

**The Four Quarters of Conflict**  
**Integral Analysis-The Diamond Approach**

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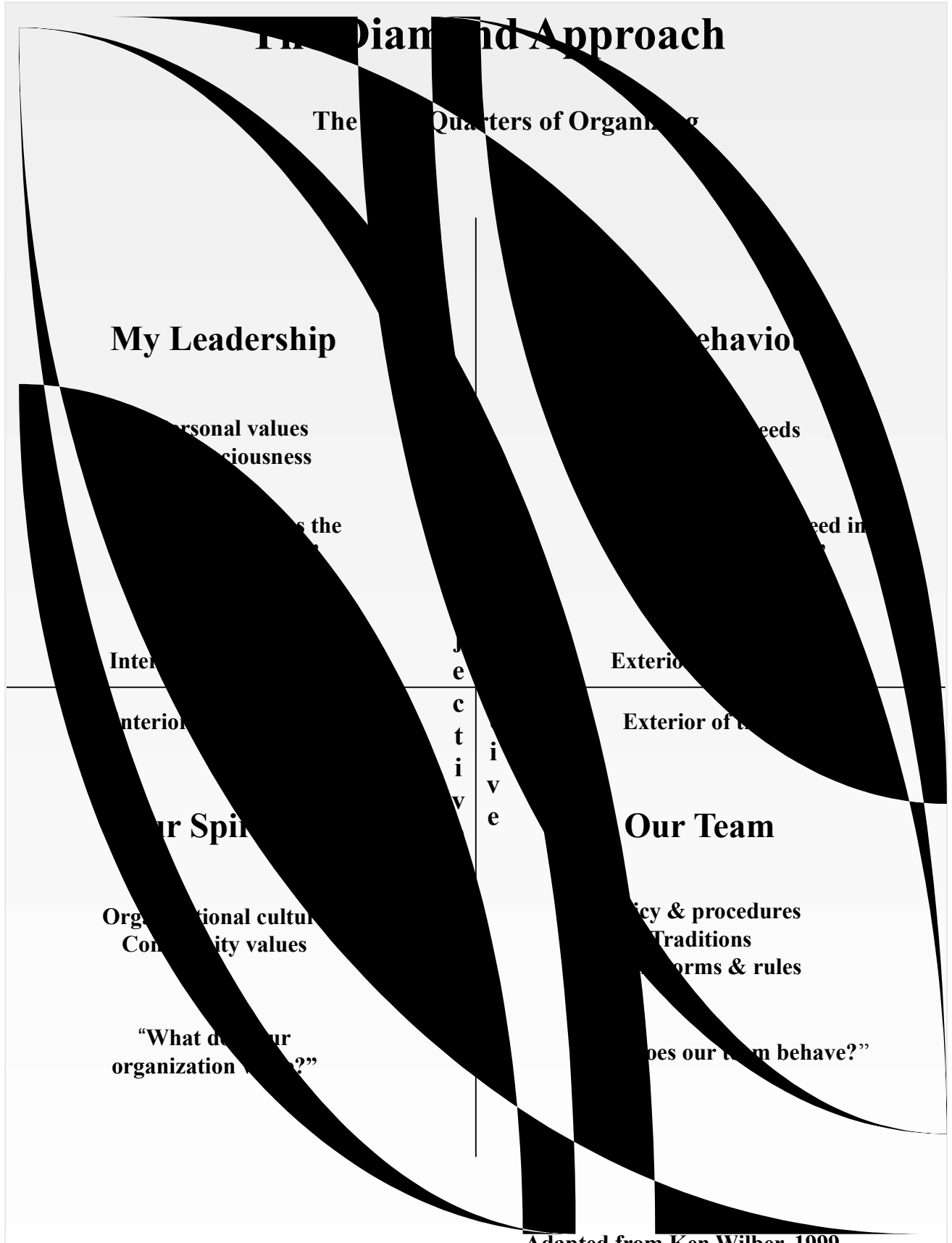
In assessing conflict, we utilize four theory realms, or Quarters, that are situated within one model (please see the next section). These realms are *My Leadership (intention)*, *My Behaviour (behaviour)*, *Our Spirit (culture)*, and *Our Team (social)*. Each Quarter represents a distinctly different perspective about the same conflict. When we examine the conflict from the Four Quarters, our understanding of its complexity is expanded and we are better equipped to discern remedial courses of action. Further enrichment occurs when we investigate the links among these dimensions (Wilber, 1999).

Complex realities require integrated approaches. An investigative approach that employs a singular theory domain (or Quarter) is an incomplete research tool because it limits one's capacity to understand, manage, and support the resolution of conflict. The resulting diagnosis will be handicapped by the absence of the other perspectives. This ultimately undermines one's ability to take effective action.

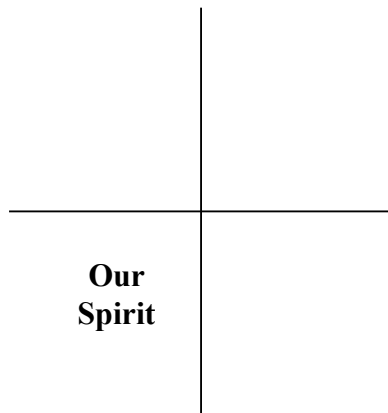
In this report we use a multi-faceted analysis, *The Diamond Approach*, by suggesting that:

- ✓ Each theoretical dimension or Quarter reflects a unique aspect of conflict,
- ✓ Each Quarter is relative to, and linked with, the other facets,
- ✓ The special advantage of each Quarter is reflected in the actions of the disputing parties, and,
- ✓ An integrated understanding of human interactions is essential for successful conflict management.

Similar to the proverbial story about the blind men and the elephant, the same conflict assumes distinctly different characteristics depending upon the perspective of the investigator. Equally important, the conflict exists with equivalent legitimacy in all facets. When solutions are derived from an integrated analysis, they are more likely to succeed because they take multiple factors into account.



## Our Spirit-Culture



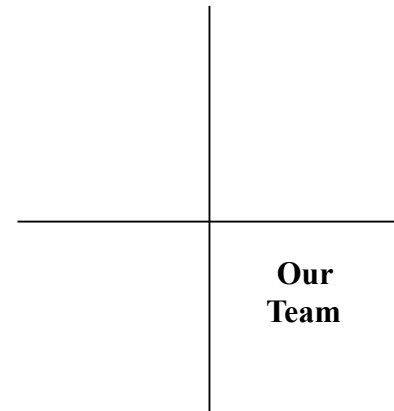
### Introduction

This Quarter, Spirit, refers to the pattern of development reflected in the organization's system of knowledge, ideology, values, rules and day-to-day rituals; it is the hidden curriculum that is present in all organizations. In this sense, organizations can be viewed as mini societies that have their own distinctive patterns of shared belief and meaning. An organization may perceive itself as a tightly knit team, or perhaps a quasi-family that values harmonious working relationships. Another may be driven by a competitive notion that "we're the best in our field and intend to stay that way." Still another may be highly fragmented, divided into groups that think about the world in different ways, or that have conflicting aspirations as to what the organization should be and how it should function.

Defining culture as an emergent process of reality construction allows us to understand particular events, actions, objects, statements, or situations in ways that are unique to the organization. In turn, the patterns that emerge from observing these elements provide a disciplined basis for deriving meaning about the behaviours in question.

Patterns of shared belief and meaning manifest in artifacts and activities ranging from formal operating policies to informal norms of interaction. Understanding organization culture is a subjective, interpretive process that is facilitated through interviews with, and surveys of, personnel at all levels, examination of organizational documents, and observation of staff interactions (Morgan 1986; Schein, 1992).

## Our Team



### Introduction

This Quarter examines the formal rules and informal norms of the organization that guide collegial interactions. The *formal rules* of the organization are often found in policy and procedure manuals and explicitly define behavioural expectations across a wide range of operations, from daily procedures, timetables and routines, to expectations about how staff will (or will not) behave in the organization. Formal guidelines are easy to locate because they are explicit.

*Norms* are unofficial but powerful operating conventions. They are the tacit, informal protocols that regulate and regularize team behaviour. These norms are not recorded in any visible location, but have a potent influence on team members' behaviours and interactions. A norm exists when team members accept and implement it regularly, whether or not they do so with conscious intention. In other words, a norm exists only as long as its corresponding behaviour is accurately anticipated and activated with observable consistency. Staff and other personnel are usually only vaguely aware of the implicit norms by which they operate, although they can usually identify them when asked to do so (Berne, 1963; Ofshe, 1973; Robbins, 1989).

Norms represent the tacit learning at the group level and are manifest in the day-to-day interactions of the group. In the final analysis, group norms help to determine whether or

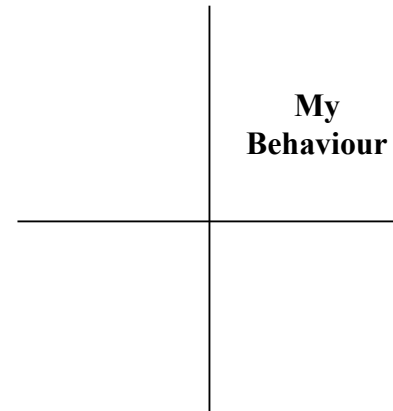
not it functions as a high performing team or becomes a loose collection of people working together (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993).

Transparent identification of both rules and norms facilitates high levels of group effectiveness across a wide band of behaviour including:

- ◆ conflict
- ◆ communication
- ◆ decision making
- ◆ creativity and generation of ideas
- ◆ role-definition

Rules and norms are tangible manifestations of culture. They are the expression of beliefs and values that are embedded within the culture of an organization (Wilber, 1999).

## My Behaviour-My Needs



### Introduction

This Quarter examines the role of inherency in conflict, which is part of an ongoing debate about whether conflict is primarily affected by genetics or by social interactions. *The Diamond Approach* (a form of interactionist theory) does not favour any one particular Quarter, or any singular theory realm. Rather, we propose that when conflict arises, its origins exist within all Quarters, with each contributing to an integrated whole, of which inherency is a factor.

Although this Quarter is rich with contributions from such theorists as Hobbes, Freud, Lorenz, and Marx, our focus is on the work of John Burton and his development of ‘needs theory’. While ‘needs’ may arise from within the individual or group, they will be denied or met within the social and cultural context of the organization. Essential to understanding ‘needs’ theory is the premise that human beings are motivated by a series of drives, or needs, which compel them to act, and that these needs will be pursued by all possible means. Therefore, needs satisfaction is expressed in social environments, and so the organizational setting influences the degree to which they may be satisfied (Tidwell, 1998).

### Needs Theory

Needs theory grew out of the work of John Burton, an Australian academician and former Permanent Secretary of the Australian Department of External Affairs. Drawing extensively on his international experience, Burton believed that conflicts could be

resolved effectively without relying on power based bargaining methods. He noted that governments and institutions often impede progress towards the resolution of conflict because part of their function is to protect existing power relationships and the resulting status quo. Burton (in Tidwell, 1998) believed that the resolution of conflicts grows more directly from the understanding of social human relationships. Hence, he rejected the premise that coercion and power are the basis upon which conflicts are best resolved. Building on the reputable work of Maslow (1987) and Sites (1973), Burton laid the foundation for the application of needs theory in the conflict arena.

In this facet of our analysis, we confirm the distinction between disputes and conflicts, and reinforce the relationship that needs theory has with conflict. Because this section focuses on individual needs, we also link individual needs with their corresponding identity group. This is because individuals pursue the satisfaction of their individual needs through their affiliation with their identity group.

**To Burton, the only way that society can manage conflict is to ensure the satisfaction of everyone's basic human needs.**

As Tidwell (1998) notes, when one group imposes its needs on another, then needs satisfaction does not become a source of conflict reduction, but rather the cause of the conflict itself. When we analyze conflict from a needs theory perspective, we shift the focus from examining how power is exercised to identifying unfulfilled needs and exploring potential solutions that will address needs satisfaction for *all* parties.

Proponents of needs theory posit that there are identifiable human needs that are fundamental to the human condition. Tidwell (1998) defines “needs” as the basic human requirements for the continuation and propagation of life. When describing Burton’s work, Tidwell notes that human behaviour is represented by a broad diversity of forces, which are almost always influenced by culturally bound socialization processes. He states that humans are often socialized to accept and perpetuate behaviours that do not necessarily satisfy their personal needs. However, in so doing, the conflict between



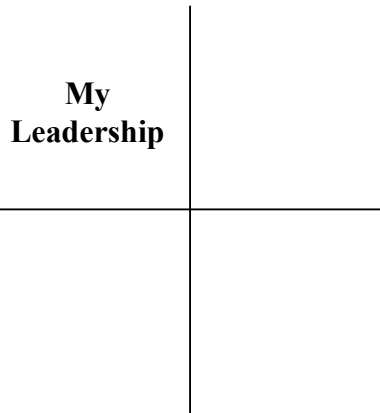
individual needs and socially prescribed norms does not disappear, but instead emerges in the guise of a related dispute.

If the satisfaction of human needs is a primary motivation for human behaviour, and moreover, the satisfaction of these needs is understood in the social context of the individuals striving to meet them, then it becomes easy to see how the legitimate pursuit of needs can result in conflict. Furthermore, when needs theory is understood, then it is possible not only to diagnose existing conflicts, but also to predict how conflicts may erupt in the future. When organizational leaders understand the roots of human behaviour in this way, they can enable the implementation of decisions that are designed to mitigate the destructive effects of conflict.

A criticism of the needs theory approach is that it is impossible to determine exactly how many needs exist, and to confirm the legitimacy of all of the needs that are proposed. However, Burton's list of needs is widely used and considered very acceptable in the analysis of conflict. It includes (adapted from Burton & Sites in Tidwell, 1998):

- ✓ Consistency in response
- ✓ Stimulation
- ✓ Security
- ✓ Recognition
- ✓ Justice
- ✓ Appearance of rationality
- ✓ Meaning
- ✓ Control
- ✓ Role defense

## My Leadership



### Introduction

This Quarter refers to the cognitive and emotional development of individuals. The first portion of this section is devoted to a discussion of leadership, which is a significant aspect of personal, internal development. We use the term ‘leader’ in a dual context; first, to include all members of the organization because we believe that each position in the organization offers leadership potential, and secondly, to those in formal positions of leadership, such as a supervisor or CEO.

**Those who know the  
needs of the  
people  
Are fit to govern them.  
Those who responsibly  
meet  
life's conflicts  
Can truly lead the  
world.**

Understanding the importance of leadership and development will allow organizations to manage and transform themselves, thereby facilitating the organization to affirm coherent goals and endorse visions for its future. Any successful organization intervention must support the elevation of current leadership practices. Although

intelligence is key to overall task accomplishment, it is not the only element that is important to individual growth and working with people. There are other critical elements that influence the ultimate consequences of leadership strategies.

Leadership is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, and as such deserves to be examined from a perspective that acknowledges many of its dimensions. Too often we think of leadership in purely instrumental terms, which encourages the development of techniques and skills, but rarely reaches beyond. The “Diamond Approach” that we present in this essay for understanding organizations can also be used to consider leadership. This is appropriate because leadership is so much more than the application of learned skills. So, we can reflect on leadership from the perspective of:

- ◆ The interior of groups (*The Good*). This includes values, spirituality and the diverse ways in which we answer the heart’s longing to be connected with the largeness of life.
- ◆ The exterior of individuals and groups (*The True*). This manifests as the conscious translation of leaders’ values into behaviours and actions.
- ◆ The interior of the individual (*The Beautiful*). This includes the continuing exploration of the intellectual and emotional depths of the leader.

Leadership behaviours and actions in the workplace are derived from the leader’s depth of understanding of their colleagues and others who may report to them, and from their

own personal strengths and challenges, maturity, and values. Leaders are able to support staff according to the depth and extent of their own self-awareness, especially as this awareness relates to their values and ethics. Because values are operationalized in supervisory practices, it is incumbent upon leaders to be conscious of the values and principles that inform their practice.