams get stuck at the interface? In starting to understand what elements create an effective interface, only then could I ask what helps create movement and consider sense making as part of that answer.

1.3 The Research Question

The topic of this thesis is the role of sense making in working with the tensions across internal interfaces in a multinational organisation. In exploring the topic it asks three key questions: Why do teams get stuck at the interface? What holds them there? What might help create movement?

For the organisation in question, the ability to manage internal interfaces was seen as a core organisational capability. A major reorganisation had taken place two years prior to conducting this research. Eighteen months into the change it was recognised that its interfaces, especially those between its key marketing functions, were a weak link. In some areas the participants were struggling to work effectively together to achieve organisational objectives and were stuck in on-going tensions as to who did what, where authority lay and indeed what their collective strategy and implementation plan was. The brands in any of these country / category combinations were worth multi-millions of pounds and improvements in profits, share or efficiency would reap benefits to the organisation.

A series of workshops were developed by the author to address this issue. These became the subject of the first case study. Workshops were carried out at ten key interfaces. Following its success, the initiative was also applied to interfaces elsewhere in the organisation and become the subjects of the second and third case studies.

1.4 Overview of the thesis

This research might appear as two theses: one that addresses the components of interface effectiveness and the other on sense making however both are part of answering the overarching question: Why do teams get stuck at the interface and what holds them there? In doing so, it helps answer the core question: What is the role of sense- making at internal interfaces?

The introduction provided over the next two pages is intended as a means of navigating what is quite a broad thesis and to provide some explanation upfront as to

the challenges and choices in terms of methodology and research approach. It also outlines the key findings.

The Philosophical Framework

This section describes both the context of the research, defines boundaries and interfaces and suggests why complexity might be an appropriate lens to explore them. Much research on sense making is conducted from social constructionist ontology (Campbell, 2000, Weick, 1995) dealing with perspectives rather than absolutes. But here I have taken a complexity lens. Indeed complexity might be considered by some as a form of social constructionism (Burnes, 2004). It is a lens that doesn't lend itself to reductionism and takes a more holistic approach to a situation. It acknowledges the unpredictable and non-linear nature of organisations. Complexity Theory became of interest to organisational sciences during the 1990's, (Stacey, 1992, Hock, 1999, Brown and Eisenhardt, 1997, Anderson, 1999) and was a move away from the cause and effect and predictability of more traditional management thinking (e.g. Porter, 1980).

An important consideration in viewing the interface from a complexity perspective is that it focuses attention on what is happening in the 'here and now' of the interaction. In effect in complexity terms the 'bifurcation point' (Capra, 1997) is 'the interface'. It is also worthwhile noting that often in complexity language interfaces are more commonly described as boundaries. A dictionary definition (Chambers, 1988) defines a boundary as a '*border or limit'* and an interface as '*a common boundary or connection between two parts of the same system*' I will explore the distinction between the two in both sections 2 & 3.

Literature Review

In addition to the literature on complexity thinking, the breadth of the research topic necessitated literature reviews into three other core areas; boundaries, sense making and team effectiveness. The thesis took an emergent and inductive approach, using semi Grounded Theory as means of data analysis. As a consequence of this, although some of the literature was reviewed prior to the commencement of the research project (the nature of the DBA course structure required a significant literature review as part of its Stage 1 requirements), much was done in parallel to conducting the research. It followed an iterative pattern whereby data suggested the need for further

inquiry into the literature. As a result, there is a relatively short section reviewing the literature at the beginning of this thesis, rather it is discussed extensively in combination with the findings; again consistent with a Grounded Theory approach.

Methodology

One of the challenges of this research was that, being based in the day to day workings of an organisation; it was hard to apply the traditional methodological rigour that might be conducted in a more easily controlled environment. The approach taken was more of a 'bricolage'; pragmatically using multiple tools and methods to make sense of the question being posed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The primary method used was that of Case Study (Yin, 2003, Stake, 1995) where three case studies were conducted within the same organisation. These provide an empirical view of different types of interfaces in their day to day context. I also took an Action Research orientation. I have deliberately described this as an orientation rather than method as, although the workshops themselves drew on several aspects of Action Research, the ultimate research questions were being addressed by me as opposed to the group. The research approach also links to a complexity ontology where there was a cycle of experimentation and then an amplification of what worked. A semi Grounded Theory approach was taken for data analysis; semi only in the sense that there was a priori element to the literature review. Although as discussed in the section on methodology, the labelling as semi might not be necessary. It is felt that a *bricolage* of the three key methodologies described above provided an adequate degree of rigour and thoroughness.

Research Approach

The research was conducted over three case studies in my own organisation - a multi-national, where the questions being addressed were live concerns and thus formed part of on-going activities for both myself and the organisation.

Findings

The thesis presents six core findings. The first two findings relate to interface effectiveness. Namely that, the components of inter-team effectiveness have the same basis as team effectiveness and secondly, that interface effectiveness might be considered a variant of team effectiveness but can be differentiated from 'boundary

spanning'. These two findings enabled the development of a framework to consider interface effectiveness.

The model also highlighted where the triggers for sense making occurred as teams worked across the interface. A further four findings related to sense- making at the interface and might be considered theory elaboration to existing research. These were that there are a number of key triggers at the interface where sense giving and sense making occur; that there is a critical interplay between sense giving and sense-making at the interface which can enable, or impede, action. This can be seen both in terms of hierarchical sense giving and peer to peer sense giving and making. Another finding was that although sense-making is a live and dynamic process happening in the moment, there is a time lag between sense-making and sense-giving which needs to be appreciated. Finally this research supports findings elsewhere that skills in dialogue and narrative are key enablers in the sense-making process.

Reflections on Practice & Impact

In addition to the six findings there is a final section which reflects on my practice itself and my learning from the challenges of researching within a dynamic business organisation. The distinguishing feature of a DBA as opposed to a PhD. is that it is a practice-based doctorate. Therefore it is appropriate to spend some time both on reflecting on practice and of my reflections on my *reflection-in-action* (Schön, 1983); on my experiences of the case studies and the interplay of the emotional, relational and political dynamics that impacted on both the workshops and my practice. Also consistent with the sentiments of Action Research, the research will have had an impact on me and me on the research. This section reflects, from my perspective, on the workshops action in practice and my own practice in action. The final part of this section considers the impact of this research on the organisation.

Conclusions

Within the concluding section I consider both the limitations and the contributions of this thesis. I draw together the implications this research has on practice and how the findings might be applied in organisations. I also suggest the areas from this research that I might take forward in the future.

Summary of Research Approach

The Questions: Why do teams get stuck at the interface? What holds them there? What might help to create movement? What is the role of sense making in working across internal interfaces?			
Ontological Framework	**Literature Review**	**Methodology**	**Research design**
Complexity	Complexity Boundaries Team Effectiveness Sense-making	Case Studies – multiple in a single organisation Action Research orientation Semi Grounded Theory Bricolage approach	Three case studies involving 13 workshops Data collection - Questionnaires - Observations - Interviews Emergent coding – development of a coding framework

Findings:
Interface Effectiveness
1. Interface effectiveness shares the same components as team effectiveness although the emphasis and execution differs slightly. The findings provide a framework through which interface effectiveness can be considered.
2. Interface effectiveness can be considered as a variant of team effectiveness but differentiated from 'boundary spanning'

Sense making
3. There are a number of key triggers at the interface where sense giving and sense making occur.
4**.** There is a critical interplay (peer to peer & hierarchical) between sense giving & sense-making at the interface which enables or impedes action.
5. Although sense- making is dynamic there is a time lag between sense-making and sense-giving
6. Skills in dialogue and narrative are key enablers in the sense-making process.

Reflections in and on practice
Reflections in and on practice in researching in a dynamic business organisation

Conclusions
These consider the contributions and limitations of this research project; the applicability of the findings to practice and suggested future research

Table 1 – Summary of Research Approach

Glossary

I am conscious that throughout this thesis there will be a number of terms were it would be beneficial to provide further explanation, Appendix 1, provides further elaboration on terms and abbreviations being used in this text.

Appendices

There are a substantial number of appendices. They include a number of tables providing a more detailed analysis of the four core areas reviewed in the literature section, illustrative examples from the case study material, including sample interview documents and an example story of a workshop; and details of coding tables and analysis.

2: Context, Complexity and Philosophy

An anchor for any piece of research is its philosophical lens. For it is this which underpins how the research question is addressed and how choices are made around methods and design. This section seeks to explain why a complexity lens was taken as opposed to the more obvious social constructionist view. It considers complexity as a theory and why it is relevant to the challenges of 'stuckness'. The section endeavours to provide a frame and context for the research.

2:1 Context

Organisations are becoming more complex in terms of agendas, speed, technologies and geographies, so that we find old ways are less likely to work (Shirky, 2008). In the past, many problems faced by organisations might have been complicated but resolution could be reached through analysis using the appropriate technical expertise. Through the late 1980's and 90's there was a more holistic appreciation and acknowledgement of the interdependency of all parts of the system (Senge 1990). However, in both cases the tendency was to discover 'the right' answer and to deal with problems as manageable questions (Snowdon, 2002). Increasingly, organisations are moving from situations where the issues and the actors in them are known and the process to reach the required actions established - to one where existing approaches are inadequate.

> '*A problem has low social complexity if people who are part of the problem have common assumptions, values, rationales and objectives. ... A problem has high social complexity if the people involved look at things very differently*' (Kahane 2004 p.*31/32)*

It is not that every problem in an organisation is complex or that every situation is paradoxical, but as well as having to contend with both simple and complicated questions, today's leaders have also to work with complex issues and have inadequate strategies to do so. As organisations are being faced with big complex challenges, they are finding that the existing order cannot hold the tensions.

The topic being researched here, that of working across internal interfaces is one such complex situation.

The organisation in question is a large multi-national. In the past the organisation has been managed in a de-centralised way, whereby local parts of the business had

autonomy as to how they resolved issues, often quite independently of any other part of the organisation. In response to the changing competitive environment and with a need for greater speed of innovation, tighter focus, lower costs and increased profits, the organisation underwent significant reorganisation about two years prior to the start of this research. As with many change processes it was a period of intense organisational anxiety and destabilisation (Balogun & Johnson, 2004). For the organisation in question the anxiety was especially pronounced as there was a fundamental shift in how the organisation was structured, which completely changed existing power bases. At the heart of this shift was a global - local dynamic creating tensions around power, identity, decision making, roles and responsibilities.

An impact of that reorganisation was an increase in the number of interfaces. By their very nature, the groups have different agendas, membership and aspirations. The interface between them is inherently a place of tension. The reorganisation was designed with the aspiration that such tension might be a source of innovation and growth; however what was emerging at the time of this research was that many internal interfaces had become a place of confusion and anxiety and had become a 'weak link' in how the organisation operated.

Where in the past teams were more homogenous, the global - local dynamic emerging through the reorganisation, brought with it a new tension of heterogeneous membership and multiple perspectives (Fambrough & Comerford, 2006). Tensions manifest themselves with differences of opinions, for example, on decision rules, pricing strategies and brand equity; with global vs. local ambitions coming to the fore. Not all the inertia was due to complexity, some were residual issues from the change process the teams had undergone in the last two years, where people were still coming to terms with new roles and responsibility. Others were more complicated and needed deeper analysis but were resolvable. A few of these problems however were complex and did not have straight-forward answers. As described in the introduction, the inability to hold with complex tensions resulted in a spiral of binary debates and an inevitable 'stuckness', where some teams were unable to move forward successfully. Instead the same agenda items would come back time and again or sub-optimal solutions were developed.

As an O.D. practitioner in the organisation, my challenge was to look at the most pressing interface problems between two parts of the marketing organisation (Section 5 provides further details of these). The initial brief was one of trying to find clarity

on roles and responsibilities and some outstanding 'grey areas' around processes and decision rules. However, as the situation developed the brief became broader to one that looked at how teams could work better together at 'the interface'. A series of workshops were developed to address this issue. These also became the subject of the first case study.

The need for these workshops occurred at a time I was developing my research proposal. The opportunity to use them as part of my research was serendipitous. The dual role of practitioner / researcher, its challenges, opportunities and impact on the research, is reflected on in Sections 4 & 7, but it is worth noting here these factors, and the fact that in my role as an O.D Director, I had, in effect been given 'permission to act', all had an impact on how the research was approached.

The workshops provided an opportunity to inquire into the nature of an interface and better understand the dimensions and patterns of behaviour which helped it to be effective. How to work with the heterogeneity and pluralism within such groups begged questions as to how they were making sense, both of their particular context and each others, as they worked through some of the complex challenges they needed to address. The purpose of the research was therefore to understand the elements that contributed to an effective interface and specifically to understand the role of sense making in working with the tensions at internal interfaces in such a way that might help such groups move forward rather than get caught up in a pattern of inertia.

In addition to the workshops described above, two additional case studies explored interfaces within different parts of the organisation.

There is an increasing recognition that mainstream management thinking is inadequate when dealing with complex problems and paradoxes (Trompenaars, 2007). In such circumstances, old approaches no longer appear to serve us well. With this movement in organisational thinking, it would appear a timely management question to try to understand how a shift in lens might impact the way sense is made. How might taking a complexity lens shed new insights as to how to address the challenges described above? Might Fitzgerald's claim that complexity thinking can be seen as *'the science of twenty-first century management'* (2002 p.34) be applicable here?

2.2 Complexity Theories

Based on a number of theories from the natural sciences such as chaos and complex adaptive systems, complexity theory became of interest to organisational sciences during the 1990's, (Stacey, 1992, Hock, 1999, Brown and Eisenhardt, 1997), where it started to emerge as an organisational theory (see Appendix 2).

The emergent, messy and unpredictable nature of complexity and its notion of disequilibrium was a move away from the cause and effect of more traditional management thinking (e.g. Porter, 1980) and a shift away from predictability and control. As Shaw (1998 p.40) notes: *'planning was no longer an activity prior to an intervention but a continual assessment of emerging conditions'*. Rather than see the parts as separate independent entities, the focus of complexity thinking is on the holistic and interdependent nature of the entire system.

There is no single view or framework for complexity theories. Burnes (2004 p.159) offers three basic concepts: the nature of chaos and order; the 'edge of chaos' and order generating rules. Other academics might choose to segment them slightly differently and highlight other aspects, however here I will use Burnes' categorisation and incorporate elements such as paradox and disequilibrium into it. Briefly the key themes they contain are as follows:

Chaos and order describes the co-existence of two paradoxical states (Fitzgerald, 2002, Pascale et al., 2000), from whence, despite seeming randomness, order and coherence will emerge from the independent actions of the members of the group.

A Model of a Complex System
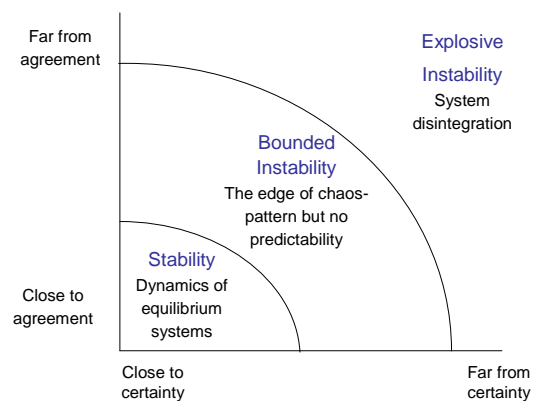
Critchley W. 1999 Unpublished. Based on Stacey

Figure 1- Model of a complex system

Although not always overt, there is a patterning of the structuring and social processes within a group (Goodwin 1994), which provides a push towards order and is an almost gravitational pull in a system, (Stacey, 1992, 2001, Griffin 2002).

This is shown in Figure 1, based on Stacey's (1993) work and developed by Critchley (1999).

Whereas stability demonstrates the dynamics of equilibrium systems, which is known and predictable and chaos systems show disintegration, in the area of bounded instability there are patterns but no predictability. Patterns are often described as 'the way we do things around here' and provide a means of creating order, providing the habitual routine responses to everyday occurrences and interactions amongst agents (Anderson, 1999). It is through the structuring of everyday actions and language that shared and differentiated meanings are made that enable or hinder human experiences (Woodilla, 1998).

It is the breaking of patterns that is of interest at 'the edge of chaos'. Many authors (Shaw, 2002, Capra, 1997, 2002, Stacey, 2001, Wheatley, 1992) reflect on the 'moments of choice' within a system where either chaos or order will occur at bifurcation points, which are critical points of instability. As complex systems operate over time, tiny fluctuations or changes can result in a bifurcation. At a bifurcation point the system has gone beyond a point where it can remain stable. Shaw (1998 p.30) comments that: '*At each bifurcation point the future of the system is essentially unpredictable; it depends both on its own unique history and on the presence of minute random fluctuations'.* It is a point where a system can take on a new direction and dependent on whether the shifts are amplified or suppressed can result in novelty, chaos or indeed can move back to order. Noticing weak signals, (Snowdon, 2006) and amplifying and dampening feedback (Pascale et al., 2000), all highlight the importance of tiny movements within the system which can result in movement.

The 'edge of chaos', is also known as 'bounded instability' (Stacey 1992, 2001), and is as much a place of transition between order and chaos and a container or frame between two entities, as an actual boundary. Interestingly here the system can fluctuate between two states and thus it is a place where two parts of a paradox can exist simultaneously. In her thesis, Shaw (1998 p.43) notes that successful organisations must be operating in conditions of bounded instability, in which order and disorder co-exist and that only such non-equilibrium systems are capable of

amplifying small fluctuations without suffering system disintegration. Unlike models such as the 'congruence model', (Nadler and Tushman, 1997) which looks for alignment and organisational fit, the 'edge of chaos' appreciates disequilibrium. There is a link to sense making here; in that most sense-making occurs when there is a break in the expected and individuals are not able to understand within their existing patterns or frames of reference (Weick, 1995).

The final concept highlighted by Burnes (2004a) was that of order generating rules, which provide minimum structures for maximum flexibility (Prigogine, 1997, Mackintosh & McLean, 1999, Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997, Lichtenstein et al., 2006) thus allowing improvisation and spontaneous adaptation within a loose framework (Barrett, 1998). There is a constraining element to the 'edge of chaos', which is reflected upon by Mackintosh & MacLean (1999), who consider the focus at the 'edge of chaos' to be on issues such as instability, interconnectedness and spontaneous self organising; whereas, they are interested in dissipative structures which they perceive as having a broader focus and concerned with deep rules (e.g. mathematical simulations), structures and organisational processes. They consider that, whilst emergent structures cannot be predicted, the range of possibilities is contained within a simple set of rules, applied to generate the new order.

But order generating rules are a common theme across complexity thinkers, irrespective of a focus on either the 'edge of chaos' or 'dissipative structures'. They explain how complex non linear systems manage to maintain themselves at the 'edge of chaos'. Such rules permit a degree of chaos whilst still providing relative order.

The theories around complexity therefore offer three core themes which might be used to provide a different lens when considering organisations: the nature of order and chaos and from that tension the emergence of patterns; the 'edge of chaos' as a place of disequilibrium, where small fluctuations offer 'moments of choice'; and finally order generating rules which provide minimum structure for maximum flexibility.

2.3 Philosophy

Having looked at the context in which the research question sits and considered the literature on complexity theories, I would now like to address why complexity might

be an appropriate lens for this research and how such a lens might impact both on my approach to the research and the interpretation of findings. In order to do that, it feels timely to explain how I am defining both interfaces and boundaries. Although the literature behind these is considered in more detail in the next section, I briefly describe my definition below.

The *Cambridge Dictionary on line*, distinguishes between interfaces and boundaries as follows: interface – *'a situation, way or place where two things come together and affect each other'* and boundary - *'a real or imagined line which marks the edge or limit of something'.*

At its most simple level there are boundaries around things and the interface is the point at which the boundaries between two entities are crossed. In relation to the case studies in this research, the entities that are 'the teams' might be seen to have a boundary around each of them, such that they are regarded as two separate units. Although this boundary can be considered as both arbitrary and fluid (Reason & Hawkins 1988) in terms of who or what it includes, it is a means of providing an identity within its borders and a distinction from those outside them. In relation to the teams being researched, the boundary of the team provides distinctions in terms of what they do, where they are located and the membership. The interface is seen as the space where the two entities come together and affect each other. Temporally or spatially there is an overlap or connection of significance where there is movement between the two parts. It is this dynamic space between and movement across that is of interest. That two teams or groups connect does not mean that a new boundary is created, rather that there is a patterning of exchanges, sometimes with a regular rhythm, sometimes ad-hoc. In complexity terms, these moments might be seen as bifurcation points which provide a source of fractal patterns. It is not necessarily a constant connection; rather it is an iterative process as new team members join or tasks are added and issues that need to be addressed across the interface change. As described earlier, if considering the interface as 'the edge of chaos', then it is a place of transition where tensions are held between paradoxes such as stability and change, with both sides co-existing simultaneously.

The activity of interest at the interface in this research is that of sense making and how the teams understand each other. Of interest is how they make sense of their context and any mutual agenda in order to move forward with whatever objective they

are both tasked with. There is a line of sight through boundaries to sense making and interface effectiveness. Tensions and differences tend to occur at the boundary, where there are different histories, perspectives and ambitions. An interface is the point where two entities or groups meet. Sense making is an enabler to working effectively with those differences. As will be examined in the Literature Review in the next section, location, language and relationships can all contribute to creating boundaries between groups, which can inhibit their ability to make effective sense. How two (or more) groups are able to make sense of their differences at that meeting point will influence how effectively they can work together, and thus contribute to team and interface effectiveness. The specific focus of this research is not on boundary spanning activity, be it internal or external, which tends to be a one way transfer of information; but rather interfaces where the two groups are charged with mutual objectives. They therefore not only have to make sense of information from 'the other', but also have to be able to work with 'the other' to act upon it. (This distinction is explored in Finding 2).

The choice of a complexity lens in order to help explore this situation is considered below. Of importance is the holistic nature of the lens. There is a need to acknowledge the pluralistic and equivocal nature of the context in which the research is being played out. Bortoft (1996) considers:

> '*A part is only a part according to the emergence of the whole which it serves; otherwise it is mere noise. At the same, the whole does not dominate, for the whole cannot emerge without the parts*' (p11)

In a complex world where a simple cause and effect relationship is insufficient to understand the vagaries of modern organisations, the whole is not just the sum of the parts, but the sum of the parts plus the relationship between them that make up the whole. Fambrough & Comerford (2006 p.342) argue that most group theory is rooted in organicism which, although useful in homogenous groups, is less applicable in today's world with heterogeneous membership and where multiple perspectives demand a contextual approach. The subject matter of this proposal is about the space between, rather than a single entity or another. It is this relationship that is of significance. The importance is the inter-subjective, interdependent and pluralistic nature of organisational life and the significance of interactions and relationships (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000).

But this in itself does not distinguish why the lens should be complexity, as opposed to social constructionism. As with post modernist thinking (e.g. Gergen, 1991, 1999, Campbell, 2000) complexity thinkers consider the very nature of organising as a process that emerges out of the multitude of interactions of its members. In many ways the two lenses can be seen as complementary, Burnes (2004a, 2004b) observes that complexity might be seen as a variant of post modernism. Appendix 5 highlights the overlap between the literature on complexity, sense making and boundaries. Indeed many of the techniques used in research from a complexity lens such as dialogue are also within the usual repertoire for research from a social constructionist perspective.

The focus for social constructionists appears to be emergence through language. Chia (1995, 1999 p.219) talks of heterogeneous '*becomings*' rather than a linear, progressive and homogeneous unfolding; Robichaud et al. (2004 p.618) consider that '*organisation emerges in the interactive exchanges of its members*' and Montomi & Purser 1999 p.138) believe '*it is the way words are used within the dynamic ensemble of social relations that determines meaning*'. In effect '*organisation is a day to day social accomplishment arising out of a network of micro conversations*' (Grant et al. 1998 p. 11).

Although language is fundamental to the process of sense making and undoubtedly plays a significant role in this thesis, the difference of focus with complexity authors (Shaw, 2002, Capra, 1997, 2002, Stacey, 2001, Wheatley, 1992) appears to be their reflection on the importance of tiny movements within the system and the 'moments of choice' where either chaos or order will occur at a 'bifurcation' point, which are critical points of instability. Indeed more recent work on complex responsive processes (Stacey & Griffin, 2005 p.33) are moving away from a 'holistic' focus and the production of a whole and towards the process of relating and working with local interactions to understand the patterns of interrelating, which are on going and produce more patterns. It is this patterning of the interrelating that is of interest. Whilst sense making will provide the movement through language, the complexity lens will help focus on the interface and pay attention to the weak signals that help create movement across it. It will pay attention to tensions, constraints and paradoxes.

In summary complexity is an interesting lens to consider the topic, both from the perspective of the interface itself and the activity of sense making at the interface because:

a. It provides insights into how movement happens at the 'edge of chaos' and the patterning of small fluctuations which is of relevance to teams working at the interface.

b. Understanding order generating rules helps work within the constraints in the system.

c. The boundary is a location for tension and difference. To understand difference and unleash potential novelty, organisations need to be able to work at the boundary and make sense of its inherent tensions.

d. The notion of disruption is an important insight for sense making; what happens as a consequence of the disturbance can result in either persistence or change. In disturbing the system, existing frames of reference and perceptions are loosened thereby providing the potential for a new sense to emerge.

e. Paradox is inherent in a system. But instead of viewing it as a compromise between two conflicting views; by reframing their simultaneous existence as two complementary sides of the 'same coin', we can shift the meaning we attribute to them and enhance our ability to generate greater understanding.

But what will the impact be of using a complexity lens? How might it influence the way I work with the research question, the methodologies I choose, the research design and the interpretations themselves?

a. From the perspective of the question it is the shift from 'stuckness' to movement that is of interest. As described above, of interest are the insights from how such movement is viewed from the 'edge of chaos' through the constant tension between paradoxical states.

b. From a methodological perspective the need is for techniques which are holistic, emergent and appreciate the uniqueness of the context. It requires methods which are able to hold with tensions and paradoxes rather than driving towards a binary solution. As such the methods sought are likely to be those which enable an inquiry into the 'here and now' of the situation and endeavour to pick up 'weak signals' in such conversations.

c. Of all aspects it is probably the design of the research approaches that is most impacted by the complexity lens. It is here that it comes to life in the actual moments of the research. How something is looked at will impact what is noticed, which in turn will impact how the data is interpreted. The design focused on conversations emerging in the 'here and now' through a series of workshops. In many ways it replicated the 'edge of chaos' where participants were working live across the interface. The workshops (which are described in more detail in Section 5) took a dialogical approach and deliberately looked to hold with the tensions and paradox in the room - trying to explore rather than defuse differences. Central to such a design is the role of the facilitator (practitioner) in the workshops.

d. The role of the researcher as practitioner; as a key influence in how the methodology is put into practice, is explored in more detail in Section 4. It recognises the huge influence and impact such a role can have. In particular the practitioners' world view will focus on where attention is paid in the room; what comments are amplified and explored and whether weak signals are noticed as well as how they manage the constraints (power, politics) manifest in the workshop itself. Obviously the ability to do this will depend on skill and experience, but the intentionality will be driven by the practitioners' own paradigm. As a practitioner, there are two aspects when using a complexity lens that will be of particular relevance in this context. The first is the ability to help the participants hold with the tension and anxiety of paradox. The second is managing my own anxiety as a practitioner / researcher around emergence. Although I might have an intentionality or direction of inquiry I will need to be open to what emerges in the 'here and now' of the intervention.

e. Finally, the paradigm will have an impact on how the data is interpreted. As with the activity in the workshops, it is also about holding with ambiguity and not searching for closure too quickly. Rather it is looking for weak signals and amplifying them, something which was of particular relevance in Finding 5.

In summary, this section has considered the context in which the research is situated. It has suggested that using the lens of complexity theory might offer new insights as to how to view a complex phenomenon. It then explores the literature behind complexity theories before suggesting why it is an appropriate lens for the topic and how it might impact the way the research is conducted.

3. Literature Review

Boundaries & Interfaces, Sense Making & Team Effectiveness

3.1 Overview of Literature

This section reviews the literature pertaining to the three key aspects of my research; the element under analysis, **interfaces** (or boundaries) and the activity at the interface; **sense-making** and finally that of **team effectiveness.**

This literature review might appear quite small; there are two explanations for this. Firstly, much of the detailed comparison is shown in the appendices. Secondly and more significantly, because the methodology takes a semi Grounded Theory approach, much of the reflection on the literature is incorporated within the discussion on the findings.

The array of literature on team effectiveness and sense-making is substantial; there is a lesser, but not insignificant, amount of literature on the specific aspect of interfaces under consideration here; those of relational interfaces. It is important to highlight that although the studies of interfaces cover a number of types of boundaries, including external interfaces (Kraatz, 1998), technical interfaces and within this topics such as networks (Nelson, 1989, Adler & Kwon, 2002, Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994), they are not part of this inquiry.

It is not possible to do justice to the volume of literature on all of the core areas within this document. Rather, this review will focus its attention on some specific questions which draw the areas together. Summaries giving a more detailed review of each area are provided in the appendix (see Appendices 3 & 4) and further references to the literature will be made in conjunction with the findings. Appendix 5 demonstrates the links between the complexity lens described in the previous section and the literature on sense making and interfaces.

3.2 The Literature on Boundaries & Interfaces

My definition of boundaries and interfaces has been provided in the previous section. This section considers the literature pertaining to them.

The ability to work across boundaries might be seen as twofold. The first, identified by Ancona & Caldwell (2007 p.41) is their attempt to '*improve the co-ordination among the different functions in the organisation'…much of the delay…comes from*

the difficulty in coordinating the efforts of various groups'. The second is the way in which team work is used to bring in and exploit new knowledge.

As early as 1984, Gladstein was raising questions about boundary management:

> *'This finding poses a new set of questions for group researchers: What kinds of activities need to go across group boundaries? Who participates in these activities? Do these activities relate to performance? How do intra-group processes and boundary activities relate to one another?' (p. 513)*

But despite having defined the need for such boundary spanning activities, several academics comment on the challenges of establishing the required conditions of boundary management. Intra-team working is often conducted through institutionalised and routine activities in stable conditions, whereas across boundaries established patterns of working are not necessarily effective (Easterby-Smith et al. 2000). Often there is a reluctance to draw in from the outside:

> *'Most companies have developed an internal environment in which any form of doubt is perceived as ignorance or weakness and all forms of questioning are interpreted as either manipulation or affront'. (Gratton 2007 p. 139)*

The themes identified from the literature on boundaries can be found in Appendix 3; briefly the key aspects can be described as follows:

The theme of boundary spanning roles & functions dominated the literature (Cross & Prusak, 2002, Aldrick & Herker, 1977, Marrone et al., 2007, Sinha & Van de Van, 2005, Balogun et al., 2005). In their paper Ancona & Caldwell (2007 p.38) identify four distinct activities in dealing with other groups: 'ambassador' activities; representing the team and protecting it from, often upwards, interference; 'task coordinator'; communicating laterally rather than up the organisation; 'scouts', who go out from the team and bring back information from elsewhere and 'guard' who keep information and resources inside the group. Most literature on boundary spanning roles explores one or more of these activities. Associated with the roles individuals play at the boundary, is the theme of power. There is the power and status between boundary elements; power as centres of control and the hierarchical aspects of group regulation (e.g. Blaker & McDonald, 2000, Metieu, 2006, Perry & Angle, 1979, Ring & Van de Van, 1994). Balogun et al. (2005) research into 'boundary shakers' (internal change agents) considers that such agents need to mobilise power across three different dimensions: resources, processes and meaning. They also comment that, not only does a boundary shaker need to affect power, but they are

also constrained by the 'power of the system'; *power is not something that people 'possess', but rather something that exists relationally* (p.264).

A number of more recent articles consider the impact of both geographical and hierarchical boundaries (Yanow, 2004, Hinds & Mortensen, 2005, Eispinosa et al., 2003, Cross & Prusak, 2002, Black & Edwards, 2000, Hope Hailey et al., 2005). Yanow (2004) goes on to explore the double periphery in which the community of practitioners acts, across both a horizontal geographical periphery and a vertical hierarchical periphery. He comments on the tension where local knowledge (a contextual knowledge, learnt at these peripheries), is juxtaposed with technical or expert knowledge and often discounted by centrally located managers.

A final theme emerging in more recent literature is the movement away from certainty and the importance of boundary spanning within changing external contexts (Easterby et al., 2000, Black and Edwards 2000). Blacker and McDonald (2000) notice that team boundaries tend to be more fluid and that:

> *'Just as day-to-day priorities in the organisation often rapidly shifted, project ideas that once seemed feasible were quickly overtaken by new priorities and unforeseen problems…group boundaries and identities were rapidly changing in the company…'(p.844/845)*

Despite recent literature that indicates that boundaries are of increasing interest to organisations and recent work by Ancona & Caldwell (2007), who consider that performance can be affected by how a team manages its boundaries; they still remain somewhat elusive;

> *'As Bateson (1972) points out, all these boundaries are arbitrary, and it is a matter of choice where the inquirer applies the 'scissors'; the distinctions are necessary and useful but have no objective existence' (Reason & Hawkins, 1988 p.80).*

Given that the boundary or interface is the focus of analysis, it is important to understand the nature of a boundary and interface from three different perspectives: firstly, from the complexity perspective with the 'boundary' as the location of the 'edge of chaos'; secondly, from the perspective of sense making where the interface is seen as a communication act, and where difference is a perception created through language; and finally, from perspective of the interface as a relational entity 'between' groups.

3.2.1 'The Boundary' as a Location

The previous section (Section 2) explored the literature on complexity. Understanding the concept of boundary within that paradigm is important. '*Productive self organising requires boundaries, without them nihilism*' (Shaw, 1998 p.144), but understanding the location of a boundary appears more so, as Pascale et al. (2000) comment: '*Edges are important in life, in fact we are drawn to them... they define a frontier*'. He goes on to cite William Thompson: '*as long as one operates in the middle of things one can never really know the nature in which one moves*' (p.67). It is 'at the edge' that difference is noticed and tested.

The nature of boundary is at the heart of complexity thinking. The previous section described the 'edge of chaos' as a place of transition where two states are held simultaneously. The two states most frequently referred to are those of chaos and order (Stacey, 1993), but others would be the boundary between actors and the boundary between the formal and informal systems in an organisation (Shaw, 1997). As described earlier, (see Figure 1), of particular relevance is the notion of 'bounded instability' (Stacey, 2003). It is here that a dynamic tension exists between the known and unknown, (Stacey & Griffin, 2005) and in relation to the question of this thesis, movement or 'stuckness'. It is a place of dilemmas and contradictions. It is not: '*a bland halfway point between one extreme and another*' (Eisenhardt; 2000 p.*703).* Rather than balance, the 'edge of chaos' is a place of disequilibrium, where '*interpretive instability ... creates opportunities for changing aspects of identity*'. (Gioia et al., 2000 p.71)

The challenge when considering boundaries from a complexity view is that they are dynamic not static entities and therefore difficult to identify.

> '*The definition and location of a specific boundary may be possible only given a specific conceptual and empirical context*'. (Aldrich & Herker, 1977 p.218)

As Langfield Smith (1992) noticed, because of the different meanings different people attached to different entities boundaries were blurred. This is echoed by Wheatley (1992) who observes that:

> '*We live in a very fuzzy world, where boundaries have an elusive nature and seldom mean what we expect them to mean*'. (p 43)

This blurring of understanding leads to the second perspective on boundaries.

3.2.2 The Boundary as an Act of Communication

Whereas from a complexity perspective boundaries appear as a 'location', from a sense making lens they appear as a perception. Boundaries are frames created by ourselves because we want to observe or acknowledge a difference (Campbell, 2000 p.72). Conceptual boundaries help actors distinguish what belongs and what does not, thereby giving meaning to both sides of a polarity (Lewis 2000 p.762). A boundary, by its very definition provides a container within which some things are included and others excluded:

> '*It provided not only a sense of being an entity, but also contains the sense-making processes that continually shape and redefine in practice the individual group or organisation' (Vince & Broussine 1996 p.2).*

Language provides the container, so that '*all action is bound, contained and embedded within the cage of language'* (Marshak, 1998 p.24, citing Wittgenstein, 1968). Shared language and code are a way in which people access information and people within a group create 'common sense' between them. The shared language is reinforced by feedback (Pascale et al., 2000), thus creating a pattern, which reinforces repetition of a way of seeing or acting. '*Stereotypes, preconceptions and long established constructs… limit what gets noticed'* (McKenzie et al., 2007 p.7), rather than recognise the gap people '*fill it in from previous experience'*.

There is a tendency for people to interact with people with a same view as their own, thus reinforcing assumptions. Diversity is required to achieve a balance between identifying weak signals and old patterns, but even where there is diversity of thinking negative messages may be filtered out (Morrisin & Millikin, 2000). The editing of a 'story' in terms of written accounts is another means of filtering out an alternative view, so that minutes or archive documents become the 'legitimate' collective view (Boje, 1995). The evidence of the Allit report (Brown, 2000) highlights how an experienced group of medical staff failed to notice weak signals because they were seeing what they expected to find. Thus, shared language can restrict sense-making within a boundary by suppressing contradictions and difference between them (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998, Wheatley, 1992, Lewis, 2000). But it can also restrict the movement of meaning across a boundary, which is a key theme in Morgan's seminal (1986) work. Using the metaphor of organisations as flux, he examines Maturana and Varela's (1973) work on autopoesis, where its self referential process means that individuals within an organism (organisation) do not seek information outside of

itself, but rather convert it to their own form. In organisations, this can result in translated local knowledge being ignored or disparaged within the employing organisation (Yanow 2004 p.17). However, language is also a means to cut across boundaries (Bateson, 1972, Cunliffe, 2001, Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Stories and metaphor in particular are seen as:

> '*ways of crossing the boundaries of discourse to create a sufficient common sense to allow us to act within a context.'* (Cunliffe 2001:365).

Therefore telling a story can depersonalise an issue, providing participants an opportunity to look at an issue from a different lens, potentially allowing them to re-frame (Watzlawick et al. 1974).

3.2.3 The Boundary as a Relational Entity

Finally this question looks at the interface as a relational entity 'between' groups. Senge reflecting on a conversation with David Bohm, notes in his comments that:

> '*the most important thing going forward is to break the boundaries between people so that we can operate as a single intelligence'* (Senge et al 2005 p.189).

It provides a notion of separation without separateness.

Sense-making across boundaries continues to be of interest to researchers. A key finding in Gratton's recent publication (2007) is the ability of boundary spanning in the creation of innovation 'hotspots'. For her collaboration across boundaries is a critical success factor, she cites Zeldin:

> '*Conversation is a meeting of minds with different memories and habits. When minds meet they don't just exchange facts – they transform them, reshape them, draw different implications from them, engage in new trains of thought. Conversations don't just reshuffle the cards; they create new cards'* (p.108)

The perceived value of working across boundaries as opposed to within them is a shift from the exploitation of knowledge, to the exploration of knowledge in providing novel combinations (Gratton 2007 p.68). In considering interfaces, Palus et al (2003) also notice that complex challenges which defy existing approaches also typically '*sprawl across the boundaries of function, expertise…'* (p27). They provide a model, highlighting three key aspects: exploring complex challenges; supporting competent shared sense making; and practical leadership based on relational principles. Crossan et al's (1999) 4I model looks at internal boundaries from a different perspective and rather than seeing them as cross functional or geographical shows how learning occurs at individual, group and organisational level, with each level

informing the other. These are connected by four related processes; intuiting, interpreting, integrating and institutionalising, which are seen as glue binding the structure together. Of particular interest in this model is 'integrating' at group level, which focuses on shared meaning and of 'institutionalising' at an organisational level. Both of which are complementary to themes coming from sense making literature. Indeed the author notes that '*dialogue and joint action are crucial to the development of shared understanding*' (p.525). However the difference of this model, as opposed to other interfaces is that in effect the boundaries are an aggregation where the member of the first level is also of the second and third. Although the accumulation of 'past histories' contributes to the whole, from a complexity perspective the interest is not in a forensic analysis of the cause and effect of each of those accumulated histories, but of their collective impact in the 'here and now'.

All of the authors above reflect on how such challenges can be addressed. In order to collaborate and resolve difficult issues it is necessary to be able to construct a deeper level of meaning between members. Dialogue is seen as an essential tool and within it the balancing of advocacy and inquiry (Isaacs 1999) and the use of the 'Ladder of Inference' (Argyris et al., 1991). However it is recognised that it is not always easy to use the technique in the pace of a day to day conversation (Palus & Drath, 2001). Narrative and story-telling (Hardy et al., 1998, Grant et al., 1998) are also used quite extensively as a means freeing participants from their usual constraints, to reframe their situation and as a vehicle to move forward.

But the work on interfaces does not just consider the relational and the dialogical. As with complexity thinking it also addresses the notion of overarching rules (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997). Hirschhorn & Gilmore (1992) identify four key boundaries in a group: authority, task; political and identity. They ask the basic question underpinning each: Who is in charge of what? Who does what? What is in it for us? And who is and isn't us? They consider that behind each of these questions lies a series of necessary tensions, such as how to specialise yet understand other people's jobs and how to defend one's own interest without undermining the organisation.

The holding together of boundaries and the tensions between them is potentially significant for this research and appears to be at the crux of the question- how can organisations, work more effectively across interfaces?

It is a delicate balance between exploring challenging viewpoints and allowing the action to move forward as *'patterns of relatedness'* (Vince & Broussine, 1996 p.4). Boundaries are necessary to provide security and identity, but it is the tension between them that adds value to organisations as points of difference surface to form novel solutions.

The nature of boundaries is at the heart of this research question. Of interest is the inter-relation of these three types of boundaries - location, language and relationship - on the interfaces being studied. As the literature highlights, boundaries or interfaces are complex, ambiguous and paradoxical. I find the description cited below a useful one to summarise the challenge and intrigue of interfaces as a topic for research:

> '*The boundary is a transitional space, a bridge between the internal emotions of individuals and their social and political context, the space where the possibility exists to discover or develop creative ways of relating, creative ways of interacting with what surrounds us. The boundary is therefore one place where it is possible to identify the intersection between individual experience and social power relations. The boundary is also a difficult space because the relatedness between things is often confusing uncertain, shifting and paradoxical. Boundaries imply barriers or defences that may have to be crossed or breached for change to occur; they provide a framework of meaning or attachment that provides coherent identity to something, and therefore different from something else*' (Vince & Broussine 1996 p.3).

3.3 The Literature on Sense making

Sense making is seen as both a retrospective activity which facilitates understanding and as a means to action through conversation (Weick, 1995, Engestrom & Middleton, 1998). It can also be described as an iterative process; with sense being made in the constant interaction between 'gesture and response' (Griffin 2002), or indeed of sense giving and sense making (Maitlis, 2005). This can be seen as a living process, whereby meaning is created in the very act of communicating it (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000). However, meaning can be punctuated by the notion of 'fixing sense' through written text. This institutionalising of meaning thus becomes a constraining feature of future (Brown, 2000, Martin, 1986, Clifton, 2006). Chia (1994) argues that decision making is a form of punctuation which 'fixes' sense:

> *'Decisions are not so much about 'choice'... (they) contrive to construct and reinforce a stable but precarious version of reality'* (p 781).

Sense is also seen to shift as it moves across time (Isabella, 1990, Brown, 2000, Boje, 1995, Balogun & Johnson, 2004, Lennie, 2001) and location, such as across both internal and external boundaries. (Balogun et al., 2005, Gratton 2007)

A study of the literature (see Appendix 4) would suggest four key themes:

    a. Sense making as both understanding and action

    b. Sense making as an iterative process

    c. The paradoxical nature of sense making

    d. Language as a tool of sense making and the processes of dialogue, story-telling and narrative within it.

However, fundamental to the questions being explored in this thesis is an understanding of the movement to action at an interface. Therefore I would like to explore the literature from the first two themes in relation to the following question: What is the difference between making sense to understand? and how do we 'talk into action'?

3.3.1 'Talk into Action'

There are two key 'types' of sense making emerge through the literature. The first considers sense making as a means of understanding what has happened and is by its nature retrospective. The second and of particular importance to this piece of research is conversation as a means of moving into action. Taylor & Robichaud (2004) provide a particularly helpful distinction:

> *'We contend that conversation is where organizing occurs...The practical effect of the conversation is to establish a basis of action... In effect, words are translated into action…. Sensemaking in contrast invokes language as members call forth knowledge of previous events through recollections and understandings of an appropriate response given the situation. They use language to name events and influence each other as they act; but they also use it to stand back and understand it. They construct texts, in other words, and these texts, in turn, become and environment for future conversations.' (P.396/7)*

At the heart of many of the propositions on sense-making is the view that people make sense retrospectively. That is that people can only know what they have done after they have done it (Weick; 1995, Taylor & Robichaud; 2004). The recounting of events through narrative provides a means of explaining what has happened by a process of 'labelling and bracketing' (Weick, 1995) by sorting information into known categories to make sense of a situation.

This process of making sense is heavily influenced by what is already known, so that the existing patterns of seeing the world and memories of past experiences have a fundamental impact of how sense of an event is created. People will focus on what is expected and notice the evidence that they expect to see. They will label and bracket according to existing categorisations. Brown's (2000) research into the Allit report, demonstrates how keenly people look to existing explanations rather than the actuality of what has occurred. Letiche (2000) notices how scientists learn not to see the 'objects' themselves, but rather to read the labels glued onto them, thus language is being used as the means to organise reality.

Van Maanen (1979) held the view that 'common sense' (a single agreed understanding of a situation) is required for a group to move forward. Most authors seem to favour the view that there is 'polyphony' of meaning (Hazen, 1993) and 'equifinal' routes to a joint outcome (Donnellon et al., 1986). The story or explanation that is created is therefore more around plausibility and the coherence with which it hangs together, rather than any real establishment of accuracy. It provides actors with logic for their activities (Brown, 2000, Weick, 1995, Taylor & Robichaud 2004, Boyce, 1996).

Thus from a complexity perspective, the push towards order is achieved by a focus on the known and the acceptable. The story makes a judgement as to what is accepted as normal (and therefore appropriate) and what is deviant (Gephart, 1991). Storytelling creates a stabilisation and a generalisation out of the multiplicity of interpretations.

For change to happen through the process of conversations, Barry & Elmes (1997) consider that narrativists need two fundamental outcomes: credibility (or plausibility as described above) and defamiliarisation (or novelty). A narrative provides both the plausibility of the story but at the same time provides a different way of seeing things. The narrative acts as the '*discourse of direction*', both providing a movement forward whilst also embedding in the story the rationale for a type of action.

The notion of a 'discourse of direction' provides a link to the second element of sense making, that of it as a vehicle for action. That sense is made retrospectively in order to understand appears relatively consistent across most authors. How sense is made in the moment as a vehicle to action, less so and organisational discourse is seen as '*poorly defined*' (Grant el al., 1998:1). Taylor & Robichaud (2004) highlight the difference between a debate centred on the agency and text dialectic, where

Engenstom (1999 p.170) contends a more critical realist view that '*organisations may emerge through conversation, but they do not emerge for the sake of organisation*', whereas Westwood & Linstead (2001 p.5) consider '*organizations as the movement and productivity of texts*'.

Looking elsewhere in literature, there appear to be two particular (but related) trains of thought; the first coming from complexity literature is the notion of the known and the unknown. Stacey's description of transformative teleology is where the '*future is unknown but yet recognisable, the known- unknown*' (2001 p. 60). It describes an iterative process which sustains continuity with potential transformation at the same time. There is the emergence of order out of chaos, where from the conflicts of constraint and freedom something emerges, but the exact nature of that 'something' cannot be predicted. When Weick (1995) says:

> '... I was exploring the skill of participating in exactly this kind of sensemaking, speaking with others into 'networks of past moments (frames and categories) present moments (cues and labels) and connections (relational meanings)' (p.111),

he appears to describe a process in which the unknown emerges from the known. Chia (1999) also notices these unfolding processes or enactments, where not only is the past incorporated into present, but where;

> …'the present is not merely the linear successor of the past but a novel outcome of it. Each moment of duration absorbs the preceding one, transforming it and with it the whole, constituting at each stage of the process a novel and never to be repeated occasion necessarily grounded in its past but always projected to wards a not- yet – knowable future'.
> (p.220)

The texts above appear to have two key elements in common, that of a balancing of constraints and that of the past and future co-existing.

The second aspect of 'talk into action', focuses on the immediate patterning of a conversation. Based on Mead's (1934) original notion of the '*living present*' the focus is on the everyday conversation where, rather than expecting a predictable outcome, the patterning or 'gesture and response' of calling forth to one another and the responses given in the immediate context co- create a spontaneous meaning. Both Shotter (1993) and Griffin (2002) explore Mead's work, whereby gestures are the beginnings of social acts, which are the stimuli for the response of other forms.

> '…a situation in which certain parts of the act become a stimulus to the other form to adjust itself to those responses and that adjustment in turn becomes a stimulus to the first form to change his own act and start on a different one'. (Griffin 2002:151 citing Mead 1934)

It is a co-constructed act, where each party is interdependent on the other and there is no single ownership of meaning. As with the 'known/ unknown' described above, the 'living present' considers that the future is perpetually being constructed.

> 'In this living present, the past and future are not separate from the present. It is in the present that we are continuously constructing the future on the basis of the enabling constraints developed over time as our past.'(Griffin 2002 p. 184)

The distinction between the two aspects seems subtle, but linking back to the debate between Engenstom and Westwood & Linstead described earlier, what seems to distinguish between the two is that the 'known/unknown' takes more of a critical realist approach, with pre existing constraints, whereas the latter is closer to the social constructionist view described by Westwood and Linstead.

In relation to the research question, the literature review demonstrates that groups need to make coherent, but not necessarily 'common' sense to understand a situation. Having made that sense conversations can be used as a vehicle to action. It is hoped the research question will provide further illumination in understanding what specifically groups need to make retrospective sense of and how can discourse can be best employed as a vehicle for action at an interface.

3.3.2 The Paradoxical Nature of Sense Making

There is a paradoxical nature to sense making (Lewis, 2000, Hampden Turner, 1991, McKenzie et al., 2007) which takes a number of forms. Firstly, linked to the complexity literature, paradoxes and contradictions are seen to play out at the 'edge of chaos' (McKenzie, 1994, 2007, Hampden Turner, 1991, Streatfield, 2001, Murnighan & Conlon, 1991) and contradictory structures and creative tension are a necessity to manage both the known and unknown simultaneously (Stacey, 1992 p.184). Secondly, associated with a social constructionist perspective, is the notion that there are 'multiple realities' (Gergen, 1991) which provide a plurality of interpretations, (Hazen, 1993, Denison et al., 1995, Snowdon, 2002). It sparks the debate, highlighted earlier, as to whether common sense needs to be so common after all, and whether it is a pre requisite for movement (Van Maanen, 1979), or whether different interpretations can still lead to joint action. (Donnellon et al., 1986, Weick, 1995),

3.3.3 Language as a Tool of Sense Making

The fourth theme considers language as a tool of sense making:

'*Metaphors and stories can provide ways of crossing the boundaries of discourse to create a sufficient common sense to allow us to act within a context'. (Cunliffe 2001 p.365)*

Often, it isn't accuracy that is necessary in sense making, but the plausibility and coherence of a good story (Weick; 1995 p.60). Sense making is often explored in association with narrative or storytelling. Stories offer one way of connecting; of trying to grasp what is happening (Boje, 1995) and impacting others through it (Downing, 2006). The very process of storytelling - be it scenario planning (de Geus, 1997) whereby organisations act into a future story, or written texts (Brown, 2000, Boje, 1995) whereby 'a' story is given legitimacy and is institutionalised - provides both a plausible and cohesive explanation of what has happened and a rational for future action.

Within this are the roles of dialogue, narrative and storytelling. These three can be distinguished as follows:

a. Dialogue (Isaacs, 1999, Bohm, 1996, Senge, 1990); as a means of understanding the multiple perspectives of a situation and resisting being stuck in a single frame of reference.

b. Narrative (Brown, 2000); as a more or less true account of events, although because choices are made as to inclusion and emission of empirical evidence, narratives might also be seen as artefacts (Brown, 2000, Barry & Elmes, 2006)

c. Storytelling (Boje, 1995, Grant et al., 1998, Gabriel, 1998, Browning and Boudes, 2005, Senge et al., 2005); as a means of expressing '*organisational realities and people's feelings more accurately then a response to a direct question' (*Gabriel 1998 p.97) In effect when *'the saga is told and retold, a discursive community is created'* (Salzer Morling 1998 p.112).

Ultimately sense-making can be considered as a way to *'help people make sense of an unknowable, unpredictable world'* (Weick, 1999 p.803).

3.4 The Literature on Team Effectiveness

The final area of literature review is that on team effectiveness. This review was conducted part way into the research when it was realised that in order to understand the data coming through on interface effectiveness, I also needed to understand the literature on team effectiveness.

Like Higgs (2007), I also noted the divergence in definitions of teams and team effectiveness. Katzenbach & Smith (1993) consider teams as: '*discrete units of performance*'…'*is a small group of people… with complementary skills, committed to a common purpose and set of specific performance goals*'. (p.21)

At a fairly straightforward level this might be considered a satisfactory definition; but increasingly more recent literature highlights the complex challenges faced by organisations; challenges which sprawl across boundaries and question the traditional team approaches (Palus et al., 2003). Indeed the rapid development in communication technology and the exponential co-ordination required across multiple boundaries, questions historical organisational assumptions, which potentially make traditional ways of working obsolete.

> '*By making it easier for groups to self-assemble and for individuals to contribute to group effort without requiring formal management,…these tools have radically altered the old limits of size, sophistication and scope of unsupervised effort*' (Shirky, 2008 p. 21).

The set piece and set roles of 'command and control' have diminished and research is making links between organisations and teams to a complexity paradigm. Belbin (2007) challenges old assumptions of effective team members being in accord with each other:

> '*The problem with the word teamwork is that it has become overused. A person deemed a "team player" is all too often someone who fits into a group and keeps out of trouble. Team behavior is often defined as complying with majority decisions and doing what's required. Yet if everyone behaved like that teams would not function*' (P.4)

More recent literature advocates necessary tensions within teams. Over time there appears to be a shift from an identification of the smooth relationships of like-minded individuals. From Gladstein's, (1984 p.500); 'humanistic school which *focused on maintenance functions in the group, encouraging openness and smooth interpersonal relation',* to Hirschorn & Gilmore (1991:181) who describe key tensions required at each of the boundaries they define; (authority, task, political and identity) and more recently to findings from Gratton (2007) who observes that although harder to

manage, there was a correlation between highly innovative teams and teams with high group complexity and difference.

3.4.1 Key Themes from Team Effectiveness Literature

Using Higgs (2007) as a base I explored the key themes emerging from team effectiveness literature. His work identified seven key elements or characteristics of team effectiveness: common purpose; interdependence; clarity of roles and contribution; satisfaction from mutual working; mutual and individual accountability; realisation of synergies and empowerment. My literature review provides a slightly different, but not contradictory, categorisation and incorporates Higgs' work as components of an effective team. Like Higgs, I also noticed that common purpose, interdependence and distinct roles were widely shared components in defining a team (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997). Gladstein (1984) considered effectiveness to have three key components: group performance; satisfaction of group-member needs; and the ability of the group to exist over time. She also noted two different research lenses, those focused on maintenance (smooth team dynamics) and those focused on task and performance. As with many subsequent researchers (Gratton, 2007), Gladstein highlighted the need to revise models of team effectiveness to include the way groups worked across boundaries and within their organisational context so that both intra and inter group actions were required to transform resources into a product.

The key components emerging from the literature are described in Table 2. In addition to Higgs' review the literature exposed three significant new research themes in conjunction with teams - teams and innovation, teams and complex problems and virtual teams.

Common purpose

There is significant convergence in the literature on the need for shared purpose and vision (Higgs, 2007, Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997, Gladstein, 1984). Pearce & Endsley (2004) conclude that shared vision and effectiveness are reciprocally, positively and longitudinally related. Two, of Katzenbach & Smith's (1993) six, 'team basics' are a common purpose and a common set of specific performance goals. Indeed, when describing a 'real' team, not only do they consider the need for a common purpose, but one to which all are 'equally committed' (p.92). Likewise Pearce & Hebbik (2004), consider that:

> *' if team members are committed to the goals and values of their team and have emotional attachments to the team and its members, it seems likely that they would engage in behaviours that would be beneficial to the team' (p.296).*

The experience of several researchers is that, without a common purpose, team members become confused and divergent.

Clarity of roles and contribution

As with clarity of purpose, role clarity is frequently identified as a contributor to team effectiveness (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997, Higgs, 1997, Pearce & Ensley, 2004). Role ambiguity is often linked to dysfunctional teams. Pearce & Ensley (2004 p.263) note a correlation between ambiguity and the propensity to leave a team. Even in complex situations Brown & Eisenhardt observe that the provision of clear responsibilities and a limited structure help individuals make sense in a fast changing environment. Without this there would be an increased likelihood of team members becoming confused.

Clarity of role is one aspect described in the literature; the other slant is diversity of role. Over many years Belbin has researched team performance in relation to the types of team roles played by its members, whereby combinations of personality types perform more successfully than others. Nine archetypal functions make up an ideal team plant, coordinator, shaper, team-worker, completer, implementer, resource investigator, specialist, and monitor evaluator (Belbin, 2004).

Team relationships – Interdependence, Collaboration, Conflict & Trust

To a greater or lesser degree groups need to be able to work together. At one end of the spectrum groups such as a string quartet not only have to work together but do so simultaneously (Murnigham & Conlon, 1991), others are more loosely associated. Smith & Berg (1987) notice that there is often a paradox between the various components of team effectiveness and that groups can become enmeshed in a 'we-they' dynamic.

> *'A group by virtue of its nature as a collective phenomenon creates certain tensions. It is not merely a number of people occupying the same physical or psychological space; it includes mutual dependencies of members on each other to achieve collective aims. When a group comes into being, it is expected to satisfy both the interdependent needs of its individual members and the needs of the collectivity that results from these interdependencies'. (Smith & Berg 1987 p.635)*

Themes	References
Team Definition/ team effectiveness definition	Higgs & Rowland 1992, Higgs 2007, Gratton 2007, Katzenbach & Smith 1993, Crossan et al. 1999, Gladstein 1984, Pearce et al. 2002
Components of an effective team	Higgs & Rowland 1992, Higgs 2007, Gratton 2007, Ancona 1990, Brown & Eisenhardt 1997, Gladstein 1984, Critchley & Casey 1984,
• Common purpose	Higgs 2007, Brown & Eisenhardt 1997, Katzenbach & Smith 1993,
• Membership & Roles	Belbin 1993, 2002,2004, 2007, Caldwell & Ancona 1992, Ancona 1990,
• Team Dynamics- Interdependence, Collaboration, Conflict & Trust	Higgs 2007, Gratton 2007, Shirky 2008 Pearce & Ensley 2004, Pearce & Hebbik 2004, Murnighan & Conlon 1991, Smith & Berg 1987, Wageman 1995, Bechky 2003, Mc Evily et al. 2003, Perrone et al 2003, Zaheer et al. 2003, Dirks & Ferrin 2001, Malhotra & Murnighan 2002, Rousseau et al. 1998, Bigley & Pearce 1998
• Boundary Management	Gratton 2007, Higgs & Rowland 2007, Ancona & Caldwell 1992, Easterby- Smith et al. 2000, Hirschorn & Gilmore 1992, O'Mahony & Bechky 2008
• Team Leadership (inc shared leadership & empowerment)	Pearce & Hebbik 2004, Vera & Crossan 2004, Ancona & Bresman 2007, Fletcher & Kaufer 2003, Burke et al 2003, Ancona & Bresman, 2007, Pearce & Conger 2003, Carson et al 2007, Katzenbach & Smith 1993, Ancona et al. 2007
• Shared & Conflicting Cognition	Palus et al 2003, Mathieu et al. 2005, Cannon-Bower & Salas 2001, Forbes & Milliken 1999
Team Process	Ancona 1990, Gladstein 1984, Hackman & Morris 1975, Crossan et al. 1999, Gratton 2007
Stages of Team Development & Teams over Time	Tuckman 1977, Crossan et al 2005, Katzenbach & Smith 1993
Team Effectiveness and Innovation	Gratton 2007, Pearce & Ensley 2004, Ancona & Caldwell 2007, Gilson et al. 2005,
Complex Teams / Complex Problems	Palus et al 2003, Pearce & Ensley 2004, Murnighan & Conlon 1991, Kahane 2004, Smith & Berg 1987, Shirky 2008
Virtual Teams	Dempster 2005, Hertel et al 2006, Kirkman et al. 2002,

Table 2 - Themes emerging from the literature on team effectiveness

I can scarcely do justice to the wealth of literature available on such a broad subject but four aspects of teams relationships were particularly prevalent in the literature examined: collaboration, interdependence, conflict management and trust. Each could justify a literature review in its own right.

The themes appear to be inter-related. McEvily et al. (2003) suggest that new organisational forms alter the pattern of inter-dependencies, whereby collaboration becomes a source of competitive advantage. In such arrangements individuals are more dependent on others; which in themselves are preconditions and concomitants of trust (Malhotra & Murnighan, 2002).

Many argue that team potential can be increased through interactions with others and the cross fertilisation of ideas (Gilson et al., 2005). The theme of collaboration features in two recent Harvard Business reviews; Fryer & Stewart (2008) interviewing John Chamber of Cisco, highlight the successful use of collaborative teams. Pisano and Verganti (2008) pose the question: '*which kind of collaboration is right for you?*', and conclude that the new leaders in innovation will be those who figure out the best way to leverage a network of outsiders. The capability to work collaboratively is at the heart of Gratton's (2005, 2007) work on 'Hotspots', where a 'co-operative mindset' is one of the three key components she identifies.

> *'In a real sense, the value from Hot Spots arises from the space between people. Fundamentally Hot Spots are places of cooperative relationships…When a mindset of cooperation emerges it does so as the result of an on-going interplay between assumptions, practices, norms, languages and behaviour'. (2007 p43/44)*

Bechky (2003) suggests that such interplay or practices are dynamic and emerge within a context but have their foundations in coordination, common ground and organisational accountability. Later work, (O'Mahony & Bechky, 2008) highlights how, even though both convergent and divergent interests were present at a boundary, by adapting organisation practices both parties were able to collaborate.

But the challenge is that although teams benefit from a collaborative approach, often the individual does not realise the benefit themselves. Wageman's (1995) work on reward and team effectiveness indicated hybrid groups where teams, rewarded at both a team and individual level, performed quite poorly.

The literature on trust is diverse and spans both psychological and sociological definitions. Trust is often researched within a context or specific issues (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). Many descriptions (Becerra & Gupta, 1993) are based on a fundamental dyad between trustor (who hold expectations about a certain party) and trustee (who is assessed by the trustor). Trust is seen neither as behaviour nor a choice, but rather a condition, psychologically rooted, which can both cause and result in choices and behaviours based on variables between this dyad. Trust requires certain conditions of risk and interdependence, variations on these can shift the form that trust takes (Rousseau et al. 1998 p.395). There are several definitions of trust, but that provided by Rousseau at al (1998), has a consistent sentiment with many of them:

'Trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another' (Rousseau et al 1998 p395)

Dirk & Ferrin (2001) consider two fundamental models on trust. The first and dominant model being that trust has a direct effect on outcomes. The second is that trust provides the conditions for certain outcomes thus acting as a facilitating or hindering moderator. This distinction is also considered by McEvily et al. (2003b), who propose conceptualising trust as an organising principle. In other words, it provides a way as to how information is interpreted and acted upon. They cite Dirk's (2000) findings; that while authority is important for behaviours that can be observed or controlled, trust is important where there is ambiguity. They observe that most organisations have a combination of behaviours that can and cannot be controlled and thus authority and trust co-occur.

But how trust is created is confused between what sits at an individual level and what at an organisational level (Zaheer et al., 2003). McAllister (1995) distinguishes between trust grounded in cognitive judgements and that founded in affective bonds between individuals. There is ambiguity about the multi-level nature of trust. Katzenbach and Smith (1993) define trust at three levels - personal, expert and organisation. Rousseau et al. (1998) distinguish between rational and relational, whereas Ferrin et al. (2006) examine three different types of trust creation: network closure, trust transferability and structural equivalence. A literature review conducted by Bigley & Pearce (1998) analyse it from a problem based focus; the interaction among unfamiliar actors, familiar actors and the organisation of economic transactions. Of note in his review is the significant proliferation of articles focused on trust between familiar actors. More recent research considers that social and technological changes, which are more virtual and impersonal, are creating a shift from interpersonal to a greater dependence on organisational trust:

…'there seems to be greater reliance on institutional trust, where one relies on the security of rules, structure and organisations to buttress interpersonal trust.' (Sinha & Van de Ven, 2000 p. 394)

Lewicki et al. (1998) pose an interesting assertion; that trust and distrust are not opposites or continuums of the same dimension, but rather two separate although linked dimensions.

> *…'both trust and distrust involve movements towards certainty; trust concerning expectations of things hoped for and distrust concerning expectations of things feared'…(p.439)*

Whereby the expectation of high trust; 'hope', finds its opposite in low trust; 'no hope', as opposed to distrust, where the expectation would be 'fear'. They therefore conclude that relationships can be multifaceted and multiplexed:

> *'it is possible for parties to both trust and distrust one another, given different experiences within the various facets of complex interpersonal relationships' (p.440).*

A final consideration from the trust literature and of significant relevance to the multi-national audience of my research, is the impact of national culture on trust. Doney et al. (1998) notice that cultural boundaries are becoming blurred; they offer a definition of culture, not by nation states, but as '*a large number of people conditioned by similar background, education and life experiences*' (p607). Their research considers the correlation between five trust building processes: calculative, prediction, intentionality, capability and transference against three national culture attributes; relationship to authority, relationship to self (eg individual / collective, masculine/ feminine) and relationship to risk. Their research highlighted a series of propositions, which reflected a preference by certain types of culture to a particular trust building process. For example:

> *'Relative to counterparts in collective cultures, trustors in individualist cultures are more likely to form trust via a capability processes'*. (p.612)

There is a role for both trust and distrust in organisations; indeed a healthy tension itself creates the most stable social structures (Lewicki et al., 1998 p.450).

As recognised above, incorporating difference is important to a team, enabling it to yield new capabilities, but those differences need to be worked with positively:

> *'individuals from different cultures bring divergent bodies of knowledge and practices whose integration yields new capacities, but only after the individuals recognise the existence and validity of their differences,'(Sinha & Van de Ven 2005 p.390).*

In their 1991 study, Murnigham & Conlon focus on the relationship between the internal dynamics of string quartets and their success as a group. They considered the role of conflict and team conflict and noticed a particular paradox of confrontation vs compromise; they found that successful quartets '*managed these contradictions implicitly and did not try to resolve them*'. Rather than thinking about resolving the conflicts the group needed ways to release them.

> *'When group dynamics are experienced as oppositional members act as if the conflicts must be 'resolved' before the group can more on, thereby making 'unresolvable' that which needed no resolution until it was defined as needing resolution'* (p.644).

They found that often the methods of resolution in themselves trigger conflict.

Boundary Management

Although considered separately there is an overlap between interdependence, collaboration and boundary management. As Gratton (2007 p.7) observes: **'***A cooperative mindset, boundary spanning, and igniting purpose have a multiplicative effect on each other***'**. The literature on boundaries and boundary management has already been described earlier in this document.

Team Leadership

There is a considerable volume of literature on the subject of leadership. This review has focused on articles where leadership has been considered in conjunction with team effectiveness. That a leader has an impact on the performance of the team is widely acknowledged, e.g. Pearce & Hebbik (2004 p.303), identify that team leader behaviour, had a large impact on team commitment, and Ancona & Bresman (2007 p.133) that;

> **'***While lists differ somewhat from one group to the next, the pattern is clear: "Good" team leaders build camaraderie, confidence in members' abilities and a solid process for working together'.*

But two themes in particular come out of recent literature. The first is the distinction between strategic and transactional leadership (Cannella, Pettigrew & Hambrick 2001), or transformational and transactional leadership (Vera & Crossan 2004) who observe:

> *'Operating within an existing system, transactional leaders seek to strengthen an organization's culture, strategy and structure. Transformational leadership, in contrast, is charismatic, inspirational intellectually stimulating and individually considerate.' (p.223)*

The second is the move away from the perception of a 'heroic' leader, to that of shared leadership.

> *'New models of leadership recognise that effectiveness in living systems of relationships does not depend on individual heroic leaders but rather on leadership practices embedded in systems of independencies at different levels within the organisation. (Fletcher & Kaufer 2003 p.:21)*

Rather leadership is distributed amongst team members than a single designated leader (Carson et al., 2007, Burke et al., 2003), and is seen as less hierarchical, and more collaborative and mutual. Fletcher & Kaufer (2003) view shared leadership as a move from individual, to collective achievement and team work. Leadership is portrayed as a dynamic, multi-directional and collective activity.

Shared and conflicting cognition

Shared cognition is a team's ability to create and share mental models (Mathieu et al., 2005). Cannon-Bowers & Salas (2001) identify three fold benefits of shared cognition: the ability to interpret cues in a similar manner, to interact and make decisions, the ability to predictive team effectiveness, e.g. readiness and preparedness and to help discuss team problems. They consider that teams need to share four things; task specific knowledge, to enable action to be taken in a coordinated manner; task related knowledge e.g. common knowledge of a process; knowledge of team mates, their preferences and expertise, so that members can adjust their behaviours to each other and finally, attitudes and beliefs which enable compatible interpretations. An alternative perspective on cognition researched by Forbes & Milliken (1999), who highlight the role of cognitive conflict rather than the need for shared cognition. This appears particularly relevant in diverse interdependent groups who face complex decision making tasks. They cite Jehn's (1995) definition: '*disagreement about the content of the tasks being performed, including differences in viewpoints, ideas and opinions.*' They recognise that cognitive conflict in groups can be frustrating and prolongs decision making processes, but they also recognise that it results in the consideration of more alternatives and better evaluation, which are seen to benefit decision making in uncertain environments.

Whether through shared cognition or cognition conflict, there are a number of articles which addressed the development of a team's capability in their ways of working together, through the recognition that multiple, equally good, sets of different models exist, rather than being committed to the advocacy of one (Pearce & Ensley, 2004). Dialogue and joint action are seen as crucial to the development of shared understanding or the ability to work with different perceptions.

The above commentary considers the elements which contribute towards team effectiveness. From the literature these appear to be; common purpose, membership

and roles, team relations (interdependence, collaboration, conflict & trust), boundary management, team leadership (including shared leadership & empowerment) and shared cognition. Two additional elements: complementary skills and a clear working approach, are specifically described by Katzenbach and Smith (1993 p.62); the latter of which might be considered as a process and described below.

3.4.2 Team Process

This section looks at the processes of team effectiveness. Several researchers (e.g. Higgs, 2007) cite Hackman and Morris' (1975) seminal paper (see Figure 2) and use this as a basis for future contributions. Of interest here is that the output of the team isn't just its performance outcomes, which is the key focus for models such as Katzanbach & Smith (1993), but equally of 'other' outcomes, such as cohesiveness and satisfaction, which contribute to the on-going success of the team.

Gladstein (1984) also distinguishes performance and 'maintenance' outcomes;

> *'Process behaviours are either maintenance behaviours that 'build strengthen and regulate group life', or task behaviours that enable the group to solve the objective problem to which the group is committed.'(P.500)*

In her later work, Ancona (1990 p.334) expands on the group interaction process and considers the 'transformation' in team performance from an external perspective; linking it to boundary management, and identifying that a team is not an isolated entity, but constantly influenced and shaped by external factors. She identifies three strategies toward the team's environment: informing, parading, and probing.

Informing teams remain relatively isolated from their environment; parading teams have high levels of passive observation of the environment and probing teams actively engage outsiders. Probing teams revise their knowledge of the environment through external contact, initiate programs with outsiders, and promote their team's achievements within their organisation. See Figure 3.

An Interaction Process Model
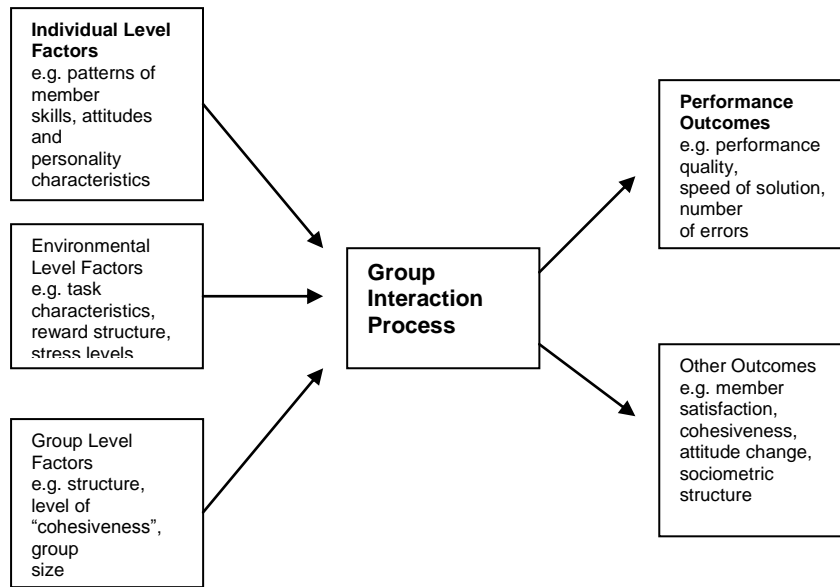
Figure 2: An Interaction Process Model: Adapted from Hackman and Morris (1975)

Whereas both Hackman & Morris' and Ancona's models are based on an input-process/ output framework, Mathieu et al. (2008) refer to mediators and assert that many of the factors that intervene are not in fact just processes but emergent states which occur in episodic cycles.

Revised Model of Group Performance – Ancona 1990
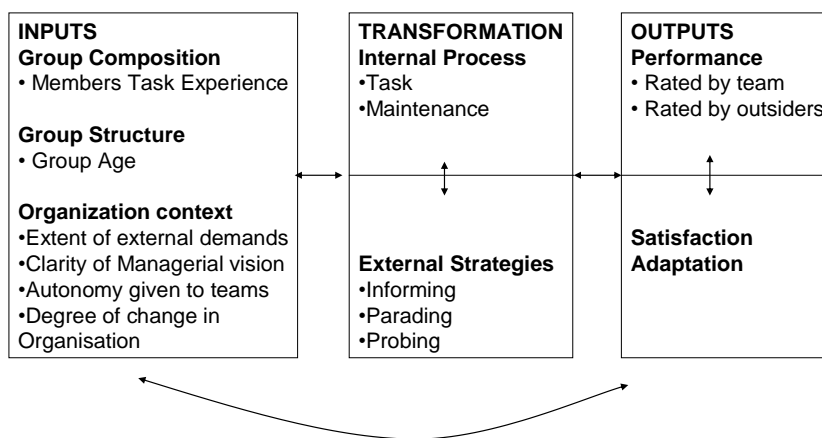
Figure 3: Revised Model of group performance

3.4.3 Stages of Team Development

The development and growth of groups across time is a theme considered by a number of researchers, e.g. Katzenbach & Smith, 1993, Ancona, 2001, Crossan et al. (2005). However the seminal work was conducted by Tuckman (1965) who investigated how a team developed over time. He described four stages of group development: forming, storming, norming, performing. Follow-up research by Tuckman & Jensen (1977) noted that few empirical studies had used the model, but they discovered a fifth stage of group development, that of 'termination' or adjourning.

3.4.4 Team Effectiveness and Innovation

Several recent studies link team effectiveness with innovation. Gratton (2007 p.77) identifies three key activities; co-operative mindset, boundary spanning and igniting task, which together with five productive practices: are critical for innovation through providing novel combinations. (See Figure 4)
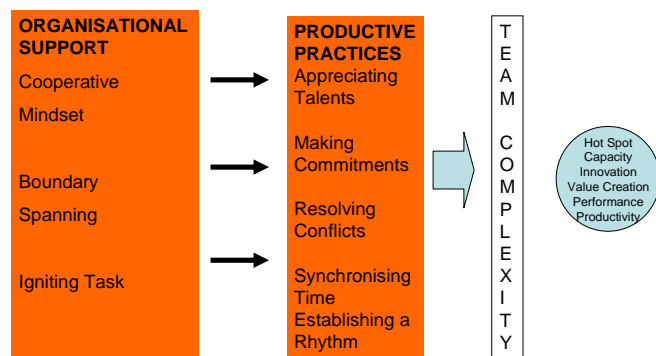
Adapted from Gratton 2007

Figure 4 - Innovation Practices

Ancona & Caldwell (2007) also notice the importance of cross-functional activity within innovation processes:

> *'What many of these techniques have in common is their attempt to improve the co-ordination among the different functions in the organisation….much of the delay in product development comes from the difficulty in coordinating the efforts of various groups.'* (p41)

A positive relationship between shared vision and innovation across groups is noted by Pearce & Endsley (2004) where:

> *'shared vision and innovation effectiveness are reciprocally, positively and longitudinally related.' (P261)*

An interesting link to the complexity literature is highlighted by Gilson et al. (2005); (and also reflected in Gratton's work). They notice that both creativity and standardisation are linked to team effectiveness, but that their underlying mechanisms appear to be antithetical, providing opposite ways of coping with uncertainty.

> *'Organisations are streamlining how work is performed and encouraging their employees to standardise work practices and to adhere to a consistent set of procedures that have been found to be successful. Consequently, teams are faced with an interesting dilemma as to whether following standardized work practices or being creative will enhance the overall effectiveness.' (p.521)*

They conclude that creativity may be most valuable when combined with high levels of standardisation.

3.4.5 Complex Teams

There is an increasing amount of literature which explores the implications of organisations becoming complex in terms of agendas, speed, technologies and geographies, so that old ways are less likely to work (e.g. Shirky, 2008). The literature on complexity and complexity theories has been explored earlier in this document.

3.4.6 Virtual Teams

A virtual team is considered as a group who work across different geographies, time zones and potentially different organisations. The communication across the team is enabled by technology - for example tele-conferencing and tele-presence. The team does not have to meet face to face, although many such teams do mix virtual and face to face working.

Kirkman et al (2002) consider five core challenges to the success of virtual teams:
 a. building trust, where their research shows that trust is built through the task based relationship that evolves through team members' reliability and responsiveness. The key here is for team members to avoid long delays in responding to each other.
b. creating synergy without day to day encounters; they notice that '*virtual teams need to understand much more so than co-located teams on what goals they are working towards*'.
c. overcoming feelings of isolation.
d. balancing technical and interpersonal needs among members and

e. assessing and recognising team performance

Moving from the challenges of virtual teams to the competencies required within them, Hertel et al (2006) define five competencies; (professional expertise, cognitive abilities, task- work related, teamwork related and tele-cooperation related) and notice that there is overlap between team effectiveness capabilities and those required for virtual teams, also that virtual team working might be regarded as a dimension of team effectiveness. Of the competencies they identify, it is the final group, tele-cooperation, which the authors consider as particularly related to the challenges of high performing virtual teams. Incorporated into their definition are the attributes of self management skills, interpersonal trust and intercultural skills.

The theme of trust in virtual teams is explored further by Clases et al. (2004) their findings indicate that the emergence of trust depends strongly on personal bonds and shared experience in the practical realisation of projects, as opposed to generalised rules and contracts and that the development of trust in a virtual organisation requires a culture of proactive trust.

The review of the literature on team effectiveness highlights the complex, ambiguous and often virtual environment teams are increasingly operating in. This context has provided the focus for much of the recent work on team effectiveness; where themes of collaboration, boundary spanning and trust come to the fore. Several authors (McEvily et al., 2003), consider that organisations that are able to incorporate such practices well put themselves at a competitive advantage.

 Although the themes above appear to be considered as almost 'universal' needs for teams working effectively in complex environments, there has been less work conducted as to how to enable these attributes. Challenges are identified by Gratton (2007) and Wageman (1995), who notice that even if such attributes are positively recognised, the under pinning practices, such as reward, also need to be congruent. It is this sense of disconnect between identifying and providing the conditions for new ways of working that is one of the striking features of the literature review, which sees organisations trying to achieve new ways with old methods.

Common in many articles is a discussion on the use of dialogue (Kahane, 2004, Palus & Drath, 2001). Dialogue is also seen as a way of managing rather than necessarily resolving contradictions (Murnigham & Conlon, 1991); often a counter-intuitive response to existing ways of approaching such situations.

Consistent with older inquiries into team effectiveness, more recent works also highlight the need for both clarity of purpose and roles and responsibilities.

Of particular interest are the three themes from the team effectiveness literature which specifically link to the research questions; those being complexity, boundary spanning and shared cognition.

3.5 Literature Review - Conclusions

The literature review was an iterative process, with research data suggesting further avenues to explore, such as that on Team Effectiveness. The inconsistencies and insights raised through that process are explored within the findings themselves, but they provided a rich and thought provoking exercise. A number of gaps were identified in the course of the reviews which have been expanded upon as research questions. The first of these was an absence of specific research on interfaces as opposed to Team Effectiveness; the components of team effectiveness identified through the reviews were thus used as a base to explore the components of interface effectiveness from the research data.

Although there was a wealth of literature in the area of sense making, much of it was based in crisis or change situations (e.g. Weick, 1988). Fewer considered sense making at an interface (Rouleau, 2005, Maitlis, 2005).

In summary the literature review suggested that there are a number of elements which contribute to team effectiveness that might also be considered in relation to interface effectiveness. The themes of shared cognition, boundary spanning and working with complex teams appear particularly relevant across the broad spectrum of this thesis. The literature on sense making is important in providing both a coherent understanding of what is happening at the interface and as a vehicle for action across the interface. Finally there are three key aspects to consider as the nature of 'boundary'; location, language as the container and relational boundaries.

4. Research Methodology:
Rigour & Relevance in Complexity Research

4.1 Taking a *Bricolage* Approach

One of the highlights of this research has been the journey to find a methodology. The research was firmly situated in my working life, drawing on projects and activities that formed part of my day to day practice. Any methodology also needed to be appropriate to working with the complexity of both the situation and the lens I was viewing it through.

One of the challenges sometimes thrown at management research – and explored in some detail later in this chapter- is the challenge of being both rigorous in the methodological approach taken and relevant to the community it is aimed at (Pettigrew et al. 2001). Because the question was so deeply rooted in real issues facing my organisation - and ones I knew from network meetings had resonance for other organisations - I felt comfortable that my research was relevant. However, where I felt more challenged and found myself paying particular attention, was to the rigour of the methodology. What was important was that the research provided a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, which went beyond a successful set of interventions to something that might be applicable elsewhere. I needed to feel confident that whichever approach I took was robust enough to withstand scrutiny and would be effective as a means of exploring the topic being researched. There was a sense as the journey progressed of the tale of '*Goldilocks and the Three Bears',* where although several methodologies and approaches were of interest individually, none of them felt quite right.

The final research approach is illustrated in Figure 5; it was made up of a series of Case Studies based around specific organisational interventions. The journey towards its development is described in some detail below and reflects on the various methods considered.

Ultimately, I took a *bricolage* approach. Rather like a magpie, the *bricoleur* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000 p.4, Levi- Strauss, 1966) is a methodological 'jack of all trades', who pragmatically uses the tools and methodologies at hand to make some sense of the question being posed. Not only do they use a medley of methodologies, they are also opportunistic in noticing and collecting examples of day to day business activities appropriate for research.

...' they remain open to borrowing from other paradigms and perspectives as they see fit... In other words, in order to get their work done, researchers are to some extent bricoleurs, they purposefully work with whatever conceptual resources are available.' (Tsoukas, 2005, p.326)

Research Approach
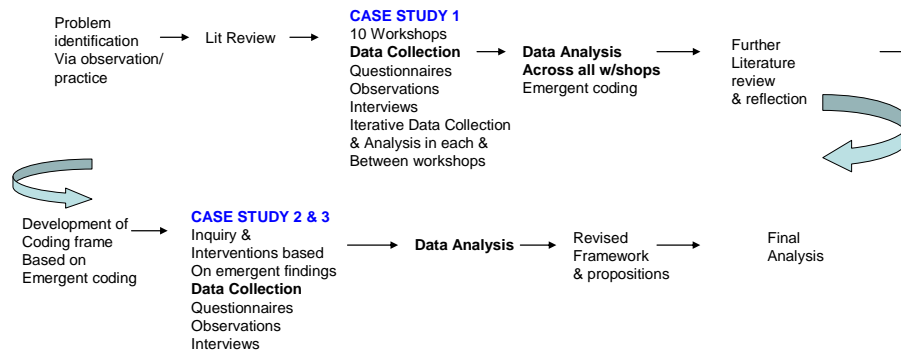
Figure 5: Research Approach

One of the concerns I had with taking a *bricolage* approach was that it might have been construed as 'cherry picking'; that aspects of a methodology which are seemingly easy might be included whilst others are discarded, thus potentially weakening any argument for rigour. Instead, as will be seen as I walk through the journey to a methodology, it was only by using a *bricolage* approach that I felt I had a means of gaining rigour. Rather than viewing a 'not quite' fit to specific methodologies as a disadvantage, the *bricoleur* is opportunistic and considers the variety of techniques to their advantage; providing the means to build a rich and textured perspective to a research project.

> *'The product of the interpretive bricoleur's labor is a complex, quilt-like bricolage, a reflexive collage or montage – a set of fluid, interconnected images and representations. This interpretive structure is like a quilt, a performance text, a sequence of representations connecting the parts to the whole.' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.7)*

It was by weaving a tapestry of different methods, using a 'warp and weft' of different ways of knowing, that I felt that I was able to provide texture and depth to my findings. In this research scenario, taking a *bricolage* approach was the way of finding rigour in complex research situation.

4.2 Research Methodology Overview

Whilst searching for a methodology I considered my requirements from three different perspectives and tried to achieve congruence between them. The first was the ontological lens, through which I view the question 'complexity'. The second was from the perspective of the dominant paradigms in my question: interfaces and boundaries; sense-making; and teams. Finally, I considered it from the perspective of practice; how as the researcher I approached the study. Having considered the methodologies other researchers had used in relation to these subjects, I then explored in some detail the three key methods I eventually used; Case Studies, Action Research and Grounded Theory. I also contemplate other methods I might have considered. Drawing the various methods together, I then explored how taking a *bricolage* approach might provide me with the appropriate rigour and relevance. Finally, acknowledging that this is a practice based doctorate and my role as facilitator cum researcher is an integral part of the research design, I contemplate the competencies, position and authority required to undertake research, such as this.

4.2.1 Research Approach in Relation to the Ontology

As discussed in Section 2, my research has been conducted from a complexity lens. Its emergent, messy and unpredictable nature is how I experience organisational life. A complexity lens has been used in a number of recent studies (Donaldson, 2005, Griffin, 2002, Streatfield, 2001). It acknowledges that research is unlikely to be linear, that Case Studies might overlap, and that shifts will emerge dependent of the response of one intervention to the next. Research is a living inquiry (Torbert, 2001, Shaw, 1998). There is no predictability in terms of the outcome but there is '*intentionality for the outcome of the project.*' (Ladkin, 200?, p.5)

Several phenomena occurring at 'the interface' can be seen from a complexity perspective. As highlighted in Section 2, boundaries, paradoxes and order generating rules are all aspects of complexity thinking. The boundary between chaos and order is where paradoxes and contradictions play out and paradoxes have been researched using a complexity lens (McKenzie, 1994, 2007, Hampden Turner, 1991, Streatfield, 2001, Murnighan & Conlon, 1991). Another theme - order generating rules - explains how complex non linear systems manage to maintain themselves at the edge of chaos. Such rules permit a degree of chaos whilst still providing relative order. The need for

very specific rules within flexible structures (semi structures) in highly competitive environments is studied by Brown & Eisenhardt (1997).

As I approached this study I was looking for methods which would allow me to explore an emergent phenomenon. The need was for techniques which were holistic and appreciated the uniqueness of the context. It required methods which were able to hold with tensions and paradoxes rather than driving towards a binary solution. As such, the methods sought were likely to be those which enabled an inquiry into the 'here and now' of the situation; of the interaction of the 'gesture and response' between the actors and helped pick up 'weak signals' in such conversations.

4.2.2 Research Approach in Relation to the Topic

Sense-making is, as the word describes, the way sense is made of a given situation. By its very nature sense-making is both an interpretive activity and an iterative process, contextually informed and constantly under construction (Daft & Weick, 2001). It emphasises the primacy of unique experience and is predominantly a narrative process, the continual re-drafting of an emerging story, where plausibility rather than accuracy becomes the focus.

As Weick (1995) points out, there are subtleties as to how various authors have construed sense making, for example Starbuck and Milliken (1988) view sense making as the placement of stimuli into a framework, or Thomas, Clark and Gioia, who describe sense making as *'the reciprocal interaction of information seeking, meaning, ascription and action'* (1993, p.240). As Chia (2000) describes:

> *'It is through this process of differentiating, fixing, naming, labelling, classifying and relating – all intrinsic processes of discursive organisation – that social reality is systematically constructed'. (p.513)*

It is the '*differentiating*, *fixing, naming, labelling',* that lie at the heart of the research techniques most prevalent in the literature examined. It was unsurprising that a review of articles on the topic (Boje, 1995, Brown, 2000, Balogun & Johnson, 2004) were phenomenological in nature and the research techniques were congruent with this, using qualitative research methods including Case Studies, Narrative and Discourse Analysis (see Appendix 6 for detail). Although as Weick (1995) comments:

> *'The prefix 'sense' in the word sensemaking is mischievous. It simultaneously invokes a realist ontology, as in the suggestion that something is out there to be registered and sensed accurately, and an idealist ontology, as in the suggestion that something out there and needs*

to be agreed on and constructed plausibly. The sensible need not be sensible, and therein lies the trouble.' (p.55)

The study of interfaces covers a number of types of boundaries including external interfaces (e.g. Kraatz, 1998) and technical within the broader field. It also covers such topics as networks (Nelson, 1989, Adler & Kwon, 2002, Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994). However, it is internal relational interfaces that are relevant to this research. The focus of this study is on the inter-subjective and inter-dependent nature of organisational life (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000). It is the study of the 'between' and by its very nature relational. They suggest (p.552) that what is important is to develop a host of methodological choices which help represent lived organisational reality as it is and that there is a plurality of perspectives that constitute organisational experience (Bartunek et al., 1983). Palus et al., (2003) used a number of methodologies including action and experimental learning. Focus groups were used as an efficient means of data collection in Balogun et al's (2005) research into managing change across boundaries.

Research on team effectiveness used a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Pearce & Ensley, 2004, Katzenbach & Smith, 1993, Higgs, 2007, Gratton, 2007). Several studies consider the correlation between specific variables on aspects of team performance.

> *'Testing the link between shared vision and key team dynamics variables will allow us to gain an understanding of the workings and interactions between team members during the innovation process' (Pearce & Ensley 2004 p.261)*

Espinosa et al. (2003) comments on the challenges of conducting field research on teams in global firms, where there are challenges of identifying a fixed boundary around a team that defines the unit of analysis under study. As highlighted in the literature review, Team Effectiveness incorporates a vast number of aspects; trust, purpose, teams over time, teams in change. As such, it is unsurprising that of the three areas it had the most variety of methodological approaches employed.

4.2.3 Research Approach in Relation to my Practice

That my research might have some practical application is a key factor for me. I am first and foremost a practitioner. Being able to bridge the gap between academia and business (Huff, 2000, Transfield and Starkey; 1998, Keleman & Bansal, 2002,

Brannik & Coghlan 2006), is one of the reasons for the choice of a pursuing a DBA as opposed to a PhD.

Pettigrew et al. (2001, p.697) make the point that theories of change in management and organisational studies must face the double hurdle of '*scholarly quality and practical relevance'.* Lichtenstein (2000a) asks the question is it valid or vacuous? The challenge is getting the balance. Anderson et al. (2001) consider the question of rigour versus relevance, differentiating between 'Popularist Science' -where the theme is relevant but it lacks methodological rigour - and construct validity back to theory and 'Pragmatic Science', which is both relevant and rigorous. Although what is meant by relevance and to whom is in itself a question of debate. The approaches taken by Shaw (1998) and McKenzie (1994), appear to demonstrate the range as to what is acceptable; Shaw's highly relevant work, touches nerves with the practitioner community (as borne out by her subsequent book, 2002), yet lacks traditional rigour as she grapples with the relatively new application of complexity theories to management, whilst McKenzie's use of more traditionally research methodologies to robustly tackle the same subject, again makes it relevant to her audience.

Whereas the outcome for traditional academic research is to develop the capability to make a significant original contribution to knowledge, Bourner (2000) considers the outcome of a professional doctorate is to develop the capacity to make a significant original contribution to practice. He makes the distinction between theoretical knowledge as opposed to the ability to apply that knowledge in practice.

Gibbons et al.'s (1994) work on the identification of two forms of knowledge creation, characterise Mode 1 as the 'scientific inquiry' and Mode 2 as 'problem solution.' This is commented on by a number of researchers (Huff, 2000 p.289, Transfield and Starkey, 1998, Keleman & Bansal, 2002). Huff considers Mode 1 as having a central belief of 'knowledge for knowledge's sake'; whereas she sees Mode 2 as 'knowledge from application', where work tends to be trans-disciplinary. Starkey & Maden (2001) also pick up this theme; they cite Davenport & Prusak (1998):

> '*What makes knowledge valuable to organisations is ultimately the ability to make better decisions and action taken on the basis of knowledge. If knowledge doesn't improve decision making then what's the point?'* (S6)

And as Keleman & Bansal (2002) comment;

> '*knowledge without an audience has little value'. (p.98)*

Weick (2001) challenges 'Mode 2' thinking and this particular view, arguing that in the frenzy of 'the real world', and its focus on immediate problem solution, 'patterns between episodes' are missed. He sees the advantage of academic (university - based Mode 1 research) as:

> '*A knowledge-creating organisation that remembers things that others have forgotten…deals with facts that others suppress and tackles questions that others avoid…'(pS74)*

But this feels somewhat polarising; as if the two types of knowledge are being set up in opposition. I do not believe one excludes the other. Weick is concerned that as pace increases practitioners are looking more to fad and become reluctant to work with fundamentals. I believe he makes a strong point. The challenge to watch out for the fundamentals is appropriate; 'pause for thought' and 'reflection' is often underused in today's environment. It is hard to dispute the value of such an approach and undoubtedly the different and broader perspective offered by academia is valued by the business communities. In the course of my job, I sit in meetings and sometimes notice the frustration (by the group but also by myself) if a proposal appears to lack an immediate practical application, or if it involves effort to understand or apply. Quite simply in a time-poor work environment, a group has 'a problem' and just wants to know the 'solution' ('so what does this mean for me'?). Interesting as the theoretical explanation might be to researchers, it means little to the participants. Even in a staff role going out to HR Business Partners, I am very conscious of the need to limit explanation; that I can explain too much. Whereas for them, they need line of sight to ground the thinking into what will it mean to the participants -where is its relevance and how it will resonate. What they are looking for is 'the meal on the table'; they do not need to know how it was cooked or the state of the kitchen! But often in racing to a solution we end up merely finding a solution for the symptom. Sometimes we do not pause for thought that allows us to really hold with the problem. I think this is where Weick's concern is coming from. But equally there is a need for pragmatism; a need for expediency, which often isn't about providing the 100% right answer, but rather the answer that is adequate enough to move things forward.

For me, the challenge of a professional doctorate is that it needs to be able to differentiate itself from 'a good piece of consulting'. It needs to be able to provide businesses with knowledge that can be applied to 'live' problems but additionally it needs to go beyond this, otherwise it stays in the terrain of consulting. My belief is that although the starting point might differ, good professional research takes on board

the attributes of more traditional research, which for me is about the ability to hold with a problem; to understand it more fully, to raise levels of awareness, to pause for thought and take it to a deeper level of reflection. Mode 2 does not deny rigour, rather to Pettigrew's (2001, p. *697*) comments above; it is the double hurdle of '*scholarly quality and practical relevance'.*

Action Research as an orientation appears congruent with this need to privilege both aspects, for it addresses both the 'action' of application and the rigour of research. The notion of actionable knowledge is a theme taken up by Argyris et al. (1985) who observe that:

> '*One consequence of this division of labour (scientist vs practitioner) is that those responsible for generating knowledge can ignore important considerations for that knowledge in action'. (p43).*

As Huff observes in Mode 2, knowledge is validated in use and the knowledge tends to be transitory. As practitioners, you have to make sense of things in 'real time'. You are part of, not standing back from the situation. Sometimes what is most appropriate is an approximate solution that enables movement. This concept has been important in relation to my research plan. From a belief that organisations are considered to be emergent and unpredictable, then the research needed to be able to adapt to take on board the opportunities and manage the real life restrictions of researching into real life situations, where the progress of research can't be absolutely predicted in a linear fashion.

> '*Quite unlike its pristine and logical presentation in journal articles, real research is often confusing, messy, intensely frustrating, and fundamentally nonlinear'* (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, cited in Parke, 1993, p.240)

The notion of transition (and therefore redundancy) in order to move forward, resonates with the 'gesture and response' of conversation which is created in the 'living present' (Griffin, 2002) and the idea of 'knowledge in motion', which is congruent with a complexity approach (Donaldson, 2005, Nolan, 2005).

Ultimately I will be satisfied, if I believe my research achieves the triple objectives described below:

> '*All good research is for me, for us and for them: it speaks to three audiences… It is for them to the extent that it produces some kind of generalizable ideas and outcomes which elicit the response 'That's interesting! From those who are concerned with understanding a similar field. It is for us to that it responds to concerns for our praxis, it is relevant and timely and so elicits the response 'That works'! - from those who are struggling with problems in their field*

*of action. It is for me to the extent that the process and outcomes respond directly to the individual researcher's being in the world, and so elicit the response, 'That's exciting!'- taking exciting back to its root meaning, to set in action.'(*Reason & Marshall, 2006 p.315)

But I challenge that there are only three audiences; the academic, the practitioner and the researcher for me there are also the participants. What is being done, in the moment, in the room needs to be meaningful for each and needs to resonate with all these audiences. This, I think, is the challenge for a practitioner - researcher and I would question sometimes whether this is possible, or compatible. It is dynamic, messy and paradoxical; but it is also where my interest lies. This is where the rigour relevance debate resonates with me. It is making explicit what already 'sits' within the group, to delve into assumptions, and find a line of sight between theory and practice, that can then be used to move a group forward.

4.3 Finding a Methodology

Finding an appropriate methodology has been a challenge. Working with the information explored in the previous section, suggested a phenomenological or interpretive approach using qualitative research. As Czarniaska- Joerges (1997) notes:

> *'Interpretive research is not a quest for ultimate truth but for a plausible, authoritative, verisimilitudious and interesting analysis that enriches our understanding of the social phenomena.'*

This statement felt like an appropriate ambition for my research. But beyond that no single methodology fitted exactly. The research addresses a complex problem, in a complex setting and it is maybe unsurprising that in order to address the question I needed a mixture of techniques.

> *' An object of study is complex when it is capable of surprising an observer, and its behaviour cannot be reduced to the behaviour of its constituent parts…Complex social systems require complex forms of knowing ; namely, forms of understanding that are sensitive to context, time, change, events, beliefs and desires, power, feedback loops and circularity. Complex understanding is grounded on an open –world (as opposed to a closed world ontology)…a complex form of understanding sees the world as full of possibilities'… (Tsoukas, 2005 p.4)*

But I was concerned that even a blended approach, although a legitimate and frequently used approach (McKenzie, 1994, Balogun et al., 2003), might be construed as a way of 'cherry picking' those aspects of a methodology which fitted and ignoring those that didn't. The following section outlines how I have grappled with each of the methodological choices available, in order to justify taking a *bricolage* approach.

I used a blend of qualitative methods taking an overarching Case Study approach. Although there were aspects of Action Research involved at the level of the workshops within the Case Studies, I could not justify Action Research as an overarching methodology and have therefore worked with that limitation, considering it rather as an orientation (Ladkin, 200?, Reason & Bradbury, 2005). Likewise, there were perceived limitations in the use of Grounded Theory. The summary at the end of this section, draws together the strands of my chosen methods and techniques and considers how they work together to form a *bricolage* approach Demonstrating how such an approach provides the rigour I am seeking and acknowledging limitations where they lie.

4.4 Qualitative Research

My literature review suggested a phenomenological approach, which is most often coupled with qualitative methods. I am aware that quantitative methods, such as questionnaires or surveys, might have been an option for part of the research (Johnson & Duberley, 2000). However, a number of reasons reinforced my choice of qualitative methods. Firstly as highlighted by Alvesson & Skoldberg (2000) my start point was from the phenomenon not from an existing hypothesis.

> *'(a) distinguishing feature of qualitative methods is that they start from the perspective and actions of the subjects studied, while quantitative studies typically proceed the researcher's ideas about the dimensions and categories which should constitute the central focus'*
> *(Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000, p.3)*

Secondly, given both the nature of the ontological lens and the topic of sense-making, qualitative methods both felt more congruent and would provide the richness and texture I was looking for. Finally, although not a research into my practice, the research was deeply rooted in my practice and within that was a criticality for me to understand my own interpretive lens. I hold with the view that it is not possible to facilitate a process without knowing your own values.

> *'If they cannot observe and assess their own feelings' biases, perceptual distortions and impulses they cannot tell whether their interventions are based on perceptions of reality, of what would really be helpful, or only their own needs to express or defend themselves' (Schein 1987, p.63, cited Casey et al. 1992, p.10)*

I will revisit this sentiment in more detail when I consider Action Research and also the role of the practitioner in research as it is critical in the selection of my approach.

Having established that it had to be rooted in practice, one of my concerns throughout has been that my research should be conducted in a rigorous way - taking it beyond being merely a piece of 'interesting' consulting.

Criteria for judging quantitative research quality can be based on measures of validity and reliability. Interpretive methods need to consider the robustness of their findings and the quality of their research through different criteria. Because much interpretive research is inquiring into a unique set of circumstances, by its very nature it is not repeatable. However, both types of research should be rigorous and trustworthy.

I considered my proposed approach against questions put forward by Reason and Bradbury (2001, p.12) for considering validity and quality in qualitative inquiry. These include questions which pertain to emergence and enduring consequence.

Question	How does my research address these questions?
Significance	The question of how to manage internal interfaces is a significant one for multinationals. (eg Gratton 2007)
Outcome and practice	The desired outcome is that through both this research and on going practice interventions, teams working across internal interfaces will work more effectively together. It is hoped that the research will provide transferable insights as to how successful interfaces interact.
Plural ways of knowing	Although situated in a single organisation the case studies will inquire into a number of different types of interface across a number of geographies, categories and functions. As well as observations, there will be primary data through interviews and questionnaires.
Relational practice	The workshops at the heart of the research are relational in practice, with sense being made of the issues by the participants themselves and actions suggested by them. The design of the workshops is also a collaborative approach with both HR and line involvement

Table 3: Validity & Quality in Qualitative Research

A further set of questions are put forward by Lincoln & Guba (2000) and Remenyi et al. (1998, p.117) who suggest that the criteria for judging qualitative research should be:

Credibility	Was the research designed in such a way that it could describe the phenomenon?
Transferability	Is the researcher explicit about his parameters and how that might tie in to a broader case?
Dependability	To be able to account for changes in the conditions of the phenomenon being researched
Confirmability	Does the research confirm general findings?

Table 4: Criteria for Judging Qualitative Research

I will revisit these questions at the end of this thesis.

Once having established that the research would use qualitative methods, the question was which method?

4.5 Action Research

The first methodology I considered was Action Research. However, there are a number of different approaches to Action Research (Raelin, 1999) and my challenge has been to distinguish between them to consider the congruence of this as an appropriate methodology.

At its most simple definition, Action Research starts with everyday experience and is concerned with the development of living knowledge an a cycle of action (experimentation) and reflection (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, Argyris et al., 1985, Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, Argyris and Schön, 1991). It is about simultaneously learning about a system and changing it (Gummesson 2000). Reason (2006, p.187) describes four characteristic dimensions of action research: worthwhile practical purposes, democracy and participation; many ways of knowing; and emergent developmental form. But beyond the general description are a multitude of different approaches and indeed researchers comment on the vagueness of definitions (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, Gummesson, 2000). At one end of the spectrum is a seemingly 'process' approach, as described by Remenyi et al. (1998, p.49) which summarises Action Research as essentially having four key elements:

- taking a static picture of the organisational situation
- formulating a hypothesis based on the picture
- the manipulation of variables in control of the researcher
- taking and evaluating a second static picture of the situation

However as Shaw (1998) comments this type of description of Action Research takes a linear and interventional approach rather than the interpenetration of action and reflection.

In contrast to Remenyi's more 'removed' description is co-operative inquiry. This Reason (1999, p.212) describes as a '*radical form of inquiry in which all those involved are both co-researchers and co-inquirers'.*

In trying to make a distinction between the various approaches to Action Research, I observe confusion in that the term Action Research is used both as an overarching genre and a specific approach. There is a family of action approaches to both

knowledge and learning, action learning, participative action research and action inquiry (Raelin, 1999) This recognises that knowledge arising from action is a different sort of knowledge, the knowledge of knowing how as much as knowing what (Reason & Bradbury, 2005, Pedler & Burgoyne, 2008, Cole, 1991, Fals Borda, 2001, Heron & Reason, 2001, Raelin, 1997). What appears common to all approaches is that the key activities are the same, as described by Remenyi et al. above, or in a similar vein Kemmis and McTaggart (2005, p.563). But in order to consider the congruence of my approach to the methodology I needed to go beyond the surface of the process and explore three key tenets from the literature on Action Research; participation, the use of 1st 2nd 3rd person inquiry; and reflective practice.

4.5.1 Action Research and Participation

What differentiates between the various types of action research is the degree of participation. But here is another layer of confusion. Even the word 'participative', is ambiguous; the participation of whom and in what? Reason's (1999) description above - shared by others from a socio- technical perspective (e.g. Pasmore, 2001, Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, Reason & Bradbury, 2001) - is of an all encompassing approach with everyone being involved as a co-researcher.

> *'Action research is participative research….Action research is only possible <u>with, for,</u> and, <u>by</u> persons and communities, ideally involving all stakeholders in the questioning and sense making that informs the research <u>and,</u> in the action which is its focus. (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p.2)*

Participation appears as an absolute. However, Gummesson (2000, p.134) provides a sense of 'degrees of participation'; '*participant observation is direct, without intermediaries, but the degree of participation can vary*.. My hesitation in calling my methodology 'Action Research' is that I question the degree of participation within my own research. To call it a piece of Action Research feels appropriate; throughout, irrespective of levels of participation by others, there is a sense of an iterative cycle of action, reflection, and renewed intervention. However, the degree of participation varies.

Who	Approach	Area of participation	Purpose	Degree of action research
Researcher	Participative Inquiry	Across all workshops and separate conversations	Analysis across all workshops to confirm emerging themes around the researcher's research question	Overarching analysis of the 'meta' research question detached from participants, nor was the meta question defined by participants
Facilitator	Action Research	Individual workshops and across workshops	To facilitate the group in addressing the question and to develop a narrative for each workshop, and to use reflections to feed into future events	At an individual workshop level to help address the interface issues the specific group were facing At a practice level noticing interventions which would help groups work with interface issues At a research level identifying key themes
Participant	Participative Action Research	Individual workshops	Dialoguing how to improve their interface	Both questions to be resolved and agreed actions defined by the participants

Table 5: Levels of Participation

In my first Case Study, (see Table 5), in the workshops, the participants were making sense of the situation and creating solutions themselves, the design of the workshops was co-created with both local Vice Presidents and HR Business Partners. Ultimately, at an organisational level there is a cycle of action and reflection being played out, with outcomes from the individual workshops informing next steps for other possible interventions. However, reflecting on works such as Reason & Bradbury (2006) my sense is that, at a practical level, it is should be the 'client', not a researcher, who is holding the research problem. I am clear that given there is no involvement of anyone else that this research is being conducted within the broader definition of Action Research as described by Remenyi et al. (1998). I would distinguish between this piece of research and the approach taken by Chivers (2005), whereby she co-created a research design with both parents and therapists and within that design, both parties 'learnt –in- action'.

From this premise, the workshops which make up Case Study 1 might be seen as Action Research interventions, but the research itself is not.

An interesting challenge is whether the participants were actually 'doing' action research. They had certainly come together with the understanding that they would be working together to find solutions to making the interface more effective. Both the questions to be resolved and agreed actions were 'contracted' with all parties. They involved reflection and experimentation. However, other than some of the HR Business Partners, if any of the participants had been asked if they were doing Action Research, they would probably have given a blank stare.

4.5.2 Action Research and 1st/ 2nd / 3rd Person Inquiry

Torbert (2006) poses another question, when he discusses 1st 2nd and 3rd person research as part of action inquiry. As described earlier there are levels to this research. Although the focus of this research is not into my practice but on a phenomena I observe as a practitioner, nonetheless I am very conscious of the 1st person element of my research. The role I play and the influence I have with the groups, undoubtedly impacts what happens at each event. '*Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world'* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.3). At an overarching level, there is a narrative about the shift in my own practice as I experiment, reflect and apply learning from one workshop or Case Study to another. This aspect is looked at in more detail at the end of this section.

Each Case Study and indeed each workshop within them is at the level of 2nd person inquiry. The participants are actively inquiring into each others perspectives, exploring the congruity between intent and impact, in order to act in different way. They are inquiring '*face to face with others into areas of mutual concern' (Reason & Bradbury, 2006:xxv).* The interpersonal dialogue described as the start point for second person inquiry lies at the heart of all the case studies.

 I am conscious that at an overarching level, I am conducting a 3rd person inquiry '*about other things or people outside the researcher'* (Reason & Bradbury, 2006, p.208). But 3rd person, does not necessarily mean detached and indeed Reason and Bradbury (2006: xxvi) suggest that the most compelling action research will engage all three strategies, whereby 3rd person research draws together a wider community and focuses on the process and outcomes of individual inquiries. Again, I am drawn to Chivers (2005) and consider the differences between our third person approaches. Whereas she holds the process together in order to help the groups work across their mutual (3rd person) research question, the groups I have been working with are

unaware of the final research question which goes across all Case Studies and are only involved in the specific Case Study question (i.e. how do we work better together across the interface?). But should this limitation exempt my research from an Action Research approach? I am left with doubts and feel that Action Research is at the level of the interventions, not the research itself.

4.5.3 Action Research and Reflective Practice

A core tenet of Action Research is that of reflection, both on action and in action (Schön, 1983). Irrespective of whether I use Action Research or not as a methodology, my research is based in my practice and I need to understand how it is being informed. '*I see having some version of self –reflective practice as a necessary core for all inquiry'* Marshall (2006, p.335). Alvesson & Skoldberg (2000, p.5) describe reflection as turning inward and understanding theoretical assumptions. Casey et al (1992) illustrate (see Fig. 6) a similar thought. If I were to extend their illustration beyond the facilitation intervention, then there is a 'line of sight' right through to research outcomes, 'What *we know and how we know are recursively linked' (*Tsoukas, 2005, p.6).It is by being reflective that we can '*detect the biases that creep into our research- biases that constitute likely threats to the validity of our knowledge claims'* (Tsoukas, 2005, p.333).

The role of my reflective practice and its impact on the research is explored in more detail at the end of this section
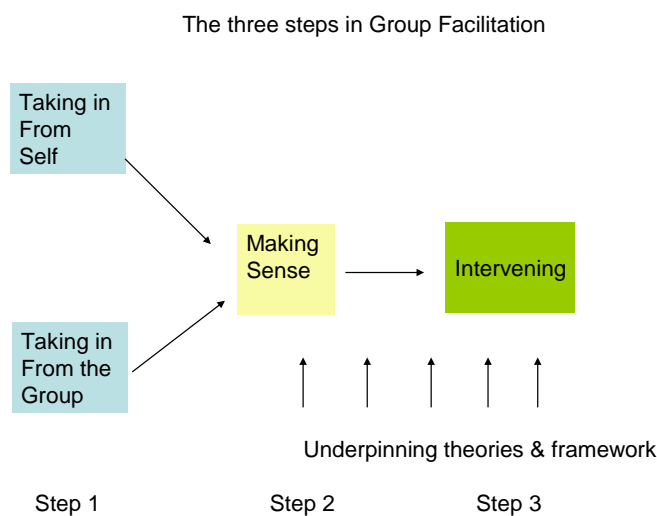
Figure 6: Three Steps in Group Facilitation - Casey et al 1992

4.5.4 Action Research vs. Research into Complex Responsive Processes

At first glance the research approach used by those involved in Complex Responsive Processes (Shaw, 2002) seems very close to those of Action Research. Both advocate participation, working with everyday experience, and emergent phenomena; but they state that they have moved on from participative inquiry and Action Research (Stacey & Griffin, 2005, p.14). Their perspective of organisations is not as systems but rather an on going patterning of interactions between people. Unlike Action Research, they do not see the interaction as generating some *thing* (e.g. an experiment) outside the interaction, but rather further patterns of interaction. In terms of the impact of this on their research approach, they conclude that as all experience is of a constant iteration of patterns, that there is no detached way to understand an organisation. It can only be as the researcher's reflections on their own experience of participating with others - a narration of their involvement. The research stance is described as one of '*detached involvement*' (Shaw & Stacey, 2006), which is the reflexivity of the researcher's own story and how it impacts on the experience being researched. This description seems quite similar to that of a participant observer described by Waddington (2004) and I am curious as to whether there is a significant distinction in the approach described by Stacey & Griffin. However, the notion of both detached involvement and narration of involvement appeals to me. In many ways, my thesis is a narration of my experiences of the local interactions as I work with teams across interfaces. The seemingly paradoxical notion of being a part of the group and yet detached, is a tension I notice in myself as I facilitate. So too is there a resonance with the view Griffin (2002) articulates; that values, norms and ideology are all contingent, and need to be interpreted and negotiated in each specific situation. For me this appears congruent with what attracts me to complexity thinking.

> '*evolution emerges as the spontaneous choices of individuals and the amplification of small differences in the iteration of interaction from one present to another, Differences and conflict are essential to such evolution, which is patterns of movement which are predictable and unpredictable at the same time*' (Stacey & Griffin 2005 p.19).

But some of the differences they describe have less resonance for me and as I have worked through this, I am struck by how personal and sometimes how subtle our own distinctions are as to what does, or does not, feel appropriate for our methodology. One of the distinctions Stacey & Griffin make is about 1st, 2nd and 3rd person research, which I have described earlier:

> *''The distinction between first, second and third person research does not arise in our research method because, no matter whether it is one two or many involved in the research, they are always particularising the general and the ideal which pertains to larger groups and societies.' (Stacey & Griffin, 2005, p.36)*

I struggle not to be able to make a distinction between the three. For me, there are different perspectives, different needs; they are all connected. They may not be separate but for me they are distinct.

One of my key interests with complexity thinking is the notion of boundaries, bifurcation points and edges. Yet here too is a distinction I find slightly perplexing:

> '*We do not think in terms of systems, boundaries, wholes… in relating to each other, people are not producing a whole, other than as an imaginary construct, but only further patterns of interaction.' (p.31)*

Like them, I find the notion of 'whole' an arbitrary one. Noticing patterns and the patterning of gesture and response in interactions is core to what I think. However, for me, the notion of boundaries and the context within a system is also fundamental; the emergent patterning of interactions happens at boundaries (all be it they can be seen as arbitrary constructs) and happens within the context of the system.

There is something attractive about this approach and it resonates with much of what I am experiencing. But in the same way that Action Research is 'an almost but not quite' approach to methodology, here my hesitation is that my research is in the service of action, of movement to something that potentially provides a solution or at least ameliorates a situation: *'that knowledge is to be produced in service of and in the midst of, action'* (Raelin, 1999, p.11). Although I am interested in action as the *'ordinary experience of interaction'* (Stacey & Griffin, 2005, p. 36); my bias is towards solving problems.

4.5.5 In Conclusion on Taking an Action Research Approach

As I concluded this section, I was increasingly clear that it would be difficult to justify my approach as Action Research. Albeit that the groups are themselves looking to identify and resolve their own issues, ultimately it is myself as a researcher inquiring into the phenomenon I am observing. However, I am left with two thoughts which resonate with my approach to the methodology. The first that Action Research *'implies a way of inquiring into the situation which embraces multiple ways of understanding that situation and not one right path which result in a better outcome'*

*(*Ladkin 200?, p.*5)*. This appears close to Torbert's sentiment of '*living inquiry'*
(2001, p.209). The second is that although clearly there is a methodology, it is as
much about a way of being in the world:

> '*We have come to regards Action Research not so much as a methodology but as an*
> *orientation towards inquiry and indeed an orientation of inquiry that seeks to create a quality*
> *of engagement, of curiosity*, *of question-posing through gathering evidence and testing*
> *practices'* (Reason & Bradbury, 2005, xxi)

It is these sentiments I have taken forward and consider Action Research as an
orientation in how I conduct my research.

4.6 Case Studies

I have chosen to use a series of Case Studies as my core methodology. Case Studies
provide a detailed empirical view of a particular phenomenon, within its context. The
approach has been used by a number of researchers (Weick, 1993, Brown &
Eisenhardt, 1997, Heraculous & Barrett, 2001)**.** Furthermore, Case Studies have been
used in conjunction with Action Research (e.g. Shaw, 2002, Stake, 1995), as
Gummesson (2000) observes:

> '*Action research is the most far reaching and demanding method of doing case study*
> *research.' (p.116)*

Yin (2003 p.83) notes that evidence for case studies may come from six sources:
documents; archival records; interviews; direct observation; participative-observation
and physical artefacts. Each Case Study should be selected so that it a) predicts
similar results (a literal replication) or b) predicts contrasting results but for
predictable reasons (a theoretical replication) (Yin, 2003, p. 47).

For Case Studies five components are especially important (Yin, 2003 p. 21) and I
have considered these against my research in Table 6. I found the first and third of
these questions particularly useful in developing my thinking. The challenges they set
in both redefining my question and understanding what my unit of analysis was
proved invaluable:

> '*The selection of the appropriate unit of analysis will occur when you accurately specify your*
> *primary research questions. If your questions do not lead to the favouring of one unit of*
> *analysis over another, your questions are probably too vague or too numerous… (Yin, 2000,*
> *p.2).*

My initial thinking placed sense-making as my unit of analysis. It took some months
to realise that my focus was on inertia or movement happening at an interface and

indeed that sense-making was rather the vehicle that aided or hindered movement into action.

As Yin states (2003, p.26), the fourth and fifth components have been less developed but should nonetheless provide a solid foundation for data analysis. A chain of evidence (explicit links between the questions asked, the data collected and the conclusions drawn) is developed as the case study develops and *'patterns of relationships* (are recognised) *amongst constructs within and across cases and their underlying logical arguments'* (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007, p.25). Ultimately good Case Study research will evidence 'pattern matching' between theory and data (Gephart, 2004, p.29).

A piece of research will often utilise a number of different Case Studies e.g. across different organisations or within different parts of the same organisation. Yin (2003, p. 40) describes four basic types of design for case studies. These include either single case design or multiple case designs, and within those two types of design are two types of analysis - a holistic approach, which has a single unit of analysis, or an embedded approach which has multiple units of analysis.

Component	In relation to my research
A study's question	Yin perceives that Case Studies are most useful for how and why questions. Reframing my questions from what to how helped understand my primary question from what is the roles of sense-making to why do groups get stuck at an interface and how does sense-making help the movement from inertia to action.
Its propositions, if any	The propositions only really started to emerge after the second Case Study. The question: where are the propositions directing attention, forced reflection on the primary question and was useful in where to look for relevant data.
Its unit(s) of analysis	Clearly identifying the unit of analysis is critical and drives to the question: what is the case? In each of these Case Studies the unit of analysis is the same – the interface between two groups. Each interface describes a different type of 'stuckness'. Answering this question really forced a shift from an assumption that sense-making was the unit of analysis to interfaces. Identifying the unit of analysis also helps link to theory and comparable approaches of other studies
The logic linking the data to the propositions	Links to data analysis. Pattern matching is particularly useful where by several pieces of data from the case can be matched to some theoretical proposition
The criteria for interpreting the findings	Comparing rival propositions, Yin considers that there is no precise way of setting criteria.

Table 6: Case Study components in relation to my research

I chose to conduct a series of three Case Studies (each with a number of workshops) across different functions and geographies and within a single organisation. In effect,

each Case Study considered a different interface each with different types of 'stuckness'. Each Case Study told a story; as Sims (2003) notes:

> *'The narrative and storytelling tradition in research on people and organizations has been implicit for a long time, for example, in the use of case study research, where it was taken that the unit of analysis was the 'case' or story, which carried its sense as a narrative whole'.(p. 1197)*

Several researchers (eg Yin, 2003, Eisenhardt, 1989, Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007, Burgess et al., 1994) comment on the advantage of multiple Case Studies within a piece of research as the opportunity for comparison.

> *'Multiple case studies typically provide a stronger base for theory building… Multiple cases enable comparisons that clarify whether an emergent finding is simply idiosyncratic to a single case study or consistently replicated by several cases. Multiple cases also create more robust theory because the propositions are more deeply grounded in varied empirical evidence. (Eisenhardt & Graebner 2007, p.27)*

Comparison between my own Case Studies provides richer and more robust evidence. One of my key propositions only became evident through the second Case Study. Whilst considering my own approach to using a case study methodology, my attention was caught by a comment in Easterby-Smith et al., (2002):

> **'***Yin (1994) demonstrates that case studies may contain the same degree of validity as more positivist studies and therefore his exposition of the method contains both rigour and the application of careful logic about comparisons…. In contrast, Stake, (1995) sees case method being much closer to action research: he is less concerned with issues of validity and more concerned with the potential for the researcher to aid change within the research setting.' (p.49)*

Two comments in particular from Stake (2005) would appear to support this view of taking an Action Research orientation; the first is an avocation to '*place your best intellect into the thick of what is going on'* (p.449) and the second that:

> *'Enduring meanings come from encounter and are modified and reinforced by repeated encounter. In ordinary living, this occurs seldom to the individual alone and more often in the presence of others. In a social process, people together bend, spin, consolidate and enrich their understanding.' (p.454)*

In many ways the workshops which make up my Case Studies are 'repeated encounters', where the on going conversation both with participants and the supporting HR community - during and after the event - are the vehicle of my own sense- making.

From a complexity perspective Case Studies are an appropriate choice firstly because they allow for a holistic view (Gummesson, 2000). Secondly, the Case Study is a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamic present within single settings (Eisenhardt 1989). Finally and maybe less obviously, for their potential use of historical data. A complexity perspective, as highlighted earlier, focuses on actions, ('in the moment', the dynamic present') and therefore a retrospective study might seem at odds with the perspective. But as Gummesson (2000) observes;

> *'Historical analysis is not just a simple retrospective study, but a reflection of the view that history is always present and that new history is always in the process of being created from the current social, political and economic reality.'* (p.98)

However, researching in a single organisation might not pick up on organisational peculiarities. Case Studies are only a snapshot in time and I am conscious, as Pettigrew (2001, Pettigrew et al., 2001) pointed out, both context and time might impact what is seen. To a degree this is overcome where Case Studies are employed as part of longitudinal studies (Balogun & Johnson, 2004, Hope Hailey & Balogun, 2002), where in effect multiple snapshots in time are created (Avital 2000, Isabella 1990). Typically, they are based on a variety of data sources providing triangulation (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007, Yin, 2003).

Whether in longitudinal studies or Case Studies in general the importance of triangulation in qualitative research is highlighted:

> *'The essence of triangulation is to attempt to corroborate any evidence that is supplied either by speaking to another individual or by asking for documentation that will support the initial view.' (*Remenyi et al., 1998, p.*142*)

He goes on to recommend the use of triangulation as a means of eliminating bias (p. 126). Triangulation, based on a navigational metaphor, is a means of using multiple points to more precisely define a location, in research terms it is about different views of the same dimension (Jick, 1983). Checking back with participants is recommended as a means of triangulation (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). However, Heron (1996) points out that if something is co-created and emergent, then checking back wouldn't be possible, as it has moved on to something beyond the original and individual view. Richardson (1997) goes a step further than triangulation with her image of the crystal. This provides not just reflection of external perspectives but also refracts within itself and is akin to the researcher sitting in the middle of and part of the research.

> *'I propose that the central imaginary for 'validity' for post-modern texts is not the triangle- a rigid, fixed, two dimensional object. Rather the central imaginary is the crystal, which*

combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionality and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change alters but are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colours patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose…Crystallization without loosing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of 'validity' (we feel how there is no single truth, we see how texts validate themselves); and crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex thoroughly partial understanding of the topic.' (Richardson 1997 p.92 – cited in Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p.208)

Even though this is not a research into my practice, my practice does impact the research. As with the crystal it will refract what is being reflected from external perspectives (the research). There is an '*intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry'* (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, p.8). I am conscious therefore of the need not just to triangulate from sources within the groups, but also from within myself.

Within a Case Study a number of data collection and data analysis techniques (both qualitative and quantitative) can be used (Yin 2003, Eisenhardt, 1989); the multiplicity of approaches enhancing the ability to triangulate. Indeed, as Eisenhardt (1989) observes:

> *'A striking feature of research to build theory from case studies is the frequent overlap of data analysis with data collection.… Field notes, a running commentary to oneself and /or research teams are an important means of accomplishing this overlap.' (p538)*

The notion of overlap between collection and analysis has been a characteristic of this research where, because of the timing (in particular of the workshops in the first case study), at any given moment I could be collecting pre workshop data for one workshop, running another and conducting post workshop interviews for a third. From a practitioner point of view, obviously the learning coming from one workshop was feeding into the sessions of subsequent ones, whilst from a researcher perspective, findings from one workshop would influence what I noticed in the next.

The techniques for both data analysis and collection within a Case Study methodology are considered below.

4.7 Data Collection

Three key methods of data collection were used: interviews; direct observation of workshops; and qualitative questionnaires. In addition, there was a more limited use of archival information.

4.7.1 Interviews

Interviews were used as a means of data collection, both pre- and post the workshops. Interviews are seen as a highly efficient way to gather rich, empirical data (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007) and in particular as an important source for Case Study research (Yin, 2003). Stake (1995, p. 65) makes an interesting distinction between the use of observations and interviews, in that what is observed is not normally in the control of the researcher, whereas the interview is targeted and influenced by the interviewers. Interviews are also a means of building on observations as interviewees can provide observations that the researcher cannot see for themselves (Stake, 1995, p. 97). There are two types of interview: open ended and semi structured or focused (Remenyi et al., 1998, Yin, 2003). Isabella, (1990) uses a semi- structured approach in her research and Shah and Corley (2006) use open ended but structured questions about interviewees' experiences. They note that they needed similarities in the questions asked to enable comparison. Flexibility was also important so that the informant has control to express what aspect of the phenomenon was most meaningful to them. The need to be able to compare data is also taken up by Miles and Huberman (1994, p.89) who observe that the *'looser your interview strategy the less comparable your data'.* As Stake (1995, p. 64) observes: *'the interview is the main road to multiple realities.'* In order to cope with that multiplicity, the researcher needs a strong advance plan - as getting a good interview is not easy! People are often happy to talk but focusing them on questions about what needs to be known can prove difficult. He suggests preparing a short list of issue orientated questions.

Some concerns are expressed with the use of interviews. The theme of time or retrospective sense-making is one concern, where poor recall can obscure what is being reported. Avital (2000) raises a concern that:

> *' The interviews revealed that in many instances researchers treat the data collected about subjects' perceptions as objective or fixed independent property, while it is evident that the subjects' perceptions change over time'*

Isabella (1990) was also concerned with snapshot method in her own research but goes further to consider that they '*are not accidental or transitory phenomena, but rather they are rooted in the deep structure of positivism.'* Alvesson (2003) is concerned with the 'tools and pipeline version' of interviews, whereby the dominant metaphors of the research interview are as an instrument to be used as effectively as possible; or a human encounter, encouraging the interviewee to reveal his or her

authentic experiences, but where neither pay attention to significant aspects of the interview as a complex social system.

> *'What takes place in the interview, however, may be seen as complex interaction in which the participants make efforts to produce a particular order, drawing upon cultural knowledge to structure the situation and minimise embarrassments and frustrations, feelings of asymmetrical relations of status and power, and so forth'. (p.19)*

He advocates greater reflexivity in an approach to interviews, whereby the interviewer makes a: *'conscious and consistent efforts to view the subject matter from different angles and avoid or strongly a priori privilege a single favoured angle and vocabulary'(p25). .*

One of the potential biases he identifies, that of impression management, is also recognised by Eisenhardt & Graebner (2007). They recommend that a way to mitigate against bias is by:

> *'Using numerous and highly knowledgeable informants who view the local phenomena from diverse perspectives. These informants can include organisational actors from different hierarchical levels, functional areas, groups'* (p.28).

Triangulation can also help reduce bias where multiple data sources are explored (Parke, 1993).

Although there appears to be a dominant preference, with researchers advocating the use of tape recorders and transcribing an exact replica of the conversation, there are disadvantages:

> *'The usual disadvantages of recording an interview centre on the nervousness and anxiety provoked in the respondent. The accuracy of responses can be jeopardized since respondents do not want to be recorded saying 'the wrong thing' (Hart & Smith, 1991 p.196)*

Stake considers that; *'getting the exact words of the respondent is usually not very important, it is what they mean that is important' (p.66).* He suggests that the interviewer submit a transcript to the respondent for accuracy and stylist improvement. In order to keep the interviews as natural and open as possible in a work setting, all interviews were transcribed rather than recorded, with a transcript being forwarded to the interviewee for confirmation.

4.7.2 Observations

In effect the researcher, through his observations and subsequent interpretations of what happens during a Case Study, becomes a storyteller (Stake, 1995). During the course of his observations the researcher should keep a detailed record of events, which can then be used to provide a sound description and can be used for analysis.

Indeed, it can be considered as one of the most valuable ways of collecting reliable evidence (Remenyi et al., 1998 p.176).

Stake (1995, p.60) contends that it is important that the researcher is clear as to the target of the Case Study, because of the need for observations pertinent to the issues. However, this does not appear to be universally the case, such as with complexity researchers (e.g. Shaw, 2002), who take a far more emergent approach with a 'living inquiry'. The notion of what get noticed, is an interesting one, lying at the heart of interpretive thinking as the observer will always, even subconsciously, be making choices as to what they notice or not; this is as described in Argyris's 'Ladder of Inference', where *'the possibility of interpretative ambiguity threatens the inter-subjective agreement among observers so necessary to testing in the mainstream account of science'* (Argyris et al., 1985 p. 57)

Observations from the research took three forms: flip chart notes made during the workshops; field notes of observations during the meeting itself; and field notes made of reflections soon after the meeting, incorporating informal conversations with co-facilitators and participants.

4.7.3 Qualitative Questionnaires

Qualitative questionnaires were used for all participants going into the workshops. This was to provide an initial understanding of the participants' perceptions as to how the interface was working and where their personal concerns and issues might be. However, Easterby-Smith et al. (2002, p.133) caution that a potential weakness is that the data obtained may be very superficial and that the analysis of qualitative questionnaires can be very time consuming. When designing such questionnaires he offers the following advice:

- make sure the questions are clear
- avoid any jargon or specialist language
- avoid negatives
- avoid personal questions
- don't ask two questions in one item
- avoid leading questions

Having collected data from multiple sources, the next step was to define how best to analyse the data.

4.8 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is about the defining, categorising, mapping and ultimately explaining and theorising about the mass of data, often unstructured and unwieldy, accumulated in the data collection stage (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002). Data can be analysed in one of two ways: a priori, where there is an existing proposition or framework against which the data is sorted, or inductive analysis when themes emerge from the data. Whereas there were some well defined approaches to data collection appropriate to my research, finding an approach to data analysis was more challenging. Other than Grounded Theory, described below, there is a noticeable absence of references to data analysis (Bryman & Burgess 1994, Hart, 1991). There appears to be no correct way of analysing and interpreting qualitative data (Hart, 1991, Robson & Foster, 1989) and Grounded Theory is often inappropriately used as a 'catch all' for any type of qualitative analysis (Sudderby 2006).

Even when conducting an inductive analysis a number of researchers argue that you cannot really separate out coding from an earlier interpretation from observation (Stake, 1995, Robson & Foster, 1989). A researchers' judgement is a significant element throughout the research process.

> 'Analysis and interpretation does not only occur as a separate process at one particular stage of the research rather it should be occurring at the time the researcher is interviewing respondents and thinking about their responses.' (Robson & Foster, 1989 p 89)

4.8.1 Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 (cited Miles & Huberman 1994). Unlike positivist research which looks to data to prove a theory, the start point for Grounded Theory is the data itself. The researcher searches for concepts which fit the data rather than the other way around. Inductive and empirical evidence is collected first (often from multiple data sources) without any preliminary hypothesis being formed from existing theory. Glaser and Strauss shared a belief that prior knowledge of the literature on the topic being researched would contaminate the perspective of the researcher and influence his findings. The method described by Glaser and Strauss is built upon two key concepts: 'constant comparison', in which data is collected and analysed simultaneously and 'theoretical sampling', in which decisions about which data should be collected next are determined by the theory being constructed (Suddaby 2006 p. 634).

> ' A *central idea of grounded theory is that the sampling of data runs in parallel to, and is directly influenced by, the analysis of existing data'* (Easterby- Smith et a.,l 2002, p. *126).*

A schism developed between Glaser and Strauss with the development of 'axial coding' by Strauss and Corbin, which forced categories on the data, and which Glaser claimed compromised the true emergence of categories from the data.

Grounded Theory methodology has become widely used in qualitative research, (Isabella, 1990, Turner, 1983, Locke & Golden–Biddle, 1997). Yin (2003) and Parke (1993) describe it as a method used in conjunction with Case Studies.

Grounded Theory rejects a priori theorising (Shah and Corley 2006). As such there is a 'tabula rasa' as opposed to a priori hypothesis (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000, p. 16) - the themes emerged from the date rather than being previously suggested. In many ways, it might be argued that Grounded Theory could be an appropriate methodology, for despite conducting a significant literature review at the start of the research I uncovered very limited previous work on the specific topic of interfaces and the impact of sense making which would argue for having to do some aspect of grounded work. However, such a significant review might be seen to compromise the integrity of the research approach. Bryman (2004, p. 401) suggests that Grounded Theory is '*more honoured in the breach than in the observance'* and Suddaby (2006) tackles the increasing misinterpretation of the method and notes that;

> ' *Methodological slurring tends towards 'forced categories' in the coding process …and reduces grounded theory technique from its intended purpose of identifying new theory to one of simply confirming extant understandings of a social consequence of the researcher imposing intentions on the data.' (p.637)*

There are challenges as to whether the 'purist' approaches of Grounded Theory can ever really exist; that one can ever really avoid some degree of prior theorising (Bryman, 2004, Kelle, 2005) or that researchers could suspend their ideas on theories and concepts.

Within even the first couple of workshops, concepts from the literature would be creeping in and much to Argyris' 'Ladder of Inference' (1990), I would be choosing what I noticed.

As with other areas of my methodology I was faced with a dilemma of 'almost but not quite'; whereby although I was working emergently from the data I was conscious of a priori influences. Rather than try and argue that my research might fit a Grounded Theory approach, I considered that I was taking a semi Grounded Theory approach and looked at a number of authors as to how to approach emergent coding. Certain

researchers advocate that having a rough working frame in place at the beginning of the work is helpful (Miles, 1983, p.119). Both Hart (1991 p.9) and Miles & Huberman (1994 p.61) cite Lofland's (1971) classification of social phenomena as a basis for a coding scheme which can be used as preliminary analytical strategies during data collection and sits part way between a priori and inductive coding, where '*codes are not content specific but points to the general domains in which codes can be developed inductively:*'

- *Acts (temporary)*
- *Activities (longer duration ie weeks)*
- *Meanings*
- *Participation*
- *Relationships*
- *Settings*

Most authors describe a number of similar steps when approaching qualitative analysis and include 'Framework' (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002, Hart, 1991) and grounded analysis (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002); the key activities of both are described below. The critical difference between them appears to be whether coding occurs before or after a framework, with the former appearing to lean towards an a priori approach and the latter an inductive one.

The key elements of **'Framework'** (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994, p.178) are:

- Familiarisation- essentially involves emersion in the data
- Identifying a thematic framework – sets up a thematic framework (having looked at issues trends etc) into which the data can be sorted.
- Indexing – sifting into the framework
- Charting- data lifted from original context and rearranged
- Mapping and interpretation

At the heart of the analysis process is coding. In effect codes are tags to describe units of meaning, from whence themes and trends can be identified and interpretations made. Corbin & Strauss (1990, p.12) identify three types of code;
Open coding – the interpretive process by which data are broken down analytically, the purpose to give new insights. In open coding events/ actions/ interactions are compared with others for similarity/ difference. They are given conceptual labels.
Axial coding – categories are related to their sub categories and the relationship tested against the data. During the analysis the analyst can draw on previous experience. A single incident isn't sufficient basis to verify or discard a hypothesis; a

hypothesis must be indicated by the data over and over again. Starts to provide things like … 'under these conditions this action'… 'under these conditions that'…

Selective coding- all categories are unified around a core category.

The key elements of **Grounded Analysis** are described as:

- Familiarisation – re-read transcripts (recorded and unrecorded) e.g. context
- Reflection about things like: does it support existing knowledge? Does it challenge it? Does it answer unanswered questions? What is different? Is it different?
- Conceptualisation- concepts articulated as explanatory variables
- Cataloguing concepts- transfer to database and look at labelling
- Re-coding - e.g. people in same organisation interpreting a concept in a different way
- Linking – link variables to a more holistic theory
- Re evaluation

(Easterby-Smith et al., 2002 p.122/123)

Codes can be descriptive, interpretive or consider patterns. The challenge is to dissect the data meaningfully and yet keep the relation of the parts intact (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data analysis took a semi Grounded Theory approach using emergent coding from the data collection of the first Case Study. This is closer to the 'grounded analysis' described above. The emerging themes then became the coding frame for subsequent data analysis. The data analysis was an iterative process, in the spirit of both Case Study and Action Research the data reduction and coding from the first Case Study provided – '*preliminary analysis which refines, iterates and revises frameworks suggests new leads for further data collection and makes data more available for final assembly into case studies and cross site analysis' (Miles, 1983 p.122).*

As with Grounded Theory, newly coded data was constantly compared in a category with old coded data (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000, p.25). As the analysis developed, core coding emerged. These core codes appeared frequently, related easily to other categories, and helped develop a theory (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000, p.29).

4.9 Alternative Research Methodologies Considered

There were alternative methods considered as I planned my research, these are considered briefly below:

4.9.1 Discourse Analysis

Discourse Analysis, was a potential approach for this research. Discourse analysis is a type of narrative research, concerned with how individuals use language within specific contexts. In effect it looks at the meta stories being told in an organisation. The underlying ontology associated with discourse analysis is of social constructionism and the belief that language constructs the nature of the world rather than being the vehicle to reflect it. It is the use of language that is the central object of study, both in terms of how individuals use language as a construction and also why they do it in particular ways. Discourse is defined as '*a system of texts that bring objects into being*' (Parker, 1992, in Hardy, 2001). Discourse analysis can take a number of forms: artefacts, written (Brown, 2000) and spoken text, visual effects, for example Hardy (2001) describes the use of cartoons in a discourse analysis.

The conversation and dialogue aspects of Discourse Analysis are concerned with the focus on the interaction itself and would therefore have been a potential methodology for exploring activity at an interface. However, this appeared a less feasible option when considered in terms of integrating this approach with my working practice. As such I felt that it was less likely to yield as rich a source of data as the chosen options.

4.9.2 Storytelling

Storytelling is used as a facilitation technique in the Case Study 1 workshops; however I could have considered it as a research methodology throughout. An option could have been for participants to tell stories of their experiences at interfaces, from whence key themes would have emerged, rather than using the specific experiences of the Case Study workshops.

There are a number of examples of storytelling being used as a methodological approach (Chia, 1996, Downing, 2005, Gabriel, 1995, Brown 2000, Sims, 2003). Boje (1991) transcribed hundreds of everyday conversations (at various office locations; boardroom, restaurant and training sessions), in effect making up scenes in a story. He then used a Grounded Theory and Discourse Analysis approach to identify common themes. In '*Tamara-land*' (1995), he researched archive texts to understand the emergence of the current 'Disney' story. Reason & Hawkin, (1988) suggest that:

> '*Stories can also change how experience is gathered. Instead of asking 'Tell me about…', which can lead to an explanatory account, one can ask, 'Tell me the story…,' which invites more expression.*' (p.100)

Storytelling would have provided a relevant approach to this research, but would have necessitated far greater involvement with participants in advance of the workshops. This would have been difficult to negotiate with the organisation.

4.9.3 Focus Groups

There is a synergistic potential with focus groups to go beyond a series of simultaneous interviews to produce new collective insights that might not be achieved through individual interviews. They also take the interpretive processes '*beyond the bounds of individual memory and expression to mine and historically sediment collective memories'* (Denzin & Lincoln 2005 p. 903)

Focus groups are not without their challenges, Steyaert & Bouwen (2004 p.114) highlight the importance both of determining the size of the group and the preparation of the content. The researcher needs to be able to facilitate a comprehensive exchange of views in which '*all participants are able to speak their minds and to respond to the ideas of others'* (Easterby- Smith et al 2002 p.106). A bigger challenge in a work environment is likely to be time. It is noticed that focus groups often require a significant amount of time to warm up (Easterby Smith et al., 2002 p.106). In a culture of expediency, participants (particularly senior managers) might not be prepared to give the group the time it needs.

For me, there is another – quite pragmatic- challenge with focus groups; the ability, particularly when working across geographies, to get the appropriate groups of people together. Despite recognising that this might be a beneficial method, ultimately it was too difficult to arrange within the constraints of the organisation.

4.9.4 Archive Information / Document review

A number of researchers have used archive or document information as either a primary or secondary element to their research (Boje, 1995, Brown, 2000). Stake (1995, p.68) considers that gathering data from records follows the same line of thinking as observations or interviews and that the researcher needs to be organised in what they are looking for, yet open for unexpected clues.

As acknowledged at the beginning of this section, quantitative methods such as surveys or quantitative questionnaires might have been used in conjunction with qualitative techniques for aspects of this research project (Higgs et al., 2003); such as

when exploring the aspects of interface effectiveness. Ultimately I felt that would have been more reductionist.

Looking back at the methods considered, but not taken, I notice a common theme of rejection was because they would have been difficult to work within the constraints of the organisation. This highlights the need not just of the philosophical congruence of approach but also the practical application when working within ones' practice.

4.10 Back to the *Bricoleur*

As described at the beginning of this section, I grappled with the need to put a label on the methodology being employed and was challenged by nothing 'quite fitting'. The assessments I was making against each methodology felt quite rigid, with an assumption that rigour might only be achievable if the purity of the methodology has been adhered to. However, as described throughout this section the methodologies moved over time. Action Research has spawned a number of variations; indeed the approach described by Complex Responsive Process researchers might even be considered one of them. There are multiple versions of Case Studies and Bryman (2004 p.401) notices that Straussain's Grounded Theory has changed a great deal over the years. Neither rigidity, nor adherence to a single technique necessarily equate to rigour.

Qualitative methods do not set out to provide a 'reality', rather a medley of perspectives from which sense can be made of a phenomenon. Triangulation cannot provide an absolute validation (nor in a qualitative piece of research would this be looked for) but through providing a number of perspectives it can provide a more textured representation. Over time, there appears to be evidence of embracing and working with multiple methods.

> *'It is clear that Geertz's prophecy about the 'blurring of the genres' is rapidly being fulfilled. Inquiry methodology can no longer be treated as a set of universally applicable rules or abstractions. Methodology is invariably interwoven with and emerges from the nature of particular disciplines ... and particular perspectives. (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p.191)*

As I worked through the materials on each methodology I kept being drawn back to the notion of *bricolage*. I felt that it might provide a way of finding rigour in complex

research situations. It was an approach that appeared to enable me to draw all the strands of ontology, practice and methods together.

> *'We propose that bricolage involves an ideal-typical configuration of acting (practice), knowing (epistemology) and an underlying world view (metaphysics)',* (Duymeijan & Ruling 2010 p.133)

In complex situations it is often not possible, or advisable to look in one way. To go deeper and get beyond the presenting issue is likely to require different perspectives of the same thing, informed in different ways. I felt that like the warp and weft in a tapestry, I could weave together the multiple perspectives afforded by a variety of data collection and analysis techniques to provide a rich and varied texture in answer to the research question.

There was something else that caught my attention as to the role a *bricoleur* might play:

> *'One of the paradoxical mechanisms at work in bricolage is the idea of 'ritualized ingenuity' (Coutu 2002) based on the bricoleur's familiarity with the elements that make up his environment and an ongoing practice of diversion and permutation of elements in the bricolage process. In a crisis situation, the encounter with familiar objects and the capacity to perform simple actions can allow actors to retain their orientation, but also to immediately engage in a process of trial and error, so that the ability to act does not become paralyzed',* (Duymeijan & Ruling 2010, p.135).

Although the context of the research was 'stuckness' rather than crisis, the passage above caught my attention for two reasons. Firstly, there was the suggestion that the *bricoleur* was familiar with the elements in his environment and the links to complexity theories of working with the 'known/ unknown' to provide both stability and novelty. The second was the reference to paralysis. 'Stuckness' is a type of paralysis or inertia and as before I was struck by the pragmatism of *bricolage* in helping to work through a problem. The notion of trial and error also resonated with an Action Research orientation.

4.10.1 Understanding the Threads

Pragmatically, a mixed approach of qualitative methods seems the best (and most justifiable) way to address my question, given both the limitations and opportunities of my research context. But there is more than a little of the purist in me that wants to ensure that there is a rigour; that I am not 'cherry picking' and simply pushing aside

aspects of a methodology when they don't fit, that I am able to provide an in depth

understanding of the phenomenon I am studying.

Research Method	'The fit'	The limitations	How to mitigate
Qualitative	Congruent with the topic Looking to understand the phenomenon as opposed to provide a single answer	Ensuring research rigour of what might be conceived as 'consulting' Subjective 'points of view', which can be construed as 'anything goes'	Triangulation within each case study and by using multiple Case Studies
Participative Inquiry	Congruent with a practice approach Congruent in looking at a phenomenon with no clear a priori hypothesis	Might be conceived as an 'opt out' where other methods don't fit	Use a blended 'bicolour' approach highlighting the limitations of each method
Action Research	Based in practice Participants looking to themselves to resolve questions they themselves have posed. The workshops in the case studies are an iterative cycle of action and reflection	The proposal is not a 'classical' approach to AR At a meta level the researcher is a 3rd person observer not participant Predominantly 2nd not 1st person inquiry	Acknowledge that Action Research is at the level of the workshop interventions, and for the research question itself AR is a working philosophy or orientation Ensure that 1st person reflections of my practice are incorporated into the analysis and write up
Case Studies	Provide a textured view of the phenomena. Real life Enables 'pattern matching' between theory & data Aids change in a research setting (link to Action Research)	Case Study in a single organisation and a limited timeframe Not repeatable	Look to different sources to triangulate data
Grounded Theory	No preconceived theory or hypothesis is being tested In workshops data collection and analysis is happening simultaneously	Literature review already conducted prior to research	Use emergent coding for analysis but be aware of priori theorising Use an independent person to validate coding
Questionnaires	Provides data from wide source pre workshops	Potentially superficial responses	Use triangulation from other data sources
Interviews	Provides multiple perspectives Enables participants to provide deeper focus on what they observed and felt	Interviewees perceptions change over time Impression management Interviewer steering the conversation	Ensure good cross section of interviewees Triangulate with other data sources Endeavour to conduct interviews soon after the event
Observations	Holistic, textured, real life Fits with the emergent nature of a workshop	Researcher 'blinkered' to what wants to see Story changes over time	Ensure provide 1st person reflections
Storytelling	Provides focus on expression rather than explanation	Limitations tend to be organisation availability	Use in specific workshops, and in presentation

Table 7: The fit and limitations of research methodologies & techniques

A researcher needs to understand the limitations of their choices and triangulate with other techniques to provide a credible and dependable story; one which ensures that the rigour of the research isn't compromised. To do so, I have taken each of the methodologies /techniques and have considered them against questions shown in Table 7: what is it about this methodology / technique that is appropriate to my research, What are the limitations? How, by taking a *bricolage* approach, might I mitigate against those limitations?

Denzin & Lincoln (2000) describe the generic activities of the research process under five headings. The researcher sits behind each phase and brings their perspectives to it which will permeate the process:

> *'The ...researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology)*
> *that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that he or she then examines in specific ways*
> *(methodology, analysis).' (p.18)*

I have also considered the research approach under each of these phases in Table 8:

Phase	Description
The researcher	An OD practitioner within the company being researched. It is important that the research methodologies are congruent with practice, hence the choice of action research as a orientation. Both rigour of methodology and relevance of the question are important.
The interpretive paradigm How the researcher sees the world and acts on it	Based in a complexity paradigm. With a post modernist belief of multiple and co created realities. Qualitative and participative methods appropriate to this
Research Strategies	Case studies across multiple geographies/ categories in a multi-national organisation. An action research orientation based in on going practice, with grounded analysis
Method of collection and analysis	Data collection from Case Studies; pre workshop questionnaires, workshop observations, notes and journal and post workshop interviews to provide triangulation. The emergent themes from the first case study become the coding frame for subsequent case studies.
Interpretation and presentation	A narrative style would support the logic of complexity theory (Houchin & MacLean, 2005, Shaw, 1998)

Table 8: Activity in the Research Process

These are the threads I am working with as I look at the phenomenon of 'stuckness' in the context of an interface.

4.10.2 Warp and Weft

Taking a *bricolage* approach was like turning a kaleidoscope and looking for shifts in patterns, trying to understand what those shifts were about. It was about looking for gaps in a methodology and finding different techniques to explore them. As a

researcher, there was also a shift in my approach. Initially when critiquing methodologies and identifying something did 'not quite' fit, I saw it as a deficit, much to the rigidity described at the opening of this chapter. I would look to arguments as to how it could work. Taking a *bricolage* approach provided more flexibility; whereby different methods enabled me to explore different aspects of the situation.

Using the analogy of tapestry the various methodologies might be seen as serving different roles in the completion of an overall work. The Case Studies might be seen as the canvas; they provide a background and frame for the study enabling the view of the interface in its context. The fact that there were multiple Case Studies added depth to the picture. The semi Grounded Theory approach provided a way of looking at the data inductively, of building the story up from an emergent experience. It provided a means of analysing and working with the data. An Action Research orientation provided the way I interacted with the research and the question; appreciating the voices of the participants, as well as the researcher and providing a focus on emergent rather than prescribed responses. It also informed how the workshops were designed to enable reflection, sense making and experimentation with the participants. All of them helped provide a different view of 'stuckness' at an interface and explored what helped the shift to movement.

Taking a medley of methods has meant that each of them has impacted in different ways to this thesis. Taking a semi- Grounded Theory approach meant that the Literature Review is relatively short because the literature and data worked together iteratively as I developed my findings. There is a significant reflective section consistent with taking an Action Research orientation and recognition of the impact I have as a practitioner on the research, as well as it on me. The Case Studies have framed how the story is told.

Not unlike the interfaces I am studying, so too are there tensions when working with different methodologies. Epistemologically there are inconsistencies between the various methods: Grounded Theory is inductive and requires a 'tabula rasa'; other methods do not. Action Research looks to solutions through experimentation; complex responsive processes are not solution focused. But these differences are not necessarily irreconcilable rather their tension adds a richness to the overall tapestry. It was by weaving all the threads through data collection and analysis, that a richer picture is drawn rather than if a single method had been used. This richness, in turn, provided a deeper source of insights and ultimately findings.

4.10.3 Defending Rigour

Researching as a practitioner has its own set of challenge in terms of the constraints imposed on it by working in a dynamic situation, but it also offers opportunities, which the researcher needs to be open to grasp. A *bricoleur* allows for this opportunism, which takes from a number of methodologies and provides flexibility in developing a workable research approach from which the researcher is able to inquire. But the approach needs to be taken consciously; it is not a means by which to choose those aspects of a methodology regarded as easy and discard others. The researcher needs to understand the limitations of their choices and triangulate with other techniques to provide a credible and dependable story; this ensures that the rigour of the research isn't compromised. The analysis in Table 7 endeavours to demonstrate this.

Earlier in this chapter, I considered how rigour might be addressed in qualitative research. If I take Reason & Bradbury's (2001) view of validity and quality in qualitative research (Figure 3), the latter three of their four elements: significance; outcome and practice; plural ways of knowing and relational practice; are potentially enhanced by taking a *bricolage* approach. The pragmatism of *bricolage* could enable a more relevant outcome for the audiences it is targeting. Relation practice honours how we work, as well as what we need to do. However, it is the element 'plural ways of knowing', that appear particularly relevant, when taking a *bricolage* approach. At its very heart is the pulling together of multiple strands, gathered from multiple perspectives. It is the constant iteration of looking at similarities and difference between perspectives and identifying patterns and gaps that truly gives plural ways of knowing. In complex situations it is the pragmatism and the plurality offered by a *bricolage* approach, along with its ability to weave the various strands into a multi-facetted whole that provides a robustness and rigour to the outcome.

Duymeijan & Ruling (2010) describe *bricolage* in organisations as:

> *'As a process of continuous creation and utilization of practical knowledge, and as an exploitation of varied types of resources, bricolage depends on the existence of organizational memory. This memory allows an organization to maintain an inductively generated knowledge base founded on experiences'* (Duymeijan & Ruling 2010, p.136).

So too might this apply to research as an on going and emergent process where, in complexity terms, the past and future co- exist in the present (Griffin 2002). There is a

process of weaving; of combining methodologies, of practice and epistemologies and of past, future and present. Together these parts provide a more complex and richer whole.

I feel comfortable in the appropriateness of my chosen research methods: '*Qualitative research privileges no single methodological practice over another*' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000 p.6) and by applying them well, my research might be considered rigorous.

4.10.4 Different Combinations

In developing my methodology, I have chosen a combination of methods and techniques that suited my particular context. As explored earlier in this chapter, there were a number of other equally valid methods I might have chosen. In this case, because of organisational constraints I did not use them. Another researcher with the same question, but within a different setting might also take a *bricolage* approach, but choose to use a different combination of techniques which better serve their context. The critical question in making that choice is how to maintain rigour. This is about making conscious choices; of deeply understanding the methodology and its limitations, the context of the research, where the opportunities and constraints lie and finally the researchers own lens. Ultimately, to Heron's (1996) point:

> '*What is important is that the researchers are clear about the grounds of validity they are claiming and critical about the extent to which they have reached them.*' (p.159)

The final point which segues to the next section is that the researcher also needs to understand their own skills and limitations in conducting any of the chosen methodologies well.

4.11 Personal Competencies, Position and Permission

The assessment shown earlier in Table 3, demonstrates that rigour might be achieved through taking a *bricolage* approach. It might also be seen to suggest that a richer result is obtained by plural ways of knowing. This raises a question of the difference of knowledge in practice, as opposed to theoretical knowledge. As cited earlier, Bourner (2000), makes the distinction between understanding a phenomenon at the level of intellectual assent the ability to use the knowledge in practical contexts:

'Expert knowledge, be it by academic or internal expert, is delivered in terms of 'what we know', whereas the domain of practice starts form the premise of 'what we don't know'. (p.17)

I would like to spend some time profiling the researcher and their impact on the process. For me, this is where the rigour relevance debate resonates; it is the facilitators practice at making explicit what already 'sits' within the group, to delve into assumptions, and find a line of sight between theory and practice, that can then be used to practical advantage. It is this that sits at the heart of a DBA where not only does there need to be a contribution to theory, but also to practice.

Throughout the story covered in the last few pages there have been a number of references to reflective practice and the role of the facilitator. Section 7 reflects on how those practices manifest themselves for me, as both a practitioner and researcher at the start of the research journey and in the course of this research. I would like to understand what the assumptions about the researcher as a practitioner are. In the employed research approach the facilitative role of the researcher is highly visible and highly influential. At the heart of all three Case Studies were workshops, which the researcher both designed and facilitated. Anyone considering pursuing a similar style of research would need to be cognisant of the requirement of such a role. Here I would like to consider them from three perspectives: skills and competencies; position; and permission to act.

4.11.1 Skills and Competencies

If asked what I believe to be the key skill of a good facilitator I am likely to talk to the description of *The Reflective Practitioner* (Schön 1983) or Block's *Flawless Consulting* (2000). At the heart of both these books - and indeed many other articles - are a handful of obvious, seemingly simple practices. These include such things as active listening and inquiring, of being 'in the moment' so that one's focus is absolutely paying attention to what is happening in the room. It is about honing one's ability to notice both the obvious of what is being said, but also to realise where potentially something is not being said. There is a heightened awareness of what is happening; a mindfulness (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006). Yet these practices are elusive. There is often a gap between what one believes and what one does; between the espoused theory and theory in use (Argyris & Schön 1996). One needs a 'consciousness of practice' in order to monitor the gap between the two; to be aware of what one is doing in a group and why.

For me there are two core skills as a facilitator. The first skill is noticing; noticing all the little signals from the group, yourself and the environment. The second is the ability to name what it is you are experiencing, to push back an observation or challenge or question into the group. At times this is a courageous conversation, as the facilitator holds a mirror up to the group.

But reflective practice is still deeper than these skills. It is a distillation process. Often for a facilitator one has to operate in real time, looking beneath the presenting issue to the influences and assumptions creating it. It goes beyond noticing, to be able to form insights from those observations. But in so doing, the first set of assumptions to look towards are ones own.

> *'It is this process of becoming reflective that makes us realize that the first problem of listening to others is to identify the distortions and biases that filter our own cognitive processes. We have to learn to listen to ourselves before we can really understand others.'*
> (Schein, 1993, p33)

There is a deep level of authenticity in a truly reflective practitioner, who is able to understand themselves and how their assumptions are impacting their practice with the group. Earlier (Figure 6) I considered a facilitation process from Casey et al. (1992). In a simple way this demonstrates a reflective process, whereby a facilitator takes in signals both from the group, but also from themselves. The making sense is then a reflective process and goes deeper to understand what is being observed or sensed within underpinning theories and frameworks; all of which informs the facilitated interventions.

So in the research where were these required practices and how did they work with the methodologies? The answer is that they were required throughout. That both the Case Study and Action Research approaches were underpinned by facilitative practice; and that in itself adds variability to research of this type, for another more skilled facilitator might have been able to draw even more findings from the situation and a less experienced one fewer. In many ways it could be argued that this research was lived through reflective practice. As a practitioner / researcher, there is a constant process going on where every conversation, every intervention and aspect of workshop design is part of the whole process. It becomes a way of being, as opposed to an activity to be done.

As asserted above, every aspect of the research was impacted by the facilitator's practice. But where and how did this show up? Firstly, the design of the workshops

demanded an understanding of how to enable rich dialogues. It required an understanding of energy flows and timings and how, through the agenda, to keep opening the group up so that it was ready to have such conversations. Active listening, probing and reflecting back were all part of getting the most from opportunistic conversations before the workshops, helping to understand the tensions at the interface and how best to frame the questions in the meetings. It is in the workshops themselves that the facilitator's skills are most obvious and draw on the competencies described above.

4.11.2 Position

Skills and competencies are one factor of practice which can impact both the researchers' ability to conduct this type of research approach, and influence its results. The next aspect I would like to explore is position. Both Complexity Theory (as a lens) and Action Research (as a method) acknowledge power in a system and the constraints it can impose. By position, I am referring to the facilitators role and level in an organisation and how that might both influence the way members of a group react to them and equally how the position of group members might modify the facilitators own behaviour in terms of, say, deference. In terms of hierarchical position in any group I sat in the middle, with the VPs having higher position, the directors at a peer level and managers at a more junior level. In this particular piece of research, I believe it is the next factor- permission to act - that was of greater relevance. However, it is nonetheless a consideration and in different contexts will play out differently.

This research position seemed to impact/ be impacted by four things: confidentiality; safety; independence; and leadership. The first three appear to be expectations that the group had about me as a facilitator, and link closely to the next section. Because my position was not part of either team and because I came from what was perceived to be a detached role at 'centre', it was assumed that I was independent of the arguments of either side. That I had no personal agenda appears to be a very significant across all of the workshops. There was an expectation, which I had to live up to and indeed built a reputation for, that independence brought with it both confidentiality and safety. It was from that position that I was invited to hold sometimes difficult conversations between two VPs as they explored their own relationship.

The position of neutrality also appeared assumed in my role in the room. You can never really know what people are thinking, but I would evidence this assumption with the side conversations people would have with me in breakouts and outside the workshops. Here they would share concerns or check out some of their perceptions of what was happening. But I am aware that as a facilitator I have huge power in a group; a bit like a conductor in an orchestra, I have some control of what is discussed and what closed down, who speaks and who does not. The power in this position has to be a combination of all three aspects. The role or position of facilitator comes with some expectations; but unless as a facilitator you have the skills and the permission to act from the group and the organisation, then the position is diminished.

The final aspect of position in relation to this research was the impact of leadership and any constraints it had on how I acted in my role. Because I was dealing with interfaces, there was a curious situation of dealing with joint leadership. At times I was conscious of compromising between both leaders, in order for both to feel engaged and empowered. I had a number of sources as to what was happening at the interface and what was important to them; the participants themselves through pre-event questionnaires, the HR Business Partners, VP conversations and final conversations with senior leaders such as country Chairmen or Category Heads. All are equally valid, but I noticed myself at times privileging the views of the more senior members, in terms of framing questions or issues - where positional power trumps the decision as to what is actually discussed.

A challenge for the facilitator / researcher is how to manage the tensions between the different assumptions implicit at the 'edge of chaos'. There are situations where there is pressure on the facilitator to deliver against an agenda being dictated by an 'authority'. The tension is often between control and ambiguity; of trying to deliver against the set piece of a prescribed outcome. Ladkin (2004?), talks of intent, rather than the predictability of an outcome. For a facilitator in such complex situations one can only work at the level of intentionality. Often it takes a brave conversation to be explicit of that potential disconnect in expectations.

4.11.3 Permission to Act

Whereas the previous section was based on a 'given' position or role, my interest here is on permission to act - of having authority in the group. This section links quite closely to the discussion on position and I would suggest papers, such as Meyerson &

Scully's (1995) seminal paper on Tempered Radicalism, span both. They explore the position of an internal consultant, describing its pros and cons and highlighting that organisation members appear to respect an external consultant more highly, whereas sometimes an internal facilitator's authority appears undermined.

Permission to act was an important factor throughout this research. The activity that constituted the first case study was a mandated piece of work from the senior leadership team, as such the VPs from the teams involved worked with me to make the events happen. Given the numbers and complexity of some of the interfaces, just getting the two groups together in one place was quite a challenge!

I would suggest that permission to act needs to come from two sources. Firstly, position and inherent authority is provided by 'the organisation'. However, although that permission puts the facilitator at an advantage they also need to gain the permission of the group (the second source); that the group vest in them permission through a facilitated process to 'hold the anxiety' in the room. For me this is a vital point, it is the juxtaposition of ability, authority and trust. This is critical if groups are to have challenging conversations that hold with tensions, as opposed to trying to defuse them.

The facilitator is tasked both with opening up such conversations by probing what is going on in the group and amplifying and exploring the points that are raised. Often participants feel vulnerable; the very process can be exposing and unless individuals feel that they can trust the facilitator, they are less likely to open up. In effect the facilitator is also giving participants permission to act, but is providing a safe environment in which to do so.

Permission to act and holding anxiety weren't only aspects of facilitating in the room. There were also some quite significant interventions with the VPs in advance of the workshops. Often these conversations focused on their relationship with each other. What appeared important as a facilitator was to demonstrate a detached concern and rather than judging the situation, or even trying to provide a solution, it was about giving both parties time and a safe place to explore what was going on.

In conclusion, skills gained through an accumulation of experience, position and permission to act was core to conducting this research. It was these skills that underpinned the ability to work across the methods, to weave together a rigorous *bricolage.*

5. Research Approach & Analysis

5.1 Research Approach

The research was conducted within a large multi-national organisation which has representation in a number of FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) categories. The author was employed within the organisation, developing and facilitating the workshops described in each of the case studies. The research took a multiple Case Study approach with an Action Research orientation. Both are congruent with the topic as described in the methodology section, and have been used by other researchers in the same field. The approach used emergent coding from the data collection of the first case study to develop a coding frame for the subsequent case studies. A diagram summarising the research approach has already been included (Figure 5) earlier in this thesis. Although the diagram might look linear, in reality it was a highly iterative process particularly during the workshops in the first case study. The research was conducted over three different case studies conducted over eighteen months during 2007/8 (Table 9). The design of the interventions and workshops was congruent with both the complexity lens and the methodologies being employed. Thus the design, through the use of facilitated dialogue helped the group stay with the tensions and paradoxes they were facing. There was space for emergence, with the suggestions coming from the group, as opposed to prescribed solutions.

	Interface	**No of workshops**	**Geography**
Case Study 1	Marketing between regional and local	10	Global across five regions
Case Study 2	Market research between regional & local	2	North America
Case Study 3	Brand development between global & regional	1	UK workshop but global participants

Table 9: Case Studies

Although Case Study 1 was the most substantial, conducted over 10 workshops, each Case Study took a similar format whereby a workshop was at the heart of the intervention with members of both sides of the interface being present.

5.1.1 Data Collection

There were slight differences in each of the Case Studies, which are described in more detail in the specific Case Study description, but each contained three key sources of data:

a) Firstly pre-workshop qualitative questionnaires; (See Appendix 7 for example) which were distributed to all participants These provided the delegates current impressions of the interface and what they perceived helped, or hindered, the teams working together. These yielded a 50% return (97 responses) in Case Study 1, 85% (7) in Case Study 2 and 68% (24 responses) in Case Study 3.

b) The second source was observations and notes from the workshop itself. This not only included the meeting, but in each instance the day prior to the workshop was spent in a series of conversations with the VPs, key members of the local HR community, and in many instances the Chairman of the country hosting the workshop. Their purpose was to provide a greater understanding of the interface and to establish the key issues to dialogue in the workshop. By their very nature, these exploratory conversations were themselves an intervention, forcing the VPs in particular to focus on what was happening between the groups and their own role as leaders. On occasions, actions became apparent from these meetings even before the workshop had begun. In total, these accounted for over 50 conversations in the first Case Study and approximately 15 each in the second and third. These working sessions were not transcribed in detail but key issues and comments were noted.

In addition to these planned conversations, there were numerous ad hoc conversations at meals, over the phone and over coffee (Shaw, 2002). It was often at these informal 'gossipy' conversations that the un-surfaced issues around politics and insecurities emerged, which I could then refer to in the workshops. These informal conversations were also useful in my own sense making.

The workshops themselves were structured around some common elements, but the exact agenda and questions dialogued varied dependent on the issues perceived at that specific interface. Key to all interfaces was elements around purpose and priorities; perspective; roles and dialogues. Narratives were created for each workshop (e.g. Maitlis, 2005). (See Appendix 9)

From an organisational practitioner perspective the intention of the workshop was to improve how the team worked across the interface; from a researcher perspective the intention of the workshops was to explore both what participants felt was important to the effectiveness of the interface; what they were needing to 'make sense of' and what facilitated that sense-making.

c) The final source of data collection was a series of semi- structured in-depth interviews conducted across selected participants, in three communities; the VPs, the delegates themselves and the HR directors who co-facilitated the events. (See Appendix 10 for example)

The interviews were conducted primarily by telephone after the workshops and transcribed in detail (they were not recorded as it felt it would limit the conversation).

> '*The usual disadvantages of recording an interview centre on the nervousness and anxiety provoked in the respondent. The accuracy of responses can be jeopardized since respondents do not want to be recorded saying 'the wrong thing' (Hart & Smith, 1991, p.196)*

The transcripts were forwarded to the interviewees to confirm accuracy.

It is believed that the approach of workshop observations, interviews and questionnaires should provide adequate triangulation. In addition, a copy of a series of interviews conducted by an external consultancy, against a similar population within the organisation, corroborates the emergent themes.

The interview protocol was standard across all three Case Studies. All started with a series of very open questions around the participants' view of the interface and their experiences of the workshop before moving into prompted questions, based on themes which emerged from the pre- workshop questionnaires and the workshop observations. As an interviewer, I tried not to focus attention onto a specific issue until the end of the conversation. One of the challenges in interviews, where the participant spoke English as a second language, was to resist offering the participant a word or phrase when they were struggling to express themselves. (A summary of all data collection opportunities for Case Study 1 is shown in Appendix 8)

5.1.2 Data Analysis

Action Research is by its very definition an iterative process of reflection, and experimental action (Bradbury & Lincoln, 2005). Because, the research was being conducted on groups who were themselves exploring what they could do to improve how they worked across interfaces (participative action research), data analysis occurred at three different levels (See Figure 7). At times, it also meant a simultaneous process of data collection and analysis. Indeed, as Eisenhardt (1989) observes:

> *'A striking feature of research to build theory from case studies is the frequent overlap of data analysis with data collection…Field notes, a running commentary to oneself and /or research teams are an important means of accomplishing this overlap'. (p.538)*

The three levels of research were as follows:

1. The first was at the level of each workshop (i.e. the interface between two groups) from a participant perspective. Here, the participants (from both sides of the interface) were working together to establish what they might do to work better together across their specific interface.

For the participants there were two key activities: a pre-workshop questionnaire which asked them to reflect on how the interface was currently working and what had helped and hindered them. The second element was the workshop itself where through a process of understanding interdependent priorities, different perspectives and finally through dialogues; (all of which demanded a level of analysis and reflection), the groups came up with a joint action plan of what they might do differently.

2. The second level of analysis was from a facilitator perspective, again at the level of each workshop. Here the focus was twofold - the first was with a facilitator hat on trying to understand how to help the group work through the process to improve how they worked. As such data from pre questionnaires was used to inform where the focus of the specific workshop should be, and where the key issues for the group were lying. As described above, prior to the workshop itself there were a number of detailed conversations with both HR business partners and the Vice Presidents who lead each of the groups, to provide a greater understanding of the interface and to establish what the key issues were to dialogue in the workshop. Within the workshop there was a series of reflections (analysis) during and between sessions, which helped to hone the questions asked during the dialogue sessions. As a practitioner, there was

also analysis across all workshops to help understand what other initiatives the organisation could put in place to help interfaces work more effectively.

3. The final level of analysis was from a research perspective. Here the focus was on understanding, pre-, during and post workshop; what the groups found important at the interface and what helped or hindered in the process of sense-making. Using the analysis of three sets of data collection and reflections during and after the process a narrative for each workshop was created. The approach of creating a narrative is described by Maitlis (2005) who, in her work on British orchestras, uses a narrative approach to describe each of her key themes. She cites an earlier example of such an approach from Eisenhardt (1989).

Whereas the analysis at the level of the individual workshops was dynamic, informing the next step of experimentation / action and helping inform the narrative for each event; the third level of analysis was retrospective and happened once all data collection had been completed. It looked to check and consolidate emerging themes from individual workshops and it cross- referenced differences in data between different groups and different events.

As described in the methodology section, it is because the overarching research question itself is not 'owned' by the group that Action Research is being considered as an orientation, as opposed to an 'absolute' methodology.

Case Study 1- Levels of Participation & Data Collection & Analysis
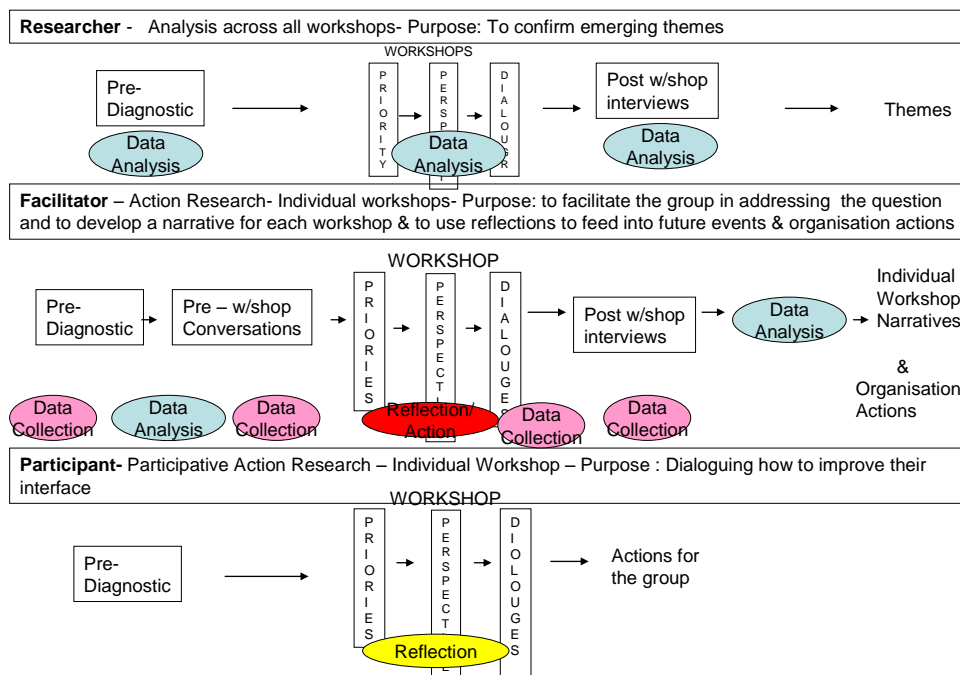
Figure 7: Levels of Participation & Data Collection & Analysis

5.1.3 Development of a Coding Framework

The approach taken for data analysis was to use emergent coding from the data collection of the first case study, close to the 'grounded analysis' described by Easterby-Smith et al. (2002, p.122) and then for those emerging concepts to become the coding frame for subsequent data analysis.

As described by Easterby-Smith et al., data analysis is a process rather than an ultimate interpretation of the phenomenon. Indeed this was the experience where the sense-making of data was an iterative process with relevance of early data only being illuminated in the context of subsequent data. In the tradition of Grounded Theory, data collection and analysis proceeded simultaneously, with information from one workshop informing the practice of the next. However, for example in Case Study 1, the formal data analysis wasn't carried out until all 10 workshops had been completed The process used for the inductive data analysis of Case Study 1 is described as follows: Firstly all materials from the workshops were re-read. This was done sequentially, workshop by workshop; whereby pre-workshop questionnaires, workshop materials, then post workshop transcripts were read through. Finally journal entries, which held reflections on workshops and for the latter ones included perceptions of comparisons between them. This is in line with *familiarisation,*

described by Easterby-Smith et al., the comparisons through the journal entries are in line with their *reflection* stage. Time was spent at this point ordering documents, to place them in manageable chunks. The start point for the development of the framework (*conceptualisation)* was to collate a vast spreadsheet consolidating all the pre- workshop questionnaires against each question split by workshop and split out by function. The process was a build upon build; taking the first workshop the data was then coded into concepts. The concepts were named using descriptive labels (e.g. Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007) rather than incorporating the language of the participants. New concepts were highlighted for subsequent workshops. The pre- questionnaires identified 25 concepts. The post- workshop interviews were then analysed using this framework and any additional concepts identified. Finally the materials from the workshop itself were identified. The workshops and post-workshop transcripts added another three concepts. Nine concepts appeared particularly frequent.

Verbatim comments, which described the concepts well, were extracted from the transcripts. The *cataloguing concepts* took some time and involved much referencing back. A potential limitation was that many participants were answering in their second language, which potentially blurred interpretation.

Of note is the need for *re-coding*. Early in the course of the analysis it became apparent that what had originally been identified as a concept - 'ways of working' - was actually a number of concepts. Even though in the final analysis not all these concepts grouped together under the same 'ways of working' theme, for coding exercise they were identified as a sub -set of 'code item 6'.

A basic *linking* exercise was done after Case Study 1, whereby key themes were identified and findings from it used in management reports. However, the coding framework for the subsequent case studies was still done at the concept level and all 42 concepts used in subsequent analysis. This was a deliberate decision to ensure that the subsequent case studies were kept as open as possible. Once data had been collected from all three case studies a thorough linking exercise was conducted, exploring themes, dimensions and the iteration between them. (*Axial coding*, eg Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007, p.65)

The final stage in the analysis was *re-evaluation*, which was an iterative process of writing, leaving and re-evaluating, especially in light of reflections and comments of independent coders and colleagues involved in the Case Studies.

When using inductive coding several authors (e.g. Isabella, 1990) highlight the need to reduce the potential of the researcher's own bias. Although the notion of bias is somewhat a paradoxical one; as Stacey & Griffin (2006) observe:

> '*Clearly there can be no objective validity for the obvious reason that the research is an interpretation, a subjective reflection on personal experience.*' *(p.27)*

For me, understanding bias is therefore about increasing the researchers self - awareness and understanding their limitations; it doesn't actually make the data any more robust.

An often used approach is for an independent coder to look at representative examples of the data (e.g. Isabella, 1990). Lansisalmi et al., (2004) blindly re-analysed a random sample of interview data. In order to understand my own biases of the coding of this research, three independent coders were used in different ways. The first was a former colleague who had been involved in the initial design of the Case Study 1 workshops. She had used Grounded Theory in her own PhD and was therefore familiar with the technique. Using the data from the first three pre- workshop questionnaires, I asked her to independently develop an initial framework. Then compared my own analysis with hers and discussed the differences, I then sense-checked the development of the rest of the coding framework with her. The focus of our conversation was around whether or not to use 'in vivo' coding. The decision was to use my language because some of it was quite conceptual (and literature based), which was easier to translate as I worked between the data and the literature review.

In the later Case Studies my concern was that I might have started to be selective (biased) as to what I was looking for in the data. Two other independent coders were HR colleagues who had helped co- facilitate the workshops in Case Studies 2 and 3. Neither had experience of Grounded Analysis, but in their work both were familiar with analysis. I explained the coding framework developed in Case Study 1, and asked them to analyse a selection of transcripts, from their respective Case Studies using the framework.

I then compared their assessment with mine and discussed these with them. In Case Study 2, the analysis against the framework provided a similar result. The only difference being the identification of an additional example of resource allocation,

along with a reference to training which hadn't been coded and not added to the coding framework as it was an isolated example.

In Case Study 3, budget control and project silos were identified as additional concepts, which I had coded under 'roles and responsibilities', and 'good and nice people', which she didn't allocate but I had coded under 'team relationships'.

In a subsequent conversation, I also gave them all the data from the Case Study and discussed my interpretation of the findings with them, which provided the opportunity for general impressions to be reflected on.

> *'Checking the case study with the participants can be a valuable part of the analysis (Hartley, 2004, p.330)*

5.2 Research Protocol

One of the challenges with protocol was that the research was being conducted in a business environment with a primary focus of achieving business objectives. As such there was an element of compromise in the set up and facilitation of the workshops. For example, attendees flexed dependent on the context of the particular interface, some inviting more support functions than others. In one there was an additional session on explaining a marketing process because it was opportune to present this to the group whilst they were all together. It was only the post- workshop interviews that had a purely research focus.

The choice of workshops in Case Study 1 was entirely influenced by the business with each region nominating the 'cells' (country/ category) they felt would most benefit by such an intervention. This could be considered a limitation (see below). However, each workshop was approached in a consistent way using the same pre-workshop questionnaire, workshop format and post workshop interview. The differences workshop to workshop were in the choice of 'dialogue' sessions which were generated by the responses in the pre-workshop questionnaires.

The pre-workshop questionnaires were designed to access two key elements. Firstly, detail as to what had or had not been understood in the Operating Framework and secondly, open questions as to the participants' perceptions of how they experienced the interface and what they considered helped or hindered its effectiveness.

Post –pilot, the format of the workshops remained fairly constant. The workshops were designed with the ambition of enabling constructive dialogues around potentially difficult issues. As such there was a deliberate flow from each teams own priorities, to

the interface priorities and then time thinking about perspectives before the specific topic dialogues.

By focusing attention into certain areas, the design of the workshop obviously has an impact on the research. For example, trust was a frequent topic in the identified in pre- questionnaires; it was therefore was often a topic in the dialogue sessions; but in choosing it as a topic for discussion it in effect amplifies it, and therefore it is not surprisingly discussed in post workshop interviews.

Other than aiming to get a representation across all workshops and a balanced mix between VPs, HRBPs and participants, there was no particular criterion for choice of interviewee. To avoid my own bias to talk to people I was more familiar with, I asked my secretary to organise a number of interviews with participants (alerting them to the fact that this would be used in research); on the whole who I talked to depended on availability.

All interviews followed a similar 'script' explaining what I was doing and the purpose of the conversation. All interviews started with open questions around the participants' experience of the workshop and their reflections on it. This was followed with questions which then followed the flow of the workshop for any particular recalls in any of the sessions. Questions were then prompted about some of the key themes that had emerged.

5.3 Limitations of Approach

Limitations of the different methodological approaches and how I might mitigate against them has been described in the methodology section. Here I would like to consider some of the limitations of my approach.

5.3.1 Accounting for Cultural Differences

A key question I was frequently asked when presenting my research was 'how are you going to account for the cultural differences lying behind the groups that may impact their sense-making?'

This has been a consideration: Nisbett (2005) explores the background between Western and Eastern thinking, describing fundamental differences in the way thought is processed and the assumptions behind it. That the individual group members will be sitting with different psychological and cultural perspectives is undeniable, as Maitlis (2005) notices:

> *'Such stakeholders engage in sensemaking from a variety of organizational positions,*
> *histories, and personal backgrounds that create divergent frames of reference and lead them*
> *to take on different roles in sensemaking processes'.(p. 21)*

Whilst Bird & Olsen's (2005) research demonstrates how embedded cultural schemas can impact on how different cultures build trust and collaboration.

From a quantitative lens, not being able to account for cultural difference can undoubtedly be seen as a limitation of the research for there is no 'control' in understanding how an individual's cultural history is impacting the way they are making sense and where in turn that is impacting on the findings of the interface. To take into account the multiple variables of individuals; individuals in relation to team; the multiplication of individual / team into the interface when considering the outcome, would be an enormous undertaking. The focus of the research would be in danger of being lost in the detail of the history.

> *'If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the*
> *grass grow and the squirrels heartbeat and we should die of the roar that lies the other side of*
> *silence.' (George Elliot, Middlemarch 1850)*

To hypothesise as to the impact of culture on the interfaces or indeed psycho-dynamics, is potentially a topic for research in its own right (e.g. Vince & Broussine, 1996).

The workshops were run across the world. Irrespective of geography from Japan to Brazil, there was a commonality in themes emerging. Due to the significant number of ex-pats in the organisation, even where a workshop was run in what might appear as a specific cultural environment (e.g. Japan) there could be up to six to eight different nationalities present. In addition, the organisation in which the research was conducted is perceived to have a homogenous organisational culture which transcends more local /national cultural difference. Work conducted by OPP on Myres Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and cultural difference (Kendal et al., MBTI Type & Culture) indicates that there are not significant differences in personal preferences across nations, but rather the expression of them is modified by cultural norms. In their work on cultural stereo- typing Olsen & Bird (2000) comment that:

> *'While this sophisticated stereotyping is helpful to a certain degree, it does not convey the*
> *complexity found within cultures. People working across cultures are frequently surprised by*
> *cultural paradoxes that do not seem to fit the descriptions they have learned.' (p65)*

In many ways rather than this being a limitation it is actually congruent with the choice of methodology, which unlike more qualitative methods which demand correlation and causality, its interest is in the intervention itself.

Rather, by viewing the interface from a complexity perspective, the focus is on what is happening in the 'here and now' of the interaction. As with Shaw's (2002) work on organisational conversations, it takes a forward looking rather than retrospective approach - a Gestalt approach (Nevis, 2001) - which is congruent with both Action Research and complexity perspective. The sentiment being that we are where we are, the situation is as it is; the interest is focused on what can be done to move forward (experimentation), as opposed to explaining why the situation has occurred in the first place. It is also a position congruent with Weick & Roberts (1993) notion of 'heedful interrelating' and a pattern or process of sense making rather than the cognition behind it.

> 'W*hen it comes to complex responsive processes, the argument is that there is no causal agent outside interaction itself. Interaction is its own cause.' (Stacey & Griffin, 2005, p. 21)*

A second possible limitation (and again one which might be considered an issue from a quantitative rather than qualitative stance) would be in the choice of workshops. They were chosen either because they were important interfaces and /or interfaces requiring attention. As such, it could be argued that they were not entirely representative. It was not possible to undertake a 'control' workshop; however, an analysis conducted by external consultants across representatives of a broader range of cells reported consistent themes. Work beyond the timescales of this research continues to corroborate findings.

A third potential limitation (also a possible avenue for future research) was that the case studies were based around a particular intervention; a workshop, where the participants were reflecting on how they might make the interface work better between them. Potentially different observations might have been noticed if the approach had been a longitudinal study (e.g. Maitlis, 2005), studying the day to day patterning of the interface interactions around the key social processes of the two parties.

5.3.2 The Pros and Cons of Researching into your own Organisation

An area of consideration when planning the research was that of researching in the author's own organisation. The obvious is that of being too familiar, albeit

subconsciously, with ways of working which can influence interpretation, similarly, participants may be in some way inhibited by the researcher's role in the organisation and modify their responses. These potential limitations were considered but on balance felt that they were out-weighed by the huge advantages of access that the position as an insider afforded. To have an opportunity to run 10 workshops (Case Study 1) world -wide and in each workshop to have representation across both sides of the interface, and across three and sometimes four hierarchical levels, was rare even for an Organisation Effectiveness practitioner, let alone to have access as a researcher. These groups had never been brought together as an entity, nor focused on the topic of their interface before. In addition, as an insider there was access to small, often spontaneous conversations in the build up to and post workshop (e.g. fifty pre-workshop conversations in Case Study 1) which provided a depth of information and perspectives that would have been unlikely to have been available to an external researcher.

Bias was a consideration; but whether an internal or external consultant as a participant or a leader, we all have biases that are drawn from our own histories and preferences. Van Maanan (1995, p.688) observes that: '*There is no form of speech, argument, representation that is free from rhetoric;*' Watson (1995), makes a similar point, that we are hung up with objective scientific accounts that:

'Rhetorical fencing does not just occur between individuals as they argue with each other. It also occurs as part of the mental process in which individuals in effect, 'debate with themselves' when making decisions.' (p 808)

Sometimes others perceive a bias where there is none, or indeed don't appreciate where there is one. All we can do is appreciate what those biases might be and understand their impact. Firstly as a relative newcomer to the organisation, I had no previous association with any of the teams, or their VPs, prior to the workshops. Given that I am based in the UK and all but a few participants in Case Study 3 were based abroad, there was in addition no informal connection. My role is seen as independent. In fact many people don't even realise I am employed by the company. Due to my perceived independence I was asked on a number of occasions to work with the VPs on their own relationships.

However, throughout I was conscious that my lens was an internal one and thus sought to keep myself aware of that lens. The first way was to check in with internal members of the organisation to understand the sense they were making of events. The

second was to use external perspectives. A piece of work was being conducted at the time of Case Study 1 by an external consultancy; part of the work was to conduct interviews within the marketing community. Their findings highlighted the same key themes I had identified. As I worked with the data I also tried to consider which might be findings specific to a particular workshop, which to a particular Case Study (See Appendix 12 & 21), but also what might be peculiar to this organisation (or ones very similar) e.g. the impact of geography and travel.

There are examples both in Case Studies and Action Research of the researcher being a member of the organisation being researched (Chivers, 2008, Griffin, 2002). Indeed the researcher, as part of the organisation methodologically, appears particularly congruent with Action Research. But there are challenges; McKenzie (1994), researching within her own company (a consultancy), noted the particular pressures of having to report back findings every six months. Ultimately, however, it was considered that the opportunities offered outweighed any potential limitations.

5.4 Ethics

Remenyi et al., (1998) provide a number of issues around the need for the researcher to be open to informants. They make the point that:

> *'It is essential that the researcher be fully open and honest with the informants and participants. This means that the informants and participants should be made aware of exactly why the evidence is required and exactly what will be done with it once the research has been completed.'(p.229)*

Samra- Fredericks (2004) discusses the need for a '*clear and honest mode of operation'* and for confidentiality and anonymity for her subjects.

Permission was granted by the organisation to use data collected from the workshops in this thesis. In addition, prior to each interview, the participants were asked that I might use their responses in the research. Transcripts of the conversation were forwarded to the interviewees for verification. Individuals were not identified in the research write up. '

5.5 The Case Studies

The research consisted of three case studies which are described below:

5.5.1 Case Study 1 – Marketing Interfaces

<u>Background to the Business Project</u>

Two years prior to the start of the research the organisation had significantly changed its operating framework. This included splitting the marketing function into Brand Development (BD), which was in effect a category organisation (organised by product categories) concerned with the development of brand strategies; communication and equity; and the Brand Building (BB) which focused on the implementation of those strategies into the local countries. Work was undertaken through surveys and focus groups to ascertain how well the transition to the new organisation was progressing. Some key issues were identified and a group of senior managers across functions and geographies met to understand what might be done to ameliorate the areas of tension. One specific tension was a lack of clarity around some of their roles and responsibilities. The workshop identified what was to become known as the 'Top Ten Grey Areas'. Work was then done to clarify who should do what and where decisions should be made.

Workshops were developed as a response to this piece of work. The initial intent being that they should be run at ten of the key interfaces globally, in order to help the teams understand their specific roles. However, by the time the workshops came into fruition this had become only one objective within a much broader ambition, for the interfaces to identify how they might work more effectively together.

The first Case Study focused on a single interface (Marketing Brand Development and Brand Build). However, as the major interface in the organisation, its effectiveness had significant impact. A single interface (that is a specific combination of a category in a country -a cell) would be worth multi-millions of dollars; poorly executed projects between the two entities could lead to reduced share, profit losses and give competitors advantage. Within this Case Study the workshops covered a number of hierarchical levels, product categories and geographies. The first Case Study focused on 10 workshops conducted across a number of different category / country combinations around the globe (eight countries across four continents and five category types). The workshop population included three levels of marketing management, from Vice Presidents to middle managers, balanced across both sides of

the interface. In most instances supporting functional staff (e.g. Finance and Research & Development) was included. Workshop size varied from 12 to 34 participants.

The approach was to conduct a series of one day workshops against a similar framework. At the heart of each was a series of dialogues which explored the barriers currently inhibiting the teams working well and addressed how the teams might work more effectively together. The exact nature of the dialogues differed workshop to workshop dependent on feedback from pre- workshop qualitative questionnaires, as well as interviews and conversations with HR staff and the two Vice Presidents involved.

The Workshops – Case Study 1

Although each workshop differed in terms of the specific questions addressed in the dialogues, the basic elements of the workshop were the same. A sample agenda is show in Table 10.

Example Workshop Agenda

- Introduction and context
- What are your priorities and interdependencies?
- 'In my shoes' -Plenary & Breakout inc individual contracting with opposite number
- What does good look like? Critical success factors in getting it right
- Top 10 Grey Areas- Roles & Responsibilities
- Dialogue – 1
- Dialogue – 2
- Plenary feedback and next steps

Table 10

The sentiment behind the workshops was that the participants needed space to explore what was happening between them and have time to discuss their concerns or lack of clarity; where there was a 'safe' space to bring things into the open.

> *'Organisation cultures are often created as a defence against emotions, such as anxiety, and this makes it difficult for organisational members to express feelings within the organisation… organisations give little space or opportunity for organisational members to understand their*

own and others' conscious and unconscious feelings about organisational life generally and organisational change in particular.' (Vince & Broussine, 1999, p 3)

It also worked on the assumption that the participants were looking at ways of resolving or working with their issues themselves as opposed to a prescribed solution being provided for them.

Each workshop started with the context being set by either the Chairman of the host county or the two VPs. This was followed by a session on prioritisation, where the two groups broke up to discuss their view of their top three priorities, their interdependency on the opposite team and their perception of the challenges. At the design stage, it was assumed that this would be quick straight-forward session.In the case of the pilot it turned out to be a very rich and full session highlighting a fundamental issue which became the critical anchor point for the rest of the day. Because the subject matter was tangible /rational as opposed to emotional, it seemed a good start point to then segue into the more challenging conversations in the afternoon.

The following session started with a quick exercise on perspectives. It demonstrated that often there was more than one equally valid point of view. Two core tools were used in the workshop. The Ladder of Inference based on work by Argyris (1990) and included in work by Senge (1994, p.198) was used to help the group appreciate that their assumptions and the conclusions they were drawing might not be the only perspective on a situation. The second was that by using a balance of Advocacy and Inquiry (Senge, 1990) the group was able to make explicit where their thinking was coming from. Thus by inquiring into the others they were able to have better dialogues and potentially identify better ways forward. (See Appendix 23) These two concepts are also described in more detail in 'Finding 6'.

This was then followed by 'In my Shoes' stories from each of the VPs. These sessions were some of the most emotionally powerful of the workshop, challenging many group assumptions. These were then followed by individual 1:1 and table discussions about each others 'shoes'.

The final session prior to lunch was a session around 'what does good look like'? Much to the sentiment of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider et al., 1995), it was designed for the group to build on what was working. Interestingly most examples

came from 'crisis' situations. The afternoon started with an interactive quiz and subsequent discussion on roles and responsibilities. The rest of the afternoon was dedicated to two or three dialogues. These were at the heart of the workshop and were conducted in facilitated breakout groups of six to eight participants, mixed BB / BD. The principles of dialogue are defined by Bohm (1996) whilst Isaacs (1999) describes it thus:

> *'Dialogue…is about a shared inquiry, a way of thinking and reflecting together. It is not something you do to another person. It is something you do with people.' (p9)*

Conversations in organisations can often be characterised as debates, where one side tries to win points off the other; often only listening to the other side in order to find ammunition to defend their own point of view. The groups were encouraged to use the principles of Advocacy and Inquiry and Ladder of Inference from the morning; to try and respect each others perspectives, to suspend their judgement and to probe why the other felt or thought the way they did, rather than dismiss it.

The small groups allowed for greater participation, often opposite numbers were put together in the breakouts. Also to Maitlis' (2005, p.45) observation there could be deference to the leaders' viewpoint and smaller groups meant that the leaders could be separated out. One of the reasons in facilitating the breakout discussions was to help the group hold with the discomfort of some of the conversations. What the workshops provided space for were '*learning dialogues*' which *'bring to the surface – in the safe presence of trusting peers - the social, political and emotional data, that arise from direct experience of one another.'* (Raelin, 2002)

The topics varied workshop to workshop, dependent on the themes coming through from the pre-workshop questionnaires and conversations with the VPs. Sample questions are shown in Table 11.

Of note is the dominance of trust as a dialogue topic in the majority of the workshop. This will be described later in the Findings section.

Table 11

Each workshop concluded with an action planning session.

5.5.2 Case Study 2 – Market Research (North America) Local / Regional Interface

Case Study 2 was based within the North American region of the organisation and the interfaces between local and regional consumer market research. The function supports Brand Building Marketing, Customer Marketing and Customer Management; this ensured that decisions around the optimisation of media and customer/trade investment are based on sound insights and Brand Development with consumer insights. The function had re-organised along the lines of the marketing Brand Build / Brand Develop split described in Case Study 1.

The function is responsible for an enormous budget; reflecting the value of insights to the organisation. However, these insights need to be timely, 'joined up' and presented in a format that is useful to their users. At the time the research was conducted the relationship between the interfaces was strained, roles and responsibilities unclear and internal customers of the function confused and frustrated by what they were describing as dysfunctional 'ways of working'.

The Case Study focused on two key workshops. The first workshop was between the seven leaders in the North American market research operation. It had three core objectives: for the leadership team to better understand their interface tensions prior to

the annual functional event; to define the 'Grey Areas' within their current operating framework and to try and provide next steps to resolve the current tensions. The second event was an annual two day functional meeting of approximately 80 North American market research colleagues, of which a three hour session was dedicated to working through the key interface issues, defined in the previous leadership meeting. Data collection followed the same pattern described earlier; however for the first workshop additional data was provided by one hour in depth interviews (four) with marketers, 'customers' of the market research organisation, to understand their perceptions of the function and how it was working. These were conducted face to face with an HR colleague present, who was then able to validate the transcripts. Key quotes from these interviews were used as stimuli in the leadership workshop the following day. There were also journal records of conversations held between the two workshops.

The Workshops – Case Study 2
The start point of the intervention was a phone call with several of the directors to discuss whether a workshop of some description was required prior to the annual event. The tensions during the conversation highlighted the need.

The first one day workshop was held in the US and co-facilitated with an HR colleague who business partnered the function. I was led by the UK based VP. In many ways the first workshop was a modified version of the workshops used in Case Study 1, but taken from an earlier start point and designed to explore where and why the group were getting stuck and how to help. Rather than pre-workshop questionnaires, unstructured phone conversations took place with seven local directors plus a global VP and HR Business Partner.
Unlike the Case Study 1 work, where roles and responsibilities and grey areas had already been defined, here this hadn't been done. The interface was at a far more embryonic stage. The VP developed a draft roles and responsibilities matrix prior to the workshop for discussion there; meaning the focus of this workshop was weighed more towards agreeing roles and responsibilities and surfacing the grey areas, than dialoguing their implications.
As an output of the first workshop a number of 'grey areas' for the organisation were defined; these included such things as joint usage of information, budgeting and

market prioritisation. Seven of these were taken to the annual event to discuss further with the group. In the time between, the VP, with some input from the group, explored the issues and came up with some potential solutions to offer as a 'straw man'; all were to quite different levels of detail.

The session at the second workshop was designed as a 'hotspot café', in the spirit of a 'world café'. What this means is that the same conversation is had a number of times, each building on the views of the last. The constant in each group is the table host who facilitates the discussion. The idea had come from the directors themselves at the end of their first workshop. They had been keen to take ownership of the issues and to work with their people in creating the solutions and saw this as a potential way of doing this. The group were divided into two parallel streams each with four groups of approximately eight people. At the end of the four rounds the feedback from each table would be consolidated to five key themes/ actions and fed back in plenary. The role of the directors hosting the table was to briefly describe the issue, and then get the group to engage with the following questions: Where do you see this happening? Why is it an issue for you?, thus helping to bring the issue to life. They were then to discuss potential solutions and develop them with the group.

The final part of the Case Study was a series of post workshop interviews to understand participants' perceptions of how they saw their interfaces working and what they had seen at the workshops.

5.5.3 Case Study 3 – Brand Development – Global / Regional Interface

Case Study 3 was based on an interface within the Category organisation. The workshops in Case Study 1 had highlighted tensions and ambiguity not just between Brand Develop and Brand Build but also between the global and regional teams within the Brand Development team itself. Brand Development had two elements to it: the global brand teams responsible for the brand strategy, brand character etc; and their regional colleagues who were responsible for the two way flow of representing the global ambition to the local Brand Build marketers in their region and to take back to the global team local concerns and nuances of the markets.

The regional team members perceived themselves as a 'post-box' between the global BD and local BB teams, often finding themselves by-passed in conversations. The

global teams complained that their regional teams had 'gone local' and were not representing global needs. The Case Study focused on one particular two day workshop within one of the biggest categories. The workshop brought together 33 global and regional VPs and Brand Directors to tackle the question of how they might work better together to drive growth in the category. Again to provide an idea of the potential impact and value of effective working the category in question is worth well over a billion dollars - even small differences which help drive share and profit can be financially very significant. Specifically, the group needed to understand on what and where they would benefit by working together; to establish the principles around how they should work together in terms, of rules, behaviours, learning etc; and to have agreed with the VPs what this means in action. What should each group expect from each other - both global and regional- and also hierarchically between the brand director and VP groups?

Data collection followed a similar process as the previous Case Studies, with data being collected in the form of a qualitative questionnaire prior to the workshop, observations of the workshop itself and post workshop interviews. In addition there are journal entries describing a number of the ad hoc pre workshop meetings.

The Workshop – Case Study 3

Although this workshop took a similar format to the workshops in Case Study 1 - considering different perspectives (In my shoes), purpose priorities and ways of working - there were a number of differences worth noting.
The first was that although the workshop itself was between the regional and global teams, there was also a hierarchical interface cutting across the two days. A leadership meeting was being run in parallel; the members of that group coming in to the workshops, so that for certain sessions they were present and others not. The group also presented back to them at the end of the two days with proposals. This dynamic provided some unanticipated insights in terms of hierarchical sense-making. The second was the use of an academic guest speaker to provoke and challenge the team as to what collectively they were trying to achieve.
Having defined where the teams current ways of working were in the earlier stages of the workshop and identified where the team perceived their barriers to more effective working, the final half day of the workshop gave the teams the opportunity to define

how they themselves might address the issues and create new ways of working. The proposals were then fed back to the leadership group who joined at the end of the day.

In total, the three case studies provided a wealth of information which is discussed in the following section on findings. The similarity of the issues within the Case Studies and indeed the workshops themselves allowed, for meaningful comparisons to be made. Yet the diversity of geographies, categories and functions and the number of workshops being conducted provided a fair basis to make generalisations.

5.6 Data Analysis and Development of Findings

5.6.1 The Development of the Findings

Here I consider how the findings were built up across the three case studies. In total the research highlighted 42 coding concepts; of those 12 were minor, only occurring two or three times across the research. Appendix 11 provides a summary description (across all three Case Studies) of each of the coding concepts, together with examples of participant comments or observations. These in turn could be condensed into six themes (Appendix 22) each containing a number of insights from which the six key findings of this thesis are drawn. The findings for each Case Study are described below, indicating key observations arising from it and any surprises or contradictions noticed.

Having commented on each of the Case Studies in turn, I then consider the similarities and differences between them before outlining the six findings.

Analysis - Case Study 1

The ten workshops of Case Study one, with their associated pre and post data collection, provided a substantial number of insights. All but two of the eventual 42 coding concepts came from the first Case Study. Tables 12 & 13 demonstrate the build up of codes from pre diagnostic information to workshop observations and post workshop interviews.

One concept (6) 'ways of working', quickly expanded to include a number of different aspects. However, throughout the coding exercises these still remained coded as a subset of the concept, to help keep a line of sight across the workshops.

Themes 3,4,6, 12, 18, 19 & 21 were the key themes in the
workshops & overlap across all three areas of data collection

1. Marketing Processes eg IBC
2. Roles involvement of other functions
3. Roles & Resps of Marketing
4. Behaviours associated with Roles & Ronsibilitiess
5. Local Jewels (non standard)
6. Ways of working (ie interdependency)
7. Local market understanding
8. Quality measures
9. Pricing
10. Resource allocation / budgets
11. Consequences
12. OTIF (On time in full)
13. Leadership differences / alignment

14. Innovation
15. Resource location eg proximity
16. Capability
17. Risk assessment
18. Credibility / Trust
19. Different Obj. / Prioritisation
20. Performance
21. Different perspectives
22. Rules
23 Structure
24. Travel
25. Career Pathing
26. Aligned Goals
27. Power
28. Local / Global

No 13, was critical prior to the workshops. Themes 26,27, 28
only emerged during the workshops and post workshop
interviews. 26 & 28 were frequently mentioned

Table 12 – Build up of coding concepts from pre- diagnostic through workshops and post workshop interviews

Of interest here is the fact that although the vast majority of the concepts were identified through the pre- diagnostic, what came through in the workshops and post workshop interviews was where the real emphasis lay.

Appendix 13 highlights the key concepts emerging from Case Study 1. A concept was considered key once it had been mentioned by several participants in the pre- or post-diagnostic / interviews, or where it was a particular area of discussion in the workshop. This is not a quantitative piece of work; however, when looking across the data, I tallied the mentions of a particular concept to help think about the relative importance of each. This was overlaid with considerations around the depth of the discussion.

Theme 6 – Ways of Working had a number of sub themes beneath it…

a. Interdependency
b. Mindset
c. Integration / Inclusiveness
d. Feedback & Review
e. Balanced teams
f. Robust transparent communications processes (timely)
g. Skilled dialogue
h. Team relationships (descriptors)
i. Internal selling
j. Action orientated
k. Appropriate use of data
l. Excessive internal debate & challenge
m. Confidence (self)

… these came through in the pre- diagnostic and were evident in both the workshops and post workshop interviews

Table 13: Code 6

The first Case Study threw up some surprises. As anticipated, there was significant debate around the roles and responsibilities across the interface, but this became less of a feature as the workshops progressed. An interesting aspect of the division of roles and responsibilities was the tension between global and local elements of the organisation. Whereas initially the Brand Building marketers felt that their role had been diminished and they had little 'raison d'être', as the workshops progressed there were increasingly comments from the Brand Developers around having 'untenable roles'. Going into the workshop there had been a sense that there was some lack of trust between the two parties, but the extent of the distrust was far greater than had been imagined and this was a significant theme through all but one workshop.

> 'The first revelation for me was that I didn't realise how big an issue it was and how the teams built trust. A lot of the issues were hanging on this'. (HR1-CS1)

Two particular findings prompted managerial action. Firstly, the issue around prioritisation, where at a cell level these were often mis-aligned; the second was the emergence of another interface between the global and regional members of Brand Development, which was causing as many challenges as the country / category interface. Indeed, this finding then led to an intervention which then formed Case Study 3.

Appendix 12 highlights key coding differences between the ten workshops that make up the first case study. This was of particular relevance when I considered the cultural limitations highlighted earlier. As is shown, the key themes are consistent irrespective of geography.

Analysis - Case Study 2

Findings for the first workshop, together with the conversations prior to it were focused around roles and responsibilities. This was unsurprising given that this had been the initial reason to bring the two teams together. The workshop had a huge energy around clarifying roles and responsibilities. One aspect stemming from these conversations, which hadn't come through in the pre- conversations, was the tension and confusion between global and local responsibilities; a theme that had also come through in the first Case Study.

An interesting observation was that, whereas the overall observation across the interviews with the group's 'customers' was their perceived lack of cohesiveness and lack of leadership alignment in the function, the directors themselves didn't mention this either in their individual pre- conversations, nor the workshop itself.

In addition to roles and responsibilities significant, conversations were held around how they communicated with each other and the way data was shared. Given some of the pre-conversations where lack of trust had featured quite emotionally, it was surprising that that the theme of trust didn't come out in the meeting itself. Appendix 14 highlights the coding concepts for the first workshop and prior conversations.

The second part of Case Study 2 involved a larger workshop, where the 'grey' areas which had been identified in the first workshop were discussed. The conversations prior to the workshop were characterised by discussions across a much broader spectrum of issues with no particular themes dominating. This contrasted with the workshop itself where just two of the existing concepts dominated: roles and responsibilities and the communication processes. Two new concepts however came through very strongly, those of sense making and sense giving. Appendix 15 highlights the concepts identified from the second workshop and the conversations preceding it.

The structured interviews post the workshops again reflected a much more diverse spectrum of concepts (Appendix 16). As with the first Case Study the concepts of different perspectives and different objectives featured in many conversations. A broad range of concepts, sitting under the theme of ways of working (the original code 6) were also frequently described. Of note was that of transparent communications. But what dominated the conversations were reflections around sense giving and sense making, with both participants and the directors (who owned the table conversations) commenting on the difference between where adequate sense had been given and the participants were able to make and build further sense of the situation, to where the directors were unable to provide adequate sense for the group to move forward.

Appendix 17 highlights the core concepts which emerged from both workshops and all conversations across Case Study 2. Of particular note are the concepts in bold, which are the seven key concepts identified in the Case Study. The concept of roles and responsibilities centred on the groups being able to clarify where both the work was done and decisions; associated with this conversation was that of resource allocation (how and where resource was split between the regional and local parts of the business). The differences both of objectives and perspectives between the two parties, as noted earlier, were also core concepts coming through at the interfaces in Case Study 1. Finally, there were the concepts of sense giving and making and that of communications. With these latter concepts, sense giving and sense making appeared to be focused hierarchically, whereas those around communications appeared to be more peer to peer.

Analysis - Case Study 3

The final case study was a shorter intervention focused on just one workshop (although it ran over two days). Unlike the previous two case studies where the interface was between two separate teams, this was based on a division within the team itself between Brand Development colleagues who worked globally and those who worked regionally. The fact there was an interface within a function and the tension between the two areas had already been highlighted as part of the workshops in Case Study 1, the intervention which formed Case Study 3 was in response to this finding.

As with the previous two Case Studies data was collected prior to the workshop through a qualitative questionnaire. The key concepts emerging are shown in Appendix 18. A broad number of concepts were identified, but no additional concepts were added to the coding framework. Of significance here was the enormous variation in interpretation as to the top three objectives of the group. This was completely against the expectations of the V.P. who had assumed that the priorities had been well articulated and understood. Also of note were a number of comments around the group's ways of working (code 6). Although no one single concept dominated, the group's ways of working appeared significant to the participants.

The workshop itself highlighted similar themes to those in previous case studies (Appendix 19). Of note at this workshop were the discussions around different objectives, which had been identified in the pre- workshop questionnaires. Linked to these discussions were those around global and local needs and the tensions ensuing from them. The concept of performance was also quite figural. This was interesting as although mentioned in the previous Case Studies it had not before been central to a conversation. As with the pre- workshop questionnaires topics around the theme of 'ways of working' were discussed quite broadly but it was only code 6d; feedback, which was observed to be given particular focus in the meeting. A feature of the conversations on the second day was around leadership differences and lack of alignment, which in part was seen as a cause of the different objectives described earlier. Within these discussions were also conversations around the need for simplification of processes and ways of working and empowerment. A striking feature of the workshop was how sense making and sense giving played out. Whereas Case Study 2 demonstrated sense giving from leader to subordinate, Case Study 3 also provided examples of subordinate to leader. As mentioned in an earlier description of the workshop, a parallel meeting of the senior leadership team was being held at the same venue, with the leaders joining the main workshops at various points over the two days. These moments, where the two meetings came together, were in themselves interfaces in action and demonstrated quite clearly the interplay of sense giving and sense making.

The semi-structured interviews post the workshop provided a much tighter set of concepts, and reflected the same key concepts coming out of the workshop (see

Appendix 20). Central to all of them were reflections around how the concepts of sense giving and sense making had played out, particularly during the second day of the workshop. The specific theme of leadership alignment was less prevalent in the conversations and tended to merge with observations around sense making.

5.6.2 Summary of Observations from the Case Studies

Appendix 21 highlights the differences between the three Case Studies. The table has been reduced to only include core concepts. To be included on the original list, a concept needed to be mentioned by more than two people. To be included on the final list a concept needed to have been of at least a moderate feature in two of the three Case Studies, or of particular significance in one Case Study. Thus 13 of the original concepts have been excluded on this table.

Six concepts featured strongly across all workshops: roles and responsibilities; prioritisation of different objectives; different perspectives; local / global tensions; transparent communications and skilled dialogue. The concepts of sense giving and sense making are not included in this summary as they were not highlighted specifically during Case Study 1. However, looking back over the materials transparent communication - which is identified through out - appears to be linked to the concept of sense making.

5.6.3 Themes

Having established the concepts, a linking exercise was undertaken (e.g. Easterby Smith et al., 2000) consolidating the concepts into eight core themes (Appendix 22). The eight themes are shown in Table 14.

Sense Giving / Sense Making
Roles & Responsibilities
Global /Local
Aligned Goals & Priorities
Issues Impacting on Delivery
Ways of Working: which encourage trust or confidence with each other
Ways of Working: which facilitate or not working across complex and often geographical diverse interfaces
Career Progression

Table 14: Core Themes

 Of these eight themes six fed into findings around interface effectiveness, such as roles and responsibilities or aligned goals and priorities. Sense making /sense giving clustered into its own theme, but within this theme sat some of the most dominant concepts such as: different perspectives; transparent communication; and skilled dialogue as well as the concepts of sense giving and sense making. There was a final theme around career progression, which only contained one concept: career pathing, although this was identified in two of the Case Studies it was not a significant concept in either. Thus although identified this theme is not explored further. The theme of local / global is picked up tangentially when considering the findings around interface effectiveness, whilst linked to both the themes of delivery and trust, it is not explored separately in any detail. It could constitute a topic for research in itself; the tension between these two power bases is an area of interest for multi nationals (e.g. Hope Hailey et al., 2005).

Each theme had one or more insights associated with it (Appendix 22) from which the key findings of this thesis are based.

5.6.4 Inconsistencies and Surprises

There were a few but not significant inconsistencies during the course of the research. The most noticeable was where there was no mention of a certain concept in the pre questionnaires but it was then quite figural in the workshop itself. Examples of this were the concepts around local/ global tensions, which only really emerged in the

workshops themselves and the tensions between the regional and global aspects of Brand Development.

The surprises were either in the form of a concept seemingly coming out of no-where, such as the concepts on sense giving and sense making which emerged during the second case study; or where the intensity of the issue was far greater than had been anticipated, such as the concept of trust in Case Study 1. One contradiction was around collaboration where, although people talked of the organisation being relational this did not actually translate into collaboration. The distinction appearing to be that the relational was based on similarity, whereas to be able to work collaboratively the teams needed to be able to work with difference, which at times proved quite challenging.

This section has described the approach taken in data collection, providing details of the three core sources: questionnaires, observations and interviews. It also provides a description of the Case Study workshops, providing some texture around the experience. Finally it has stepped through the process of data analysis; highlighting, but not interpreting, the key findings at each stage.

6. Findings and Discussion

6.1 Findings Overview

In this section, I explore the six findings which emerged from my research. The findings fall under two areas. The first two deals with interface effectiveness, which lead to the development of a model for interface effectiveness - four of which specifically address the role of sense making at the interface. The six findings are highlighted in Table 15.

Interface Effectiveness
1. Interface effectiveness shares the same components as team effectiveness; although the emphasis and execution differs slightly. The findings provide a framework through which interface effectiveness can be considered as a contextual and pluralistic dynamic.
2. Interface effectiveness can be considered as a variant of team effectiveness, but differentiated from 'boundary spanning'
Sense making
3. There are a number of key triggers at the interface where sense giving and sense making occur.
4**.** There is a critical interplay (peer to peer & hierarchical) between sense giving & sense-making at the interface which enables or impedes action.
5. Although sense- making is dynamic there is a time lag between sense-making and sense-giving
6. Skills in dialogue and narrative are key enablers in the sense-making process.

Table 15: Findings

Each of these findings is discussed in detail in the following section, but a brief summary is as follows: The first finding indicates that interface effectiveness shares the same components as team effectiveness; however, interfaces in particular appear to 'get stuck' because they lack a mutual ambition; they hold different priorities and have ambiguous roles and responsibilities. They are often further inhibited by a lack of trust between the two sides, all of which perpetuates a vicious cycle of poor delivery. The time to give and make sense is found to be a critical vehicle in enabling effective conversations around the aspects described above and help movement across the interface.

The second finding considers the components of interface effectiveness and suggests that although interface effectiveness might be seen as a variant of team effectiveness, it should be considered as different to boundary spanning. The latter focuses its attention on drawing in and sharing information with its environment, whereas the

former is far more inwardly focused in the establishment of mutual ambitions and ways of working.

The next four findings are all concerned with sense making as a critical activity in the process of creating an effective interface. Finding 3 links the key interface effectiveness components highlighted in Finding 1, to triggers of sense making activity. These critical triggers are then explored in more depth in Finding 4, where the need for both hierarchical and peer to peer sense making is considered. The finding suggests that whereas the former is a more overt patterning of sense giving and sense making, (where hierarchically adequate sense needs to be given in order for subordinates to make their own meaning of an issue or activity), the latter is a more fragmented and subtle activity, often involving a number of simultaneous conversations, whereby each group is influencing the other in a patterning of gesture and response through an on-going dialogue.

The fifth finding highlights the need for time to be given in either hierarchical or peer to peer sense giving, to allow the other group a 'time lag' in which to interpret and make meaningful the information they have been presented with. So that although conversations are themselves an action at the interface, there needs to be a 'pause for thought' as the other side can reflect on 'what it means for me'.

The sixth finding corroborates the literature on dialogue, reinforcing its power as a tool in helping groups overcome barriers and enabling them to work with paradoxes and dilemmas. In particular, it helps demonstrate that the power of dialogue appears universal and is not limited to 'western' cultures.

Findings on Interface Effectiveness

The first two findings consider the nature of the interface and how or when it is effective. In so doing, they address two fundamental questions: Firstly, what makes an interface effective; does it require the same success factors as team effectiveness? The second finding considers whether interface effectiveness might itself be a component of team effectiveness such as 'boundary spanning'?

6. 2 FINDING 1

Interface effectiveness shares the same components as team effectiveness; although the emphasis and execution differs slightly. The findings help understand where teams 'get stuck' at the interface and provide a framework through which interface effectiveness can be considered as a contextual and pluralistic dynamic.

What enables interface effectiveness? This question is examined in two parts: What are the components of working at an interface; how they are similar to those found in team effectiveness and secondly is there a model or framework which might help us understand interface effectiveness?

The start point in exploring this finding was to take the concepts and themes suggested in Appendix 22, and to consider where there were similarities and differences with the concepts on team effectiveness which had emerged from the literature review described previously (Table 16).

Key Themes from Research Findings	Components of an Effective Team from Literature
- Sense Giving / Sense Making - Roles & Responsibilities - Global /Local - Aligned Goals & Priorities - Issues impacting on Performance / Delivery - Ways of working which encourage trust or confidence with each other - Ways of working which facilitate or not working across complex and often geographical diverse interfaces - Career Progression	- Common purpose - Membership & Roles - Team-Dynamics-Interdependence, Collaboration , Conflict & Trust - Boundary Management - Team Leadership (inc. shared leadership & empowerment) - Shared Cognition

Table 16: Research v Literature Findings

I then examined the descriptions of the components described in the literature and working with those to consider where the themes and sometimes the concepts linked; establishing a revised set of components reflecting an effective interface (Table 17).

Components of an Effective Team	Research Findings- Coding classification	Revised Interface Components based on Research Findings
Common Purpose	26 Aligned Goals 12 On Time in Full (19. Different Obj. /Prioritisation)	**Mutual ambition** **Aligned priorities**
Membership & Roles	3. Roles & Responsibilities 4. Behaviours associated with roles	**Clarity of Roles & Responsibilities**
	8. Quality Measures 9. Pricing 11. Consequences 12. OTIF (On Time In Full) 14. Innovation 17. Risk Assessment 20. Performance 6j. Action Orientated	**Issues impacting on Delivery**

Team Dynamics:
Interdependence,
Collaboration ,
Conflict
Trust
	6. Ways of Working
	    a. Interdependency
	    b. Behaviours/ mindset
	    c. Robust transparent communications
	    d. Dialogue
	    e. Internal selling
	k. Appropriate use of data
	7. Local market Understanding
	18. Credibility
	18a. Trust
		Ways of Working; which encourage trust & confidence in each other

	1. (Marketing) Processes 15. Location proximity 24. Travel	**Ways of working; which enable working across complex geographies**
Boundary Management	(28. Global / Local) 7. Local market understanding	**Understanding the Interface**
Team Leadership (inc shared leadership & empowerment)	13 Leadership difference / alignment	**Aligned Team Leadership**
Shared Cognition	19 Different Obj. / Prioritisation 21. Different perspectives 28. Global Local 29. Sense giving 30. Sense making	**Sense giving / Sense making**

Table 17: Components of an Effective Team vs. Components of an Effective Interface

I considered how the research findings reflected those elements highlighted through the literature review and where there were similarities or differences, or where the weighting or emphasis differed.

For reference, Section 2 describes in more detail the literature behind each of the themes below.

6.2.1 Components of an Effective Team v Effective Interface

Common Purpose to Mutual Ambition and Aligned Priorities

The literature review highlighted a significance convergence on the need for shared purpose and vision (Higgs, 2007, Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997, Gladstein, 1984). The findings from the research divided into two elements around this theme: mutual ambition and aligned priorities. The first element of mutual ambition came through very strongly in all of the workshops particularly in the first Case Study and third Case Study. It was present but less overt in the second Case Study. The assumption going into the workshops was that although the teams were separate they had a clear sense of their objectives.

> *'I think people believe there is joint purpose but it is important to spell it out and check interpretation.' (VP6-CS1)*

What became evident was that although teams had objectives they were primarily articulated at either a country or a category, rather than at a combined cell level. Therefore, although the teams assumed they had a mutual ambition, in actuality the ambition emphasised either category or country ambitions, whereby the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) differed for each. What participants were looking for was something that overarched both sides of the interface:

> *'Common purpose gives a broadness to the perspective- a higher broader meaning I can fight for- beyond the job description. Having a purpose helps positive challenge.' (HR5-CS1)*

The word mutual was used on a number of occasions. Friction occurred where one side perceived an agenda or purpose being forced on them by another. Each recognised that they might not have the same purpose, but that there had to be a mutual value that was of significance to both parties.

> *It's not just about what the joint purpose is, but what is the importance of that purpose to each of you? What is the mutual importance of this to each party? (P5-CS1)*

But what was happening here, although similar, doesn't quite appear to be that of equifinal meaning (e.g. Weick, 1979*). Equifinal meanings are interpretations that are dissimilar but have similar behavioural implications.

> *'Organization members might have different reasons for undertaking the action and different interpretations of the actions potential outcome but they nonetheless act in an organised manner' (Donnellon, 1986, p.44).*

She considers that communication enables members to create equifinal meaning, from which organised action can flow and that *'common ends and shared meanings rather than being prerequisites of joint action are an outcome' (1986, p.43).*

At the interface, shared meaning - expressed as a mutual ambition - needed to be established at the beginning, because subsequent prioritisations were made against this. Each party might have separate needs behind this, but they needed a shared ambition at the cell (interface) level to anchor them as they moved forward. Bechky (2003) concludes that there must be some common ground for coordination of complex interdependent work to succeed. The common ground at the interfaces was to establish an ambition for the cell (country and category) that overarched their individual ambitions. Critical to this definition was agreement as to key success indicators:

> *'The matrix nature of the interface will always invite tension. The cure is to have a common set of success indicators. That doesn't mean you both have to do the same thing, you still delineate who does what, but you need a common definition of success and agreed set of KPIs.' (VP1-CS1)*

Dialogue helped the groups moved forward, but because they had to make choices and prioritise projects, they had to find something that was mutual to both parties.

> *'They need to have a common purpose, but they will never be 100% aligned'.(HR2-CS1)*

The communication (as advocated by Donnellon above), also needed to be aligned with a sound fact base; using data which participants of either side were able to trust to inform choices. Purpose and priorities were often talked of together, but there was a distinction made between the two. Purpose was used to clarify the objective of the combined interface, whereas prioritisation was where the two parties needed to make choices between projects, and thus where resources were focused.

> *'So when we have tough issues re prioritisation we need the same measures to make a decision. We use this to look at alignment now whereas previously we were talking along different lines and in a different language'. (P2-CS1)*

This was often an area of challenge and served to emphasise the differences between the two groups.

> *'On BB/ BD side, list of things to do, some joint, some separate. If one is higher than the other you are fighting against each other, and the other side doesn't appreciate what you are doing. Looking at the list of priorities it's an eye opener to see that you haven't got the same ones. We are working together but we have a difference in what we see in common'. (VP4-CS1)*

Unless the group had a clear mutual ambition (purpose) with success factors and measures associated with it, they had nothing to prioritise against when they needed to make choices, instead reverting back to their 'silo' needs.

Clarity of Roles and Contribution

Given that the initial impetus for the workshop was to help clarify roles and responsibilities between the two sides of the interface, it is unsurprising that this came out as a strong theme throughout the research. There are numerous references to it as a theme throughout questionnaires and interviews.

> *'There is a lot of confusion, for example some jobs like one supplier for packaging materials, but this is different form the previous one… so who goes to the factory to approve the materials? (P3-CS1)*
>
> *'It just feels that if you aren't clear about who is doing what, then that becomes the source of all that follows' (P5-CS1)*
>
> *'There is a struggle in BB where people don't know where their role stops and starts' (P6 CS2)*

Lack of clarity was seen to drive duplication, frustration and the undermining of one side versus the other.

> *'I heard that the BB team were a bit under, because everything was going to the BD team' (HR3 CS1)*

A significant number of conflicts were generated from either a lack of clarity or a lack of agreement with regards to roles and responsibilities. All that is being observed here reinforces what is being found in the literature where clarity of roles and responsibilities also came out as a strong theme (Pearce & Ensley, 2004).

Team relationships – Interdependence, Collaboration, Conflict & Trust to Ways of working which build trust and confidence in each other

Although various aspects of team dynamics came up in all the workshops, the theme that dominated almost every workshop and across all three of the Case Studies was that of trust. I don't believe that these findings in any way diminish the importance of aspects, such as collaboration or interdependency; but rather in the context of all three Case Studies the figural dynamic was around trust. Therefore the ways of working which built trust and confidence with each other across the interface became the focus of many dialogues. Although the coding concept was 'trust' over time this split into trust and credibility. Credibility tended to focus around references to the expertise of the other side and the confidence that they would be able to deliver what was required or agreed to; whereas trust tended to focus on the integrity and intent of the other.

> *'At the workshop the two aspects of trust, people trust and expertise trust had been blurred, which created the tension.' (VP4-CS1)*

Many descriptions in literature (Becerra & Gupta, 1993) are based on a fundamental dyad between trustor (who hold expectations about a certain party) and trustee who is assessed by the trustor. Trust requires certain conditions; risk and interdependence, variations on these can shift the form that trust takes (Rousseau et al 1998: p.95). Smith & Berg (1987) notice that groups can become enmeshed in a 'we-they' dynamic, and this dynamic appeared to play out at the interface, as this exchange between two parties demonstrates:

> *'Why don't you say what you really think? Why do you try so hard to sell a global solution; why don't you say what you think?*
> *'Because if I do you will hold it against me'*
> *'If I show you that I am vulnerable and show you any doubt about any aspect of it you will use it against me… these are blackmail conversations' (W/S8-CS1)*

Rossueau et al. (1998) highlights the feeling of vulnerability sitting behind individual's wariness of trusting the other. This was evident in several of the workshops. It was described both in terms of ones perspective being rejected;

> *'Most important factor that hinders trust is the fear of being challenged, because normally everyone wants the other side to accept their proposal. Fear of being refused and rejected'.*
> *(P7-CS1)*

But it was also described not just in looking foolish or being rejected by members of the other side, but also of having to shoulder the 'blame' of failure by their counterparts. So for example local country colleagues were 'embarrassed' where they 'failed' in the delivery of a project to the sales colleagues in their country. This fear of failure and of potentially being left vulnerable by 'the other side' was one of the drivers behind excessive data analysis and checking up on what should have been their counterparts' accountability. What people were wanting was reliability and confidence;

> *'Where things go wrong frequently there is a lack of confidence. As delivery improves then trust improves significantly' (P6-CS1)*

What mattered was that the other side were capable of delivering what was expected and that they would honour what was of mutual benefit rather than covering their backs but what often happened was a spiral of cover up and half truths or avoidances which impacted on the personal trust.

One consideration when analysing the data was whether proximity had an impact on trust; whether co-located teams found it easier to trust each other than those working virtually. Bigley & Pearce (1998) analysed trust from a problem based focus looking at interaction among familiar actors and unfamiliar actors. Although all teams agreed that knowing someone in person (not just a voice on a phone) helped working together, there was no evidence of trust being greater whether the teams were co located.

Although its' expression manifested itself differently from country to country, cultural difference did not appear to influence whether a group was more or less prepared to trust each other. Some of the most heated discussions about trust were in countries such as Japan and China which would be contrary to typical stereotype expectations. Rather, to Doney et al's (1998) suggestion, there appeared to be different trust building preferences and mechanisms where some participants advocated trust building through demonstration of delivery others through relationship building over time.

> *'Trust builds up all the time- you can't intuitively trust people, people need to deliver to their commitments and behave consistently. People need to do what they say they will do' (VP3-CS1)*
>
> *'Trust and confidence are sentiments that follow from reliability. Of course it's not easy…things get in the way'. (VP1-CS1)*
>
> *'Where any relationship gets off to a rocky start, trust is something that has to be won'. (P6 CS1)*

The data here is too limited to put forward any detailed findings on the nature of trust at the interface rather it is something which could form the basis for future research. However, what is very clear from all three case studies is that lack of trust can act as a serious inhibitor to interface effectiveness.

<u>Boundary Management</u>

Boundary management and the distinction between boundary spanning or interface effectiveness is explored more fully in the next finding and therefore is not discussed at this point.

<u>Team Leadership</u>

The interesting slant when looking at interface leadership is that it is about joint leadership. This isn't shared leadership which is distributed amongst team members (eg Fletcher & Kaufer, 2008) but rather that there are two leaders of equal status, each

leading one side of the interface. So that effectiveness was not just about the ability of the leader to lead their teams but also the two leaders being able to work together to shape a mutual agenda and mutually beneficial ways of working.

There were surprisingly few mentions of leadership alignment in either the pre workshop questionnaires or the post workshop interviews. Those that were highlighted the impact the leaders' relationship had on the group.

> *'VPs trust is key because people look at how the bosses trust each other'. (HR3-CS1)*

Where it was really noticeable was in the pre workshop conversations with the two leaders. In four of the workshops in the first case study there was a need to spend time with the two VPs understanding and working on their own relationship and alignment issues before the main event. This was also the case in the second workshop. Two key tensions were highlighted; a lack trust around the positive intent of the other; and a questioning of their functional capability.

Even where there were no 'relationship issues' several leaders reflected that they just didn't have time to communicate as frequently as they would like with each other.

> '*We don't take time out to spend as a leadership team together' (P10 CS2)*.

The implication of this was that even with the best intentions they missed issues where they needed to take an aligned stance, and as such gave mixed messages to the teams who picked up on even the most subtle signs of difference, as to how the leaders were working together.

> ' *In the workshop they still didn't come across as people who have a friendly interface- no banter between then, no smiling, no passion of 'we are together' (HR2-CS1)*

Shared and conflicting cognition

The findings on this aspect of interface effectiveness were significant and will be examined in more detail under the findings around sense making. In effect the iterative processes of sense giving and sense making underpin the components of interface effectiveness described above and in the complex environments of the interface act as triggers for conversation which provide movement across the interface. Power, politics and negotiation all contributed to the pluralistic and dynamic process which underpinned interface activity.

There were two other themes coded in the findings which were perceived to be pertinent to interface effectiveness. The first was around issues impacting on delivery and the other 'ways of working' which enable working across complex geographies.

Issues impacting on delivery

In many ways at an overarching level team or interface effectiveness is about issues impacting on delivery: Indeed Katzenbach and Smith (2003) describe:

> ' *'The primary objective of a team effort must be the members' collective performance results rather than an elusive notion of working together better'. (Xiv)*

Eight coding concepts sit under this theme, including ones such as pricing; innovation and measurement (see Appendix 22 for full details). Rather than components of team - or interface effectiveness, the codes described here are quite specific contributors to performance. The most dominant concept which came up time and again was that of 'on time-in full' or OTIF. Many of the trust issues described earlier we attributed to the Brand Developers inability to provide their colleagues with materials on time and to the expected standards.

> *'Everything is late which causes a lot of resentment.' (WS7-CS1)*

The focus in this theme is primarily about delivery to each other - an internal delivery in order for the collective group to achieve their mutual ambition.

Ways of working across complex geographies

All the case studies involved complex teams working across huge geographies. The challenges of virtual working and of tensions being exacerbated by distance were common themes. Conversations focused around the frustrations, which were primarily the exhaustion of many of the BD teams with their relentless travel, as well as those around the impact of proximity. Interestingly the latter was somewhat paradoxical, with many references to the issues caused by parties being located together (and the feeling of an overlap of knowledge) as there were about those geographically separated and the limitations of working virtually (time zones, poor telecommunications).

From frustrations the conversations moved to ways to mitigate against these challenges. These considered four core areas: effective communication processes, which provided a cadence or rhythm for the group, responsiveness to each other, the balance between face to face and virtual meetings and the use of technology. These

were not dissimilar to themes coming through from the literature on virtual working (e.g. Kirkman et al., 2002). An interesting observation from Kirkman et al. resonates with the need described earlier, to understand purpose and tasks. It was that '*virtual teams need to understand much more so than co-located teams what goals they are working towards*'. This suggests even more weight to the need of creating a mutual ambition and clear priorities described earlier. The findings at the workshop on trust; (that it is built and reinforced by actual delivery), would concur with findings by Clases et al. (2004), that the development of trust in a virtual organisation requires a culture of 'proactive trust'.

Considering these components helps to understand where teams get stuck at the interface. The elements are not dissimilar to those found in the literature of team effectiveness. But is merely understanding these elements alone enough to improve interface effectiveness? As a collection, the description of components seems somewhat static and implies a cohesiveness or consensus as a potential cause and effect view of an interface; whereas the experience of the Case Studies was that of constantly working with tensions and multiple voices. Looking back to the literature review, I was curious as to whether the findings might also provide a process or framework, to help think about how these components of interface effectiveness might work and whether there was an additional dynamic to be considered.

A framework for considering interface effectiveness

Time and time again , the same themes came out of the workshop: lack of prioritisation; and with it lack of aligned goals; inability to dialogue; lack of trust; an inability to deliver OTIF; duplication of tasks; poor use of data; in some cases this was exacerbated by leadership not being aligned. As described above, it is around these aspects that teams appear to get stuck at the interface. Referring in particular to the work of Hackman and Morris (1975) and Gratton (2007)- see Figures 3 & 4- I reflected on what they considered happened in the team process and how that might apply to interfaces. In particular I was interested in the two levels of output from the Hackman and Morris model: performance and team sustainability, alongside the notion of productive practices from Gratton. I was also curious as to how considering the interface as a complex system might provide an alternative way of viewing what was happening. The work of Brown and Eisenhardt (1998) on complex organisational

forms, cited by Black & Edwards (2000 p.573) calls for structuring around the few critical rules of, set priorities, deadlines, responsibilities and target real-time measurement of movement towards the stated goals and real-time communications. These appear congruent with the findings described above.

Fambrough & Comerford's (2006) interesting paper on team dynamics helped think through this paradigm. Their description, of a shift from organicism to contextualism, appears absolutely pertinent to the concerns described above of the dangers of viewing interface effectiveness as a homogenous and static set of criteria. It allows space for different interpretations.

> *'Contextualism focuses on actions and events occurring interactively in a specific context. Within this worldview, nothing is static, universal, or unchanging, making it impossible to categorize entities or phenomena. The root metaphor of contextualism is the historic event embedded in the active present, where meaning is made and remade retrospectively'.* (Fambrough & Comerford, 2006, p.563)

The need for contextualism is also brought out by Hope Hailey & Balogun (2002) in their work on Glaxo Wellcome.

Building on the inputs described above suggested a framework (Figure 8) which considers the interactions across the interface and critically the iterative sense giving and sense making processes and the underpinning practices which supported it.

The framework suggests the following characteristics and process for an effective interface. Firstly, where an interface comes together, both teams need to establish a mutual ambition, which is peculiar to their context. This overarches any specific tasks and may involve choices at an organisational level, e.g. prioritisation, projects etc. Interactions between the two parts of the interface are iterative and to work effectively depend upon all parties having clarity and prioritisation of the tasks, together with clarity as to how the roles and responsibilities in achieving those tasks are allocated. Delivery is about delivering to each side's expectations; e.g. in the first Case Study this would have been the 'on time in full' (OTIF) expectations from BD and execution in the market place by BB. There is a constant iteration between task and delivery. Here success is achieved by rigorous analysis of the facts and robust dialogue. These two elements have to work together. The output is then two-fold: performance (of share, profit growth etc against KPIs) and sustainability. Sustainability is critical, for it is through this that a virtual cycle of effective working is created comprising the key elements of; trust, mutual working, flexibility and resilience.

Interface Effectiveness Model

Initiation	Iterative Interactions	On- going outcomes

MUTUAL AMBITION

TASK

Rigorous Analysis
Robust Dialogue

DELIVERY

PERFORMANCE

SUSTAINABILITY

•Trust
•Mutual Working
•Flexibility
•Resilience

Iterative sense giving & sense making through robust dialogue
Mutual working enabled by underpinning practices
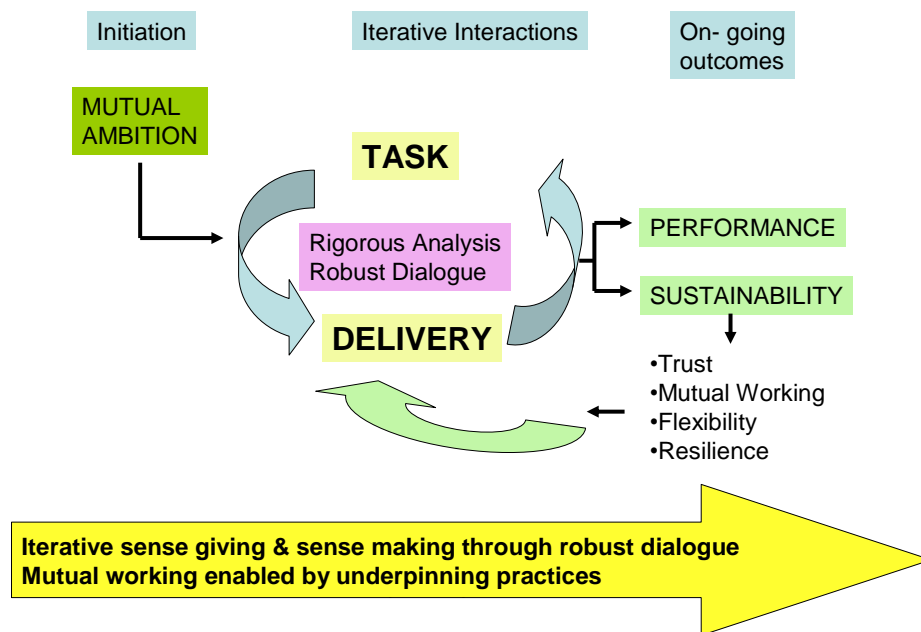
Figure 8: Interface Effectiveness Model

Across the entire framework is an iterative process of sense giving and sense making which will be described in more detail in subsequent findings. It is the appreciation of, and a focus on this aspect, that is the difference between a static combination of components and a dynamic and pluralistic entity.

To enable the process there are a number of underpinning practices, without which the cycle breaks down. Some of these involve significant shifts within established organisation practices. These include strategic choice & prioritisation; cooperative mindset; balanced capabilities; reward; appropriate use of data; virtual working; skills around dialogue and conflict management.

This finding demonstrates that teams get stuck at the interface through a number of potential factors. Be it lack of mutual ambition, holding different priorities; ambiguous roles and responsibilities or different measures of success. However, in a dynamic and pluralistic environment, which characterises many interfaces, resolving these factors is unlikely to be enough. As outlined through the complexity literature in Section 2, there are unlikely to be obvious answers. Rather it is about making choices and understanding the consequences of alternative solutions. Thus, underpinning the components of interface effectiveness are the iterative processes of sense making and

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sense giving along with a number of underpinning practices which enable robust dialogue and the ability to work with ambiguity, manage conflict and to build trust.

Post the research, this model has been used to help frame conversations about the interface within the organisation. It appears to resonate as a way of thinking about interfaces and subsequently a diagnostic has been developed from it, which has been widely used to get a position assessment as to where specific interfaces are getting 'stuck'. Rather than providing a process to follow, the finding here provides a framework to help understand and to act as a vehicle for sense making in the iterative conversations, that can help move the interface forward.

6.3 FINDING 2
Interface effectiveness can be considered as a variant of team effectiveness. Although not separate, it can be differentiated from 'boundary spanning' and privileges different capabilities.

This finding reflects on my experience of working at internal interfaces and compares it with the literature of team effectiveness and boundary spanning described in Section 3. Of the findings, this is most heavily dependent on referencing the literature. It might be considered as a sub- finding to Finding 1, as it attempts to distinguish between the components of interface effectiveness and to understand whether interface effectiveness is a variant of team effectiveness (or a distinct organisational capability); as well as explaining whether interface effectiveness should be incorporated as a dimension of boundary spanning.

The first question is whether interface effectiveness is a separate organisational capability to team effectiveness. To do this I refer back the work in Finding 1, which compares the components of team effectiveness with those findings observed through the Case Studies on interface effectiveness. In particular if I look back at Tables 16 & 17 in Finding 1, what is apparent is that although the emphasis might vary, the criteria for an effective interface almost mirror those for team effectiveness. Likewise, if I refer to how the work on virtual teams is positioned (Kirkman et al., 2002, Clases et al., 2004), it is consistent with my findings. Hertel et al. (2006) observe that there is overlap between team effectiveness capabilities and those required for virtual teams.

They conclude that virtual team working might be regarded as a dimension of team effectiveness. Likewise I come to a similar conclusion that interface effectiveness is a variation of team effectiveness. The components are the same; it is the circumstance that differs.

The second part of the question considered whether interface effectiveness was equivalent to boundary spanning. It is this aspect of the question that has proved most challenging to address, as philosophically it sits at the epistemological heart of this research project. From a social constructionist perspective boundaries are a construct:

> *'We multiply distinctions, then*
>
> *deem that our puny boundaries are things*
>
> *that we perceive, and not that which we have made.'* (Wordsworth; 1850)

One might challenge whether interfaces or boundary spanning was conceptually distinguishable, or whether the 'catch all' term of boundary management might adequately cover both. As cited earlier in this thesis:

> *' all these boundaries are arbitrary, and it is a matter of choice where the inquirer applies the 'scissors'; the distinctions are necessary and useful but have no objective existence.' (Reason & Hawkins, 1988, p.80)*

As I worked at the internal interfaces, I noticed that what I was experiencing wasn't quite resonating with what was being expressed in the literature. There were glimpses I could identify with, but the predominant focus tended to be of boundary spanning into the external environment and of descriptions which focused on the capabilities of key individuals who acted as connectors to the external environment. Whereas what I had observed was the need for the majority of team members (not a few key members) to be able to work with each other; almost to be able to dove-tail their activity, so that they were distinct (but not separate) from each other in certain aspects of their work. Even though their end objective was to be competitive in the external world their key focus at the interface was about working with their different perspectives and inherent tensions, to achieve a mutual overarching goal - rather than to draw in perspectives from the outside world. (Although this activity would be being done separately by each side of the interface and would feed into the perspectives they were bringing to the interface).

My start point was to go back to the dictionary definitions highlighted in the literature review: Interface – *'a situation, way or place where two things come together and affect each other'* and Boundary - *'a real or imagined line which marks the edge or*

limit of something' (Cambridge Dictionary on line). There is indeed a distinction between them. Chambers (1988) goes further and also includes the words '*of the same system'.* However the literature, be it between or around a team, tends to use boundary spanning interchangeably with that of boundary management and interfaces as a subset of that definition; for indeed a boundary of some form is pertinent to all of them.

> *'Team boundaries can be thought of as both the lines within and the lines around a team.'*
> *(Espinosa et al 2003, p.158)*

But I wonder whether they are a continuum of the same dimension or whether there has been a particular focus which is privileging a specific meaning? The disconnect I was experiencing seemed worthy of exploring further. It felt that examining the more subtle distinctions between boundary spanning and interface effectiveness might be enlightening. I was curious to explore the distinction further.

As Figure 9 attempts to demonstrate, the focus of boundary spanning is between the team and its environment, whereas the focus on interfaces is the integration between the two teams.

Interface Effectiveness v Boundary Spanning
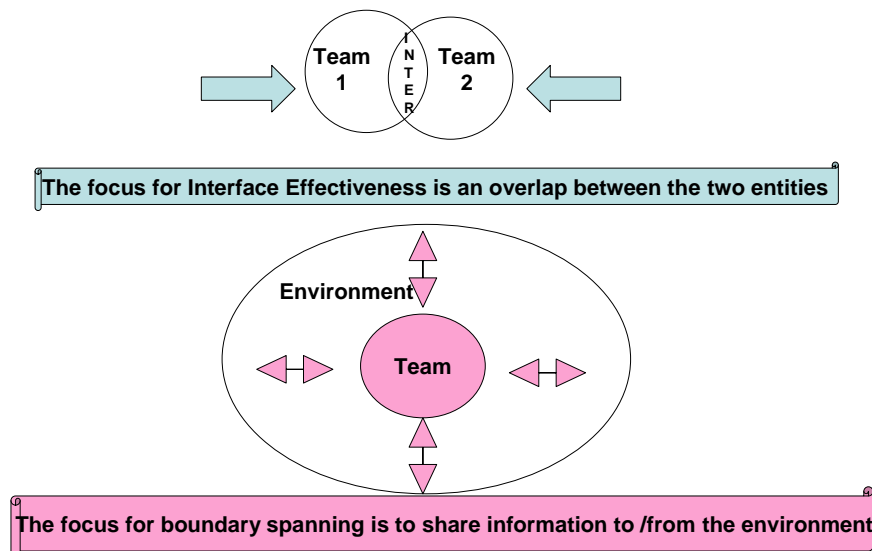
Figure 9: Focus of Interface Effectiveness v Boundary Spanning

The literature review in Section 3 considered the key themes which emerged from the literature on boundary management (see also Appendix 3); I reconsidered the literature in an attempt to address that question.

There appear to be four discernable clusters, although there is some overlap between them. These might be plotted against two axis; the first between internal and external focus, the second between a need for interpretation of activity from 'outside' to use with the group versus sense making with others -so interpretation as opposed to 'co-creating' for a mutual benefit. The four themes have been plotted in Figure 10, and can be described as follows: The first cluster (1) includes the literature which is located at the boundary between the team and its environment. Its focus is primarily on the bringing and sharing of new knowledge and looking outwards for trends or changes in the environment (e.g. Jemison, 1984). As highlighted in the literature review, Ancona & Caldwell (2007, p.38), identify four distinct activities in dealing with other groups: ambassador activities; task coordinator; scouts; and guard. It appears to be scout activity which is most dominant here. The attention is to external activity and '*a range of externally directed actions*' (Marrone et al., 2007, p.1424). Bringing the outside in and working outside the traditional boundaries of an organisation is seen as increasingly important in today's world, with an impact on how work is considered and designed.

> '*In an increasingly global and knowledge-intensive economy, work design is no longer contained within an organization; it often transcends the boundaries of organizations and countries. These changes call for a renewed research focus on work design.*' (Sinha & Van de Ven, 2005, p.389).

How these changes will impact the way we manage innovation for example, is an important topic when considering the future of work (Gratton 2007) and segues to the next cluster.

The focus of the second cluster (2) is that of networks and networking. In many ways it is a 'how' of the first cluster, and is in the service bringing in new knowledge through people who '*use their networks to get work done; eyes and ears to the outside world*' (Cross & Prusak, 2002). It is still externally focused, but is more collaborative and there is a greater sense of two way sharing. It is perceived that there is real power in being able to harness individuals' informal networks (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993). The theme of collaboration or co-operation also features strongly in these works where co-operation across boundaries helps engage in purposeful combinations and where boundary spanning and co-operation can be seen to have a multiplicative effect (Gratton 2007, O'Mahony & Bechky, 2008, Bradbury & Lichtenstien, 2000, Ring & Van de Ven, 1994).

'When a mindset of cooperation emerges it does so as the result of an on-going interplay
between assumptions, practices, norms, languages and behaviour. (Gratton 2007 p.44)

The interplay described above was a feature of many of the workshops observed in the Case Studies. Certainly the evidence (positive and negative) from the case studies demonstrated the importance of a collaborative mindset beyond just the interface being researched.

'I'm in favour of open sharing of data but our business partners need to be too' (WS1CS2)

Dimensions of Team Effectiveness v Boundary Spanning
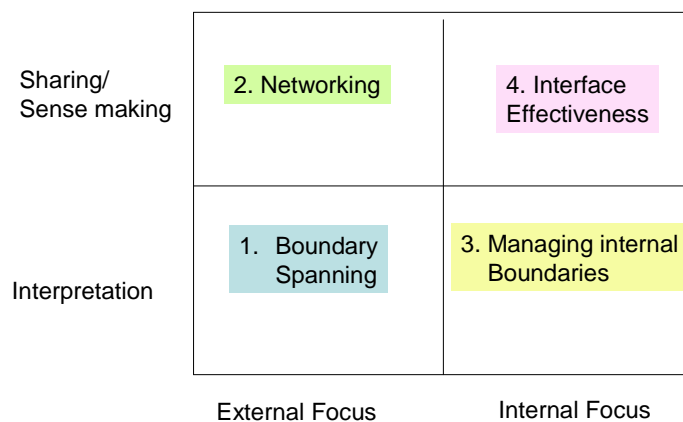
Figure 10

The third cluster (3) considers internal boundaries. Research by Balogun et al. (2005), on internal boundary shakers, is one of the few pieces of literature which focuses on intra organisational boundaries. It is a paper I found particularly useful in the early stages of my research, because it was firmly positioned within the organisation. I found myself identifying with their description of a boundary shaker, needing to mobilise power across three different dimensions: 'resources', 'processes' and 'meaning'.

> *'Our findings show boundary-shakers to be manipulators of existing organizational networks,*
> *gathering and using knowledge of the organizational political context and the motivations of*
> *others to pursue their change objectives'. (Balogun et al 2005:262)*

The role they describe of a 'boundary shaker' is that of an internal change agent. Unlike the first cluster, its focus is on the internal rather than the external; but the role is similar of individuals bringing across information, concepts and instructions to be interpreted and used by a group for the group itself. Rather than change agendas, my

interest across the internal boundaries is the day to day patterning of interactions as teams work with and between each other to achieve their on going objectives. Balogun et al. describe the boundary shaker needing to mobilise 'power' across the three dimensions of 'resources, processes and meaning'. The mobilisation here is, for me, a question of authority. With the interfaces I was exposed to, it was more a case of 'mobilising' itself, with both sides having authority; of taking into action; of working together, establishing, making choices and taking decisions on, 'resources, processes and meaning'. The difference is in the way the information is used and by whom and for whom the sense is created.

This leads to the fourth cluster (4), those of internal interfaces (be they geographical or hierarchical). This cluster is distinguished by an internal focus of groups making sense and working (or not) together. It is the literature around this theme that has most resonance with what I was experiencing throughout the workshops and indeed it links to working with the geographical complexities described in the previous finding. There are four key articles - all noticeably recent - which pick up on this theme (Yanow, 2004, Metiu, 2006, Hinds & Mortsen, 2005 and Hope Hailey et al., 2005). Tensions between local and global expertise are considered by both Metiu and Hope Hailey et al. Metiu's paper on status in distributed groups, explores an Indian software team feeling that their skills were being undervalued by their global counterparts. It comments that geography had minimised their ability to see each others areas of expertise; Hope Hailey el al. also notice perceptions of disempowerment between local and global teams.

In this research project there was significant commentary by participants, both in workshops and in post-workshop interviews on the dynamics and tensions between the local and global areas of the business; the comments seem to mirror some of the sentiments described above.

> - *'One of our root causes is that we don't think their external capabilities are high, that they don't understand Europe' (P5 CS1)*
> - *'The local team didn't feel it was good enough' (Pre W/S8-CS1)*
> - *' There is a granularity that needs to be brought into the global level.-We don't have a global level but a collective of key countries, and a brand vision/ framework and coherence but deployment will vary. We struggle as to how to achieve through others; we tend to do it ourselves. We get into conflict when escalating tasks that others didn't design. It's when global tries to be local'. (VP6-CS1)*

- *'Sense of the teams working against each other re deployment of budget, advertising rather than the collective ambition to win' (HR4-CS1)*

In working with geographically distributed teams, Hinds & Mortensen (2005) notice how conflict plays out. They conclude that shared identity moderated the impact interpersonal conflict and shared context moderated task conflict.

> *'A shared context exists when team members have access to the same information and share the same tools, work processes and work cultures. Occupying different contexts can make it more difficult to co-orientate to a particular object or approach, develop mutual understanding, and establish common behavioural norms.' (Hinds & Mortensen 2005 p.293)*

Again the need to establish some norms in order to work together was evidenced in my research:

- *'it is now a pleasure to work with them, it seems like we are talking the same language' (P8-CS1)*

- *'We really talk about plans and work as a team, not an opposite team'. (P8CS1)*

- *'It was not just about the operating framework, you do that, I do that, but the element of together is very important. It's not about being two different silos' (VP5-CS1)*

It is the last cluster of articles that appear to address some of the specific issues encountered at the interface of internal and often dispersed teams.

To consider the distinction between boundary spanning and interface effectiveness further, I have taken the core attributes from the list of literature themes on boundary spanning (Appendix 3). Those being function; boundary focus; roles; mindset; performance and identity, and consider how they manifest themselves be it from a boundary spanning or interface effectiveness perspective. Interestingly it is only mindset; collaboration and cooperation that appear common to both. As Table 18 portrays, there are quite clear distinctions as to how these attributes manifest themselves for boundary spanning and interface effectiveness.

Considering these distinctions I would suggest that even though there are overlaps in the capabilities required for both interface effectiveness and boundary spanning, they do actually address different requirements; where boundary spanning might be defined as activity which brings information into a group for interpretation by, and for the benefit of the group; interface effectiveness is about sharing and co- creating between groups. In order to achieve this there are also likely to be on going communication processes underpinning activity.

Boundary Spanning	Both	Interface Effectiveness
Function Bringing in new knowledge		**Function:** Work together to achieve a mutual ambition
Boundaries: External		**Boundaries:** Vertical & Horizontal
Roles Scout Guard		**Roles** Co-ordination Dealing with dilemmas and paradoxes Establishing mutual ambitions
	Mindset Collaboration & Co-operation	
Performance In achieving the teams objectives through effective collaboration with the environment		**Performance** Of an overarching a mutual ambition Likely to be achieved through on going communications processes
Identity Distinct		**Identity** Although distinct from each other there is also a need for some form of shared identity

Table 18: Distinctions between Boundary Spanning & Interface Effectiveness

In conclusion my findings would suggest that interface effectiveness might be considered as a variant of team effectiveness. I recognise that the boundary is a somewhat arbitrary entity where: *'The organisation does not have impervious boundaries; rather, even the artefacts of culture are 'only made real by being given meaning'* (Hawkins, 1997, p.424).

However, I would suggest that the focus to date of boundary management has primarily considered boundary spanning from a perspective that looks outwards. As such, it privileges certain capabilities. By changing that focus to a more inward one which considers the requirements for interface effectiveness, it addresses different capabilities and ways of working. Therefore within the domain of boundary management there is a benefit in being able to distinguish interface effectiveness from boundary spanning.

6. 4 Introduction to findings on Sense-making

The previous findings focus on the components and underpinning practices of interface effectiveness and its relationship to team effectiveness, the following four findings look more deeply at the vehicle which ran through all of these; sense giving and sense making. These two concepts are described fully in Gioia and Chettippeddi's (1991) seminal paper. But for definition here sense giving can be defined as the way one party articulates their own interpretation on a situation in order for the other party to explain or influence an other party to enable meaningful conversation around a topic. Whereas sense making is the process and cognitive behaviour as to how an individual or group of individuals come to an interpretation of a situation that is meaningful to them.

Sense making / sense giving emerged as one of the eight themes from the data and a number of data concepts were associated with it. These are shown below in Table 19, together with a summary of emergent insights.

CONCEPT	THEME	INSIGHTS
21. Different Perspectives 29. Sense giving 30. Sense making 6d. Feedback & Review 6f Transparent timely communications 6g. Skilled dialogue 6i Internal selling 6k Appropriate use of data 6l. Excessive internal debate & challenge	Sense Giving / Sense Making	- Adequate hierarchical sense has to be given for subordinates to fully engage in the sense making process - There is a difference between peer to peer sense giving /making at interface v hierarchical sense giving / making - There is a time lag to sense making which often is not appreciated - The ability to understand and work with different perspectives is critical at the interface. - Ability in skilled dialogue is a key enabler - How data (facts) are used can enable or impede sense making and interface effectiveness - The conversations are in themselves action creating movement at the interface

Table 19: Concepts and insights on sense making and sense giving

The four findings related to sense- making were as follows. Firstly, linked to the earlier model on interface effectiveness, it shows the occasions which trigger sense making at the interface. Secondly, there is a critical interplay between sense giving and sense-making at the interface, which can enable or impede action; this can be seen both in terms of hierarchical sense giving and peer to peer sense giving and making. A third finding is that although sense-making is a live and dynamic process happening in the moment, there is a time lag between sense-making and sense-giving which needs

to be appreciated. Finally this research supports findings elsewhere that skills in dialogue and narrative are key enablers in the sense-making process.

6.5 FINDING 3

There are a number of occasions when teams work across the interface which require adequate sense making/ sense making activities between the parties.

Based on the model described in the earlier findings a number of occasions emerge which both trigger sense making activities and during which groups need to make adequate sense if they are to work effectively together (Figure 11/ Table 20).

Sense Giving / Making Triggers
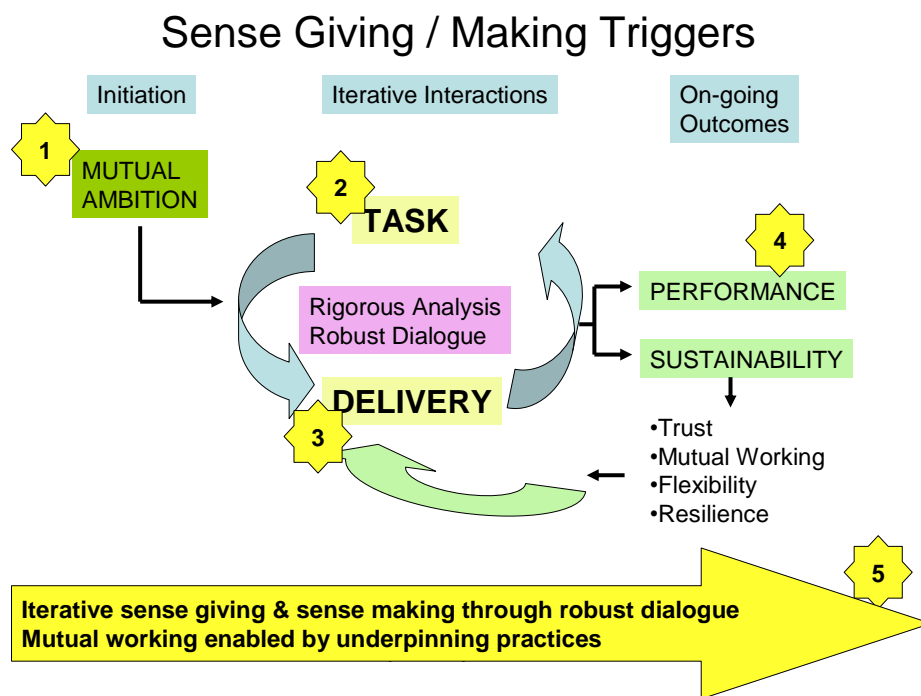
Figure 11: Triggers of Sense Giving and Sense Making

The first of these occasions is where the parties need to establish their mutual purpose and ambition. As will be explored further in the next finding, this required not just sense making between the two peer groups, but also an understanding from more senior members in the organisation around strategic intent and an intra team understanding of what it meant to them. Within the dialogues was an understanding of constraints and discussions around paradoxes and tensions. As discussed elsewhere, mutual ambition does not mean a common sense. Rather to the sentiment of equifinal meaning (Donnellon et al., 1986) there was solidarity established about what was to be achieved but each party might have its own reasons for the achievement.

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The second occasion was around a prioritisation of the tasks in order to achieve the ambition. This included understanding the constraints, expectations and establishing measures of success.

	Occasion	Description
1	Establishment of Mutual Ambition	Agreement of overarching ambition, constraints and phasing. Understanding as to constraints, paradoxes, ambitions of each other.
2	Prioritisation of Tasks	Agreement as to the key tasks/ projects to be delivered in order to achieve the mutual ambition and associated KPIs. Clarity as to limitations and expectations. This also includes expectations as to who does what and how and where decisions are made
3	Updates on Delivery	On going conversations which highlight variations to plan vs expectation and impact. Discussion of ad hoc issues related to delivery
4	Review of Performance	Agreement as to what has been achieved
5	Dialogues around ways of working	On going conversations around the process of working together which will enhance performance and sustainability

Table 20 Sense making Occasions

Most on going sense making was triggered during the course of delivery itself, often through a myriad of conversations around variations between expectations and variations to plan. In the first and third Case Studies these primarily related to 'on time in full', or implementation into the market. In the second Case Study it was around timeliness and robustness of analysis.

A fourth point was a review of performance, the sense making here often linked back to measures established, or not, at earlier stages in the process.

The final set of occasions was sense making around the process (rather than the content) of how the teams worked together, so for example establishing communication patterns or clarifying roles and responsibilities.

In their research on sense making in British orchestras Maitlis & Lawrence (2007) describe a number of sense giving triggers (Figure 12). They were able to distinguish

between occasions when leaders and occasions when stakeholders needed to give sense. These included situations of complex environments or incompetent leadership.
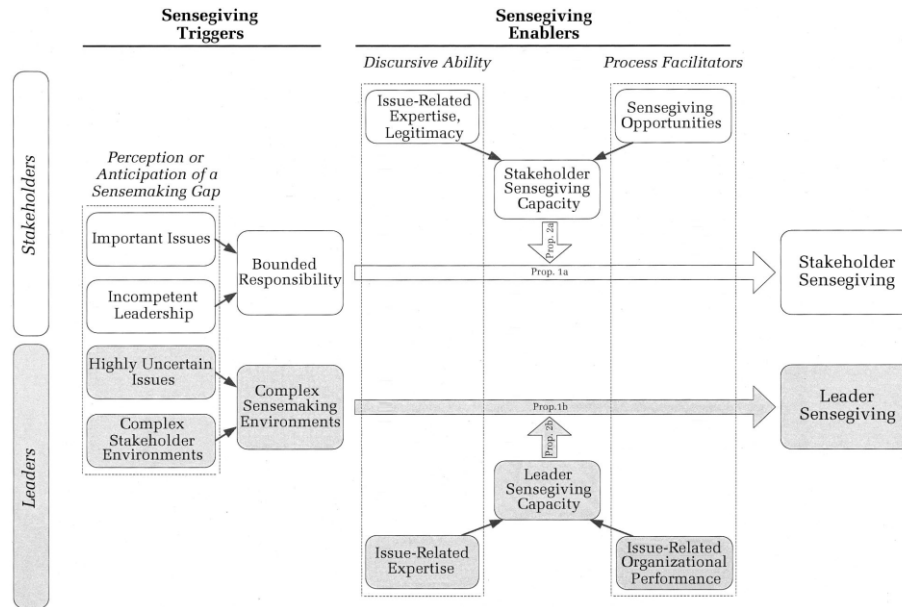
Figure 12: Sense-giving Triggers - Maitlis & Lawrence (2007)

Whilst there is nothing in the findings in this research which would contradict their work, the triggers that emerged at the interfaces appear to concentrate around specific moments in the process.

One of the differences between the two pieces of research is that Maitlis and Lawrence's was based on a longitudinal study, whereas this research is focused on individual workshops; a moment in time, where the participants were both reflecting on and working through issues they had in their day to day interactions. Although the workshops themselves were interactions, their reflections tended to focus on critical incidents in their day to day relationships and their categorisation; (their 'labelling and bracketing', Weick, 1995) honed in around stages in their working processes. Another difference was that whereas Maitlis & Lawrence's focus was on triggers for sense giving, what is being considered in this finding is an understanding of specific points, where the members of the 'interface' needed to make sense together through an iteration of sense giving and sense making.

By understanding that there are critical occasions where sense needs to be made across the interface, teams (and indeed team leaders and facilitators) can plan and give

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time to such conversations. By being aware that sometimes issues, inactivity and conflicts are occurring because of inadequate sense making they can pay attention to the process of their sense making rather than just focusing on the content of their dispute.

Whereas this finding considered where in the processes of the interface sense making occurs, the next two findings consider aspects of the process of sense making itself and their potential impact on interface effectiveness.

6.6 FINDING 4

There is a critical interplay between sense giving and sense making at the interface which can enable or impede action. This can be seen both in terms of hierarchical sense giving and peer to peer sense giving and making.

There are two aspects to this finding; the first is that adequate sense needs to be given hierarchically to a group (either interface or intact team) for them to then make sense effectively themselves. At an interface, effective sense giving helps provide the context and constraints in developing a mutual ambition. The second is that the patterning of peer to peer sense giving and making at the interface, is different to that experienced hierarchically.

<u>Adequate hierarchical sense giving</u>

Case Study 2 most clearly highlighted the interplay of sense giving and sense making, as the group tried to make sense of their changes in structure and ways of working. Insights came initially from the first workshop where the VP put up a 'straw-man' of a proposed 'RACI' (roles and responsibilities). This was positively received as the participants (the directors) found it valuable to have something to focus on as they critiqued it through the lens of their experience.

> *'It's so much easier to get traction when there is something to start with. At least we had an opinion at the table and we could judge and morph it in the business. I think at (Workshop 1) without that 'straw-man' we would have been going around in circles; having something to react to was critical.' (P7CS2)*

What appeared to be happening here was that adequate sense was being given to the group to enable them to then embellish it with their own stories and so make meaningful sense of it themselves.

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However, the experience in the second workshop illuminated the differences between adequate sense being given for a group to move forward and the ensuing confusion and inertia where it was not. The directors (who had been at the first workshop) were each given a specific 'grey area' to host as part of a 'round robin' exercise. What became apparent was that the topics split into those where the director had a clear understanding of the issue and were able to give the group a clear context and outline and those where the directors themselves were still trying to make sense of the problem and therefore found it difficult to set the scene for their group to work on the issue.

> *'Part of me wondered whether… the directors were using the sessions to make their own sense' (P10- CS2)*

> *'I think people were confused because they didn't have the background'. (P10 CS2)*

> *'I was expecting to get clarity on the new roles before I started to clarify on the grey areas. I needed clarity to make these sessions relevant to me'. (P1 CS2)*

This was also apparent in the third Case Study. Although in this instance it was not just about leadership sense giving but also subordinates into leaders.

> *'Despite the great discussions we didn't get it across to them. I don't know what wasn't working, either we didn't give them a strong briefing on day 1, or they were already too far apart… It was really like a sender/ receiver situation. I would have loved to have filmed it! (P3 CS3)*

Literature provides a number of examples that support the need for adequate sense being given, if it is then to be used effectively by subordinates (Gioia & Chettepeddi, 1991, Tourish & Robson, 2005, Sims, 2003). Maitlis & Lawrence (2007) notice that:

> *'All sensegiving is in response to troubling, uncertain, or confusing issues, but our study suggests that if an organization's leaders have a limited appreciation of the threatened area, and if the threat is affecting an already poorly performing aspect of the organization, leaders will find it difficult to engage in significant sensegiving'. (p.79)*

In their research on distributed offshore / onsite work and associated sense giving, making and breaking, Vlaar et al. (2008) found that team members' engagement in iterative communication cycles not only diminishes problems of understanding, but enabled the co-creation of novel understandings. One of their propositions was that:

> *'Acts of sense-giving, sense-demanding, and sense-breaking increase the likelihood that congruent and actionable understandings emerge among distributed workers' (p.244)*

Whereas the sense giving / making process was overt in the second and third Case Studies it was less apparent in the first. I have a number of reflections on this.

Firstly there was a question in the pre- workshop diagnostic which specifically asked if any aspects of the 'grey areas' remained unclear. So any 'inadequate' sense giving was captured at a specific content level and dealt with. It didn't then get re-discussed by the participants as a key theme.

Secondly, the issue of 'grey area' clarification and the operating framework was seen as an organisational issue and participants appeared to be looking to a nebulous 'organisation' rather than their specific leaders to address. Interestingly, the very reason for holding the workshops was because 'the organisation' hadn't provided adequate sense giving around roles and responsibilities. Upfront of the workshops time was spent with senior leaders clarifying the 'grey areas', which in effect was their own sense making in order to give sense (clarify) further down the organisation. Thirdly, by the time the workshops actually took place adequate sense had been made of the grey areas (which were distributed in advance of the workshop) and the VPs in their turn were able to give an adequate sense to the participants.

> *'We found that complex sensemaking environments created occasions for leader sensegiving as leaders sought to construct stories that could make sense of unpredictable, ambiguous issues for stakeholder groups with divergent interests' (Maitlis & Lawrence 2007, p.77).*

Leadership sense giving around context, ambition and constraints helped to provide a framework for the groups then to make sense of each others assumptions.

> *'They (the leaders) set a tonality and context and role model especially in a transitional environment.'* (P6CS1)

The exception to this however was around issues of prioritisation. Prioritisation remained an issue across all the workshops in Case Study 1. Much of the ambiguity was around different assumptions as to what was or wasn't a priority and associated expectations. Because leaders weren't able to be clear as to the mutual priorities and the implications of those choices (e.g. what would not be done) conversations around this topic tended to circle without resolution; this required a decision (and in effect adequate sense giving) to then be provided by more senior leaders.

Maitlis (2005, p.32) examines four forms of organisational sense making between leaders and stakeholders (see Figure 13). This framework can be overlaid which the experiences of the three Case Studies, and the sense giving which characterised them.

Case study sense giving against Maitlis' Four Forms of Organizational Sensemaking

Guided Organizational Sensemaking	**Restricted Organizational Sensemaking**
Process Characteristics	Process Characteristics
•High Animation	•Low Animation
•High Control	•High Control
Outcomes	
•Unitary, rich account	Outcomes
•Emergent series of consistent actions	•Unitary, narrow account
Effective Case study 1 workshops	•One time action or planned set of
W/shop 1 – Case Study 2	consistent actions
Fragmented Organizational Sensemaking	**Minimal Organizational Sensemaking**
Process Characteristics	Process Characteristics
•High Animation	•Low Animation
•Low Control	•Low Control
Outcomes	
•Multiple, narrow accounts	Outcomes
•Emergent series of inconsistent action	•Nominal account
BB/BD relationships at the onset of	•One time, compromised action
Case Study 1	Workshop 2 Case study 2
Case study 3	

High — Low (Leader Sensegiving, vertical axis)

High — Stakeholder sensegiving — Low (horizontal axis)

Based on Maitlis 2005:32

Figure 13: Forms of Organizational Sense making

The workshops in the first Case Study were developed to address what was being perceived as inadequate sense being given by senior leaders. This resulted in different parts of the organisation (the stakeholders) providing their own interpretations, which in turn lead to multiple and inconsistent actions described above as 'fragmented'. Again in the third study, the stakeholders were trying to make their own sense of the situation without clear direction from above. Although as a group they worked together to provide an account and became extremely animated and energised in the process, they were frustrated at their inability to articulate this to their leaders. As indeed were the leaders in their ability to understand. This is described by Maitlis as fragmented sense making:

> *'Where animated and uncontrolled processes lead to individualistic accounts and inconsistent actions, resembles 'collapse of sensemaking' (Weick, 1993), in which actors experience the disintegration of shared meaning' (Maitlis 2005, p.39)*

The second workshop in Case Study 2 provides an example of 'minimal' sense making, where neither leaders nor stakeholders were able to provide an adequate start point for the discussion. The table discussions where this happened were characterised by much lower animation and somewhat unstructured conversations, which lead to very minimal outcomes.

Where there was adequate sense giving by the leaders, and their subordinates were given the opportunity to make and give their own sense (such as the Case Study 1 workshops or the first workshop in Case Study 2 - guided sense making), there was a richer and more consistent and effective outcome.

Although there was no workshop examples of restricted organisational sense making there were references to inhibitions felt by members to challenge more senior leadership with comments such as '*category ayatollahs*' (WS7 CS1). This appears to link to Morrison & Milliken's (2000) work, which identifies the collective-level phenomenon as 'organizational silence.' Whereby issues aren't raised and there is a collective perception that speaking up is unwise, which is both caused by and influences the sense making dynamic. They cite Argyris and Schön (1978) who suggest that a fear of feedback by managers avoiding embarrassment, threat, and feelings of vulnerability or incompetence.

Although not all sense making requires (leadership) sense giving (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007, Weick, 1995), the findings from this research would indicate that effective sense giving was beneficial; this is particularly true in ambiguous or new situations, where done adequately it made it easier for the groups' discussion to move forward rather than get stuck in a spiral of confusion.

Peer to peer sense giving

Whereas in both Case Studies 2 & 3 such activity was clearly coded under sense giving and sense making, in the first Case Study these codes didn't appear. Rather it was a cluster of concepts (see Table 21) which provided insights into peer to peer rather than hierarchical sense giving and sense making.

| 6d. Feedback & Review |
| 6f Transparent timely communications |
| 6i Internal selling |
| 6k Appropriate use of data |
| 6l. Excessive internal debate & challenge |

Table 21: Concepts providing insights to peer to peer sense making

Whereas hierarchical sense giving appears to focus on strategic input and key messages and provides a framework for future discussions; peer to peer sense giving and making appears more fragmented and on going. Many of the comments focused on the need for timely and open communications in terms of progress, so that the

group could work together if something was off track; of mutually understanding data rather than using it as a weapon and of minimising internal selling, with its inherent pushing the solution of a single perspective, instead understanding the best way to address a mutual ambition.

> -' What I see is it is more about whether we are brave enough to be more transparent to each other and share the concerns and difficulties. First it is about being brave enough to open ourselves and then about sharing the information with the other party. Then both sides can achieve the mutual understanding. (P7-CS1)
>
> -'Because we don't understand too well, we have a very superficial diagnostic of everything, so time is wasted in the passing of emails… lets concentrate on what we want to do rather than analysing what each other is doing' (W/S2-CS1)

The pattern of hierarchical sense making is represented as a series of linear steps by Gioia & Chettipeddi (1991) where sense is built upon as it is both given and made; an iteration of cognition and action, (see Figure 14).
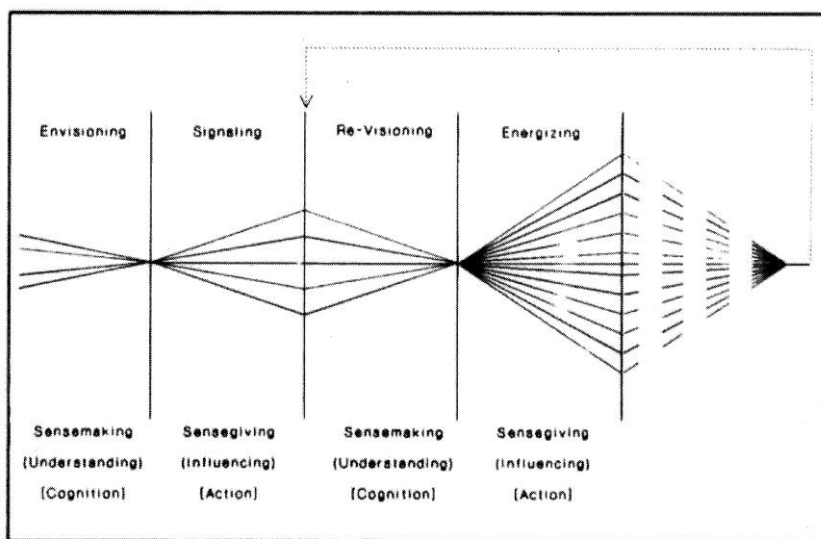
Figure 3. Processes involved in the initiation of strategic change

Figure 14: Processes of Strategic Change: (Gioia & Chettipeddi, 1991)

Although still based on an iteration of cognition and action, findings would suggest that peer to peer sense making takes on a slightly different patterning. (Figure 15)

Peer to peer interface sense-making
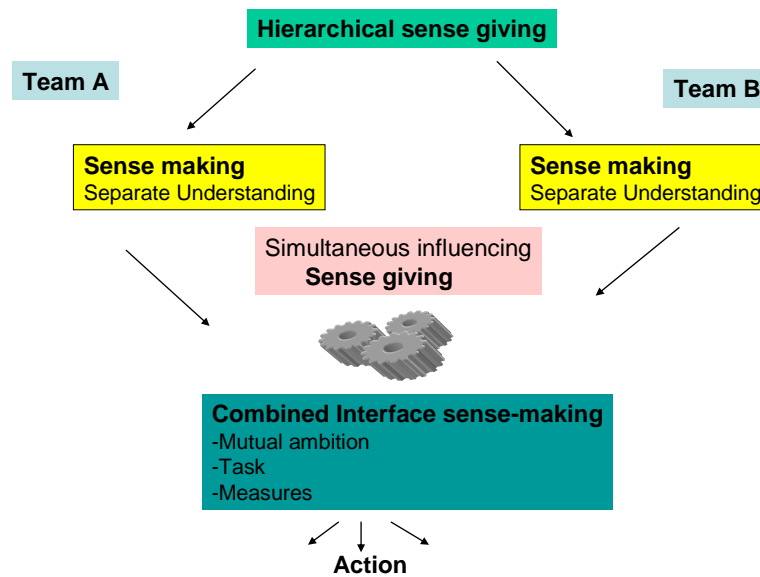
Figure 15: Peer to Peer sense making

Although both groups are hierarchically 'given' sense against the same operational framework; they then need to separately make sense in order to understand what it means to them in their context.

> *'With new roles maybe more conversations need to be had re 'what does it mean to me'- a lot is about managing their workloads and satisfying their marketers. But I think people came from different angles to make sense of where they fitted in . As soon as you engage in a situation you tend to make sense of it from your own experience.' (P3 CS2)*

> *'Maybe they didn't 'make sense' but they made it relevant to them. Maybe their first step was to make sense of the problem before they started to provide an answer for it.' (P9 CS2)*

There is then an iterative and quite fragmented process where each group simultaneously influences the other in terms of market or brand needs. This influencing is both at a one on one level, peer to peer through phone conversations and emails, or group to group in meetings and on a multitude of different aspects of data from clarity as to who is making what decision, to interpretations of local market needs and delivery of agreed projects.

Hazen (1993) discusses the notion of polyphony, of many dialogues occurring simultaneously and sequentially. Each voice is his or her centre in an organisation; *'in dialogue nothing is ever finished, complete or neatly agreed upon by all';* therefore what goes across an interface never has a tidy edge. Her description is an apt

description of interface conversations. There is not a punctuation before something 'moves across', it is a constant dynamic.

> *'It's not just about what the joint purpose is, but what is the importance of that purpose to each of you? What is the mutual importance of this to each party?' (P5-CS1)*

But within this cacophony of conversations the peer to peer aspect of this process during the workshops took three distinct forms. (Table 22)

Type	Characteristics	Examples
High sense giving from both parties	Animated Clarity of mutual agenda and priorities Balanced dialogue Use of well expressed transparent fact bases Clear actions	RACI session w/shop 1 CS2 W/Shop 1/6/7/8 CS1
High sense giving from one party low from the other	Different understanding of the mutual ambition and priorities Unbalanced capabilities / or ambiguous roles One parties mis-trust of the other parties abilities Ambiguous actions	CS 3 W/ shop 3 CS 1 Some parts of W/shop 2 CS2
Low sense giving of both parties	Unclear and siloed ambition Different priorities Withdrawal or blame conversations Data used as a weapon Conflict or withdrawal Mis-trust by both sides Fragmented actions or 'motherhood and apple pie' actions	W/shop 2 CS 2 W/S 8 CS1

Table 22: Peer to peer sense giving characteristics

In effect the characteristics of high sense giving by both parties are the process of an effective interface described in Figure 7. Such conversations included such elements as the reference to data (fact bases) that was open to and viewed as robust by both parties, such as the RACI document described in the second Case Study. They were typically less parochial and tended to focus on a mutual problem. They utilised to good advantage the techniques of effective dialogue (described in Finding 6) and were well balanced between both parties.

There were examples where one party was providing high levels of sense giving, but the other party hadn't made adequate sense of it themselves, so were either withdrawing or falling back on opinions or emotional reactions. In effect the '*separate understanding*' shown in Figure 15 (Peer to peer interface sense making) had happened on one side but not the other, leaving the conversation unbalanced. This was seen, in some workshops, to be caused by a different level of capabilities between the two sides; elsewhere (such as in the third Case Study) it was seen as one side having had time to work through something whereas the other side hadn't (see Finding 5). In either case, the resulting actions were ambiguous because it wasn't fully making sense as to where the proposed actions were coming from.

The final type of conversation was where there was low sense giving by both parties. These manifest themselves in one of two ways: the conversations were very flat, where the participants were withdrawn and 'went through the motions' or they focused on blame conversation with each side arguing from a siloed mentality. When Yanow (2004, p.12) researched across both geographical and hierarchical boundaries he considered the question of local knowledge vs expert knowledge; where local knowledge is contextual knowledge, developed out of experience with the situation in question. Local knowledge is situational, but it doesn't necessarily lack expertise. This segregation between the two types of knowledge and associated assumptions was a manifestation of low sense giving conversations, where the parties protected their own perspective and dismissed the others, rather than build across them. It was in these situations that the notion of 'data as a weapon' was most in evidence.

In summary, this finding would suggest that at an interface, adequate sense needs to be given hierarchically. The separate parties need to make sense of the situation from their perspective using rigorous analysis, as opposed to just opinions. Both parties then simultaneously influence each other (sense-give) using skilled dialogue (advocacy & inquiry). This is supported by underpinning communications processes. In order to move forward effectively together both parties need to create a mutual sense.

6.7 FINDING 5

Although sense-making is a live and dynamic process happening in the moment (which in itself can be considered 'action'), there is a time lag between sense-giving and sense-making which needs to be appreciated

Two seemingly contradictory themes emerge from the findings. That sense- making is dynamic but that it also retrospective and involves a 'time lag'. This section explores both the fluid nature of sense-making through conversations at the interface, but at the same time the experience of a 'time lag' between the sense-giving of one party and the sense making of the other. Although most evidence of the latter is seen at hierarchical interfaces, there were also observations as to how it manifests itself at a peer to peer level.

The literature on sense making considers it as both a means of retrospectively making sense of a situation (Weick, 1995) and understanding how action occurs in the moment, as an output of conversations (Ford, 1999, Ford & Ford, 1995). At the heart of many of the propositions on sense-making is the view that people make sense retrospectively. That is the sense that people can only know what they have done after they have done it (Weick, 1995, Taylor & Robichaud, 2004).

> *'How can I know what I think until I see what I say.' (Weick, 1988, p.308)*

The recounting of events through narrative provides a means of explaining what has happened by a process of labelling and bracketing (Weick 1995, Letiche 2000); of sorting information into known categories to make sense of a situation.

There is an alternative, although not contradictory, view that the very act of 'talking something through' in effect talks it into action and that a decision is made in the process of the conversation. Conversations therefore become the basis for action (Taylor & Robichaud, 2004, Alvesson & Karreman, 2000a, 2000b, Weick, 1995, Engestrom & Middleton, 1998). The narrative acts as the '*discourse of direction'*, both providing a movement forward but also embedded in the story is the rationale for a type of action (Barry & Elmes, 1997) where 'o*rganisation emerges in the interactive exchanges of its members'* (Robichaud et al., 2004, p.618).

As with post modernist thinking (Gergen, 1991, 1999, Campbell, 2000) complexity thinkers consider the very nature of organising as a process that emerges out of the multitude of interactions of its members (Shaw, 2002). Chia (1999, p.219) talks of heterogeneous '*becomings*' rather than a linear, progressive and homogeneous unfolding. In effect it is the presence of and interaction between variations on these two perceptions that is being observed in this finding.

Talk into action

Firstly, to consider conversation as a dynamic process of 'talking into action': Many respondents referred to the power of the dialogues in their feedback discussions.

> *'What made it were the conversations, real power was in the dialogues.' (VP2-CS1)*

It was here that they shifted from separate and sometimes opposing entities to a group that found themselves in a different place and from where they were able to move forward. Details of how techniques, such as advocacy and inquiry and dialogue, helped create effective conversations are described in the next finding; the focus here is to consider the patterning within those conversations which shifted and created action in the moment, as opposed to either providing retrospective understanding or a set of future action lists.

> *'I think that there is another dynamic that is not just about sense making but also about progress, of moving that sense making into action.'* (P7CS2)

One co-facilitator reported back on a conversation she had overheard from a participant to someone elsewhere in the organisation. It was observed that the workshop hadn't resulted in an action list, the participant had reflected on this and replied that there hadn't been, that all the action lists had happened in the meeting. What appeared to be happening here was reminiscent of the 'living present', a perspective from complex responsive processes (Stacey & Griffin, 2005), where action takes place in the present. The past is not so much incorporated into present, but rather there is a continual recreation of our perceptions of the past. This in turn creates expectations of the future.

Chia (1999) also notices these unfolding processes or enactments:

> *'The present is not merely the linear successor of the past but a novel outcome of it. Each moment of duration absorbs the preceding one, transforming it and with it the whole, constituting at each stage of the process a novel and never to be repeated occasion*

necessarily grounded in its past but always projected to wards a not- yet – knowable future'.
(p.220)

Through the dialogues the conversations unfolded into something they could jointly move forward on.

…'it was something they all agreed on – a statement. Then without making judgement or blaming or questioning why, they moved on to how it could be'. (W/S6)

In effect by understanding their pasts in a different way they were then opening up possibilities as they acted into the future. The workshop in question had been at a particularly difficult interface where confidence rather than trust between the two teams was low. As much as anything each side had got itself stuck into a spiral of limiting beliefs about their own situation AND importantly the position of the other side. In reframing (Watzlawick et al., 1974) their perspectives of what had happened and why (their past), they were changing the way they were then able to act into their future.

What was happening during these moments was;

'*people create shared significances and possibilities for action between themselves as they argue 'persuasively for a 'landscape' of next possible actions' (Cunliffe, 2001 p.352)*

There was a patterning in the conversations, a 'gesture and response' of calling forth to one another and the responses given in the immediate context which co- created a spontaneous meaning. Both Shotter (1993) and Griffin (2002) explore Mead's work, whereby gestures are the beginnings of social acts, which are the stimuli for the response of other forms.

'*A situation in which certain parts of the act become a stimulus to the other form to adjust itself to those responses and that adjustment in turn becomes a stimulus to the first form to change his own act and start on a different one.' (Griffin 2002:151 citing Mead 1934)*

Neither side was advocating a particular point of view; there was no solution obvious to one or the other, but nor was it an easy conversation. There was resistance, tension and doubt.

…'no one person is wholly in control of meaning, rather meaning (as a verb) is a complex, back and forth, unfolding process of mutual construction, full of tensions and taken for grantedness'. (Griffin, 2002, p.148)

But from the mêlée of the conversation what emerged was a way forward of acting together.

'*We settled on a monthly meeting to share, along with a roadmap, what the problems were and to work more with the limitations. We really talk about plans and work as a*

team, not an opposite team. …. We have implemented these meetings and they are working perfectly….

But the important thing here wasn't the action for the future, but the action they had taken in the present as to how they were together.

'now have the best time ever working with them; we are working in scenarios of total honesty, we have clear responsibilities; we are in love with each other!. It makes a lot of difference, it is now a pleasure to work with them, it seems like we are talking the same language. We are much more motivated to resolve issues and to make things happen. We can talk directly and clearly without hiding info. (P8CS1)

There was a similar context at the next workshop (on a different continent), where a similar pattern played out. A big issue with this interface had been around pricing and the inability of the interface to come to agreement as to their policy. The workshop didn't address this issue; rather they had talked about their lack of trust in each other. But later in the week, when they had to have 'the pricing conversation', because they were mutually in a different place, the conversation opened up to previously unrealised possibilities. In the process of their previous conversations they had loosened a knot which enabled them to move on from their previous 'stuckness' (Shaw 2002).

In a third workshop- this time in Asia- what worked through in the conversations wasn't an ability to take an action, nor a retrospective understanding from one group to the other, but rather the coming to a mutual realisation that they were using data as a weapon against each other which had helped shift a 'way of working'.

Through their conversations and their mutual sense making, the groups were talking into action; plausible stories that keep things moving, new data created new opportunities for dialogue and patterns of interactions with each other had enabled them to work effectively across the interface. The sense making at the interface and its resultant action was an iterative process located between individuals. Overall organisation performance comes from the actions of many interdependent people (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000) thus organisations can be considered as *'nets of collective action' (*Czarniawska- Joerges, 1992), where interlocking routines and action patterns are constructed. A group's activity is likely to become *'more mutually defined, more mutually dependent, more mutually predictable and more subject to common understanding encoded into common language.'* (p32)

Time Lag

Although the workshops provided support for the concept of 'talk into action' and the co-construction of sense; what also emerged was the notion of a time lag between sense giving and sense making. That the 'dance' of gesture and response occurred only when individuals on both sides had an adequate sense, that they had enough cues from the others gesture for them to work with. This didn't mean that they had to have a common sense rather, as observed by several authors elsewhere; they worked with an equifinal meaning (Weick, 1995, Hazen, 1993, Donnellon et al., 1986). Without it the conversations either floundered or became stuck in a spiral of irresolvable conflict. The notion of time lag is distinct from works which examine the change of perceptions over time. So, for example, Isabella (1990) considered how managers construe organisational events as change unfolds. She raises the point that interpretations are only a snapshot and therefore don't take into account the temporal nature of the interpretation. The theme of time in research has been picked up by a number of authors since her article was published: Pettigrew (1990) notes the '*importance of temporal interconnectedness, locating change in past, present and future time',* whilst Pina E Cunha (2004) considers how even (clock) vs event time privileges either reflection or action. Bohm (1997) and Isaacs (1999) both refer to the nature of time in their work on dialogue. More recently, in his research on time in social inquiry, Avital (2000) observes from the interviews he conducted that: ' *the interviews revealed that in many instances researchers treat the data collected about subjects' perceptions as objective or fixed independent property, while it is evident that the subjects' perceptions change over time'.* In the same article he echoes Isabella's concern with snapshot method, but goes further to consider that they '*are not accidental or transitory phenomena, but rather they are rooted in the deep structure of positivism.'*

Whereas these works consider the shift of interpretation over time what was noticed in the course of the second Case Study was that there was a time lag between one party giving sense and the other party having adequate time to assimilate the information to the extent that a meaningful conversation might be had. There was a marked contrast between the progress being made in some conversations and not in others. Participants reporting back on such conversations described an inability to grasp the fundamentals of the discussion that they felt as if they had to catch up on a journey well underway.

'She was using words I wasn't familiar with, so I hadn't got a concepts framework or language I was familiar with to work with. She might have been doing this for months, but we hadn't caught up, it was new. We had to spend ages defining the words she was using, and what they meant as we were all holding different definitions. We didn't even have a common language at this session, we had to spend lots of time just defining the language, and also defining the activities and roles she was talking about.' (P1 CS2)

What seemed to be happening here was that one party forget their own journey and assume that the other side can instantly see what they have been working with and through. This led to tensions on both sides - as cited above - there was on one side a feeling of frustration, on the other interpretations of resistance or ignorance..

'There was a naivety, and they didn't understand what had been tried. I had to control myself, there was this kid giving me attitude about the structure.' (P4 CS2)

In effect, having made their own sense, the sense giver was often impatient to act; this disadvantaged the receiver and put them under pressure, resulting in a spiral of frustration and distrust. (See Figure 16)

Time-lag in Sense making

Multiple conversations Culminating in some form Of sense fixing Rich, textured & Iterative

A conclusion; where there Is little understanding of what Thinking has gone into the black box. Opaque

•Wants to move on
•Frustrated
•Confirmation the other Side is resistant
•Owns the perspective

•Needs to slow down & Make own sense Disadvantaged
• Distrust of other side
•Detached

GIVER

= Tension & inertia

RECEIVER

Figure 16: Time Lag in Sense Making

The sense giving / sense making under discussion here is a hierarchical one. This finding was again evident in the third Case Study, which also demonstrated a time lag in sense making, firstly from leaders to team members:

'I think that is why on the first day of the workshop there was the sense that they were climbing Everest, and trying to make sense of what their task was. They needed to make sense

of the stuff that they weren't sure of, because they had only ever seen part of it before'.
(HR1CS3)

But then, it played out in reverse where the leaders needed to make sense of the conclusions their teams had come to, and to dialogue with them.

*'I think what the problem really, was; firstly, the preparation of the leadership team coming into the session, we had had no chance to switch onto the right frame of mind. The other guys had worked for two days to get to that point and we weren't ready. We didn't prepare for it at all. I can remember when we were walking across saying that we needed to be really attentive. Also when we were faced with it we had a lack of ability to deal with it. We didn't have the same thinking as to how we were reacting to it....In fact it didn't feel like an issue until after the issue had happened. It was as if we were prepared with left brain thought, but the right brain wasn't in the right place so we weren't prepared.' (*VP CS3)

A participant summed up what she thought had happened thus:

'In giving just headlines we lost a sense of the journey and we couldn't translate it into igniting questions, or couldn't make the link to them. It got lost in translation. We were so much into the working session that we didn't waste time getting to the right 'selling sentences'
(P4CS3)

The concept of 'time lag' appears to differ from that of the retrospective sense making described earlier. Whereas retrospective sense making talks about individuals making sense of their own thinking and experience, the notion of time lag seems more closely associated to work from the change literature whereby individuals have to take on board others experiences and meaning making.

Balogun & Hope-Hailey (2004) consider that:

'*Communication does not necessarily lead to the transfer of meaning, since it is the listener who creates meaning for themselves' (2004:169)*

and later that:

...' it is too easy to announce just the conclusions and not explain the thinking that has gone into the decision making process.' (p.181)

What appears to be happening here appears to be a form of the *Kobler-Ross* bereavement curve (1969), or the transition curve described in much change literature (Balogun & Hope-Hailey, 2004 p.142) which describes the stages of testing and acceptance as individuals move through change. Our communication is an expression of the experience we have had and doesn't necessarily transmit. When talking of change projects, Bridges (2003) notes that of people designing change projects:

'*Such people typically go through their transitions before they launch the changes, while they are still struggling with the problems and searching for solutions. By the time they are ready to announce the change, they have long since put their endings and their neutral zone behind*

> *them and they are now ready for a new beginning. But they forget that middle management is just entering the neutral zone.'* (p.65)

In many ways like singing a round of *Frère Jacques* where one group has finished their sentence before the next group has started theirs. By the time the final group has reached the end those at the start have moved onto something else.

> *'My talking is spread across time, competes for attention with other ongoing projects, and is reflected on after it is finished, which means my interest may have already changed'* (Weick, 1995, p.62)

The challenge for organisations is always that of time. In trying to be expedient conversations are short circuited, often to the snap shot headlines described by the participant above. Weick (1995) cites Bruner 1973, p.30)

> *'The cost of a close look is often too high under the conditions of speed, risk and limited capacity imposed upon organisms by their environments or their constitutions. The ability to use minimal cues quickly in categorising the events of the environment is what gives the lead time in adjusting to events. Pause and close inspection inevitably cut down on the precious interval for adjustment.* (1995 p.58)

What was being experienced in the workshops wasn't just the frustration of being left behind in an intellectual exercise, of not understanding the rational and logics of that had taken one group to their conclusion. Rather, it was the emotional journey they had also been on. In the third Case Study participants described their experiences in quite emotional language; using metaphors of the exhilaration of *climbing Everest*, of a sense of achieving a collective challenge, but then of quite a dramatic, '*fire met ice'*, when the senior group went in, as if all their energy just dissipated.

In both cases there was quite an observable gap, and in both cases it involved hierarchical sense giving. The question was why didn't it come to notice in the weighty data from the first Case Study? Was what was happening at a hierarchical level also present in peer to peer interfaces? Looking back over the data it became apparent that there was evidence of what might be construed as a peer to peer 'time lag'. But in fact it was more subtle, as firstly there were no huge gaps in understanding and secondly, it was being disguised by the tensions and constraints being argued over in the conversations. In particular those codes that covered local/ global tension (the use of data and power).

Re-examining and reflecting on the data and observations of Case Study 1 I came to two core conclusions. Firstly, that unlike the second and third Case Studies there had

been significant movement over time, the participants had been through a change journey, where the structural shifts in their organisation had occurred eighteen months to two years previously and they had established patterns of working.

Also, as a set up to the workshops they had pre- read information on the operating framework and received clarification, to some level of detail, around roles and responsibilities. Even through the VPs talked through the interfaces strategic priorities and projects at the workshop, none of this was 'new news' to the participants. That they might have interpreted it differently, or had issues with it, was a different issue. What they had already had time to do was their own process of labelling and bracketing.

'An important property of arousal is that it develops slowly. …. People try to construct some link between the present situation and 'relevant' prior situations to make sense of the arousal' (Weick, 1995, p.45)

Importantly, they had been able to acknowledge and reflect on their own emotions to what was happening. So that in the meeting they were both working live, to each others 'gestures and responses', whilst at the same time working from their own retrospective sense of the situation. By having had time to assimilate their thinking they were on an 'even footing' to have a conversation. The important insight here is that unlike the conversations described earlier, they didn't feel at a disadvantage in being able to join the conversation.

But did the concept of 'time lag' also applied at a peer to peer level, or was what was required was just good practice around balancing Advocacy and Inquiry as described in Appendix 23?

It was this notion of 'feeling at a disadvantage' that provided the clue as to where to look. Descriptions of feeling disadvantaged featured under concepts such as 'appropriate use of data', 'global/ local,' 'internal selling' and 'power'. Interestingly, linked to the earlier observations these concepts are areas where particular tensions had emerged during workshops. This appears to link to the inherent constraints within the system and the tensions between cooperation and competitiveness and power games, as referred to by those researching in complex responsive systems (Stacey & Griffin, 2005). In an early workshop in the first Case Study, this particularly played out around the issue of how data was being used as a weapon; a fear of being on the back foot vs their opposite numbers was resulting in each side doing more and more analysis prior to meetings, as a defence against one side being able present new data

and a potential interpretation, when the other hadn't had time to look at it. The concern was that they wouldn't have had time to get their 'heads around' whatever was being presented (and potentially being decided upon), thus leaving them at a disadvantage.

Whereas in the hierarchical situation the 'time lag' appeared inadvertent, at a peer level the examples felt more manipulative; a power game was being played out, albeit at times unconsciously and the 'time lag' was being used to one side's advantage. The data behind the concept of global / local also contained some indication that on occasions there was a time lag in understanding between two parties:

> *'We get into conflict when escalating tasks that others didn't design. It's when global tries to be local.' (VP6-CS1)*

But it was less substantial and there were other factors also at play such as a feeling of identities being undermined.

The peer to peer tension that did speak to the 'time lag' was that of internal selling. The need to 'sell everything to everyone' was a frustration expressed at many workshops by Brand Development colleagues and interpreted as either being resistant or parochial. Interestingly, their country colleagues felt as if something was being imposed on them that they hadn't engaged with. The level of internal selling was perceived to be dysfunctional by the participants to the point of paralysis, where at some interfaces it appeared that everything had to be proven time and again before the other would 'buy' it. As with the issues on global / local, to which this concept was linked, other factors such as power and identity appear to be being played out.

The data from the workshops indicates that, in order for there to be movement through conversations at an interface, particularly one involving hierarchies, adequate time and space has to be given for either sides sense making of the others sense giving.

There is something of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* both in this and the previous finding, that too much or too little sense giving can act as a constraint to working effectively across interfaces. The trick is to provide something that is 'just right'. Too little sense making as found in the second and third Case Studies meant that the conversations floundered, there was nothing to anchor the discussions and there were limited cues. Too much sense giving became a one way tell – the '*category ayatollahs'* of one participant in Case Study 1. Effective interface conversations were

dynamic, creating an on going and shifting dialogue that worked with a constant interaction between the parties but over and above each party adequately making explicit their context and assumptions. The evidence was that on occasions, where something was very new or complex or controversial, there did need to be a 'pause for thought'. This allowed for the other party to be able to adjust their thinking and go through their own transitions, so that both parties could contribute to the conversation. In some instances this was facilitated by time in the meeting; in others having pre-read helped; in others, just paying attention to the fact that not everybody had been on the same journey.

> *'The speed and progress of the journeys varies considerably, and is uneven with movement back and forth.' (Stuart, 1995 p.36)*

As a participant noticed:

> *'Sense-making is an internal process… it has to grow in people's heads, and that can take a while.'* (HRBP CS3)

6.8 FINDING 6

This research supports findings elsewhere that skills in dialogue & narrative are key enablers in the sense-making process.

This finding corroborates the findings of many researchers who comment on the power of dialogue as a means of resolving issues and moving groups forward.
It reflects on how dialogical techniques were used during the course of the case studies. It considers how the participants reacted to the approaches and the role they played in as enablers of the groups being able both to give and to make sense.
There are a number of seminal works in this area (Bohm, 1996, Isaacs, 1999, Senge 1990 and Argyris et al., 1991) and techniques described in their works were used during the case study workshops, to promote different ways for the groups to work with each other.
This finding is structured in two parts; the first describes how the techniques of 'Ladder of Inference', storytelling and dialogue were used in the workshops and the impact they had; the second part considers three questions raised by an initial reflection on the experiences. Firstly, how does dialogue help, what is it that distinguishes it from other types of conversations? Secondly, what are the challenges

for dialogue in time constrained environments and, finally, what is the impact of culture on dialogue and storytelling?

Narrative & Dialogue in the Workshops

All of the Case Studies included workshop sessions on perspectives, narratives and dialogue. The format varied slightly Case Study to Case Study to be appropriate to its context, but none were significantly different. They also all occurred in the same sequence.

Perspectives

Quite early in each of the workshops was an exercise on perspective. Its intent was to help participants appreciate that potentially they might look at the same thing in different ways. It used quite a simple exercise where half the group were given one picture and the other half, another. They then had to describe their half to the other. What they didn't realise was that they were all looking at different aspects of the same thing. The conversation was then expanded to consider where in their day to day work they might be considering things differently.

As the discussion was coming to a close the 'Ladder of Inference' was introduced. The Ladder of Inference is based on work by Argyris (1990) and expanded on in work by Senge (1994 p.198). It was used to help the group appreciate that their assumptions and the conclusions they were drawing might not be the only perspective on a situation. (See Appendix 23 for further details). There was a subsequent conversation once this had been presented. The 'Ladder' was also referred back to during the dialogue session. This seemingly simple exercise proved highly effective.

> *''The Ladder of Inference was fundamental! It followed the beach picture, and gave the opportunity to show different people see things in different ways and there is nothing wrong in the way they see them. Simple, quick energised. When concluded with the Ladder of Inference, their faces sort of went pale and 'can I have a copy of that' (HRBP6 CS1)*

The exercise surfaced a number of assumptions and triggered several conversations which were then developed on in the dialogue sessions. Memorable amongst these was the realisation by one team that although they had got their objectives aligned they were considering the metric that sat behind the delivery of the objective quite differently. This in turn was driving some of the confusion and tension at the interface. In many groups, it was the realisation that they had become caught up in

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quite a blinkered point of view that provided a pause for thought and a reflection on what another perspective might be.

> *'My learning and take out was the interpretation can be totally different, different ways of interpreting a message. We think we said one thing but the other side hear something different. I need to be sure they have heard my message as I intended, so the message is the same. We do things through our logic; we need to think about other ways of thinking to deliver the message in the most appropriate way'. (P7 CS1)*

In my shoes

These conversations led to the next session, which was to look at the different perspectives but expressed as 'In my Shoes' or 'Day in the Life' stories from each of the VPs. These proved some of the most emotionally powerful sessions of the workshop, challenging many group assumptions. These were then followed by individual 1:1 and table discussions about each others 'shoes'.

> *'We always think in our shoes, we don't think in their shoes.' (VP7-CS1)*

> *'Understanding the different frames of reference was really useful. It was very useful to walk in each others shoes, as you are still stuck in your frame of reference and have to go through a lot of filters' (P10 CS2)*

> *'I think (the VP's) personal stories were really good, it made people realise that we are all human beings. I think the personal sharing helped the whole workshop and it helped it be positive'. (P2 CS1)*

The 'In my shoes' or 'Day in the Life' exercises were both forms of storytelling. The use of storytelling can be seen as a form of inquiry which shifts the dynamic of the conversation.

> *'Stories can also change how experience is gathered. Instead of asking 'Tell me about…' which can lead to an explanatory account, one can ask, 'Tell me the story', which invites more expression'. (Reason and Hawkins, 1988, p.100)*

Story telling is suggested by Boje (1991 p.106) as the '*preferred sensemaking currency of human relationships'.* It is through the narratives told during the course of the event that the participants were able to make sense, both individually and collectively (Kleiner & Roth, 1997).

I have three observations around these exercises. Firstly, at a general level, they opened up realisations because they had been framed in a different way.

> *'The 'day in my life' was very good. It was also very good to realise that actually their priorities were aligned but that it didn't feel like it at a day to day level, because of the tensions. What also came out was the importance of the relationships and how they were impacting on the interface.' (HR1 CS1)*

Often there was a realisation that assumptions that had been held about the others work load or challenges in contrast to their own had been blinkered.

> *'In my shoes was very good because we never have chanced to share what we are facing each day. What are our agenda, our constraints, our issues and our wish for their help? This will help you realise that wow, his/her life is not that easy neither. It helps to appreciate each others constraints and then ask the question how we help. It's not easy to think quickly, it takes longer to think in (the others) shoes about what I would do'. (VP7 CS1)*

My second observation was both the power and the vulnerability of the VPs stories

> *'It's about openness form the VP side, some emotionally touching, others more generic.'* (HR5 CS1)

But there is a level of risk for the VPs (and indeed others) in describing their challenges.

> *'It disarms people a bit. I think especially with your senior leadership, to see the human side, they take on a larger than life image, all work and struggles and challenges. We all have passions as people we are not so different'. (VP1 CS1)*

Through their personal disclosures the VPs lay themselves open to being vulnerable; they were exposing their own insecurities and potentially limitations. These sessions were run in all geographies, and in some eg China, there was less familiarity or expectation that their leaders would expose this side of themselves. But in all cases they were received very positively.

> *'(The VP's session) was very good because people understand their bosses as human beings. They can trust their bosses and feel closer to them'. (HR3 CS1)*

Sims (2003) considers this issue and reflects that:

> *'Good stories take risks, for example, by taking the listener further than they were expecting to go. They are a complicated balance between the excessively confessional and the over-distant, between the boring and the incredible, between the blandly inoffensive and the embarrassing. They are vulnerable to sabotage'. (p.1200)*

The third observation was the way in which the 1:1storytelling helped individuals understand each other in a way that reduced 'judgement' and left them more open to each other. Having talked about what it was like in their own shoes, in many of the workshops we then ran an exercise, whereby each party could contract with each other as to what it was they could do, in order to work better with each other. This feedback was framed as a wish rather than a criticism and respected the fact that each was coming from a different preferences, styles, perspectives and challenges. These conversations were less about what was the 'right thing to do,' rather what is the most helpful thing in that situation to help them work together.

<u>Dialogues</u>

In many ways the above exercises were a way of preparing participants for the dialogue sessions described in Section 4.

The dialogue sessions were designed to put the difficult conversations on the table.

> *'The content to be discussed was the content that really mattered.' (HR6-CS1)*

Time was spent with the VPs and HRBPs in crafting the questions so that as far as possible the discussions really resonated with the participants.

> '*The questions are important; they need to be- what is the question we need to ask here, not platitudes.' (VP1-CS1)*

In all three Case Studies dialogues were at the heart of the workshops and from a practice perspective were what made the difference to the interventions.

> *'What made it were the conversations, real power was in the dialogues'. (VP2-CS1)*

> *'All the breakouts have a very big conversation. They were really discussing, not just discussing to finish a list of activities for a workshop. They were really there' (HR3-CS1)*

Feedback from the participants clearly reflected that the dialogues had been useful but what was it that differentiated these conversations and made them more powerful? What is dialogue and how does it differentiate from other conversations?

Our day to day organisational lives are conducted through a series of conversations; so what is it that differentiates dialogue from any other conversation?

<u>What is dialogue?</u>

The quote below makes a useful start point in understanding why in the context of this research the dialogues proved so powerful:

> *'We understand dialogue as conversations that deliberately pursue deeper levels of shared sense-making around difficult issues (Isaacs, 1999). 'By deeper we are referring to something like Argyris's 1990 ladder of inference.'(Palus et al., 2003)*

There appear to be two key aspects to this; firstly they are important conversations about difficult issues;

> *'What makes a difference is the honest conversations about what it is we need from the other side shared publicly and openly about <u>what it is that we are challenged by</u>.' (VP1-CS1)*

The topics under discussion weren't everyday topics, but were issues or situations. These presented real dilemmas to the group, where there were no obvious approaches. The crafting of the questions was really important; it was pin pointing what the challenge or dilemma was. Too vague and meandering when limited by time constraints and the discussion wouldn't really come to a conclusion; too precise a

question that didn't really resonate with the whole group, e.g. a specific issue in the pilot of the first Case Study, and the group were disengaged. It also needed to be a question that the group didn't feel already had an answer to it that the VPs weren't sharing; almost a going through the motions.

Secondly, working through them requires going deeper. Getting to that depth required a level of transparency and vulnerability.

> *'They were working together really understanding the issues, and coming out with quite creative solutions.' (HR3-CS1)*

> *- 'What I see is it is more about whether we are brave enough to be more transparent to each other and share the concerns and difficulties. First it is about being brave enough to open ourselves and then about sharing the information with the other party. Then both sides can achieve the mutual understanding.' (P7-CS1)*

The bravery described above is both about opening up, but also about that most difficult of things, not defending. We rely on our ability to defend in order to protect ourselves (Raelin 2002), so that in conversations it becomes almost a reflex. Isaacs (1993) describes dialogue as a process for transforming the quality of conversations, but notices that:

> '*Unfortunately, most forms of organizational conversation, particularly around tough complex, or challenging issues lapse into debate (the root of which means 'to beat down'). In debate, one side wins and another loses; both parties maintain their certainties, and both suppress deeper inquiry' (Isaacs, 1993, p.24).*

To leave oneself open to attack takes courage because you are breaking the patterning of defend/ attack; potentially to your own disadvantage.

Typically the conversations described by the groups going into the first Case Study might be characterised by debate, as opposed to dialogue; whereby the focus was on winning the opposition over to 'my' point of view, as opposed to dialogue which looks at understanding and working with the different perspectives. The focus therefore tended to be to defend ones own stance and try to close down views at variance from their own, rather than amplifying them.

> *'Not brave enough to say our doubts so we end up defending'(W/S7)*

So, for example, take the need for 'mutual ambition' described earlier. In theory there were 'locking plans', which should provide the joint agreement, but in many instances these weren't working. Why? Because sometimes the groups come to a conclusion prematurely - so priorities, tasks and delivery criteria were confused, or because the

group didn't check assumptions they ended up with different interpretations of the same thing e.g. different metrics of success.

An alternative approach to dialogue or debate was observed in some conversations, where issues were avoided or skirted around.

> *'The expectation was that we think we work well with the French, but that was superficial and we avoid real debates for the sake of looking ok'. (VP6-CS1)*

There appears to be a form of consensus, where compromises are made but;

> *'While consensus approaches may create some measure of agreement, they do not alter the fundamental patterns that led people to disagree at the outset.' (Isaacs, 1993, p.26)*

What a dialogue encouraged was an increased breadth and depth to conversations; so in breadth terms it considered what happened, not just from 'your' perspective but also the other sides and to go deeper beyond the apparent 'facts' of the situation to the feelings and identity. It did not avoid conflict, rather it held with the tensions in the room, but nor was it paralysed by the tension.

Dialogue helps reframe and deal with paradox

Whereas debate might be of value in an either / or conversation, dialogue is of particular value when the situation is complex and there is no obvious choice to be made. Kahane (2004) describes his use of dialogue with some of the dilemmas and paradoxes which needed to be worked through as apartheid in South Africa came to resolution. What was described was the criticality of being able to be open to the position of others, and to take the conversation beyond the binary solutions from either side. What dialogues enable are: '*new agreements about how people will work together to achieve something new.' (*Mohrman, 2007, p.1)

By balancing both advocacy and inquiry (Senge, 1990), that is by making explicit what your point of view is and the assumptions behind it, whilst actively listening to the others perspective and trying to understand why, individuals and groups are better placed to make sense of an equivocal situation (Boje, 1991). They can then deal with ambiguity and paradoxes. It is by suspending the 'either /or notion' of resolution and by understanding both perspectives that different solutions emerge (Trompenaars, 2007). Often groups can get stuck in a rut of the same arguments; there can be a 'mindlessness' as described by Weick & Sutcliffe (2006, p.517) where there are mental grooves or habits which lead to recurring thinking, restricted viewpoints and

instinctive dislikes. The antecedents and consequences of different framing activities are considered by Fiss & Zajac (2006, p.1175) who suggest two frames: those of acquiescence where there is obedient to norms and institutional processes (compliance) and balancing which accommodates the divergent interests of different constituents. It is the latter which is of interest at interfaces, with their multiplicity of viewpoints. By using a narrative approach it:

> *'...help*(s) *provide unexpected clues which may trigger new ways of thinking and thus initiate fresh courses of action'. (Tsoukas, 2005, p.83)*

Stories helped reframe situations (Watzlawick et al., 1974), so that new questions can be asked and old judgements suspended (Bohm, 1996). One noticeable 'reframe' was during a conversation in the second Case Study.

> *'I don't think anyone changed their end goal, but they changed the way they positioned things... The main concerns with the team going in was that they didn't like the structure, and in the end the structure didn't change; but what we did was to change the parameters about what we could change and what we couldn't and then focused attention on what we would change, that was currently sucking up resource.'* (P6 CS2)

Another conversation described a tension between travel restrictions and the need to be 'in market':

> *'What was good was were they were speaking about how hard it was to travel in all the markets, and that they couldn't go to all market... but looking at a way they could reach an understanding'. (HR2 CS1)*

What appeared to help the groups get to a position where they could discuss difficult issues, was a combination of dialogue (balancing advocacy and inquiry) but through a degree of storytelling.

> *'A good storyteller describes what it is like to deal with ...opposing forces, calling on the protagonist to dig deeper'... (McKee, 2003, p.52)*

But other than in the 'In my shoes' exercise, if any of the participants had been asked if they were storytelling in their discussion, I doubt they would have recognised it as such; storytelling doesn't need to be obvious, it can still feel like a 'business conversation'. The shift was the difference between an explanation and an expression.

Dialogue moves from explanation to expression

This shift is an interesting one: Reason & Hawkins (1988, p.83) consider them not as competing modes but as *'poles of dialectic'.* But it appears that a conversation dominated by explanation, even where that explanation is in the service of positive advocacy in helping the other understand, curtails to some degree or other; whereas

expression appears to help 'liberate' a conversation (e.g. Whyte, 1994). McKee cited above uses the phrase '*what is it like to deal with.*' A participant talked of '*share what we are facing each day*'. *(VP7 CS1)* These invite expressions which broaden rather than narrow, a response and in that way open up new possibilities.

Rouleau (2005 p.1433) suggests three orders of explanation – 1st, 2nd, 3rd order sense giving and making. My interest here is in the difference between the first and second order, which shifts between facts and stories, (Table 23). Indeed it is her 'second order explanation', which in fact appears a type of expression.

	First order explanation	*Second-order explanation*	*Third-order explanation*
Strategic sensemaking and sensegiving	Phases of change	Patterns of interpretation	Set of micro-practices
Unit of analysis	Facts	Narratives, stories, discourses	Routines, conversations
Process	Evolutive	Iterative, sequential	Co-present, mundane, practical
Context	Strategic plan	Strategic rules	Strategic and social rules
Individual	Top Managers	Top managers in relation with internal and external stakeholders	Managers (top middle low) in relation with internal and external agents

Table 23: Three orders of explanation of strategic sensemaking and sensegiving - Rouleau (2005)

Rouleau's Case Study is of a strategic change in a top-of-the-line clothing company. Whereas her first order explanation deals in objective facts and events around the fashion collections, her second order provides a deeper comprehension and is achieved by sense givers weaving their tacit knowledge of the context, through narrative.

> '*Each story presented a plausible and credible explanation in the light of the tacit knowledge managers had from previous relations with their interlocutors*' (Rouleau, 2005, p.1425).

Third order is how this is continued in daily routines and conversations.

In considering conversations from the three Case Studies against this table, those that appeared most static were those that stayed in the realms of first order explanation, (such as the second workshop in the second Case Study or parts of the third case study); whereas some of the dialogue sessions in the first case might be classified as second order explanation. What didn't come out in the workshop conversations were references to Rouleau's third level. However, this appears to link to the peer to peer sense making findings described earlier; where the routine patterns of the conversation flows between the interface (or lack of them) to facilitate an on-going 'story'.

'*Sensemaking and sensegiving are more than just clear patterns constructed by top managers. They are in a permanent flux and constantly being reconstituted in daily experiences of agents.' (Rouleau, 2005, p.1437)*

Dialogue gives energy and allows movement

Isaacs (1993, p.25) defines dialogue from the Greek as a 'flowing through'- it is about movement. Both Quinn & Dutton (2005) and Lichtenstein (1997) reflect on the notion of energy in conversations; where there is a '*freeing up that allows something else to happen'* (Lichtenstein, 1997 p.403).

The start point for this thesis was the movement from 'stuckness' to action. There is a sense that through dialogue a form of energy is created; the feeling that '… *one is eager to act and capable of acting'* (Quinn & Dutton, 2005 p.36).

The sense of movement appears relevant both to complexity thinkers and to practitioners of Action Learning. With the former, there is particular interest in the pattern of the conversation which can either perpetuate the existing state or generate something new. By noticing and amplifying differences and holding with the inherent tensions between parties there is the possibility of something new being created, as opposed to compromising or defusing differences. However their interest is in the interaction itself, as a movement rather than to a pre defined goal.

> '*Trust emergence, have no goals –The universe of possibilities is not limited by a preconfigured agenda. There is no goal but to rest in the moment from which might ensue an emotional or spiritual release or an intellectual breakthrough. These are natural results, not goals.' (Raelin, 100, p.:72, citing Krammer, 1998)*

With the latter practice however, the interest is in the iterative cycles of reflection and experimental action, that is the movement to 'something'. In both cases the conversation holds with and explores different perspectives; but of particular interest is how the energy is created through different types not just of narrative, but also through the philosophical underpinnings; which can affect the intention and direction of action.

The workshops were developed with a specific question in mind – how do we work better together across the interfaces? The expectation was that there would be an output in terms of suggestions, actions or understandings which would answer this question. What those particular solutions might be was not prescribed; however, there was a directional intent through the design of the intervention. In organisations where

there is a profit or service outcome, it seems difficult to envision conversations without a directional focus. My experience through the Case Studies was that both existed and existed to good effect. The core conversations in the workshops had a focus towards some kind of action; interestingly, rather to the notion of formal and informal conversations (Shaw, 2002), there were examples both during the breaks in the workshops and post the workshops, where individuals or small groups had time to reflect and then expanded on the conversations they had had -not because of any agenda, but from a curiosity as to what was happening; which in itself created movement.

There were occasions in some workshop dialogues where distinctions were blurred. There was a goal to the session, but the conversations were truly emergent and there was a natural movement.

> *'The trigger in the dialogues was that they noticed that they all colluded with allowing the issue of how long and convoluted it was to make a decision. It was something they all agreed on – a statement. Then without making judgement or blaming or questioning why, they moved on to how it could be.' (W/S6)*

The findings from this first question concur with many authors on the central use of dialogue as a tool in addressing challenges. Techniques such as the balancing of advocacy and inquiry (Isaacs, 1999) and the use of the 'Ladder of Inference' (Argyris, 1990), combined with those of narrative and story-telling (Hardy et al., 1998, Grant et al., 1998), can be used as a means to free participants from their usual constraints and thus enable them to reframe their situation. For in order to move forward and resolve difficult issues, it is necessary to be able to construct a deeper level of meaning between members. Dialogue is seen as a means, but it is also recognised that dialogue can be difficult in the pace of a day to day conversation (Palus & Drath, 2001).

What are the challenges for dialogue in time constrained environments?
From the descriptions above dialogue appears as a means towards transformational conversations. But there appears a bit of a paradox here, for although dialogue appears to enable movement, it seems to do so by slowing the conversation down; it is the type of conversation that requires time to listen and understand the multiple perspectives. Dialogues which ultimately helped the resolution of apartheid took years to come to conclusion. In the time poor environments of today's business world, sessions such as the one described in the workshops are a luxury. Many participants

commented that just having the time to talk to each other was a big part of their success. There is a link back to the earlier finding around time lags. People need space to process what is going on, to make sense of it for them; additionally, through dialogue, they also need to be able to make sense of something with others.

> *'Having time to process is really important with me. When T, N and I sat at a table and reacted to Cs' RACI – we went through line by line and even then we didn't finish. N and I had looked at it in advance. We then went through the exercise again in the larger group, but the nice thing was we could all support each other'. (P9 CS2)*

Reflective practice is thinking about our thinking (Raelin, 2002, Schön, 1983), it's about going deeper, probing and testing. It can be time consuming; the particular exercise described by the participant above took over two and a half hours, well over what had been anticipated. But in spending this time, all of the participants then had a mutual clarity on the issues and were much better equipped for their subsequent meeting with the broader community; this appeared ultimately to have saved time in the overall process and provided a better result. Whereas *'on some of the topics they were going into (the workshop) where they hadn't fully worked through things themselves (VP1 CS2)*

Instead the group (and me, as the facilitator) fell back on their standard responses and practices; short circuiting any real conversation in a desire to get to a solution (any solution) in time. The latter situation appears to exemplify what Raelin (2002, p.67) describes as a typical problem solving pattern of: 'problem, solution data base, stop'. He advocates the need to inquire even in the heat of the moment. Here lies the reality of our challenge in organisational practice; we don't have an unlimited supply of 'two and a half hours', but equally we shouldn't be satisfied with knee jerk 'solution data base' resolutions. How do we facilitate the 'win- win' that provides adequate pause for thought 'in the moment'? It is this which stops us hurtling into standard responses and yet at the same time doesn't paralyse us in inaction, instead allowing us to 'get on with the business'. How do we reframe what we do, so that reflection isn't separate from, but rather is part of action?

Interestingly, there is a leadership behaviour in the organisation within which this research is based, labelled 'action not debate'. It was defined in response to the observation that as quite an 'intellectual' organisation, a huge amount of time was spent deliberating on what could be quite philosophical debates. But this behaviour

does not always serve well. At times, it is being used as an excuse to close down appropriate conversation, because the other side feels challenged or does not have a factual argument available. Again, rather than speed things up this actually slows things down ('mooses' haven't been allowed on the table) and consequently the conversation closes without any meaningful agreement (and indeed true intent to act).

I don't believe there are any 'silver bullets' to the questions posed above. For me it is about two things: awareness and choices. Awareness at multiple levels - within oneself as to the clarity of our own assumptions; awareness of others, their perspectives and an awareness, in process terms as to how we are moving through a conversation and the consequences of that. We need to be mindful that in difficult or ambiguous conversations, *it's not easy to think quickly, it takes longer to think in (the others) shoes about what I would do. (VP7 CS1)*

Then there are choices. It is about being able to identify those ambiguous conversations; for not every conversation needs to make explicit all its assumptions, or treat the views of all with equal weight. The challenge is spotting the conversations which can most benefit from slowing down and in having the courage to do so.

<u>What is the impact of culture on dialogue and storytelling?</u>

The Case Studies were conducted globally, in four continents involving dozens of nationalities, (one workshop alone had sixteen nationalities present). In another, I established that English was the participant's fourth language. So does culture (and its associated language differences) have an impact on the use of dialogue and story telling? Does it work differently in different places?

The focus of the workshops was in the 'here and now' of the interaction; rather than any causal analysis as to how the situation had arisen. But as Tsoukas (2005, p.83) observes, the situation might be likened to the reverse of a black box; for nobody knows the participants past experience, no actor possesses all the local knowledge, subsequently nobody knows which part of individual experience and local knowledge will be connected with incoming narratives.

How did these multiple backgrounds impact on the conversations? Is there an overarching corporate culture which 'trumps' the local culture (Tromperaars & Wooliams, 2003)? Do local cultures still dominate or does leadership drive the conversations?

'*A problem with heroic perspectives is that although they see cultures as dynamic, they tend to assume change will be in a unified direction driven by the leader's vision. It is supposed that the actions and words of leaders will have an impact on the attitudes and actions of followers in an unproblematic fashion. This ignores the dynamic tension between the espoused culture and the experiences of the group members (Hawkins 1997) and militates against seeing organizational cultures as diverse.*' (Beech 2000, p.212)

I will firstly consider the techniques of dialogue and narrative within the cultural settings and then secondly, address the impact of working in different languages.

As an overarching observation (and as evidenced by some of the quotes used earlier), participants at all the workshops in all locations commented positively on the use and the power of dialogues as a means of helping the interface work better together. What I am curious to explore, is whether there were any differences in what it was that resonated or made a particular impact geography to geography.

Because in any workshop there were several cultural backgrounds, it is inappropriate to suggest more than an indication as to where differences might lie and this in itself might be an area for future research. My observations were as follows:

There appeared to be universal appreciation of the role of dialogue in making explicit assumptions. In Far Eastern workshops there was a weighing of comments around the openness of the leaders and the impact this had. As one VP put it, '*It disarms people a bit.*' That a leader shows vulnerability and is open about their challenges appears to be unusual. The comments that it made them appear more human seem to be positive; there were unprompted references to this, but these were also tempered by some scepticism as to their authenticity.

> '*They tried very hard to be a role model. I'm not sure if it was authentic or not*' (P2 CS1)

Interestingly although there appear to be poplar assumptions that Far Eastern cultures are reticent to criticise their bosses, this wasn't the evidence observed in either the workshop breakout or the subsequent interviews; Bird and Olsen (2005) highlight that there are sub personalities in any culture. In Latin America, what appeared to be appreciated by the dialogues was the energy they released. As a population (within the organisation), there is a level of pragmatism noticed about the region and this appeared to be played out here. A similar pragmatism was also noticed in Africa.

> '*The questions helped the dialogue because they didn't have a double meaning (very straight forward / open). The content to be discussed was the content that really mattered*'. (HR6 CS1)

In Europe the contribution of dialogue appeared to be that it facilitated greater honesty; '*you will gain more of our trust if you are more honest'. (WS8CS1)* This finding would suggest that cultural differences or leadership influence does not inhibit the power of dialogue as a technique in conducting meaningful conversations. It appears to be universally applicable; however it does indicate that different cultures appreciate different outcomes from it.

The impact of language

The second part of the question which considers the impact of language has also proved interesting. This is in terms the existence of a 'corporate' language; perceptions of 'speaking the same language', and of working in first second and third languages and how that has impacted understanding.

In their paper Welch et al. considers how multi-national managers deal with language diversity issues. They question whether a common company language facilitates information exchanges.

> *'The positive and negative effects of language are not overt and obvious. Negative effects, such as distortions, blockages, and filtration, have long been recognised by cross cultural communications researchers, but there has been limited extension of these aspects into the international management field. More importantly, for cross-border information sharing and knowledge transfer, especially tacit knowledge, to be effective, communication integrity is vital. (p.11)*

There was evidence of a strong corporate language being used throughout the workshops. As an insider, sometimes it was difficult to realise how strong this was, but reading through the transcripts of interviews or the pre- workshop diagnostics it is noticeable how many acronyms are used- in fact whole sentences were constructed from them. It is a language which is very inhibiting for outsiders; however it is one that links the internal organisation and indeed was common to both sides of the interface. But although it connected them, the terms were bandied about as shorthand and in many instances what sat behind the acronym had different interpretations individual to individual. The coding wasn't unravelled and so misunderstandings were perpetuated. An example of this was a particular process, which was full of codes and indeed itself was an acronym. People assumed they understood what terms meant, but only when they started to unpick the words they were using did they realise the range of interpretations that sat behind them. Groups appear to be lulled into a false sense of

security, with corporate language assuming a common understanding. However, as time moves on, it is the words -not the meaning beneath- which is common.

But what does talking the same language mean? There was a moment in one workshop, which had a history of difference between the two VPs, where it was observed that:

> *'All the team realised that (the VPs) were both talking the same language and were serious about this'. (HR CS1)*

In this specific case what was meant was that the two VPs had been able to reconcile their differences and take the conversation to a level that transcended these. In effect, as described in Finding 1, they had articulated a mutual ambition. As is advocated by some of the 'dialogue thinkers' (Bohm, 1996, Isaacs, 1999), they were thinking together.

The final consideration is that despite a corporate language and despite the use of English as the business language; in many cases participants were working not just in their second, but often third or fourth language. This does appear to have a difference on how individuals are able to engage in the conversation.

> *'The use of Portuguese made a positive difference; higher engagement. There were a couple of people who were very active in the workshop; we would have lost them if it had been in English.' (VP2 CS1)*

In several workshops some of the breakouts were conducted in the local language. Quite pragmatically, the thinking was that where somebody had to translate and contribute to a conversation, they would be disadvantaged. This would be exacerbated where people were translating in an emotional, as opposed to a business, language. The chances of distortion of meaning - such as an expression of a provocative '*evil challenging'* by one participant -were heightened in a second language. What the participant was trying to express was a sense of manipulative challenge; although maybe the blunt words were 'right first time'!

> *'It is the way words are used within the dynamic ensemble of social relations that determines meaning.' (*Montomi & Purser, 1999, p.138)

And it is the way that words are used in second language situations that appear to add challenge. The benefit of techniques, such as the 'Ladder of Inference' is that they slow the process down. By spending time, though dialogue and examining what words were used and what was really meant by them, in participants own languages where relevant, or where English was being used as a second language helped

individuals get closer to what each had intended rather than words sometimes being thrown out indiscriminately.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this finding concurs with many previous researchers on the power of dialogue and its associated techniques in organisational practice. In particular at the interface, by slowing conversations down and exploring the different perspectives from each side, the group was helped to make sense of their context and objectives in a way which enabled them to move forward. However, it also highlighted the on going challenge of conducting dialogues in a time poor environment. Finally (although limited and potentially a topic for future research), it provided some understanding of the use of dialogue across geographical boundaries; indicating its value and applicability irrespective of culture.

6.9 Summary of Findings

In conclusion, this research suggests the following: Firstly that although interface effectiveness shares similar components to team effectiveness, there is a slightly different emphasis to them; in particular, the establishment of a mutual ambition, aligned priorities and a clarity of roles and responsibilities, which can be expressed as a framework for considering interface effectiveness. Such a framework can help guide facilitators though the key issues at an interface, drawing attention to areas of potential tensions. The framework can also be used to create a diagnostic to inform how a specific interface might be working. Although interface effectiveness might be seen as a variant of team effectiveness, by turning the focus of attention from the more outwardly focused capabilities of boundary spanning, to the more internally focused ways of working at an interface, an additional set of capabilities (such as the creation of a mutual ambition), come to the fore.

The research also highlights the criticality of sense giving and sense making, as a vehicle in enabling effective conversations around each of these key elements, as well as indicating trigger points where sense making is particularly relevant. Although this is more often thought of in hierarchical terms, the research highlights a more subtle patterning of peer to peer sense making. In either instance, it demonstrates a 'time lag' in sense making and the need for adequate time to be given for either side to 'make sense'. Finally, it reinforces findings elsewhere of the benefits of dialogue in enabling effective conversations across interfaces.

7. Reflections on and in Practice

This section is both a reflection on action and also reflections on my *reflection-in-action* (Schön, 1983). I consider my experiences of the case studies and the interplay of the emotional, relational and political dynamics that impacted on both the workshops and my practice. This thesis is not research into my practice per se, but the two cannot be detached; consistent with the sentiments of Action Research, the research will have had an impact on me - and me on the research. In the first part of this section, I reflect on the workshops action- in- practice and my own practice- in-action. The second part then considers the impact and implications of the research along with its findings on the organisation.

In many ways this is the narrative of my own sense making journey. Initially I positioned it as a finding because I felt that for a DBA, insight into my own practice was indeed a finding. I tried in an early draft to express my reflections on practice as part of the overall text, however, the result was messy (maybe a parallel to the research itself) which in terms of sense giving felt that it hindered, rather than helped, the reader. Here I have separated it out to give it its own focus.

I have considered this reflection in two parts: The first is further divided into three and refers back to the levels of research described in Figure 7. This highlighted three levels of learning: the activity of the participants themselves, as they addressed how they might improve the quality of their interfaces; my reflections on my practice as a facilitator in the workshops and my role as a researcher and how through those interactions were both influenced by, and influenced outcomes. In some ways this parallels Marshalls' for them, for us, for me (Reason and Marshall, 2006, p.315) described earlier in the methodology section. There also appear to be links with a trilogy of practices described by Pedler et al. (2004) as 'my practice, our practice, their practice'.

As I write, I am interested as to why I am separating these three elements out when they appear so interconnected and indeed why I have felt it necessary to position my practice as a finding, as opposed to interweaving it with the overall text. Both I think, link to my own sense giving and sense making processes. To the former point I found that by framing it from one perspective at a time, it was easier to reflect deeper. The challenge was to ensure that an impression of the whole, not just the parts, was considered.

The second part of this section looks at the impact of this research on the organisation. This is both in terms of the workshops themselves (as an intervention in helping the specific teams work together across internal interfaces), but also how the learning from the research itself has been of relevance.

7.1 Reflections on the Participants' Activity

Here, I reflect on what I noticed in terms of how the participants reacted as they worked through their experiences at their interface and came up with suggestions as to what they might do to work better together.

The start point for most of the workshops was a phenomenon of 'stuckness'. Maybe some reflections on how this 'stuckness' manifest itself in the workshops would be a useful beginning. Particularly in the early workshops the teams were still working through the consequences of changes that had been made as part of an organisation restructuring. What appeared to be happening at several of the interfaces was that, despite roles having been defined, individuals and indeed whole teams were holding onto previous responsibilities and were getting bogged down by sometimes impossible workloads. Indeed, the 'stuckness' was amplified by the confusion that the duplication of activities resulted in. The second observation was that, because the teams struggled to make priorities and, importantly, to follow through with the consequences of those choices, they ended up in a vicious cycle of doing more and more and trying harder and harder.

Sitting at the heart of all the workshops were sets of assumptions lying between members. Assumptions about what was right or wrong often bound the groups in the way they were acting with each other, which 'cemented' their position, reinforcing their experience of being stuck. Somewhere in the process of the 'In my shoes' exercises there frequently seemed to be a 'loosening up' of conclusions people had already drawn about each other.

> *'Mistrust and making assumptions, it might be a different viewpoint that you are not buying into… is it because you don't understand?' (HRBP 6)*

The dialogue sessions went further in trying to get beneath the assumptions, but laying them out was often an uncomfortable process because it left the individuals vulnerable.

There were times (e.g. workshops three and four in the first Case Study) where it felt as if the group or individual were more comfortable with the status quo and maintaining the assumptions they were making, rather than trying to shift them; where it was easier to work with or around a difficult situation rather than confront issues.

> *'Attachment is not only about the continuity of the structure of meaning within an individual, but also involves ways in which the current order and the routines that support it, are reinforced by the ontological security it provides both individuals and groups.'(Vince & Broussine, 1996)*

There were ramifications in acknowledging the other perspective was valid, with well constructed rationale around a way of working crumbling. There was a breakout conversation in an Asian workshop, where an individual had constructed maybe a third of her workload on the assumption that her counterpart was unable to effectively analyse key data.

Language also appeared to be bound up in assumptions. Particularly, because people were working with first, second and even third or fourth languages, phrases weren't always interpreted in the same way. Words have a different emphasis. An abruptly articulated observation might be heard provocatively, equally there were occasions where what was being said was couched so obliquely that the meaning was hard to surface. This would have been very easy to pass over.

Interestingly, I noticed I took more care in my own language in predominantly non-English dominated workshops and yet it was often in English based workshops where my own language got in the way. Sometimes we short-hand our explanations and assume that the other will understand. Or maybe the clumsiness is sometimes because we haven't quite made sense of something ourselves, so we hope the others will from our DIY kit of words. We assume a vague appropriation will do and people are too polite, or awkward, to ask for clarification.

The use of breakouts for dialogues appeared to work well for a number of reasons. Firstly, splitting the groups up helped to ensure all voices were heard. This was particularly important where people were having to use a second language and might have been reluctant to speak in plenary. It also provided the opportunity for some breakouts to be conducted in the first language, e.g. Portuguese or Japanese.

'It made a positive difference, higher engagement. There were a couple of people who were very active in the workshop; we would have lost them if it had been in English' (VP2 CS1)

Because the dialogues were facilitated attention was drawn to assumptions and answers were probed. This felt 'safer/ less exposed' than had the participants been in the larger group.

There were some dialogues that stand out as memorable, not for a major resolution, but for a tiny shift in perspective that made a difference and enabled the group to reframe. There was a realisation in one workshop that the group didn't need to prove the solution was right; rather that trust would be built by sharing concerns, as much as providing the perfect solution.

> *'You will gain more of our trust if you are more honest.' (P5-CS1)*

In another, was the realisation that headlines do not provide the story, along with a realisation from both sides that they might have been distilling things too much in an attempt to be expedient.

A positive feature of several of the workshops was that there were answers; often small differences that lay within the group. Rarely did a group come away with a long list of actions - or *inaction lists* (Block, 2000) - which would just sit in the minutes somewhere and were dependent on others doing something differently. Instead they came up with one or two experiments, such as the creation of a monthly surgery at one interface that both VPs committed to. Six months later this was still up and running.

These actions came through conversations and in many ways the conversations were action (Taylor & Robichaud, 2004); but they were conversations with a purpose. Shaw (2002) describes instances where just by having the conversation something shifts. Experience in these workshops would concur with that to a degree. Some of the pre-conversations, described earlier, provided huge benefit just by focusing attention onto a specific topic. But what became apparent as the workshops progressed was the criticality of how questions were framed going into dialogues so that they resonated with the group and, secondly, that the conversations were facilitated and given a direction, not just left to wallow in a situation. This isn't about prescription; the questions were co-created with the group. Nor is it about finding a specific outcome, but it was about having a rigour to how the dialogues were conducted and will be described further, in relation to my own practice.

To end this part, I would like to reflect on the actions that the groups decided to work with in order to move themselves forward. They predominantly focused around three core themes. The first were those that involved some sort of communications or

decision making process (e.g. the surgery described above). The next involved those around building trust. This was far less about actions and more about a mindset. Where there were specific actions these tended to be around activities that would help relationship building such as lunches together when in location; making a concerted effort to have telephone conversations to catch up, rather than just when things went wrong. The mindset 'actions' were more about a way that the teams wanted to be, such as giving each other permission to call unhelpful activities.

The final theme was around prioritisation, which was a key issue in the first case study and was taken up outside the groups, resulting in a corporate action.

In all instances what appeared to make the difference was less about the agreed actions and far more about making the situation explicit.

7.2 Reflections on Practice as a Facilitator

As a practitioner, my perspective starts from my practice: 'What am I doing? What is the impact? What could I do differently? Where is my anxiety? What is my own sense making on what is happening?

<u>My Sense Making as a Facilitator</u>

As a facilitator, I am constantly looking out for what is happening in the group; the patterns and dynamics that are occurring and at the same time trying to notice how I am responding to them - the sense I am making. A tension described by Shaw (2002) and Critchley (1997) is of that between the informal and formal parts of the organisation and between formal and informal conversations. In the process of their research, much data was collected through these small spontaneous interactions. As Appendix 8 shows, in addition to the formal research conversations there were numerous small conversations with a whole array of people before each workshop. These, sometimes gossipy, conversations were also part of my own sense making of what was happening. Often because they were snatched phone calls or coffee machine conversations they weren't formally recorded, rather they left an impression or a point to ponder about the interface. It was often in these conversations rather than the workshops themselves that the emotions and the politics were played out to me. As Vince (2008) observes in his paper on learning action and inaction, the:

'Continuous process of coping with the internal conflicts and contradictions integral to organizational roles – roles that are often redefined through the creativity and frustration of interaction with others.'(p.15)

The 'Frustration of Interaction'

That *'frustration of interaction'* was played out in a myriad of conversations. Conversations with VPs varied in terms of how much positioning or politics they brought in. As a listener, I reflected as to how much I colluded or encouraged political disclosures, or where I tried to avoid particularly difficult conversations. In approximately a third of all interfaces there was a specific issue between the two VPs involved. Because I was seen as 'independent', as part of the intervention I would spend time working with the VPs on their relationship. I reflect again on the notion of 'stuckness'. There appears to be an inherent tension in interaction be it in a relationship or in a complex system. What I seemed to be experiencing in these situations was a 'double whammy' of the frustrations of interactions at a relational interface, exacerbated by those of the organisational interfaces. As a facilitator in all of this, there is yet another overlay of interaction; I am curious as to the part my choices, in whether or not to engage in certain conversations, increased or defused the frustration.

My own 'Stuckness' and Movement

Maybe my most relevant questions as a practitioner are; where am I coming from on this? Why does this matter to me? It is these that will be influencing all that I am making sense of going forward. At a very sweeping level the interfaces interventions were all in the service of changing something; of movement into action.

I described the phenomena of being 'stuck' earlier in this thesis. I wonder whether there is a parallel process; that maybe I have a dislike of being stuck, or of not having an answer and how this impacts my practice. What were the patterns of my own facilitative behaviour and the consequences of those? Reflecting back on my Competency Development Plan in Stage 1, I commented on my own Kolb's learning style. Kolb's (1976) research led him to the development of a learning cycle conceived as having four key stages. All elements are necessary to learn, but individuals tend to have a preference for a particular style. Kolb's work focused on

four dominant learning styles. Later work by Mumford and Honey (1992) suggests that there are two learning styles or orientations, thinking (which links to reflector and theorist) and doing (links to activist, pragmatist). The former style links to the right brain (intuitive, spontaneous, and qualitative) and the latter to the left brain (factual, analytical, and quantitative).

Kolb – Learning Styles

Concrete Experience

Active
Experimentation

Reflective
Observation

23

17

10

11

20%

60%

100%

David. A. Kolb 1976

Abstract Conceptualisation
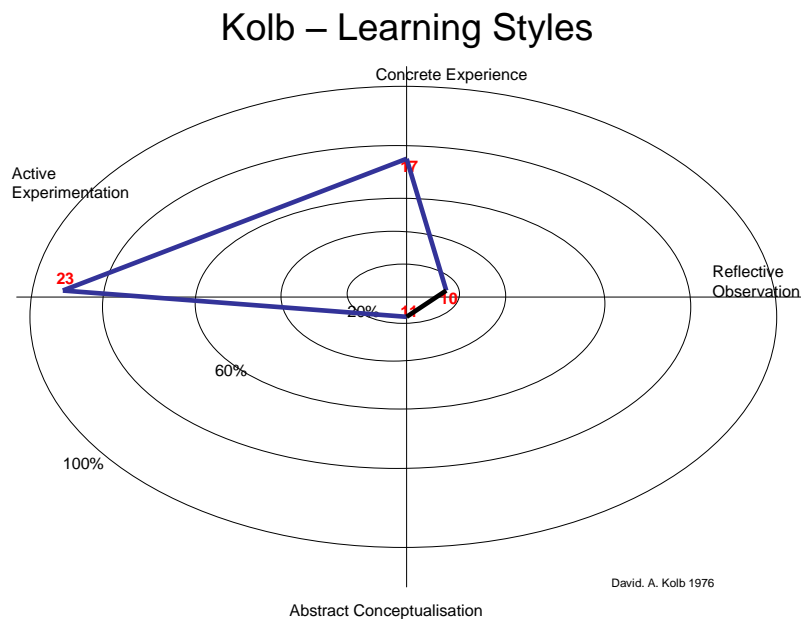
Figure 17: Kolb Learning Styles

My own Learning Style is shown in Figure 17. What I find of interest is that this profile hasn't changed in over 15 years, despite significant career changes.
When I first used the tool I was a marketer. The action orientation resonated with how I saw myself act. Whereas now, I pay significant attention to theory and reflection and most observers assume these low elements to be far more prominent on my profile. But I am curious that despite learnt skills, the preference for action is still very strong and that maybe the tension between action and reflection is where my perception of 'stuckness' comes from - that it is as much about me as to the situation I find myself in. In other words, it is my interpretation of 'stuckness'.
There were a couple of workshops where I was aware that the VPs were being coerced into holding a workshop. They perceived it as remedial activity, of which they did not believe their team needed to be a part. I noticed my own instinctive response was to either to reassure that it wasn't remedial, or convince them of the benefits rather than listen to their reluctance and understand what was sitting beneath it. Was this too in the service of my own need to speed things up? It was only when I

spent time holding with the issue that I gained a better understanding of the insecurities, exposure or sometimes just frustration at yet another thing to do, that I started to get a better understanding of the particular interface.

But maybe it also questions how we use such tools and whether at times we make too absolute a judgement from them, rather than using them as a trigger for a conversation. Perhaps my tension between reflection and action is better explored as a disconnection between what I know and what I do (and indeed a parallel process in the groups), Argyris (1980) describes this as a discrepancy between an espoused theory and theory in use. Individuals have a theory in use which they have learnt through acculturation and which they use to produce skilful actions. They are often tacit and the individual doesn't reflect on them. Argyris (1991) later considers that irrespective of an individual's specific theory in use they all have the same set of governing values including, amongst others, the need to remain in unilateral control. The master program is profoundly defensive and behind any high aspiration of success, there lies a stronger fear of failure and the avoidance of making mistakes. I wonder how much of my own vulnerability plays out as I facilitate and how I mitigate against that vulnerability being exposed and therefore the potential consequences for the group I am facilitating. My espoused theory involves reflection and staying with the problem, but I notice my own anxiety where a conversation becomes stuck, or is taking an excessive (in my view) amount of time. There is something about the 'set piece' that is quite reassuring. I spend hours designing interventions with managers, which I know will shift on the day. The irony is, by providing the reassurance of a 'set piece' I'm actually providing freedom to me. There is a paradox here, where heavy preparation would assume control and predictability. However, if I have prepared well and have spent time honing the questions (but importantly not anticipated the specific answers or outcomes), the workshop can be very fluid. Maybe this preparation might be seen as my own sense making in order to 'give' sense to the group? Often there is incomplete sense giving because it is being newly formed; frequently it is ambiguous and confrontational. As a facilitator I am opening up 'Pandora's Box and I feel vulnerable because I feel there is an expectation of me to be able to stay in control of the conversation and draw it to a neat conclusion. I can never control a group, only notice and respond to its dynamics (and indeed my own). But often there is the expectation of an agenda which at least provides a framework; around which, as a facilitator, you are expected to exert some control.

Maybe my preference for breakouts is also driven by my own anxiety around plenary sessions and a need for some sort of control. I ask myself whether I am taking responsibility for things I don't need to take responsibility for; the facilitator isn't some omnipotent hero.

How am I Influenced and Influencing as a Practitioner?

I have a number of reflections, both on the pre workshop conversations and the workshops themselves, as to how my practice was influenced and how my practice influenced. The first is to what extent the pre workshop conversations influence my own expectations of the workshop going in. Did this leave me looking for particular types of data to confirm what I had heard from selected people (Raelin, 2002); forgetting sometimes that my start point had been through the filter of somebody else's lens? The second is that many of these conversations were themselves an intervention (Shaw, 2002) and were in themselves influencing the effectiveness at the interface; such as pre conversations with the VPs. The third reflection linked to this, is around the rhythm and pace of sense-making. How, just by having a conversation on the interface, we had prompted thinking around the issues and these individuals walked into the workshops having moved their thinking forward where other participants were still understanding the issues. This was more a case for VPs than most of the participants. It resulted on one or two occasions in the 'priorities' sessions of VPs seeming frustrated by the gap in their teams' understanding (see Finding 5).

I took enormous learning from the workshops themselves. Because Case Study 1 involved 10 workshops, I was able to look out for patterns of behaviour in myself and to go through my own process of experimentation. This was primarily around what helped and hindered my being in the moment and how I could listen better. My learnings included: letting go; of not trying so hard (which I will look at later in this finding); and to be aware of my own 'bête noir' regarding time. They also highlighted a need to ensure that I truly had clarification, as to the purpose and directions of the conversations and how to help move them from an interesting discussion to action.

In many ways I see my practice as a bridge between the academic and the organisation. Much of what I do is also around provoking, probing and reframing. In addition, as a facilitator, you also 'hold a space' (Block, 2000) for such conversations

to take place. For me, the frustration is often around my own inadequacy to do these well. In a strange way it is as if by taking on the mantle of 'a facilitator' I have suddenly invested in myself an ability to reframe or probe over and above participants. I learnt to be really mindful of how I expressed myself and to check understanding. Again and again, I realised the criticality of the way the dialogue questions were expressed; that I really needed to understand what the question was that needed to be asked, and not to be satisfied by an approximation.

7.3 Reflections on Practice as a Researcher

At the heart of both facilitating and researching is noticing; noticing what is being said and what not, noticing the dynamics in the group, noticing your own reactions. My assumption was that whether from a facilitator or researcher perspective, the noticing would be the same. However, in the early workshops it felt as if there was jerkiness between the two. That by noticing (and noting down) from a research perspective inhibited my ability to really listen and be 'in the moment' of the workshop; that in my mind I was overlaying what I was hearing with something I had read. Reflecting on the 'Ladder of Inference' (Argyris, 1990) used in the workshop, I became conscious that, albeit subconsciously, the data I was selecting to notice was being influenced by what I thought might or might not be relevant to my research. I tried to understand what the difference was in the research data as opposed to the facilitated data. It appeared to be around what I interpreted as 'business as usual' and data on specific projects or processes. I noticed I was jumping to conclusions as to what might or might not be blocking the interface.

Wearing the dual hat of a facilitator and a researcher is a challenge. An intervention might be 'interesting' irrespective of its outcome to a researcher, but as a facilitator I am charged with delivering a result. In order to deliver the result I have to respond to the 'reality' in the room, which might compromise my 'planned' research agenda. But what is this difference? Indeed, irrespective of the role of researcher or facilitator am I not actually looking through a single lens – my own? So what is the challenge about? Is it rather, the challenge of practice and facilitation; that in the room, in the moment, it is me as facilitator rather than researcher to the fore? Being a researcher (as well) do I ask questions differently?

Vince (2008) describes studying organisation from the perspective of Critical Management Studies to gain an understanding of power, control and inequality rather

than efficiency, effectiveness and profit. At times it feels even messier than that. Multiple dynamics play out: control: empowerment: pragmatism: inaction vs. movement; espoused theories vs. theories in use. There is no single approach; all are colliding in the moment. As a facilitator, I am making choices around a multitude of conflicting signals; choices I sometimes regret, before the words are hardly out of my mouth. It is dynamic, a rapid iteration of gesture and response (Griffin, 2002). As a researcher, making sense of what has happened is equally messy. All I can do is give my account of what I interpreted and try to be as reflective as possible about my perspective whilst understanding the assumptions I am making. As with the Ladder of Inference (Argyris, 1990) I use in many of the workshops, so too as a researcher am I never able to 'see' all the data available.

Reflecting further I wonder how much of this also reflects confusion as to my own identity. Am I trying on the new clothes of a researcher and finding them strange? I am aware of a (maybe) naïve set of assumptions around my own 'shoulds and shouldn'ts' as to what either makes excellent research or facilitation without potentially getting bound up in 'doing the right thing'. Much as Watzlawick et al., (1974) describes 'more of the same' or trying harder'. In many ways, an agenda is not dissimilar to a research plan. Maybe being new to research, like a manager with an agenda, I am nervous of accomplishing my task. In the first workshop, I was so conscious of timings being adrift that I hardly recognised what became a fundamental conversation. Rarely did a workshop go 'to plan' and the sooner I jettisoned the 'set piece' of the workshop design and relaxed into a looser framework, working with what was happening in the room, did I really start to listen and notice what was going on and indeed really start to notice research insights. Do I interpret differently as a researcher? I think not. The sense I make is my sense. What has probably shifted both through doing a DBA and my MSc, is the way I think; that I am more reflective, that I do seek out and pay attention to multiple realities and that I link what I am seeing to theory. But this is now what I do, whichever role I am playing.

But what were the things that went deeper with reflection? If I had just been consulting, I would still have got answers about prioritisation, clarity of roles and responsibilities, mutual ambition and trust. However these would have been separate parts and it would have been difficult to construct what exactly was the dynamic at the interface, which provided an understanding of the relationship between things. Nor would the insights around sense making have become apparent. These would have

been lost as 'part of the process'. It was only by going back to the data and reflecting and reflecting again that some of the patterns and linkages emerged. It was by reflecting and realising what was absent in one Case Study yet present in another that really helped articulate what was happening around sense giving.

When considering learning Foil and Lyles (1985) explore the difference between organisational learning and organisational adaptation. They consider the premise that change does not necessarily mean learning. Learning is seen as:

> *'The development of insights and knowledge, the association between the effectiveness of past actions and future actions.'* Whereas adaptation is: '*the ability to make incremental adjustments as the result of environmental changes, goal structure changes or other changes.'(p.811)*

There seems to be something of this sentiment between consulting practice and research; the difference being the level of reflexivity.

I'd like to link this back to the description of Mode 2 thinking, (Gibbons et al.,1994) and Weick's challenge to it described in the methodology section; that in the frenzy of 'the real world', and its focus on immediate problem solution, 'patterns between episodes' are missed. He sees the advantage of academic (university based Mode 1 research) as:

> '*A knowledge-creating organisation that remembers things that others have forgotten…deals with facts that others suppress and tackles questions that others avoid.'(p.S74)*

I think what he describes is the challenge for the practitioner / researcher; but I do not think it should be seen as an argument against Mode 2 research. As I have described above, with reflexivity, constantly going back to the data from different perspectives enables the patterns between episodes to emerge and the results can go beyond '*the frenzy of the real world'* to provide both a practical and deeply considered piece of research.

But as is my need to move away from being driven by time as a practitioner, so too do I need to slow down as a researcher and allow myself to go deeper. As Marshall and Reason (2007) observe, inquiring well is challenging:

> '*The notion of taking an attitude of inquiry implies opening our purposes, assumptions, sense-making and patterns of action to reflection. These are challenging aspirations.' (p.369)*

It wasn't just about going deeper; it was also about doing less. Even now I suspect I have over compensated, because I felt I had an 'almost but not quite' methodology. I am overlaying one technique with another, in an attempt to demonstrate rigour. There

are shades of the Watzlawick et al. 'try harder' described above, emerging as a pattern that not only affects my practice, but also my research.

<u>What has the Impact Been of Taking a Complexity Lens?</u>

As stated at the beginning of this thesis I was curious as to how taking a complexity lens might shed new insights, as to how to address the challenges faced in complex organisations. Whilst I was writing this up, I was in a meeting with a senior leader. He was describing the very challenges present in this research: the dilemmas of local / global and the paradoxes at the interface. He talked of the challenges of organisational complexity in today's market place and the constant tensions they displayed. He likened complexity in the organisation to cholesterol, where there is good cholesterol and bad.The challenge is to understand which is which; where is it important to simplify in order to take advantages of synergies or scale (globalisation) and where complexity was required. Where difference needs to be embraced and amplified to provide potential growth. Much to Stacey's model (Figure 1), there is a push to order (simplify) and a need for novelty, which emerges through difference and the unknown.

The complexity lens through which I have viewed this research appears to be absolutely pertinent to the context of the organisation. Where it has been most apparent has been in the workshops themselves; with the acknowledgement of paradox and an appreciation that rather than 'right answers' it is a question of choice. It was only by holding with the tension (often uncomfortably) and exploring it that something novel started to emerge. The workshops enabled weak signals to be heard, amplified and focused upon.

<u>Am I True to a Methodology?</u>

Defining my methodology was in itself a major journey. I talk of being a 'bricoleur', but what exactly does that mean in the way I have practiced my research? What is my concern with being 'true' to a methodology? Am I really congruent with what I espouse?

Despite my protestations of qualitative research, at times I seem to have a need to prove that feels closer to a quantitative approach. I am dealing in the subjective. My sense making is influenced by my own perceptions, history and biases, as are those of the participants. However much I triangulate, or however neatly I argue my findings; they are not an absolute, rather reflected observations in a context. For me, the

constant question has been: is it good enough, is it credible? But at times that question has turned to a more positivist one: is it the right answer? I believe that the pursuit of rigour is an appropriate one for any researcher. The ambition has been that having sought out multiple perceptions and provided a quality of reflections, that I have articulated them in a way that contributes to understanding how an interface works that might be useful in future practice. However well argued, it will always remain a perspective. But I am reassured by qualitative academics such as Raelin (1999) who considered that, participants are thought to have reliability and validity because the data is rooted in real action, in circumstances that really matter to them (p.117). I go back to the questions put forward by Lincoln & Guba (2000) and which are highlighted in the methodology section and consider this research against those criteria. (Table 24)

Credibility	*Was the research designed in such a way that it could describe the phenomenon?* The phenomenon is described throughout the findings section
Transferability	*Is the researcher explicit about his parameters and how might tie in to a broader case?* By using a number of different workshops within a single case study and then transferring the research into other interfaces in subsequent Case Studies the transferability of the findings was explored. Furthermore post research, the learnings have been applied successfully to work at other interfaces
Dependability	*To be able to account for changes in the conditions of the phenomenon being researched* By using a number of different workshops and Case Studies in different geographies and with different interfaces I was able to observe the differences and similarities between them There is transparency or a line of sight between the participants' observations, insights and findings.
Confirmability	*Does the research confirm general findings?* The research enhances findings from elsewhere in literature both by building on team effectiveness literature into interface effectiveness and by extending findings on hierarchical sense giving and sense making to include peer to peer sense giving and making

Table 24: Assessment against Research Criteria

There is a strange sense of belonging and being apart both as a facilitator and as a researcher. Stacey & Griffin (2006) describe '*detached involvement*' (p.9) where the researcher can never be fully detached from a situation, where they are always involved and yet this is overlaid by the reflexivity of the researcher's own story and how it impacts on the experience being researched.

I notice this tension within myself. I am absolutely part of every workshop I facilitate and my actions and interactions with those in the group impact each others' outcomes, but there is also an aloofness from the situation. The outcomes being proposed for the group will not be experienced by me; in that sense I am not part of it; my inclusion is temporal.

I also reflect on my early dilemmas on methodology as to whether or not I could class this as Action Research. I go back to the distinctions made by Stacey & Griffin between conducting research as Action Research as opposed to Complex Responsive Processes (see Methodology section). They describe the similarities between the two; participation, emergence, the everyday and of not splitting practice and theory (p.28/29). But they also make distinctions; where in CRP interactions are seen not to create whole, but rather further patterns of interaction (p.31) and that rather than changing social 'wholes' they make sense of the 'live' experience of the interaction. (p33).

I find this may be an unnecessary distinction. I don't believe that one excludes the other. It seems that in this research the workshops have both tried to change the 'social whole' of the interface (although the definition of 'whole' is somewhat subjective as to who is or isn't included in that whole), but it has been done through the 'live experience of the interaction' and indeed the outcomes are suggestions for further patterns of interaction.

Their second consideration is that Action Research is action in the service of solving a problem whereas CRP action is the ordinary experience of interaction (p.36). I have found the distinction useful as I have worked through this research. Both problem solving and inquiry appear valuable research interventions; but again I am not sure that one necessarily is exclusive of the other. At the level of the individual workshops - which I believe were closer to Action Research - the participants were very definitely trying to solve the problems of how they worked together. Whereas at a more overarching research level this thesis has been an inquiry into 'stuckness', movement and sense making at an internal interface; in effect an inquiry into a phenomenon which appears closer to what is being described by Stacey and Griffin. I feel comfortable that taking a *bricoleur* approach has enabled me to work with a dynamic research environment to provide findings that have credibility.

> *'The product of the interpretive bricoleur's labor is a complex, quilt-like bricolage, a reflexive collage or montage – a set of fluid, interconnected images and representations. This*

interpretive structure is like a quilt, a performance text, a sequence of representations connecting the parts to the whole. (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.7)

7.4 What Have I Learnt?

What is my learning on my learning? (Agyris, 2002) It's interesting; old patterns are very hard to break. I reflected on my challenges of the 'set piece' and really being able to be in the moment, both when I did my masters degree and again as part of my Competency Development Plan. Yet despite being very aware of it, it emerges as a default, when situations become tough. It is also interesting how the activist in me continues to play out; a discomfort with the static and a desire for movement and yet paradoxically, by trying to move forward too quickly, I get caught up in my own trap of inertia. I notice similar patterns between me as a practitioner and me as a researcher; the same traits play out of 'trying harder' and putting too much in, rather than really focusing down to what matters. I observe, when I am relaxed, how more fluent everything seems and how, often, it is more effective.

I also learnt that research is messy and unpredictable and that it needs to be constantly in your head; that you never stop reflecting on it.

7.5 What was the Impact of the Research for the Organisation?

I would like to turn from my reflections to considering the impact of the research on the organisation. This might be considered at two levels. The first in terms of the immediate impact of the workshops and the second the impact of the research.

All of the workshops were different and the specific actions they took away varied. What seemed consistent across all of them was a shift in how both individuals and the teams talked to each other. During the workshops they had been able to reframe their relationships and issues and were able to take that shift forward into their future conversations. With some groups there was evidence of that shift having been maintained, several months later. There were several reports, post the event, of 'an interface' being able to have a difficult conversation successfully because of what had been said during the workshop. By having a different type of conversation, the groups were able to shift from 'stuckness' to movement. But for others, changes in personnel meant the shifts were less long lasting.

In immediate terms, the evidence from the workshops led to new activity around how prioritisation was managed between teams. It also highlighted the need for further work, between the global and regional parts of the Brand Development teams.

In terms of the impact of the research findings, post this research project, I developed a diagnostic from the framework which helps teams identify where potentially they are getting stuck and therefore might want to pay attention. The diagnostic was used to inform 108 regional interface cells as to where each perceived the other and acted as a trigger to dialogues around how they might improve the way they worked. The 'heat map' from this exercise was compared with another six months later showing an on-going improvement in terms of how the two sides perceived the way they managed issues, such as prioritisation and how they worked together.

Ontologically, the framework might look like a somewhat positivist response; a set of criteria as a means of movement towards order and the known. But rather it is a framework which highlights a series of triggers around which dialogues can take place. This might result in either a known solution or a novel one. The findings also appear to be transferable into many interfaces. Time and again, as I work at different interfaces, the same core elements come to the fore; the need for a mutual ambition, an understanding of prioritisations and the need for clarity of roles and responsibilities.

But where it seems most applicable is in complex situations. It is in such situations that teams appear to get stuck over the elements identified above. Often one of the key triggers – prioritisation - is about choices that are the result of dilemmas and paradoxes. Teams at a complex interface aren't faced with binary decisions. Going back to Snowdon's (2005) distinctions, where the work has appeared most impactful has been in dealing with complex, as opposed to complicated or simple situations.

The activity at interfaces is still of key interest to the organisation. More recently there has been a much broader piece of work conducted by a major consultancy; to which the findings of this work contributed.

A second influence of the research findings was from understanding 'time lags'. In a recent intervention we have taken on board the learning on sense giving and sense making to allow adequate time for sense to be made as it moves across interfaces.

The research hasn't resolved the tensions at the interface. These tensions are ongoing. What it has done has been to give a better understanding of what happens at an

interface and, therefore, what to watch out for. It has helped highlight that paradox and ambiguity are a natural and inherent part of a complex organisation and that this should be embraced rather than deflected. It has shown the importance of understanding how we have conversations; using skills in dialogue of openness and the suspension of assumptions. Finally, it has provided an appreciation of the time it takes for sense to be given (and made) between groups.

8. Contributions, Limitations and Future Research

The conclusions from this research project highlight the importance of working effectively across internal interfaces. In considering the original question: 'why do teams get stuck?' it identifies a number of elements contributing to effective working at an interface. In particular, it recognises the need for a mutual ambition, prioritisation, and clarity of roles and responsibilities. The absence of any of them causes tensions, which contribute to the sense of 'stuckness'. It explores the similarities between the requirements for team effectiveness and interface effectiveness, suggesting that the latter is a variant of the former. Underpinning the effectiveness of all of these elements is the groups' ability to make sense together. It offers a number of insights as to the specific triggers which result either in movement or 'stuckness'. It is around this that the role of sense making is pivotal - where there needs to be a constant dialogue exploring assumptions. It is the inability to have such sense making conversations between the group that holds them in a recurring cycle of conflict or inertia. Of particular interest, is the patterning not just of hierarchical but also peer- to - peer sense making and sense giving. This is often neglected with inadequate time and processes, resulting in misunderstandings and misalignment. In particular, it appears to be a lack of appreciation of the time-lag between each group making their own sense and then agreeing on a mutual sense. It supports research elsewhere of the power of techniques such as dialogue in enabling movement within and between groups.

8.1 Contributions

I consider the contribution of this research under three headings: contributions to theory, to methodology and to practice. Because the degree is a DBA as opposed to a PhD, then it is important that the latter is explicit.

8.1.1 Contribution to Theory

This thesis offers three contributions to theory. The first is that by providing a focus on interface effectiveness, as opposed to the more externally focused boundary spanning, teams can focus on key trigger points where interface relationships are vulnerable. This contribution builds on work on internal interfaces by both Balogun & Johnson (2004) and Maitlis, (2005).

The second sits within the domain of both interfaces and sense making and builds on the work of both Maitlis (2005) and Gioia & Chettipeddi (1991). It highlights that there is a pattern of peer to peer sense giving and making which can be differentiated from that of hierarchical sense giving which if neglected can contribute to misunderstanding and misalignment.

The third, in the domain of sense making, builds on the work of Weick (1995). It demonstrates that there is a time lag between parties at an interface, which needs to be paid attention to.

I turn to the first of those contributions. As highlighted in the course of the literature review, although there is substantial work on Team Effectiveness (Higgs, 2007, Farmbrough & Comerford, 2006) and indeed increasingly a body of work around Boundary Spanning (Gratton, 2007), there is very little work on the effectiveness of internal interfaces (Maitlis, 2005). This thesis makes a contribution with respect to teams by examining the particular attributes required for interface effectiveness. It expands on contributions made by Balogun & Johnson (2004), Balogun et al. (2005), who look at the internal and hierarchical transfer of information at interfaces, as teams go through change. This research is also firmly positioned within an organisation. However, rather than a change agenda, it focuses attention on the workings at the interface as teams go about their on going activity. By turning the focus of interface effectiveness both inwardly and to situations of on-going, activity this research addresses different capabilities and ways of working. It emphasises the need for mutual ambition, an ability to work with tension and ambiguity and processes of communicating between each other. It is a timely contribution, as increasingly work in organisations is done across internal, often dispersed interfaces. The challenges faced by such teams often involve complex problems and the way in which they need to work effectively together to resolve them is not always apparent.

The second contribution provides insights into peer to peer sense making. Whereas previous works have focused on the patterning of sense giving and sense making at a hierarchical level (Maitlis, 2005, Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007), this work offers new perspectives of sense giving and sense making at a peer to peer level. Unlike the more linear process of hierarchical sense giving and making (Gioia & Chettipeddi, 1993), the findings here demonstrate a quite fragmented process, where firstly each group

needs to make their own sense, before both sides simultaneously influence the other. The influencing occurs both at a one on one level through phone conversations and emails and also at a group-to-group level, in meetings around many different aspects, such as data interpretation, decision accountability, interpretations of local market needs and delivery of agreed projects. Our knowledge on interface effectiveness and the sense making that occurs at interfaces is enhanced by understanding and making this process explicit.

The third contribution is on the 'time lag' between sense giving and sense making with teams at an interface. To date, this has appeared in change literature (Bridges, 2003, Balogun & Hope Hailey, 2004), where there is an appreciation that a leaders' attention to a change project has often moved on whilst other members of the organisation are still tying to come to terms with a situation. However, although there is a brief mention by Weick (1995) when as cited earlier, he reflects:

> *'My talking is spread across time, competes for attention with other ongoing projects, and is reflected on after it is finished, which means my interest may have already changed' (p.62)*

The notion of time lag has not explicitly been considered as an aspect of sense making. Although the lag might not be as pronounced as that found in change situations, the evidence suggests that it nonetheless puts one side or another at a disadvantage as they try to catch up with each others thinking. Appreciating the impact of this lag enhances our understanding as to how sense is made across internal interfaces.

8.1.2 Contribution to Methodology

This research makes a contribution to methodology in demonstrating how, by taking a *bricolage* approach; rigour might be achieved in complex research situations. Research in practice occurs within the natural rhythm of the organisation. It is dynamic and has to work with both the changing context of the organisation and events within it; situations rarely allow themselves to be wrapped into neat packages. My journey to finding a methodology appropriate to such an environment was a challenge. By understanding the limitations of one method in a complex research situation and compensating with those of another, a practitioner / researcher is able to weave together a research approach that covers off the multiple perspectives such an environment presents. With the *'blurring of the genres,'* (Guba & Lincoln, 2005

p.191), rather than being seen as a 'jack of all trades' -and with it the unspoken assumption of 'master of none'- the *bricoleur* becomes a 'Master Weaver'. He utilises practical knowledge and expertly chooses from a number of research techniques appropriate to the context, drawing them together into a robust whole. The contribution of this research is that it demonstrates how a *bricolage* approach becomes a means of providing rigour in complex research situations. This is achieved through the researcher applying their practical knowledge of the situation, assessing the limitations and opportunities of a number of research techniques, and then weaving these in a way that enables the research question to be fully explored and addressed. It is this textured approach that can help provide both the 'rigour and relevance' advocated by Pettigrew (2001).

8.1.3 Contribution to Practice

The impact of this research on the organisation has been described in more detail in the previous section. However, to reiterate, the contribution to practice might be seen as two fold. Firstly, the development of a framework through which to consider interface effectiveness (Figure 8) provides managers with a structure within which to describe what is happening at the interface. Secondly, from a sense making perspective, in time poor environments (which characterise the 'reality' of so many interfaces), the patterning of sense making and giving is important for organisations to appreciate, in particular that of a time lag between the two parties.

8. 2 Practical Implications and Recommendations for Practice

There are a number of implications and recommendations for practice from this research project which builds on the contributions to practice outlined above. As teams become more global and more interdependent, the ability to work at interfaces comes to the fore. The challenge is that in today's environment where teams - often virtual - are trying to move faster and faster, the time and space to explore each others perspectives and gain a mutual understanding is by-passed. The evidence from this research would suggest that this is a false economy; that for an interface to work effectively, they need to pause to establish a mutual ambition, priorities and roles and responsibilities. The recommendation is that teams use a framework to understand what, where and why they need to be aligned and then, through dialogue (or with the use a simple diagnostic), explore their various perspectives. Leaders and facilitators need to appreciate the pattern of sense making both

hierarchically and peer to peer; ensuring that appropriate communication processes and fact bases are in place and that adequate time is given to enable a dialogue which both advocates and inquires into different points of view.

8.3 Limitations and Future Research

There appear to be quite a list of limitations of this research; but on reflection many of the limitations are indeed the result of choices; of an approach or focus not taken, which in its turn might provide the basis for further stimulating inquiry. With such a broad thesis as this it is unsurprising that there are a number of areas which would benefit by future research. The first - and potentially the most obvious - is that the research has been conducted in a single organisation. Because of the size and complexity of the organisation it is believed that the multiple case studies provided adequate variation to provide a sense of the transferability of the findings, but it would be useful to extend the research to other complex organisations.

Using a Case Study approach to research into the day to day workings at the interface might also be construed as a limitation, providing snapshots of occasions, whereas a longitudinal study might provide additional or even contradictory insights across a longer period (Maitlis, 2005).

The limitations of researching in practice (Mode 2 research) might be considered in two parts. Firstly there are constraints, challenges (and indeed opportunities) from the organisation and secondly, those that are within the researcher themselves. As described extensively earlier in this thesis, there appears to be an overarching tension, between the requirements of the organisation, as opposed to the integrity of the research. How this tension is managed is an integral part of conducting Mode 2 research. Although I hope I have been conscious of the implications of the choices made, they might be construed as limitations in the research methodology. Within myself the limitations are my own preconceptions; that I got what I looked for; that 'stuckness' is what was found; rather to Richardson's (2000) sentiment of, 'what *you see depends upon the angle of repose'.* I wonder how my facilitation might have influenced or limited the findings. Had someone else facilitated might the group have worked in different directions or focused on different conversations? If I had just been a researcher in the workshops would I have had a different perspective on the data? Perhaps future research might look at un-facilitated groups and observe whether the

patterns are the same or whether, using different facilitators working with different groups would arrive at similar conclusions.

The question as to whether culture might impact on the different interfaces has been posed several times during the course of this research. Whilst this was not one of the research questions being addressed the influence of culture would be an interesting one to follow up. Likewise the theme of trust was significant across all the workshops and indeed might have been the basis for a thesis. The theme of trust at internal interfaces would be an interesting and relevant study to take forward.

A theme highlighted in literature on team effectiveness was the recent interest in virtual teams. Given that geographical diversity characterised many of the interfaces a focus on how interfaces can be managed virtually may be a highly relevant topic.

The final area which would be of interest to research further is that of the tensions between global and local teams. This was a theme that came out quite strongly in many workshops. With increased globalisation it is also of interest to managers in large organisations. It poses the question as to whether this issue is something that teams are able to work through over time - in other words part of a change agenda - or whether it is an inherent on going tension.

8.4 Final Reflections

The previous section reflected on what I learnt as a practitioner and a researcher, here I reflect again on the findings after I have let them settle a while. I am struck by some parallel processes; of the nature of my own sense making and the time lags in making sense of the data; of how my curiosity in organisational interfaces also plays out in my fascination with the interface between the researcher and the practitioner and how to bridge the gap between the academic and the facilitator.

I deliberately chose to look at this research project through a complexity lens; in ways my research has imitated its emergent, messy nature with its patterns of interrelating, as well as the unpredictability of working and researching live in a dynamic organisation. There is a comment from Judi Marshall (1999) which I found useful to reflect on, as I try to pull the various strands together from this research:

 'Treat little as fixed, finished, clear cut. Rather I have an image of living continually in process, adjusting, seeing what emerges, bringing things into question'. (Marshall, 1999, p.156)

Whether I reflect on the research process, on being a practitioner, the nature of boundaries, sense making, or indeed of the phenomenon of 'stuckness'; there is wisdom in these words. My research process has been iterative and messy, using a *bricolage* approach to draw in from multiple techniques, because there was no clear cut methodology. As both a practitioner and a researcher, my inquiry has been iterative. I have lived with the research topic rarely out of my thoughts, constantly bringing things into question. Boundaries or interfaces are constantly being negotiated. Activity at them is emergent, as managers respond to shifts in context and understanding; and true to the tenets of Complexity Theory tensions amplify and dissipate. Nor is sense making ever fixed or finished but rather constantly under construction. It is '*bringing things into question*', through the checking of assumptions and, indeed, by not assuming that everything is clear cut that is so critical to sense making at an interface. By appreciating that nothing is '*fixed, final or clear cut*', that there are indeed multiple perspectives, we can talk about them to help create movement as opposed to 'stuckness'. This research project and indeed the DBA has been a journey. But even though the thesis is complete, it doesn't feel as if the journey is over; rather to Marshall's sentiments above, it is about *'living continually in process.*' It isn't finished; as things emerge and new insights come to the fore it raises new questions. My curiosity is again aroused.

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Appendices

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24. Appendix 1 – Glossary

There are three parts to this glossary; the first is a definition of terms used in this thesis; the second provides descriptions behind abbreviations used within the organisation in the research project and the third is the coding used to identify participants quotes.

Definition of terms

Complex organisations: Here I am referring to large, often multi-national organisations, where often there are matrix reporting lines and numerous internal groupings and interfaces between them.

Complexity perspective: Based on complexity theories this perspective is in contrast to the planned and linear, 'cause and effect' nature that has historically defined organisations and change. Instead, complexity theory focuses on disequilibrium, and a shift away from predictability and control, to one of emergence and the tension between order and chaos. (eg Burnes 2004, Stacey 1992, Shaw 2002, Streatfield 2001)

Big rules and improvisation: This considers the simultaneous existence of and tension between; rules, which bring order to chaos and provide a framework or boundary, (but should not be so confining as to ossify or paralyse the organisation) and the ability to make appropriate shifts (improvisation) to maximise performance in a specific context (eg Stacey 1992, Shaw 2002)

Internal interfaces: These are the points of connection (processes, meetings, interactions) between different teams or groups within the organisation and typically would include both cross functional and cross geography. The important point here, and why it becomes a valid management question is that so often despite there being an overarching corporate objective, the different groups view things with a different set of priorities and focus that they get stuck. (Smith & Berg, 1987)

The word interface has a broad meaning, and to be clear the interface under investigation is that of internal relational interfaces (eg Bradbury & Lichtenstein 2000) as opposed to technical interfaces, external boundaries or network systems. As described in Section 2 there is a distinction between the boundary of the groups and the interface which is the point of connection between them. This connection is not permanent, but rather is a pattern of interactions.

Sense-making: The theme of sense-making has been explored widely in literature. Sense-making is as the word describes the way sense is made of a given situation. It is how people construct mentally as concepts what they construct, and why. (eg. Weick 1995, Taylor & Robichaud 2004, Boje 1995)

The movement of meaning to action – this considers both how sense is made of a situation, and how through conversations groups take action. (Taylor & Robichaud 2004, Weick 1995)

Joint action: is about groups taking action and moving forward, but whether that needs to be joint, collective or mutual action, or just action is also part of the research.

Organisation abbreviations & terms

VP = Vice Presidents; in the case studies either of Brand Building or Brand Development or of Consumer and Customer Research. Typically these would head teams of three hierarchical layers, with team sizes of 20 -30.

HRBP = Human Resource Business Partners. These are the HR Directors who work with each part of the business. They co-facilitated the workshops

Chairmen = These are the head of the organisation in each country

Category = This is the distinction of a particular product area eg hair

BD = Brand Development; this group are responsible for the development of category and brand strategy both globally and regionally, the brand equity and advertising

BB = Brand Building; this group are based in country and are responsible for the implementation of the brand strategy from Brand Development

OTIF =On Time In Full; this is used to describe the measurement of activities of the Brand Developers into the Brand Building organisation

KPI = Key Performance Indicators

Categories = Categorisation of types of products eg Hair products

References to Participant and Case study quotes

CS = Case Study,

W/S = one of 10 workshops in Case Study 1

VP = Vice President

HR= Human Resources Business Partner

P= Participant

MK = Marketeer (Case study 2 only)

Pre = information from pre-workshop survey

So for example: (P2 CS2) would be Participant 2 in the second case study

                  (VP6 CS1) would be Vice President 6 in the first case study

APPENDIX 2: Summary of complexity literature

Theme	Description	Authors
CHAOS & ORDER	The co existence of two paradoxical states	Fitzgerald (2002), Stacey (2003), Bechtold (1997) Hock (1999) Anderson et al (1999)
Emergence	The unpredictable and iterative nature of change from which persistence or newness will emerge	Wheatley 1992, Shaw 2002, 1998) Shaw & Stacey (2006), Stacey (1996, 2001, 2005), Griffin (2002) Griffin & Stacye (2005) Streatfield (2001) Black (2000), Ashmos et al (2000)
Self Organising	Where from seemingly from random chaos, order and coherence will emerge from the independent actions of the members of the group	Capra 1997, Shaw (1998, 2002) Stacey (1992,2001,2003) Anderson (1999) Goodwin (1994)
Patterns	The structuring and social processes within a group	Goodwin (1994) Anderson et al (1999) Pascale (1999)
Push towards Order	The almost gravitational pull towards order in a system	Stacey (1992, 2001) Griffin (2002) McKelvey (2004)
EDGE OF CHAOS	The boundary between order and chaos, also known as 'bounded instability'	Burnes (2004), Stacey(1992, 2001)
Boundaries	A container or frame between two entities. From a complexity perspective this is between order and chaos	Wheatley (1992) Stacey (1992,1993, 2001)
Small Variations/ Bifurcations,	The point in a system where a choice occurs and breaks off into something different	Shaw (2002, 1998) Capra (2002, 1997) Stacey (2001) Wheatley (1992) Pascale et al (2000) Snowdon (2006) Prigogine (1997)
Dampening & Amplifying Feedback	The identification of a weak signal and either amplifying it thus creating change, or suppressing it to retain the status quo	Argyris & Schön (1996) Weick 1995
Paradox	The simultaneous presence of two contradictory or ambiguous elements	Hampden Turner (1991) McKenzie 1994), McKenzie et al (2007) Schutz (1967) Martin et al 1983 Morrison & Milliken (2000), Piderit (2000), Kilduff & Dougherty (2000), McKinley& Scherer (2000), Meyerson & Scully (1995), Ford & Ford (1994) Denison et al (1995) Snowdon (2002), Westenholz (1993), Churchman (1967), Osland & Bird (2000), Glynn et al (2000) Leana & Barry (2000), Lewis (2000),
ORDER GENERATING RULES	The concern with 'deeper rules' and structures which help keep systems at the 'edge of chaos' without disintegrating	Prigogine(1997) Mackintosh & McLean (1999) Brown & Eisenhardt (1997) Lichtenstein et al (2006)
Order Generating rules	Deep rules which provide minimum structures for maximum flexibility	Prigogine(1997) Mackintosh & McLean (1999) Brown & Eisenhardt (1997) Lichtenstein et al (2006)
Improvisation	Spontaneous adaptation within a loose framework	Barrett (1998) Friss & Larsen 2006

Main headings based on (Burnes 2004)

Appendix 3 Key Themes from the literature on Boundary Spanning & Interfaces

Themes	Description	Examples
Boundary spanning roles & functions	Different types of boundary roles and activities eg task coordinator, ambassador, guard. The challenges of establishing the required conditions for boundary management Work design across divisions & organisations	Ancona & Caldwell 2007, Jemison 1984, Cross & Prusak 2002, Aldrick & Herker 1977, Marrone et al 2007, Leifer & Delbecq, 1978, Richter et al 2006, Tushman & Scanlan 1981, Sinha & Van de Van 2005
Boundary concepts & competencies	Benefits of boundary management eg efficiency, performance and identity	Santos & Eisenhardt 2005, Levina & Vaast 2005
Work Processes	The relational interactions through processes	Gratton 2007, Metiu 2006, Ring and Van de Van 1994, O'Mahony & Bechky 2008,
Mindset	Mindset & behaviours eg Collaboration / co-operation	Bradbury and Lichtenstien 2000, Gratton 2007 Senge et al 2007, Prins 2006
Power & Status between boundary elements	Centres of control and the hierarchical aspects of group regulation	Blaker & Mcdonald 2000, Metieu 2006, Perry & Angle 1979, Ring & Van de Van 1994
Geographical & hierarchical boundaries	Geographical and hierarchical boundaries eg local and expert knowledge and formal and informal boundaries	Yanow 2004, Hinds & Mortensen 2005, Eispinosa et al 2003,Cross & Prusak 2002, Black & Edwards 2000, Krackhardt & Hanson 1993
Movement away from certainty	The increasing importance of boundary spanning with the focus on changing external contexts. Links to complexity thinking	Easterby et al 2000, Black and Edwards 2000, Blacker & McDonald 2000
Boundary spanning & Learning	Increased learning between organisations eg open innovation	Gratton 2007
Boundary spanning & performance	Boundary spanning activity and its relationship to organisational performance	Dollinger 1984
Weak & strong ties & transference	The difference between the benefits of weak ties for useful knowledge transfer but the need for strong ties for complex knowledge transfer	Hanson 1999
Dilemmas	Dilemmas between the internal benefits of standardisation & innovation through external difference	Gratton 2007

APPENDIX 4 – Key themes emerging from sense-making literature

Theme /Cluster	Authors
SENSE MAKING AS BOTH UNDERSTANDING & ACTION	
Retrospective sense-making v. 'into action' conversations -Retrospective sense-making to understand from experience -Conversations as a basis for action	Taylor & Robichaud (2004), Robichaud et al (2004), Alvesson,& Karreman (2000a, 2000b) Engestrom et al (1998) Huisman (2001) Weick(1988,1990,1993,1995, 2000) Boje (1995) Boyce (1996) Weick et al (2000, 2005) Shaw, (1998, 2002, 2005) Stacey,(1993) Griffin (1991) (Mead, 1934 cited in above) Ford (1999) Ford & Ford (1995, 1995) Shotter (1993) Chia (1994, 1995, 2000) Marshak (1998), Tsuokas & Chia (2002), Tsoukas (2000), Mohrman (2007), Boden (1994)
SENSE MAKING AS AN ITERATIVE PROCESS	
'Gesture and response'	Griffin (2001), Shaw (1998, 2002, 2005), Mead (1934 cited in above), Weick (1995) Barrett (1998)
Sense giving & sense making	Maitlis (2005) Maitlis & Lawrence (2007), Gioia & Chittipeddi (1991) Palus et al (2003)
Fixing meaning, written meaning, authorship The notion of 'fixing sense', through written text and thus institutionalising meaning, which thus becomes a constraining feature of future	Brown (2000), Martin (1986), Clifton (2006), Cunliffe (2001), Boje (1995)
Meaning across time How sense is made of events across time and how sense changes across time.	Isabella,(1990) Brown(2000) Boje (1995), Balogun & Johnson (2004), Lennie (2001)
Sense making across boundaries How sense is made across both internal and external boundaries. The 'integration drivers' for both sense-making and the movement from meaning to action	Balogun et al (2005) Gratton, (2007) Balogun & Johnson,(2004) Bateson (1972), Cunliffe (2001), Nahapiet & Ghoshal (1998), Wheatley (1992)
THE PARADOXICAL NATURE OF SENSE MAKING	
Paradox, Equifinal meaning / Polyphony v common sense The difference is between the arguments that 'common sense' is a pre-requisite for movement. -no need for a group to have 'common sense' in order to move forward, Equifinal meanings multiple dialogues creating Polyphony of meaning. Paradox	Donnellon et al (1986), Hazen (1993), Van Maanen (1979) Weick (1988, 1990, 1993, 1995) , Schutz (1967) Wallemacq & Sims (1998), Fiol (2002) Morrison & Milliken (2000), Piderit (2000), Kilduff & Dougherty (2000), McKinley& Scherer (2000), Meyerson & Scully (1995), Ford & Ford (1994) McKenzie et al (2007), McKenzie (1994), Denison et al (1995) Snowdon (2002), Westenholz (1993), Churchman (1967), Osland & Bird (2000), Glynn et al (2000) Leana & Barry (2000), Lewis (2000), Hampden Turner 1981), Argyris (1993), Watzlawick et al (1974) Lusher & Lewis 2008, Martin et al 1983
LANGUAGE AS A TOOL OF SENSE MAKING & THE PROCESSES OF DIALOGUE, STORYTELLING AND NARRATIVE	
Dialogue The use of dialogue as a means of understanding the multiple perspectives of a situation and resisting being stuck in a single frame of reference	Isaacs (1999) Bohm (1996) Gratton (2007) Ghoshal 2002, Senge (1990), Grant et al (1998)
Story telling / Narrative - The use of stories and narratives as a means of creating understanding or sense of a situation	Weick,(1995, Boje !995), Boyce,(1996) Gephart (1991), Woodila 1998, Hardy et al 1998, Grant et al 1998, Gabriel 1998 Browning and Boudes (2005), Senge et al (2005) Jones (1991) Gabriel (1998), Salzer – Morling (1998), O'Connor 2000, Oswick et al (2003), Rhodes & Brown (1995)
Language The importance of language	Welch et al 2005, Whyte 1994

APPENDIX 5: Using a complexity lens, where do the themes emerging from the sense making and interfaces literature overlay and overlap against the key themes emerging from the complexity literature?

Key Sense making themes: (See Appendix 4 for further details) Sense making as both understanding & action, sense making as an iterative process, the paradoxical nature of sense making, language as a tool of sense making & the processes of dialogue, storytelling and narrative

Key Interface themes: Collaboration, Boundary spanning, Dialogue & Narrative, the overlay of authority, task , identity

Themes from complexity literature	Description	Overlaps with themes from sense making and interface literature	Authors
CHAOS & ORDER	The co existence of two paradoxical states	**Sense-making**; organising through conversation, movement into action through conversation, the use of storytelling to connect with what is happening. **Interfaces;** collaboration through conversation, structure and process to create movement into joint action	Fitzgerald (2000), Stacey (2003), Bechtold (1997) Hock (1999) Anderson (1999) Wheatley (1992) Chia (1995, 1999) Weick (1979, 1995, 2005) Taylor & Robichaud (2004) Boje(1995)Downing (2006) Brown (2000) Balogun & Johnson (2004)
Emergence	The unpredictable and iterative nature of change from which persistence or newness will emerge	**Sense making**: the process of making sense from emerging conversations; an unfolding of conversations into a not yet known future, the notion of conversational gesture and response **Interfaces**: The emergence of new facts and patterns through collaboration	Wheatley (1992), Shaw (2002, 1998) Shaw & Stacey (2006), Stacey (1996, 2001, 2005), Griffin (2002) Griffin & Stacey (2005) Streatfield (2001) Weick (1995), Montomi & Purser 1999), Robichaud et al (2004), Shotter & Billig (1998) Senge (2005) Gratton (2007)
Self Organising	Where from seemingly from random chaos, order and coherence will emerge from the independent actions of the members of the group	**Sense making**; without agenda to making sense of a situation and act into it; the notion of 'shared significances' between members, self regulation and membership through language **Interfaces:** Not explicit	Capra 1997, Shaw (1998, 2002) Stacey (1992,2001,2003) Anderson (1999) Goodwin (1994) Grant et al (1998), Shotter (1993) Taylor & Robichaud (2004)
Patterns	The structuring and social processes within a group	**Sense making**; the habitual response as to how things are perceived or spoken about which limit an appreciation of difference **Interfaces:** The understanding of different facts and patterns to create something new	Goodwin (1994) Pascale et al (2000) Anderson (1999) Woodilla (1998) Weick (1995) Brown (2000), Shaw (1998) Pfeffer & Sutton (2000) Czarniawska –Joerges (1992) Langfield

			Smith (1992) Gratton (2007)
Push towards Order	The almost gravitational pull towards order in a system	**Sense making;** movement into action through dialogue, a 'discourse of direction', plausibility and coherence rather than truth to move forward, the role of dialogue, storytelling and narration as vehicles for action through sense making. Labelling and bracketing to help create order, **Interfaces**: integration drivers for movement into action	Stacey (1992, 2001) Griffin (2002) Taylor & Robichaud (2004) Gephart (1991) Hardy (2001), Grant et al (1998) Engestrom & Middleton (1998) brown (2000), Boyce (1996) Lichtenstein (1997) Alvesson & Karreman (2000) Ford & Ford (1994, 1995) Gratton & Ghoshal (2002) Shotter (1993) Barry & Elmes (1997) Letiche (2000)
EDGE OF CHAOS	The boundary between order and chaos, also known as 'bounded instability'	**Sense making**; the known and the unknown', the co existence of contrary, the opportunity for changing aspects of understanding, destabilisation of sense making through past experience **Interfaces:** Working across boundaries	Burnes (2004), Stacey(1992, 2001) Brown (2000) McKenzie et al (2007), Eisenhardt (2000) Snowdon (2004) Critchley (1997) Gioia et al (2000) Marshall & Rollinson (2004) Weick (1995) Balogun & Johnson (2004)
Boundaries	A container or frame between two entities. From a complexity perspective this is between order and chaos	**Sense making:** a frame to distinguish difference, mutually different points of view, blurring of meaning, language as a means of creating common sense and therefore keeping something bound, the movement of meaning across boundaries, creation of local knowledge, acting within a context, language as a means of crossing boundaries **Interfaces:** separation without separateness, boundary spanning	Wheatley (1992) Stacey (1992,1993, 2001) Campbell (2000) Lewis (2000) Langfield Smith (1992) Marshak (1998) Nahapiet & Ghoshal (1998) Yanow (2004) Bateson (1972) Cunliffe (2001) Senge et al (2005) Gratton (2007)Morgan (1998) Santos & Eisenhardt (2005)
Small Variations/ Bifurcations,	The point in a system where a choice occurs and breaks off into something different	**Sense making:** The noticing of subtle differences of message or the suppression of anything that goes against the 'legitimate' view. **Interfaces:** Not explicit	Shaw (2002, 1998) Capra (2002, 1997) Stacey (2001) Wheatley (1992) Pascale et al (2000) Snowdon (2006) Prigogine (1997) Houchin & McLean (2005) Morrisin & Millikin (2000) McKenzie et al (2007) Boje (1995) Brown (2000), Weick (1995) Isabella (1990)
Dampening & Amplifying Feedback	The identification of a weak signal and either amplifying it thus creating	**Sense- making;** the amplification and building of difference to reframe things in a novel way. **Interfaces:** Reframing through dialogue	Argyris & Schön (1996) Weick (1995)

	change, or suppressing it to retain the status quo		
Paradox	The simultaneous presence of two contradictory or ambiguous elements	**Sense making:** Dialogue as a means of working with paradox, bringing paradox to the fore, equifinal meanings **Interfaces;** Working with difference to create something new from different perspectives	Hampden Turner (1991) McKenzie 1994), McKenzie et al (2007) Denison et al (1995), Westenholz (1993) Pettigrew (2000) Ghoshal & Bartlett (2000) Glynn et al (2000) Streatfield(2001) Griffin & Stacey (2005) Lewis (2000) Donellon et al (1986) Hazen (1993) Meyerson & Scully (1995) Isaacs (1998)
ORDER GENERATING RULES	The concern with 'deeper rules' and structures which help keep systems at the 'edge of chaos' without disintegrating	**Sense making;** the dialogic constraints of language, rituals and rules of language **Interfaces:** The use of overarching 'rules' and distinctions between authority, task, identity	Prigogine(1997) Mackintosh & McLean (1999) Brown & Eisenhardt (1997) Lichtenstein (2006) Giroux& Taylor (2002) Weick (1992), Shaw & Stacey (2006) Gioia (1998) Hirschhorn & Gilmore (1992)
Order Generating rules	Deep rules which provide minimum structures for maximum flexibility	**Sense making;** See above **Interfaces**: See above	As above
Improvisation	Spontaneous adaptation within a loose framework	**Sense making;** valuing ambiguity of meaning **Interfaces:** Working with different approaches to create something new between groups	Barrett (1998) Weick (1995) Bradbury & Lichtenstein (2000) Middleton 1998

APPENDIX 6: Sense-making – Key methodologies employed

Author	Article	Date	Theme	Methodology
Donnellon A, Gray B, Bougon M	Communication, Meaning and Organised Action	1986	A consideration of whether shared meaning is necessary for action and the potential for the integration of the two perspectives.	A discourse analysis of a whole episode of communication to identify the communications mechanisms responsible to develop meaning in a group. The communication episode was a behavioural simulation undertaken by a group of undergraduates.
Isabella L	Evolving Interpretations As Change Unfolds: How Managers Construe Key Organizational Changes	1990	To develop a model of how managers construe organizational events as change unfolds in a medium sized urban financial institution	Case study involving, sampling, grounded theory, interviews and coding.
Gephart, R	Succession Sensemaking and Organisational Change: A story of a Deviant College President	1991	To determine how concepts of succession sense-making and story telling can help to understand the management of organisational change	Storytelling generated through unstructured interviews
Jones M.O	What if Stories Don't Tally with the Culture	1991	Considers the contradiction between organisational culture and a contradiction or mis-alignment of the stories told within it.	Literature review
Langfield-Smith, K.	Exploring the Need for a Shared Cognitive Map	1992	To elicit the shared perceptions of a group of individuals in relation to a particular organizational domain.	Cognitive mapping
Weick, K.	The collapse of sensemaking : The Mann Gulch Disaster	1993	The analysis of a case study showing the interactive disintegration of role structure and sense-making in a minimal organisation.	Re-analysis of a case study by Norman Maclean, the original of which was constructed using interviews, trace records, archival records, direct observations, personal experience and mathematical models
Boje D	Stories of the Storytelling Organization: A Postmodern Analysis of	1995	Theorises Walt Disney enterprises as a story telling organisation in which an active-reactive interplay of, pre-modern, modern and post-modern discourses occur	Analysis of data and stories from the Walt Disney archives 1989/1990, which were considered from a pre-modern,

	Disney as 'Tamara-Land'			modern and post-modern framework
Boyce M	Organizational Storytelling:a critical review	1996	A review of several key studies on story and storytelling in organisations.	Review of organisational story and storytelling research conducted with symbolic, social constructionist and critical perspectives has examined key studies and reflected on the perspectives from which the studies have been conducted
Brown, A	Making Sense of Inquiry Sensemaking	2000	To gain insight into the sense-making processes of an inquiry teams sense-making. And to consider sense-making as a narrative process	Discourse analysis of written texts
Hardy C	Researching Organizational Discourse	2001	This article looked at four challenges for empirical researchers and how an ongoing programme of discourse analysis has attempted to address them	Discourse analysis of multiple forms of discourse including cartoons
Balogun J, Johnson G	Organizational Restructuring and Middle Manager Sensemaking	2004	This study looked at sense-making during an imposed shift from hierarchical to decentralised organisation. It identified a 'replacement' pattern of schema development in which middle managers moved from shared through clustered sense-making, to shared but differentiated sense-making	Longitudinal qualitative study, using diaries and focus groups
Jemison D	*The Importance of Boundary Spanning Roles in Strategic Decision Making*	*1984*	*Boundary spanning and inter-organisational influence on strategic decision making.*	*Study of 15 organisations using 3 different types of technology. 139 questionnaires sent out. (89% response rate) Multi rater scale, computed by averaging responses*

N.B This analysis conducted early in the D.B.A process as part of the 'methodology' element of my CDP. It was used to establish an appropriate methodology. A number of articles on sense making were examined for their methodological approach.

Appendix 7 – Example of a pre workshop questionnaire

1. **Which workshop are you attending?**	
2. **What part of the business do you work in? eg BB, BD**	BD
3. **Having read the Top Ten document are there any areas that you still feel unclear about? If so which?**	No.
4. **Are there any other issues related to the Operating Framework which have not been addressed in the document?**	1. Bases test requires business case assumption. BD lead the test. BB input into the business plan. In case, there are different views, who has the final say on the business plan? 2. BMP process lead and own by BB. JTBD must be endorsed by BD. BB has to present the BMP for Opco board for approval. In case of different views, who has the final view on JTBD & BMP?
5. **How would you describe the way you (BD/BB) work together?**	Now, it is getting better. The first year, BD just received the challenges, criticism and push for speed delivery. There were not enough constructive support and built in the past.
- What helps?	1. Now, Leader gives more trust and support to BD team. 2. More sharing of plan and projects update… two sided. (not only from BD to BB). 3. Cross-countries sharing at RBT helps demonstrated more creativity and operational excellence are critical to success.
- What hinders?	1. Mindset. Not much left for BB to do. BB looks only at the same elements of marketing as BD. And look for weaknesses side. 2. Skills. BB skills are pretty weak when compared to other countries. This leads to not excellent in execution.
6. **What is the key achievement you feel your combined category / country team has made?**	*Names a specific business project.*
- Describe what helped make it successful	The change of BB project leader to xxx. Even though, it's a bit late, but still in time. She has the right skills,

	right attitude, more thorough. And we can see BB/BD work as a team, building and helping each other. Leader involves in more details which helps as his team is not that experience.
7. Can you provide an example of where an initiative you worked on together was less successful?	1. *names specific project*. BD has rushed the work to deliver OTIF. It has been agreed BB for implementation in April. So far, the mix is not yet executed. Not keeping the words and agreement.
- What do you think got in the way?	BD was asked to deliver the job as choices. Investment and resource put behind to deliver as agreed. But not executed. This has destroyed BD trust in BB.
- What were the issues you encountered?	- Integrity. Do not do as agreed. - Change mind and view. - Not proper planning, Quality of input to BD not rigorous enough (e.g. wrong no. of quantity of product for listing, etc.) - Not sufficient communication within BB (upward and downward).
8. In a broader business context what are the 3 key objectives in your work plan that you need to deliver this year?	*Names three projects*
9. What do we need to do to ensure that we have adequate skills in place? **Please be specific**	1. Lead by example. Standard of behaviour. Once agreed, do it. 2. Partnership mindset. 3. Building each other. BD to focus on quality of mix, BB to focus on great execution strategy and plan. 4. Leaders to provide coach to junior.

Appendix 8: Data Collection – Summary of collection occasions Case Study 1

Data	S.Africa	China L	China S	India	Thailand	Brazil	Japan	France	China H	Arabia	
Diagnostics	10	12	10	9	14	10	14	7	1	11	97
Pre w/shop phone convs	3	3	3	4	5	3	2	3	2	2	30
Pre w/shop meetings											
-HRBPs	2	2	2	3	3	2	4	2	2	3	25
-VPs	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	20
-Delegates	2	-	-	5					4	1	
-Chairmen /SVPs	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1		8
Meals	3		1		2					3	9
Workshops	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Post diagnostic	7	4	3								
Post workshop interviews	4	2	4		1	3	2	4	4	4	21 (some in more than 1 workshop

Appendix 9 - The story of a workshop

Each workshop differed but I am using one example to help illustrate some of the content of what the challenges were at the interface. The particular workshop chosen occurred in the middle of the first case study, and was fairly representative.

The issues faced by the interface were described by the VPs both in telephone conversations prior to the event and a joint face to face the day before the meeting. It was from these issues that the dialogue questions were created.

The context of the interface was that it had seen share decline over the last ten years, with stiff competition and a recent increase in raw materials. The relationship between the two teams was perceived as working satisfactorily; although interestingly one VP felt more positive than the other on the relationships across the interface; the HRBP described a lack of trust; *'there was no trust before. On a scale of 0-5 I would have said that they were between 0-1'*; and the participants themselves described the way they worked in the pre-workshop questionnaire as; *'Defending, lack of credibility on both sides'*

Their challenge was how they worked with inherent contradictions and tensions in the system and found away to discuss and decide upon dilemmas. A specific dilemma facing the team was that of pricing, where the brand because of raw materials needed to put prices up but the country because of its current economy felt it an inappropriate action. The BD VP described the current inertia over taking price increases as a form of aversion to risk taking that he saw across the interface. The teams were also challenged by brand communication and perceptions that advertising and promotions were being under invested. This lead to some frustrations by the local team who felt that they didn't have the tactical tools available to them to ameliorate the situation; nor did they feel confident in the Brand Development team delivering timely and appropriate activity into the market. *'I have serious doubts that they understand their impact of what they do in the xxx market'*

An aspect of interface relationships that came through both in the diagnostic and pre workshop conversations; (and indeed was an issue at several other workshops) was the amount of time the groups spent convincing each other of solutions; thus creating quite an introspective environment rather that focusing their energies on the external world of competitors and consumers.

The content of the early morning discussions focused on establishing their separate and mutual objectives; which in effect was their annual plan and included a need to increase margins in one part of the business and to move the consumer from one product format to another in another part of the business.

As two juxtaposed statements form the priorities session demonstrate the solution for one part of the business becomes the issue for the other.
'Our major challenge is moving xxx margins forward'
Versus
'The lack of competitiveness in xxx is aggravated by price increase and bottom line pressure in the yyy business'

The interface wasn't symmetrical; there was no easy balance to be had.

The global team had different priorities than ours ie xx brand we (region) are only 10% of total turnover, so I have to fight for my priorities as well. It is so difficult not just to align views, but also to call attention in the countries.
What was important to one was far less significant to the other.
'*Every time it comes to discuss it, it is never the priority for the business as a whole.*

The theme of global / local tensions and dilemmas came through in this as in many other workshops;
'*For instance just got GPS (*Engagement survey*) results for BD in xxx- good scores, but bad score on ability to make changes fast, and my reading is that because yyy is so global our ability to change stuff or to react or attack for local needs is low.*
It is intrinsic to the org model we have picked. We are finding ways of working around it but the tension comes in every single decision point we are making.

Coming from these conversations was again the sense that they spent a lot of time selling to each other from separate perspectives rather than looking mutually at how to address issues. There were no easy answers available but the team had become caught up in a game of trying to convince each other.

Mid morning there were a series of conversations which explored the interface from each others perspective using exercises such as 'in my shoes' which helped each side understand the frustrations, issues, challenges and impacts of the other. The purpose of this exercise was to help 'loosen up' thinking so that the group would be receptive to the subsequent dialogues.
The first dialogue picked up on a theme; which had come through in the pre diagnostic, VP interviews and indeed the morning session: *What do we need to do to spend less time convincing each other?*
I have included here a slightly lengthy piece of transcript from a participant; reflecting on the dialogue.
'What marked me a lot was the discussion on the honesty between BB & BD. What do I mean? Sometimes we don't think that the global innovation is the best for the country. I might deploy something that might not be the best local solution. But we keep trying to sell this initiative to the countries even when we know its not the best option. And they know it's not the best option. What we actually need to do is stop selling and sit down and acknowledge that and then look at how we can make this initiative work best. If we are honest about where we are we will build a better initiative rather than faking enthusiasm. On the other side sometimes BB hold back information and try and avoid providing important information ie TMI info or whether something was changed in implementation. The honesty is needed in both parts to drive a good relationship. This marked me very much in the discussion'.

There were no 'silver bullet' solutions; but rather then hold themselves in a cycle that was going nowhere they were able to understand the issues from each others perspectives. I have included here the bullet points from each of the three breakout groups as they fed back into plenary.

Group 1
- Ultra clear and agreed underlying strategy, implementation roadmap, priorities, timing and targets
- Earlier involvement of 'the other side'. Agree and make key trade offs early
- 60% agreement, 100% commitment. Find the right balance between authority and interdependency

- Agree sharper JTBDs (Jobs to be done)– clearer targets / KPIs (Key performance indicators)
- Identify and involve key decision makers early enough
- Trust and rely on experience. Trust grows from stronger relationships, honesty and info sharing
- Honesty and transparency in all communications. Saying 'no', 'I don't know' and 'I think it is good/ bad'…

Group 2
- Use stakeholder interviews more often to avoid 'surprises' along the projects
- Plan and agree fully and clearly communicate across all teams. KPIs to be clearly defined
- Create the 'touch point' to get proper inputs from both sides (all levels … at once)
- Involve local team during the risk assessment process
- Improve timing and quality input to IPM (Innovation process) documents (Local at early stages)
- Clarity to execute your own work without feeling insecure all the time

Group 3
- Transparency
- Clarification on targets and possible impacts for good and bad, not to loose focus on the new
- Assumptions on projects- explicit and agreed
- Research results
- BD participate more forums with BB Sharing data from countries , ex shopper research (NB – But here there was a good conversation between the difference between a good baton change and running all the way together… so need to balance this involvement to what is useful and what is duplication of effort).

As can be seen there was quite a lot of similarity coming out of each of the groups. The following is the joint output from the group in terms of what they would do going forward.
- More detailed implementation roadmap and KPIs. (Targets / Profit / Share). This will help us with the role of each project, its deployment etc
- Mutual trust – be honest about the potential of the mixes we are delivering to the countries and the countries to trust us more that we will know what is right. It is about: 'this is what it is'…' these are strengths and weaknesses of the project' and then move on together. We need to stop selling and buying. Be mature and open about the things we are able to do and the things we aren't. (This links to the VP suggestion of joint monthly opportunities to challenge).
- We need to discuss assumptions early on

Of particular interest here is the suggestion of a monthly 'challenge session'. This in fact developed into one of the two or three key actions for the workshop. It was put in place and was still working very successfully several months later.

The second dialogue came out of the pre conversations with the VPs and in particular linked to the challenges they were having at the interface in working with dilemmas such as price increases.

In (cell name) we are running a transformation. If we keep doing things the same we will get the same results. We need to take more risks to do things differently.

But what does 'taking risks' mean to us, and how do we deal with their implications? Think about this morning's conversation, think about open-mindedness

Again transcript from a participant is shown below to provide some insight into the conversations.

> *'This was the best discussion with xxx. The meeting was so much more useful than I thought it would be. We put on the table the frustrations we had as regional and local teams and defined a way of working.*
>
> *I remember the regional team being driven by what is available globally and trying to deploy what's in the global toolbox- so sometimes there is no solution available. There was a feeling that the local team didn't trust what we were recommending to them, and felt that the local team were not seeing the quality of the work the global team had done But we concluded that the tool box might not be exactly what was needed but that the local team had to trust us to make it relevant to the countries.*
>
> *We have to talk more and understand the expectations. If something new comes up than we will see how we can work on new initiatives, but if not the local team needs to trust us.*

Again a summary of the two breakout conversations is shown below:

Group 1
- Agree on the potential risks together
  - Agree on how to mitigate the risks together
- Focus on the big risks and the show stoppers
- There is also the risk of loosing the opportunity. Doing nothing is in itself a risk.
  - How to minimise it.

Group 2
- Checking points to 'really' review performance and correct route.
- Giving time for the mix to work in the market-place and to 'take' the risk in the short term
- Greater individual risk and trust
- Establish a 'worst case' scenario – Agree how far we will go before reviewing it and define a clear Plan B. Agree at what point Plan B would be actioned.
- Learn how to bring things to the table?

However, because the topic was more abstract the dialogues tended to be more difficult. This was reflected in a conversation I had with the VP after the event.

'This was a harder discussion to get under the skin of. We still need to get clear on what it is we need to change in order to take risks. It is difficult to get to the right evaluation of the risks in advance and find a common criterion (and tools) to measure the risk. We need to be able to move from impressions to finding a way to get to the facts of the risk. We have different perceptions of the risk' (VP2 CS1)

This conversation was reflected in the plenary. One of the things that appeared to resonate was the risk of doing nothing; of abdicating from really tackling an issue. But the group still struggled with what it was they really needed to be aware of or change to take a risk; the closest the conversation got in terms of moving this forward was to start working with worst case scenarios.

Again through plenary the groups agreed on some mutual actions going forward.

- Recognise the big risks and have a conversation upfront around what we are going to measure and how we are going to make the decision
- Establish a 'worst case' scenario – Agree how far we will go before reviewing it and define a clear Plan B. Agree at what point Plan B would be actioned. Look more holistically and laterally about Plan B.
- Remember the risk of doing nothing

The action plan for the group going forward was literally the half dozen bullet points from the two dialogues. Subsequent conversations indicated that the actions from the first dialogue were particularly successful; the latter partially so.

Appendix 10 - Example transcript of a post workshop interview

1. **Thinking back to the BB/BD interface workshop, what were the important things you thought the workshop needed to get clarity on?**

We needed to understand the tensions in terms of the different definitions of success. In the operating framework we face different day to day challenges eg BB need to deliver financial commitments and short term wins, (eg monthly reports) and they have to balance all the other categories they are handling, whereas in BD we have to be more focused and more obsessed with the particular category or brand.

Plus the matrix nature of the interface will always invite tension. The cure is to have a common set of success indicators. That doesn't mean you both have to do the same thing, you still delineate who does what, but you need a common definition of success and agreed set of KPIs.

I think the other problem is that if you 'follow the money' trail that it invites the need to negotiate – we control the innovation money, they own the deployment money. You might think that tension is good as it balances power, but it isn't because the other side can hold you hostage with the media support etc.

If I look at my (*competitor*) counterparts they would even control the media money, which really liberates their country colleagues to execute with excellence. But the (*competitor*) model can demotivate the country.

We need to find a way that stops the control and power games getting in the way of doing the right thing at the interface. That's why BD feels like 2nd class citizens. We are all overstretched. It's difficult to create things out of nothing. On top of this, we have to go through the strain of travel, make lots of family sacrifices and weather the tension of having to sell, manage perceptions and manage egos. All it takes is one country to be the weakest link. In the meantime nothing gets done.

Why don't we meet OTIF? Because we spend more time debating things than doing it! If something goes wrong the other side can always bitch and v.v. Somehow we have lost the simplicity. We used to have a decision maker above innovation and deployment, now everything has to go up through to Patrick. In the old days there was a common agenda and we were judged on the same measures. These days just to get a mix off the ground is a celebration, we loose sight of the fact that it has to deliver market share. Also the role of the chairman is important. A lot of chairmen still question the mixes as a default. Often they don't get to the details, but just take the feeds from other people and use anecdotal comments. Some seem to think it is their mandate to question every single mix.

We also have an ineffective MO structure. The ROLTs should play a much more fundamental role, the plans from the ROLT should be 'locked'

2. **What were the important themes that came out of the workshop?**

I think these have been described above.

3. **Specifically, can you think if any of the following were important, and why / why not?**
    a. **Joint purpose**

It is a minimum requirement. It is the basic foundation of one Unilever. If we can't get this then we can't get off the ground. But it is not a given, we all need to agree and clarify issues, define success and the route to success

b. Prioritisation

This is another no brainer, and this is where (*main board*) must really take stronger leadership. I am happy that they agree now leading the agenda in locking the plans for 09-10. It is one of the burning issues of the matrix. Take China, the greenest of green cells, but there are many shades of green. And potentially in China there is not enough capability or capacity to deploy all the green categories. So how do they rationalise the allocation of these limited resources? For instance, (xx) is only one element of the China agenda and thus we are completing for that resource with (*names other categories*) categories. Potentially the BB guys will take their eyes off the (*category*) ball and I feel so helpless. We are all vying for the attention of China Op Co, and in particular the sales force.

c. Roles and responsibilities

Yes important. IBC helps to clarify, but we still have some issues around capability re POS delivery. BD needs to deliver the master plan and the OP co works on the permutations; different countries have different beliefs as to how to approach this. The Top Ten grey areas can confuse as much as help as sometimes they confuse things with IBC. Countries still think that they have the liberty to modify the key visual, but if they modify the composite picture it is no longer an adaptation, you are already ripping it apart, we need further clarity.

The role of in-store visibility is becoming a bigger issue. We are staring to recognise the importance of in-store communications to get to the consumer, who having put her coat on has become a shopper.
There is still power and ego at play at work as to who determines what goes into the store.

Does BB have the right capability and enough people to do a proper job? It needs skill and experience to ensure that every exposure to the consumer is impactful and powerful. We can't afford a weak link in consumer contact

On a separate matter, BD is out powered in the hierarchy of Asia. Apart from (xx), in most categories the highest level is w/l 4 who have to confront w/l 5s and w/l6s. Until the hierarchies are balanced the power play has a bias. I think the (xx) model is best and should be followed elsewhere, with a stronger BD champion for key categories in Asia AMET. The challenges for the developing world are different, and we need to approach them accordingly.

Top 10 grey areas
See before
d. IBC
See before
e. Local / global tension

Yes I understand the tension, but I am blessed that I have three brands where I am the creator (xx) and two where I am the receiver (xx), but even in these I have a difficult market so I am given the latitude to lead on certain projects specific to Japan and China.

But I have sympathies with my RCVP colleagues, who are treated by Global brand leaders as mere mediators or glamorised gofers.

Global brands need to respect the regions more. Some global brand VPs seem to go direct to a country. They will need the full story. They need to understand the category portfolio play in that country. You may have a case where multiple Global brand VPs talk to the individual country and champion purely their individual brands.

The RCVP will be able to configure what is a priority, when is it the priority and agree the full deployment of such with each OPCO
.

Ultimately, the framework is only a framework. People make it work. Therefore, character and behaviour play a bigger part. Good people with good intentions will always have good conversations. Where there is mal intent, it will always smell it will be spotted and there will be a fight. How do we make sure that the structures and framework continue to move things forward and that we don't paralyze things?

4. **During the workshop what particular exercises / sessions did you find particularly useful and why?**

What makes a difference is the honest conversations about what it is we need from the other side shared publicly and openly about what it is that we are challenged by. That both VPs understand what is preventing us. Able to have crucial conversations very honestly and constructively- when the leaders are having good conversations, then the teams follow.

I think they were honest because people are tired of the tension, tired of the endless discussions and debates with each other. We've got to a point where we just want to start winning again! We don't want to spend our careers bitching about each other and beating each other up. The real enemy is out there.

5. **Specifically probing**
   a. **Prioritization exercise BB/BD (inc purpose)**
   This was crucial as it helped see what was important for each other; what was common, what was unique and to see the struggles of each team
   b. **'In my shoes' story**

   It disarms people a bit. I think especially with your senior leadership, to see the human side, they take on a larger than life image, all work and struggles and challenges. We all have passions as people we are not so different.
   Beach picture a nice to have to illustrate the point.
   c. **'What does good look like'**
   This was important because it is objective proof and we can see where we have done it, it's no longer theory but a test case to replicate.
   d. **Quiz on Top 10**
   It's a game- nothing more
   e. **Dialogues – and which one in particular**
   Crucial; the more of this the better. Needs the smaller groups, otherwise some watch. Need to make sure that there is enough time for this so that

they aren't rushed. They are at the heart of it, everything else is intermission, or warming people up for the main act.

Focus on the main issue of what is really bugging you, what are you prepared to give, how can you both win. Use the structure of the('contract template')- what I can do for you, what you can do for me.

The questions are important, they need to be what is the question we need to ask here, not platitudes.

6. **Was there anything you still felt missing from the workshop that you felt would have helped working better across the interface?**

If I'd change anything I would really pre identify the key individuals who have issues with each other and put them on the spot, it you don't it will remain unresolved

7. **What role do you think the VPs played?**

I think the VPs helped to show the way and should be exemplars of good behaviours and good intentions, and to inspire people to have their own good behaviours at all levels. We should galvanise the teams and wherever there is a hole we should be quick to sort it. Leaders should, above all, be people who understand that the only way to succeed is to get everyone to do what they are required to do and to be clear as to what is the big game, and not to get involved in the petty stuff. When you are clear of the big game then and what the priorities are it is easier to choose the battles and to rally behind them. The VPs need to articulate this.

8. **One of the themes that came out both before and during the workshop was trust.**

    a. **What do you think was hindering trust prior to the workshop**
    b. **Did anything happen during or post the workshop that helped trust**?

Reliability is probably the better word. Unless you are able to demonstrate that you are reliable, no amount of rhetoric on Trust will resonate. Trust isn't something you declare, it's something you demonstrate.

Is the word also confidence? - The reason I am very specific in the wording is that you want to take away any philosophy, it needs to be as palpable as possible; when you say you would deliver, you must. When you say you would phone, you should.

You can rely on me, therefore you trust me and are confident in me.

Trust and confidence are sentiments that follow from reliability.

Of course it's not easy…things get in the way. Marketing is alchemy not chemistry. The consumer mind is fickle and competition can always rock the boat.. But if we are reliable we will constantly update each other to make sure that the reliability isn't damaged. People need to be kept up to speed, so even where news is negative and there is not good progress, expectations can be managed.

We forget common sense when we are threatened because we are in a self defence mode and become very impulsive. Common sense isn't that common.

Appendix 11 - **Concepts Definitions**

Concept	Description	Quotes
1. Marketing Processes eg IBC	These refer to functional processes which either helped or hindered the group working	*The skill will be to make sure that we get the quality of the items not just the process. (VP 7-CS)* *Brought Lizzie Chang in to do a session on IBC 1 as it seemed to be a particular sticking point for the group from the grey areas highlighted in the diagnostic (W/S 3-CS1)*
2. Roles & Responsibilities of other functions	Lack of clarity between marketing and other functions eg Supply Chain / R & D	*We are still finding gaps eg us with Supply Chain (VP4-CS1)*
3. Roles & Responsibilities of the interface partners	The clarity or lack of, between the two sides of the interface as to who was responsible for what	*With R & Rs they know what they should be doing but they tend to break at the border(HR3 CS1)* *- I heard that the BB team were a bit under, because everything was going to the BD team –(HR3 CS1)* *There is a lot of confusion, for example some jobs like one supplier for packaging materials, but this is different form the previous one… so who goes to the factory to approve the materials? (P3-CS1)* *It just feels that if you aren't clear about who is doing what, then that becomes the source of all that follows (P5-CS1)* *rational understanding was never a big problem, but the buy in wasn't always there. (VP3-CS1)* I need clarity on new roles to make grey area sessions relevant AH post There is lack of role clarity – (P12 CS2) There is a struggle in BB where people don't know where their role stops and starts (P6 CS2)
4. Behaviours associated with Roles & Responsibilities	Behaviours seen to result from disputes over roles and responsibilities, eg ownership, accountability, defensiveness	*- there was a sense that the BB team constantly oversteps the boundaries , so that when the category team bring out a 'big hit' the BB team have already done their thing out of kilter.(HR4-CS1)* *- Sense of the teams working against each other re deployment of budget, advertising than the collective ambition to win in France.* *- Underpinning this was confused accountabilities (HR4-CS1)* *BD try to push all the dirty jobs to BB (P3-CS1)*

		There was a lot of policing of each other rather than doing our own roles. (VP3-CS1)
		Confused parallel working (Pre W/S8-CS1)
		All want to be responsible but there is no sense of accountability (P4 CS2)
5. Local Jewels	A specific marketing issue where local brands had transferred ownership to the BD organisation	*Local jewels – re the design of a local jewels project, 'They still want to be the decision makers' (PreW/S1-CS1)*
6. Ways of working / team dynamics (ie interdependency)	See themes below	
a. Interdependency	References to the two teams needing the support of each other, and understanding how they relied on each other	*Teams need to understand how they are interconnected, even if it is not 100% synchronicity.(HR2-CS1)*
		It was not just about the operating framework, you do that, I do that, but the element of together is very important. Its not about being two different silos (VP5-CS1)
		I understand the intent but im not sure my counterpart does (P8 CS2)
b Behaviours / Mindset	References to behaviours (general) manifesting themselves between the teams	*Sometimes we feel that we don't want to be honest because they will abuse it (P5-CS1)*
		Ultimately, the framework is only a framework. People make it work. Therefore, character and behaviour play a bigger part.(VP1-CS1)
c. Integration / Inclusiveness	References to working together and including each other in activities	*(we are in love with each other!). It makes a lot of difference, it is now a pleasure to work with them, it seems like we are talking the same language (P8-CS1)*
		We work as a team, lot of interaction (preW/s4-CS1)
d. Feedback & Review	Feedback to each other both about how they felt, but also about how projects were progressing	*Wish list of what the other wanted you to do and why. We never talk to each other to explain. It came as a surprise that they wanted more of this, and we have to do more of that part(VP7-CS1)*
e. Balanced teams	This links to the capability concept, and the need for expertise and numbers to be balanced across the two teams	*its almost the attitude of; I'm as good as if not better than them, if I'm in BD. (HR2-CS1)*
f Robust transparent communication processes (timely)	Both the formal and informal communication processes; both in terms of quality and timeliness	*We don't always communicate and we need to formalize the touch-point, the right way down the hierarchies. (HR2-CS1)*
		You can't rely on a document, it's about both parties communicating and working together(P7-CS1)

		- What I see is it is more about whether we are brave enough to be more transparent to each other and share the concerns and difficulties. First it is about being brave enough to open ourselves and then about sharing the information with the other party. Then both sides can achieve the mutual understanding. (P7-CS1) *Lack of timely & constant communications (Pre W/S5- CS1)* *I talk to Peter but it doesn't go anywhere, blockages- Peter doesn't communicate what I expect him to communicate. W/S5-CS1)* *Poor communication – it barely exists P1 CS2)*
g Skilled dialogue	The ability to have conversations which enabled the issues to be surfaced and discussed in a constructive way	*They were working together really understanding the issues, and coming out with quite creative solutions. (HR3-CS1)* *All the breakouts have a very big conversation. They were really discussing, not just discussing to finish a list of activities for a workshop. They were really there(HR3-CS1)* *- The content to be discussed was the content that really mattered. (Moose on the table)(HR6-CS1)* *- What makes a difference is the honest conversations about what it is we need from the other side shared publicly and openly about what it is that we are challenged by.(VP1-CS1)* *- The questions are important; they need to be- what is the question we need to ask here, not platitudes. (VP1-CS1)* *What made it were the conversations, real power was in the dialogues. (VP2-CS1)* *The expectation was that we think we work well with the French, but that was superficial and we avoid real debates for the sake of looking ok. (VP6-CS1)* *Endless debates –PreW/S9-CS1)* *The trigger in the dialogues was that they noticed that they all colluded with allowing the issue of how long and convoluted it was to make a decision. It was something they all agreed on – a statement. Then without making judgement or blaming or questioning why, they moved on to how it could be.(W/S6)* *'not brave enough to say our doubts so we end up defending'(W/S7-CS1)* *The dialogues of (workshop 1) were long overdue (P12 CS2)*
h. Team Relations (descriptors)	Descriptors of how the teams were working together	*Personal rapport – (PreW/S5-CS1)* *Open relationship PreW/S8-CS1)* *Lot of blaming (Pre W/S9-CS1)*

		Smooth with fireworks (Pre W/S10-CS1) *I got completely frustrated with x (P 9 CS2)*
i Internal selling	The notion that ideas had to be 'sold' to the opposite number and the time and effort that this involved. Preparation / time focused cf excessive challenge – see below	*To get away from selling to each other, and the pretence of I am buying what you are selling (HR6-CS1)* *But we keep trying to sell this initiative to the countries even when we know its not the best option. And they know it's not the best option. What we actually need to do is stop selling and sit down and acknowledge that and then look at how can we make this initiative work best. If we are honest about where we are we will build a better initiative rather than faking enthusiasm. (P8-CS1)* *they sometimes feel squeezed into selling somebody else's ideas. Haven't got their own destiny in their hands (VP5-CS1)* *Stop convincing each other. (Pre W/S6-CS1)*
j. Action Orientated	A focus on action rather than debate for the sake of it	*The second was even more concrete. It gave us something we could mobilise and hold each other accountable for* *- The brightest things that stand out from the workshop were the concrete actions eg the monthly meeting. It was the down to earth commitments (VP2-CS1)* *We were driving a better way forward, rather than driving the issue (VP7-CS1)*
k Appropriate use of data	Comments as to how data was being used	*I can feel the data sharing becoming much more transparent. BB hold back information and try and avoid providing important information(P8-CS1)* *Because we don't understand too well, we have a very superficial diagnostic of everything, so time is wasted in the passing of emails… lets concentrate on what we want to do rather than analysing what each other is doing' (W/S2-CS1)* *each was using data to do each others jobs and check up on each other – this wasn't a need to share data but using it as a weapon to show the other person was wrong. (W/S3-CS1)* *We haven't an info sharing system that works M T pre ClCS2* *Analysis paralysis – we have so much data we don't know what to do with it, we cant look at it in a timely fashion (M3 CS2)* *They aren't looking at the data from a global perspective* *I'm in favour of open sharing of data but our business partners need to be too (WS1CS2)*
l. Excessive internal challenge and debate	Linked to the internal selling, this indicates where participants felt there was too much needless debate for the sake of debate	*Evil challenging (PreW/S3-CS1)* *Excessive challenge rather than building solutions(Pre W/S3-CS1)*
m. Confidence	Individuals' confidence to act. Sometimes	*Confidence is a big issue (P3-CS1)*

	linked to feelings of being intimidated by opposite side	
7. Local market understanding	Refers to the need for the BD marketers to understand and take into consideration local market conditions	*Lack of understanding of local constraints (PreW/S8-CS1)* *BD team showed little understanding of local market (W/S1-CS1)* *Packaging banned by country(Pre W/S10-CS1)*
8. Quality Measures	The need for appropriate measurements	*Need clear quantitative measures for quality standards (PreW/S6-CS1)*
9. Pricing	A specific issue in two of the workshops and links to global / local tensions	*Resistance to price increase (PreW/S6-CS1)*
10. Resource allocation	The allocation of budgets and people	*Discussions about project resource. (Pre W/S6-CS1)* *Six of us to one of her (P6 p-re CS2)*
11. Consequences	The way the organisation did/ or did not act in the face of non- delivery	*– but we don't understand what each others and joint accountability is . Also we need consequences for not doing accountability (HR5-CS1)*
12. OTIF (On time in full)	This refers to a contract for projects between BB and BD, where as part of on-going project planning process BD will agree what will be delivered, when to their country counterparts	*Specifically around how we understand OTIF, and how France understand it. I do think that it is important for there to be space in the workshop for those themes peculiar to that interface to be worked on. (P5-CS1)* *Less respect to on time delivery –(Pre W/S2-CS1)* *little faith in the delivery from BD of OTIF. (W/S1-CS1)* *Everything is late which causes a lot of resentment(WS7-CS1)*
13. Leadership difference / alignment	References to how well / or not the VPs worked together / were aligned on what needed to be done	*This was the first time they have sat doing a joint thing.* *- In the workshop they still didn't come across as people who have a friendly interface- no banter between then, no smiling, no passion of 'we are together' (HR2-CS1)* *VPs trust is key because people look at how the bosses trust each other. (HR3-CS1)* *We don't take time out to spend as a leadership team together (P10 CS2)*
14. Innovation	References to the role of innovation for that cell / country interface for Case study 1/ 3 or between CMI and Marketing in Case study 2	*Good innovation (PreW/S9-CS1)* *No strong innovation (W/S3-CS1)*
15. Resource location (proximity to each other)	References to either the two sides of the interface being co-located (as it is in some countries) or where the two teams are significant distances apart	*locational proximity (Pre W/S4-CS1)* *Working out of the same office. PreW/S4-CS1)*

16. Capability	References to the marketing capability of each other. Certain interfaces had high turnover and sometimes quite junior staff	*One of our root causes is that we don't think their external capabilities are high, that they don't understand Europe P8 CS!)* *Ensure we have complete marketing professionals (Pre W/S6-CS1)* *Local team didn't feel it was good enough (Pre W/S8-CS1)*
17. Risk assessment	Reference to how risk of projects, decisions were assessed	*Need adequate risk assessment – Pre W/S5-CS1*
18a Credibility	References to credibility either of the other team as an entity or to specific individuals within it. This refers to credibility in terms of capability and ability to deliver. It tended to focus about the credibility of either parties expertise	*Lack of credibility on both sides (Pre W/S6-CS1)* *Not keeping agreements (PreW/S3-CS1)* *Constant feeling of the other side not delivering as also lack of clarity on expectations from each other (PreW/S4-CS1)* *A lot of distrust on both sides (PreW/S1-CS1)* *Trust confidence and reliability were dominant words in the conversation (W/S3-CS1)* *Reliability is probably the better word. Unless you are able to demonstrate that you are reliable, no amount of rhetoric on Trust will resonate. Trust isn't something you declare, it's something you demonstrate. Is the word also confidence? - The reason I am very specific in the wording is that you want to take away any philosophy, it needs to be as palpable as possible; when you say you would deliver, you must. When you say you would phone, you should. You can rely on me, therefore you trust me and are confident in me. Trust and confidence are sentiments that follow from reliability. Of course it's not easy...things get in the way. Marketing is alchemy not chemistry. The consumer mind is fickle and competition can always rock the boat.. But if we are reliable we will constantly update each other to make sure that the reliability isn't damaged. People need to be kept up to speed, so even where news is negative and there is not good progress, expectations can be managed. (VP1-CS1)*
18 b Trust	References to trust either of the other team as an entity or to specific individuals within it. This refers to trust in terms of integrity and intent	*Trust is the big one, we don't seem to trust each other(Pre W/S 7-CS1)* *Trust builds up all the time- you can't intuitively trust people, people need to deliver to their commitments and behave consistently. People need to do what they say they will do (VP3-CS1)* *At the workshop the two aspects of trust, people trust and expertise trust had been blurred, which created the tension. I think personal and professional trust are merged together- I don't distinguish between the two. Trust is a very authentic value, it's a one piece thing- it doesn't come in two bits. I can't disassociate (VP4-*

		CS1)
		'You add to the stress in my life – I feel disempowered, not connected. Most of our discussions are quick wins, intermittent; we need to have r proper conversation, regular and structured… If we can agree at a principle level then I don't need to know everything. (W/S7-CS1)
		' Why don't you say what you really think? Why do you try so hard to sell a global solution; why don't you say what you think?
		'Because if I do you will hold it against me'
		'If I show you that I am vulnerable and show you any doubt about any aspect of it you will use it against me… these are blackmail conversations' (W/S8-CS1)
		This reminds me that we MUST learn to trust others, as we sometimes are in situation that similar to a "blind" person. e.g. when have language barrier to understand "pop" culture.
		- Most factor that hinders trust is the fear of being challenged, because normally everyone wants the other side to accept their proposal. Fear of being refused and rejected. (P7-CS1)
		There was a feeling that the local team didn't trust what we were recommending to them, and felt that the local team were not seeing the quality of the work the global team had done – (P8-CS1)
		It's tense- im not sure we trust one another NW pre Cl
		The first revelation for me was that I didn't realise how big an issue it was and how the teams built trust. A lot of the issues were hanging on this. (HR1-CS1)
		you will gain more of our trust if you are more honest'.(P5-CS1)
		-remember saying that trust was an issue because of missed timings, surprise factors etc. This is less of an issue because communications have improved. Now we have early warnings and we problem solve together. But where any relationship gets off to a rocky start, trust is something that has to be won. Where things go wrong frequently there is a lack of confidence. As delivery improves then trust improves significantly (P6-CS1)
19. Different Obj. / Prioritisation	References to where each side either had different objectives, or was prioritising activities differently to each other	*not judged by the same shared measures, so when we have tough issues re prioritisation we need the same measures to make a decision. We use this to look at alignment now whereas previously we were talking along different lines and in a different language. This links to the shared data analysis approach- a more objective view, more transparent and open. (P2-CS1)*

		-We needed to understand the tensions in terms of the different definitions of success … But it is not a given, we all need to agree and clarify issues, define success and the route to success *- It is one of the burning issues of the matrix. Take China, the greenest of green cells, but there are many shades of green. And potentially in China there is not enough capability or capacity to deploy all the green categories. So how do they rationalise the allocation of these limited resources?... Potentially the BB guys will take their eyes off the 'Hair' ball and I feel so helpless. We are all vying for the attention of China Op Co, and in particular the sales force.* *- (Prioritisation) This was crucial as it helped see what was important for each other; what was common, what was unique and to see the struggles of each team (VP1-CS1)* *On BB/ BD side, list of things to do, some joint, some separate. If one is higher than the other you are fighting against each other, and the other side doesn't appreciate what you are doing.* *-Looking at the list of priorities it's an eye opener to see that you haven't got the same ones. We are working together but we have a difference in what we see in common. (VP4-CS1)* *I think people believe there is joint purpose but it is important to spell it out and check interpretation. (VP6-CS1)* It important we all understand our objectives AH post Why should I give this priority when nobody else is doing it DPH post
20. Performance	References to the group or the organisations performance	*Market share pressure (PreW/S10-CS1)*
21. Different perspectives	References to being able to see / or not the other sides point of view	*the Modes team were very passionate to talk about it because they could stand on their partner's side as well. Helped understand what actions they could do together (HR3-CS1)* *Many challenges because the important things are different for each side. Especially with ex pats need to understand perspective from the local team. (HR5-CS1)* *My learning and take out was the interpretation can be totally different, different ways of interpreting a message. We think we said one thing but the other side hear something different. (P7-CS1)* *We always think in our shoes, we don't think in their shoes.(VP7-CS1)*

		Understanding the different frames of reference was really useful. It was very useful to walk in each others shoes , as you are still stuck in your frame of reference and have to go through a lot of filters (P10 CS2)
22. Rules	References to to presence or absence of rules or standards as to how the interface worked (including the Top Ten Grey areas and Operating Framework; and the impact or not of these	*My perception when we started th workshops was that these (Top 10 Gray Areas) would be the central point of the workshop. But they haven't been; they are just a point of reference (HR1-CS1)* *The operating framework booklet is clear but cold (HR5-CS1)* *In daily work the interface is very Complicated- each interface is very different; so its more around having guidance than specific rules. - We live with them as black & white guidelines, but actually we need to adapt. They are just a guide. (P1-CS1)*
23. Structure	The impact of structure (organisation design) on how the interface was working	*We create a layer that doesn't help trust (VP5-CS1)* It adds more complexity than is necessary (P6 pre W/S2) BB is undersold by its structure (M4 CS2) One point of contact (P4 CS2)
24. Travel	The impact that travel was having on the two sides being able to work together. BD roles in some categories demanded extreme levels of travel covering massive geographies.	*Too much travel on BD side (PreW/S1-CS1)*
25. Career pathing	The change in the organisational structure also impacted the way marketing careers might progress. These are references to career movement/ or lack between BB / BD	*After the workshop we discussed how to develop careers across the interface- productive (VP2-CS1)* Career pathing stops at w/l 3 – (Pre WS2 CS2)
26 Aligned goals	The opposite of 19. Different Objectives, these are references to goal alignment between BB/ BD	*they need to have a common purpose, but they will never be 100% aligned. Teams can come to alignment without necessarily sticking to the grey areas.(HR2-CS1)* *Common purpose gives a broadness to the perspective- a higher broader meaning I can fight for- beyond the job description* *- Having a purpose helps positive challenge. (HR5-CS1)* *it's not just about what the joint purpose is, but what is the importance of that purpose to each of you? What is the mutual importance of this to each party? (P5-CS1)*

		Plus the matrix nature of the interface will always invite tension. The cure is to have a common set of success indicators. That doesn't mean you both have to do the same thing, you still delineate who does what, but you need a common definition of success and agreed set of KPIs. (VP1-CS1)
27. Power	These referenced to power dynamics both within the group and the leadership above it	*All it takes is one country to be the weakest link. In the meantime nothing gets done (VP1-CS1)*
28 Global / Local	These are references to the tensions between the local and global (or regional) parts of the organisation.	*It is intrinsic to the org model we have picked. We are finding ways of working around it but the tension comes in every single decision point we are making. But Skin care in Brazil is important – we are 3rd biggest skin country, so Lux is part based here and we get a lot of focus- we do get the budget to do what we need to do for Brazil(VP5-CS1)* *As a regional team you need to pick your battles. There are even tensions between the regions as there is only so much money and we are all competing (VP3-CS1)* *My sense is that there is a lot less tension as there is more appreciation of the bigger picture and less holding onto the past. (VP3-CS1)* *BBs job is to help understand what is not working. Then BDs role is to do something about it. Now it is more a joint problem that needs solving rather than a conflict. (VP4-CS1)* *This was part of the big discussion; the regional team were squeezed between global and local. Sometimes they are trying to represent global when their heart is not there (VP5-CS1)* *There is an issue with global / regional as well* *-It is the unsaid, regional global clarity and jobs to be done. We haven't done this on the global level and there is a lot of interpretation, which gives frustration- depends on the project- have different rules, (not even rules at brand level) - Haven't got a pattern of who does what yet, and even varies in the brand accountability, probably the biggest issue… you get lost in the middle.-There is a granularity that needs to be brought into the global level.-We don't have a global level but a collective of key countries, and a brand vision/ framework and coherence but deployment will vary. We struggle as to how to achieve through others, we tend to do it ourselves. We get into conflict when escalating tasks that others didn't design. Its when global tries to be local. (VP6-CS1)* I need to be able to make things relevant to the global and local needs (P6 CS2)

29. **Sense giving**	Specific references to the provision of adequate explanation to make content relevant to their particular context or group;	*I was expecting to get clarity on the new roles before I started to clarify on the grey areas. I needed clarity to make these sessions relevant to me. (P1 CS2)* *Part of me wondered whether in the earlier sessions the directors were using the sessions to make their own sense* *(P10- CS2)*
30. **Sense making**	Specific references to the process of sense making and to being given the time / space to make sense	*As soon as you engage in a situation you tend to make sense of it from your own experience.(P4 CS2)* *They were able to make sense to them and their business and it gives a sense of progress; you walk away saying we got somewhere and I was part of that.(P7 CS2)* *I think they need to make the sense to comprehend. Maybe they didn't 'make sense' but they made it relevant to them. Maybe their first step was to make sense of the problem before they started to provide an answer for it.* *(P9 CS2)*

Legend:
CS = Case Study,
W/S = one of 10 workshops in Case Study 1
VP = Vice President
HR= Human Resources Business Partner
P= Participant
MK = Marketeer (Case study 2 only)
Pre = information from pre-workshop survey

Appendix 12: Comparison of concepts by workshop – Case Study 1

Concept	W/shop 1	W/shop 2	W/shop 3	W/shop 4	W/shop 5	W/shop 6	W/shop 7	W/shop 8	W/shop 9	W/shop 10
1. Marketing Processes eg IBC	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
2. Roles involvement of other functions	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
3. Roles & Resps of Marketing	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
4. Behaviours associated with R & Rs	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
5. Local Jewels (non standard)	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
6. Ways of working	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
7. Local market understanding	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
8. Quality measures	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
9. Pricing		Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y
10. Resource allocation / budgets	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N
11. Consequences	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
12. OTIF (On time in full)	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
13 Leadership differences / alignment	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
14. Innovation	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y
15. Resource location eg proximity	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
16. Capability	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
17. Risk assessment	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
18. a/ b Credibility / Trust	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
19. Different Obj. / Prioritisation	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
20 Performance	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y
21. Different perspectives	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
22. Rules	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N
23 Structure	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y
24. Travel	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
25. Career Pathing	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
26 Aligned goals	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
27 Power	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
28 Global / Local	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N

Y = MENTIONED N= NOT MENTIONED

Concept	W/shop 1	W/shop 2	W/shop 3	W/shop 4	W/shop 5	W/shop 6	W/shop 7	W/shop 8	W/shop 9	W/shop 10
6a Interdependency	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y
6b Mindset	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	
6c Integration / Inclusiveness			Y							Y
6d Feedback			Y		Y		Y		Y	
6e Balanced teams										
6f Transparent communication processes	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
6g Skilled dialogue	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
6h Team relations		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y
6i Internal selling					Y		Y	Y		
6 jAction orientated	Y	Y								
6k Appropriate use of data		Y	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y
6 lExcessive internal debate & challenge			Y				Y			
6m Confidence (self)						Y	Y		Y	

Y =   MENTIONED N= NOT MENTIONED

Development of Findings – Concepts from Case Studies

Key Concepts
3. Roles & Responsibilities of the interface partners
6a. Interdependency
6b. Mindset
6f Transparent communication process
6g. Skilled dialogue
6j. Internal selling
6k. Appropriate use of data
7. Local market understanding
12. OTIF (On time in full)
18. Credibility / Trust
19. Different Obj. / Prioritisation
21. Different perspectives
26 Aligned goals
28 Global / Local

Appendix 13 – Key Concepts from Case Study 1

Case Study 2 - Workshop 1 coding

Pre Work shop Themes: Marketing Directors:	Workshop – Observation & Flipcharts
13. Leadership Differences / Alignment	1.Marketing Processes
19. Different Objectives / Prioritisation	3. Roles & Responsibilities
	8. Quality measures
Pre Workshop Themes: CMI Directors	10. Resource allocation
3. Roles & Responsibilities*	12. OTIF
4. Behaviours Associated with R & Rs	28. Local / Global
5. Resource Allocation	6a. Interdependency
16. Capability	6b. Behaviours / Mindset
18. Credibility & Trust	6c. Integration / Inclusiveness
23. Structure	6f Robust transparent communication process*
6a. Interdependency	6h. Team relationships
6b. Behaviour & Mindset	6k. Appropriate use of data*
6e Balance teams	*Denotes frequently referenced theme*
6k. Appropriate use of data	

Appendix 14: Case Study – Coding First Workshop

Case Study 2 – Workshop 2 Coding

Pre Miami- conversations	Miami Workshop
1.Marketing Processes	3. Roles & Responsibilities
2.Roles of other functions	10. Resource allocation
3. Roles & Responsibilities	29. Sense giving
4. Behaviours associated with R & Rs	30 Sense making
10. Resource allocation	
16. Capability	
18. Credibility & Trust	
19. Different objectives	
20. Performance	
23. Structure	
25. Career pathing	
28. Global / Local	
6c. Integration / Inclusiveness	
6f. robust transparent communication process	

Appendix 15: Case Study 2: Pre conversations 2nd workshop

Case Study 2 - Post Workshop – Conversations	
3. Roles & Responsibilities	6a. Interdependency
10. Resource allocation	6b. Mindset
13. Leadership alignment	6c.Integration / Inclusiveness
18. Trust	6d. Feedback
19. Different objectives*	6f. Robust transparent communications*
21. Different perspectives*	6g. Dialogue
22. Rules	6h. Team relations
23. Structure*	6j. Action orientated
28 Global / Local	
29. Sense giving*	* key concept
30 Sense making*	

Appendix 16: Case Study 2 : Post workshop conversations

Case Study 2 - Summary of concepts.	8. Quality Measures
	10. Resource allocation
1. Marketing processes	13 Leadership alignment - diff
3 Roles & Responsibilities	16 Capability
4. Behaviours R & Rs	18 Credibility - trust
6. Ways of Working	**19 Different objectives – prioritisation**
6a Interdependency	**21 Diff perspectives***
6b mindset behaviours	23. Structure
6c integration inclusiveness	25. Career Pathing
6f Transparent communications	28 Local - global
6g skilled dialogue	**29 Sense giving***
6h team relationships	**30 Sense making**
6k appropriate use of data	
	Key concepts in bold

Appendix 17: Case Study 2: Summary of Concepts

Case study 3 Pre Workshop	
1.Marketing Processes	21. Different perspectives
3. Roles & Responsibilities	23. Structure
4. Associated behaviours	26 Aligned goals
8. Quality Measures	28. Local / Global
10. Resource allocation	6a. Interdependence
12. OTIF (On time in full)	6b. Behaviours / mindset
13. Leadership	6c. Inclusiveness
14. Innovation	6d Feedback
16. Capability	6f Transparent communications
18. Trust	6g Dialogue
19. Different Objectives *	6h Team Relations

Appendix 18: Case Study 3: Concepts from pre workshop questionnaires

Case study 3 Workshop
1. Marketing processes
3. Roles & Responsibilities
4 Behaviours associated with R & Rs
6d. Feedback
8. Quality measures
12. OTIF
13. Leadership difference / alignment*
16. Capability
19. Different objectives*
20. Performance*
23. Structure
26. Aligned goals
28. Local / Global*
29. Sense giving*
30. Sense making *
Empowerment and simplification were also
discussion themes

Appendix 19: Case Study 3: Concepts from Workshops

Case study 3 - Post workshop interviews
3. Roles & Responsibilities
19. Different objectives
21 Different perspectives*
26. Aligned goals
28. Global / Local*
29 Sense giving*
30 Sense making*

Appendix 20: Case Study 3- Post workshop interviews

Appendix 21- Key Concepts by Case Study – Code Red Significant, Green medium , Blue low instances.

KEY CONCEPTS	CASE STUDY 1	CASE STUDY 2	CASE STUDY 3
1. Marketing processes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3 Roles & Responsibilities	Yes	Yes	Yes
4. Behaviours of Roles & Responsibilities	Yes	Yes	Yes
7 Local Market understanding	Yes	No	No
8 Quality measures	No	Yes	Yes
10 Resource Allocation	No	Yes	No
12 OTIF	Yes	Yes	Yes
13 Leadership alignment - difference	Yes	Yes	Yes
14 Innovation	No	No	Yes
16 Capability	Yes	Yes	Yes
18 a Credibility	Yes	Yes	Yes
18b Trust	Yes	Yes	Yes
19 Prioritisation of different objectives	Yes	Yes	Yes
20 Performance	No	Yes	Yes
21 Diff perspectives	Yes	Yes	Yes
23. Structure	No	Yes	Yes
25 Career pathing	No	Yes	No
26 Aligned goals	Yes	Yes	Yes
28 Local - global	Yes	Yes	Yes
29. Sense giving	No	Yes	Yes
30. Sense- making	No	Yes	Yes
6a Interdependency	Yes	Yes	Yes
6b Mindset behaviours	Yes	Yes	No
6c Integration inclusiveness	No	Yes	Yes
6d Feedback & Review	No	No	Yes
6f Transparent communications	Yes	Yes	Yes
6g Skilled dialogue	Yes	Yes	Yes
6h Team relationships	No	Yes	Yes
6i Internal selling	Yes	No	No
6k Appropriate use of data	Yes	Yes	Yes

First order concepts	Second Order Concepts	Insights
21. Different Perspectives **29. Sense giving** **30. Sense making** 6d. Feedback & Review **6f Transparent timely communications** **6g. Skilled dialogue** **6i Internal selling** **6k Appropriate use of data** 6l. Excessive internal debate & challenge	**Sense Giving / Sense Making**	**- Even though sense making is an iterative process adequate sense has to be given for people then to make sense of it ie the first party needs to understand it properly first – needs to be framed if a paradox** **- There is a time lag to sense making which often is not appreciated** **- The ability to understand and work with different perspectives is critical at the interface. The ability of skilled dialogue is a key enabler** **- How data (facts) are used can enable or impede sense making and interface effectiveness** **- Difference sense giving making at interface v hierarchies** **- The dialogues are themselves action**
2. Clarity of other functions roles and responsibilities **3. Clarity of Roles & Responsibilities** 4. Behaviours associated with Roles and Responsibilities 5. Local Jewels **10 Resource allocation** 21. Rules 6a Interdependency 6c. Balanced teams	**Roles & Responsibilities**	**- Clarity required as to r and rs and understanding what not doing. People need help in letting go** **- Resource needs to be sensibly divided so teams balances** **-Clear rules where discussion around them**
7. Local Market Understanding **28. Global / Local tensions & dilemmas**	**Global /Local**	**-A fundamental tension between local and global priorities which sometimes cant be reconciled** **- Power battles are very prevalent in this space** **- Lack of local market understanding eroded trust between BB and BD (links to different perspectives)**
13. Leadership alignment / lack of **19. Different objectives /priorities** **26. Aligned goals**	**Aligned Goals & Priorities**	**Goals and priorities need to be aligned at the cell level (interface) mutual ambition developed** **Tensions occur where there are differences in priorities at a cell level; however the fact that there are different priorities is not always apparent as there are assumptions that each side is seeing something in the same way with the same measures** **Leaders need to be aligned on the approach**
8. Quality Measures 9. Pricing 11. Consequences **12. OTIF (On Time In Full)** 14. Innovation 17. Risk Assessment 20. Performance 6j. Action Orientated	**Issues impacting on Delivery**	**Out put of the process is delivery and performance. Tensions occur where there is failure on either side regards assumed delivery.** **Lack of delivery exacerbates lack of trust**
16. Capability **18.a. Credibility** **18b. Trust** 27. Power 6b. Mindset/ behaviours 6c. Integration/ inclusiveness	**Ways of working which encourage trust or confidence with each other**	**Trusting counterparts in the opposite team appears critical to interface effectiveness; this was described in terms of capability, delivery and mindset**
1. Processes 15. Location proximity 24. Travel	**Ways of working which facilitate or not working across complex and often geographical diverse interfaces**	**Certain conditions exacerbate / ameliorate interface effectiveness; however proximity can both help and hinder**
25 Career pathing	**Career Progression**	**The way the organisation had divided roles made career progression more difficult. (Org. specific)**

Appendix 23 - Ladder of Inference & Advocacy & Inquiry

Two core tools were used in the workshop: The Ladder of Inference based on work by Argyris (1990) and also included in work by Senge (1994:198) was used to help the group appreciate that their assumptions and the conclusions they were drawing might not be the only perspective on a situation. The second was that by using a balance of Advocacy and Inquiry (Senge 1990, 1994) which both made explicit where their thinking was coming from, and by inquiring into the others they were able to have better dialogues and potentially better ways forward.

The Ladder of Inference

I take **Actions** based on my beliefs	**I'm not going to give Sally responsibility for any key tasks**
I adopt **Beliefs** about the world	**Good team players adhere to norms and come to meetings on time**
I draw **Conclusions**	**Sally is not going to be a good team player**
I make **Assumptions** Based on the meanings I added	**Sally thinks the meeting is unimportant**
I add **Meanings** (cultural and personal	**Being late is not Acceptable behaviour**
I select **"Data"** from What I observe	**Sally came to the meeting 30 minutes late. Sally didn't say why**
Observable **"Data"** and Experiences – as a videotape Recorder might capture it	**A team meeting**