

## The Starfish Enterprise

If you have been reading these e-mails over the last year and more you will have gathered that I'm passionate about what makes people and organisations tick. I **know** the way organisations are designed, developed and led makes a massive difference to the profitability, productivity and quality of the business or service you lead.

Way back before the summer break (do you remember July?) I sent you the third e-mail in the Starfish & Spiders series. Even if you didn't buy the book and pack it in your summer suitcase, most of you got the message that **the internet has let the genie of decentralisation out of the bottle and there is no going back to central command and control if you want your enterprise to flourish and succeed.**

Some of you might be thinking that you get the idea, but what do you do now? How do you take the conceptual stuff and make it real? How do you break the habits of a leadership life-time? This e-mail aims to help you boldly go where you haven't gone before. Cue Trekkie music.

How can you develop and run a Starfish Enterprise? Let me introduce you to the Tricord, a concept that enables all aspects of an organisation to be aligned, productive and successful.

The Tricord concept belongs to Tricordant Ltd. an organisation design and development consultancy. I'll mention up front that I love their stuff so much that I have become an Associate Consultant, so that's got the declaration of interest out of the way!

The essence of the Tricord is the alignment of Strategy, Systems and Culture, each of which flow from the Identity or core purpose of an organisation. See <http://www.tricordant.com/conc03.htm> for a more complete explanation.

Tricordant understand organisations as complex socio-technical systems where people, processes, facilities, structures and procedures interact to create products or services. Some are great, some are functional, and some are completely dysfunctional. They see whole systems as comprising sub-systems which are in turn built up from more sub-systems, just like Russian Dolls.

The major Tricordant insight is the concept of organising people to create "whole work" teams. No time here to go into the evidence-base about the benefits of "whole work". Suffice it to say it's all in line with the Starfish & Spider stuff plus lots more.

But what does "whole work" mean and how would I know it if I see it?

"Whole work" systems and sub-systems are the building blocks for successful organisations. According to the Tricordant approach the defining characteristics of whole work teams are;

- multi-disciplinary teams on a human scale, probably no more than 20 people
- a team is responsible for a "significant event" (something really meaningful or transformative)
- the team "owns" the whole unit of work.
- empowered to plan, deliver and improve the work
- shared values
- equipped with systems and tools to do the work.
- designated team leader linking them to the wider organisation

Teams make departments, departments make divisions or directorates, and they in turn combine to make the whole organisation.

If it feels like most departments and teams in your organisation are constantly awaiting instructions and drive you mad because they never seem to take any initiative, then you are probably running (wittingly or unwittingly) a Spider organisation.

If you want to release creativity and initiative within your enterprise, you need to develop work teams who are genuinely empowered to plan, execute, evaluate and improve their own work. Merge the Brafman/Beckstrom and Tricordant thinking,

Simple really. But as ever with this stuff, it's very difficult to make real unless you have the capacity and skills to do it.

If Ori Brafman and Rod Beckstrom excited you with the "Starfish and the Spider", the Tricordant approach can help you make it real.

If you are interested in exploring the Tricordant approach further, please visit [www.tricordant.com](http://www.tricordant.com)

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**Roger Greene**