The Deliberately Developmental Organization

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*Most leading organizations invest in growing **some** of their people, via supports outside the flow of the normal workday—e.g., executive coaching, high-potential programs, mentoring, and leadership development. A new breed of company, however, is committed to **development for all**, creating immersive cultures for continuous individual growth as the necessary means of achieving superior business results.*

What if there were a real alternative to the war for talent?

High-performing companies recognize that their success hinges on the capabilities of their people. For some firms, that means an energetic, sometimes even desperate, focus on "getting the right people on the bus" or "winning the war for talent". From this viewpoint, the search for talent is a zero-sum game. The class of people with the requisite abilities to drive and sustain growth is small, and one firm's talent gain is another's loss.

But what if there were an alternative to the talent-war mindset? Of course, companies will always want to hire the best people available, but what if we viewed becoming world-class less as the product of successful recruitment and retention efforts and more as the outcome of a relentless focus on the growth in capabilities—even *personal development*—of **all** the people who make up the company? What if a company did everything within its power to create the conditions for individuals to overcome their own internal barriers to change, to take stock of and transcend their own blindspots, and to see errors and weaknesses as prime opportunities for personal growth?

A "developmental" alternative to the talent war is not a matter of just "being better to our people"—providing more generous employee benefits, for example, or a more high-spirited work culture. Likewise, interests in environmental sustainability, contributions to the local communities in which companies work, worker ownership, and other contemporary forms of conscious capitalism, while all highly commendable, do not, by themselves or collectively, ensure that a company will be doing anything different to develop its people.

The Deliberately Developmental Organization (or "DDO" for short) is something very different from all of these emerging new models of "great places to work" or corporate responsibility; it represents, instead, a rethinking of the very place of people-development in organizational life.

What is the Deliberately Developmental Organization?

A DDO is organized around the deceptively simple but radical conviction that organizations will best prosper when they are deeply aligned with people's strongest motive, which is to *grow*. Deep alignment, it turns out, requires something more than making "a big commitment to our people's growth," admirable as that may be, even when such a commitment is followed up with significant investments in people's ongoing learning on the job. It means something more than consigning "people development" to punctuated moments outside the flow of day-to-day work, such as stand-apart trainings, high-potential leadership-development programs, executive coaching, corporate universities, or once-a-year retreats. **Deep alignment with people's motive to grow means fashioning an organizational culture in which support to people's ongoing development is woven into the daily fabric of working life,**

visible in the company's regular operations, day-to-day routines, and conversations.

Thus, the approach to work in a DDO is not about doing something familiar a great deal harder, a great deal longer, or a great deal more. It is not about developing employees' skills better than one's peers. At the level of culture, it is about integrating deeper forms of personal learning into every aspect of life in the company.

Three Developmental Features of a DDO: Principles, Practices, and Communities

DDOs accomplish their goals in strikingly different ways from other companies. Every organization has a mission and a set of animating values. Every leading company has a set of distinctive business practices intended to facilitate planning, coordination, and execution. And every firm seeks to create a larger community out of the

Two Deliberately Developmental Organizations—In Their Own Words

Decurion Corporation

Headquartered in Los Angeles, California, Decurion, a privately-held corporation, is parent to a number of operating subsidiaries, including Pacific Theatres Entertainment Corporation, Robertson Properties Group, and the ArcLight Cinema Company. In addition, Decurion in 2011 entered the assisted living business. The Decurion portfolio of companies employs about 1,100 persons (or "members") in California.

The Decurion Corporation is defined more by why it exists and how it operates than by what businesses compose its portfolio. Its identity comes not from running movie theaters or developing real estate but from the pursuit of its purpose and adherence to its values. Similarly, people who succeed at Decurion are not attached to roles, titles, or status. They are, instead, fulfilling their own life purpose in a context of uncompromising excellence.

Decurion's purpose, the fundamental reason it exists, is to provide places for people to flourish. We believe that every human being has something unique to express (perhaps several unique things over the course of a lifetime). While building each of our businesses to world class standards, we seek to create the conditions in which that expression will emerge. Flourishing is the process of living into one's unique contribution. It is the process of becoming oneself. We expect to do this through our work.

Bridgewater Associates, LP

Bridgewater manages approximately $130 billion in global investments for a wide array of institutional clients, including foreign governments and central banks, corporate and public pension funds, university endowments and charitable foundations. Approximately 1,200 people work at Bridgewater, which is based in Westport, Connecticut.

Founded in 1975 out of a two-bedroom apartment, Bridgewater remains an independent, employee-run organization. Throughout its 37-year history, Bridgewater has been recognized as a top-performing manager and an industry innovator, winning 24 industry awards in the past five years alone. In both 2010 and 2011, Bridgewater ranked as the largest and best-performing hedge fund manager in the world. Its clients and employees routinely give Bridgewater top satisfaction ratings in annual surveys.

Bridgewater's unique results are a product of its unique culture. Truth and excellence are valued above all else. In order to be excellent we need to know what's true, especially those things that we would rather not be true, so that we can decide how best to deal with them. We want logic and reason to be the basis for making decisions. It is through this striving to be excellent by being radically truthful and transparent that we build meaningful work and meaningful relationships.

At Bridgewater, our overriding objective is excellence, or more precisely, constant improvement. We believe that producing excellence requires approaching both work and people in a principled way. Above all else, we want to find out what is true and figure out how best to deal with it. We value independent thinking and innovation, recognizing that independent thinking generates disagreement and innovation requires making mistakes.

To foster this thinking and innovation, we maintain an environment of radical openness, even though that honesty can be difficult and uncomfortable. At Bridgewater each individual has the right and the obligation to ensure that what they do and what we do collectively in pursuit of excellence makes sense to them. Everyone is encouraged to be both assertive and open-minded in order to build their understanding and discover their best path. The types of disagreements and mistakes that are typically discouraged elsewhere are expected at Bridgewater because they are the fuel for the learning that helps us maximize the utilization of our potential. It is through this unique culture that we have produced the meaningful work and meaningful relationships that those who work here and our clients have come to expect.

Source: Organizational self-descriptions from public web sites

individuals who work together within it. In a DDO, these major design features in organizational life—the organization's purposes, practices, and form of community—are orchestrated explicitly and harmoniously to produce an immersive culture built to accelerate personal development. In short, the DDO represents a series of *discontinuous departures*—twelve in all—from familiar, business-as-usual principles, practices, and structures. In what follows, we show each of these design features as they combine to create the conditions for growth for every member of the organization. We provide examples from two very different, industry-leading U.S.-based companies, which we have been studying: The Decurion Corporation, a privately held portfolio company whose primary businesses are in movie exhibition, real estate, and senior living; and Bridgewater Associates, a large investment-management firm.

Developmental Principles

It may seem strange to say, but most organizations—even most well-functioning, admired organizations—are not actually *run* on some set of principles, known throughout the organization, driving the daily practice of everyone's work, visible to even a casual observer. Yes, most organizations have *mission statements.* They have *purposes.* They have *goals.* They have *procedures.* They have *employee manuals.* They may also have mottos or mantras that *reflect* principles—"the client comes first"; "something only we can do"; "showing up every day"; "progress is our most important product." But without a pervasive *ecology*—structures, practices, tools, and shared language that allows the organization to *embody* and orient to these values in an ongoing way—they become slogans rather than drivers of how the culture runs.

In a DDO, the "North Star" of the organization is a set of deeply held principles that animate daily decisions. Genuinely *enacting* shared principles is itself notable, but in a DDO, it is the content of the principles that is even more remarkable. A DDO's principles share a common fundamental belief in the power of individual growth for members of the organization. We see four related ways that growth-focused principles together anchor a collective *developmental* focus in a DDO.

1. Running on Principles

DDOs like Decurion or Bridgewater can actually produce written documents stating their principles, but this by itself is *not* the discontinuous

Growth-focused principles shape the way the work is done, by everybody, every day.

departure from life in other kinds of organizations. Instead, what distinguishes the animating role of principles is that shared principles actively shape conduct and decisions from the smallest to the most strategic.

Decurion describes its purpose as "provid[ing] places for people to flourish." A series of axioms about how members of the organization act together are one visible expression of Decurion's principles: that work is meaningful, that people are not only means but also ends in themselves; that individuals and communities naturally develop; and that pursuing human development and pursuing profitability are one thing. When we see a crew member in one of Decurion's ArcLight cinemas beginning his work day deliberately aligning his tasks for that day with his deeper purposes as a person, we are getting a little glimpse into Decurion's principles in action.

Bridgewater's Principles are described in an evolving document that is continually referred to and interpreted by organizational members. These principles commit to (1) a continuing search for what is *true*, even when the truth can be personally difficult to accept, and (2) *evolution* and improvement as a fundamental force for good in our lives and in the world. Bridgewater's Principles call for a culture in which it is "OK to make mistakes but unacceptable not to identify, analyze, and learn from them." When we see a Bridgewater manager debriefing a disappointing outcome not only to clarify new agreements about how such situations should be handled in the future, but also to explore openly with a key player how his actions may illuminate a self-protective distortion in his thinking, one which is likely to lead him to repeat the error unless corrected, we are seeing principles in action. *This* is the discontinuous departure—that, quite simply, principles shape the way work is done, by everybody, every day.

By contrast, consider the role of the mission in most organizations. Great companies seek to align common efforts towards advancing a mission and living out shared values. Profitability and long-term growth depend on it.

But if you ask people in non-developmentally-focused organizations, "By what set of shared principles do you *carry out* your mission?"—*how* do you do what you do?—the answer might be hard to come by or focused on technical "best practices" for the industry. Indeed, in the least developmentally focused cultures, principles identified might even be principles "in the negative"—"don't let them see you sweat," "do anything to avoid a bad quarterly result," or worse.

DDOs run on positive principles, principles its members *choose* to be guided by and which they are asked to apply and reflect on from the moment they consider working for the organization. All members of the organization have a clear, collective set of affirmative principles which guide the way they carry out their work day-to-day. In a strongly woven developmental culture, principles are discussed, debated, applied, revised, posted; in short, they are ever-present and play an active role in daily life.

Think about your own organization or others you have worked in or are familiar with. Are there really any definable principles that regulate how work is actually carried out? Note that "the maximization of shareholder value" is not a principle in itself. It is a goal or an outcome. *How* we should all regulate our conduct, what ongoing structures and practices should be built, preserved, and refreshed *so that we can maximize shareholder value*—these would be principles. Do they exist in your organization?

The taken-for-granted nature that we will live and work in organizations that are *not* continuously guided by their principles is precisely what leads some people, when they get a good look at a DDO, to think they are looking at a cult.

DDOs are not cults. Their principles are not about mind-control. As organizations, they expand, rather than contract, individual freedom and possibilities for growth. We are so unaccustomed to seeing routines and practices that are clearly guided by principles, that some may even be tempted to question the authenticity of the DDO, rather than questioning the default modes of organizational life.
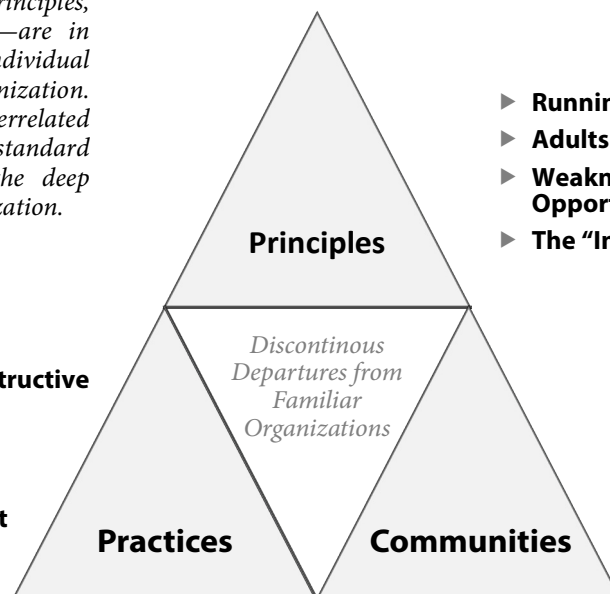
2. Adults Can Grow

It is rare enough for an organization to be ongoingly run by a set of *any* principles, but a DDO is run by a *particular* set of principles, namely developmental ones. Weick's "high-reliability organizations" (such as combat units, air traffic controllers, surgical teams) could be said to be tight cultures run on a daily basis by a set of principles related to *survival*, one's own or that of others. The prospect that error can lead to death understandably guides the creation of organizational structures that support continuously shared practices that promote survival. The DDO's principles are rooted not in the possibility of mortal danger but in the possibility of new life, of *emergence, new capability, and evolution* at the

Alignment of Organizational Features in a DDO

In a Deliberately Developmental Organization (DDO), the major design features of organizational life—the company's principles, practices, and form of community—are in deep alignment to promote individual development throughout the organization. This alignment is visible in twelve interrelated "discontinuous departures" from standard practices that together make up the deep structure of the developmental organization.

▶ **Running on Principles**
▶ **Adults Can Grow**
▶ **Weakness Is a Strength; Error Is an Opportunity**
▶ **The "Interdependent Bottom-Line"**

Principles

Discontinous Departures from Familiar Organizations

▶ **Destabilization Can Be Constructive**
▶ **Closing the Gaps**
▶ **Timescale for Growth, Not Closure**
▶ **"Interior Life" Is Part of What Is Managed**

▶ **Rank Does Not Have Its Usual Privileges**
▶ **Everyone is HR**
▶ **Everyone Needs a Crew**
▶ **Everyone Builds the Culture**

Practices   **Communities**

There is no greater waste of resources in ordinary organizations than the energy spent to hide our weaknesses and manage others' favorable impressions of us.

individual and collective level—in short, guided by the possibility of *development.*

The principle, "Grown-ups, not just children, *can and need to* keep growing," can be stated in ten simple words, but today this represents a discontinuous departure from the fundamental operation of nearly all organizations across every sector we have explored (including, ironically, education). An organization can sign on to the principle in spirit, value it as a "nice to have," even make investments to promote more of it—but this is very different than asking, **"From the ground up, have we designed our organization so that it supports the development of its members—which both they and the organization need in order to thrive?"**

Think about your own organization. Is your company designed to support its employees' development? (It may support the development of their *careers*, whether in the same role or

organization, or beyond, but this is a different question.) If we walked up to a random member of your organization—whether a leader, a manager, a support-staff member—would he or she say "yes" to any of the following questions?

- Does your organization help you identify a personal challenge that you can work on in order to grow?
- Are there others who are aware of this "growing edge," and who care that you transcend it?
- Are you given supports to overcome your limitations?
- Do you experience yourself actively working on transcending this growing edge on a daily or at least weekly basis?
- More particularly, after you perform the essence of your work—whether running a meeting, securing a set of buildings during your shift, or landing a big client account— is there any process in place by which you are helped to see how you could have done any of these things better?

There are many organizations that are great at what they do, but supporting this kind of personal growth is not part of what they do well.

Bridgewater is a hedge fund, the largest in the world, and, based on the sector in which it operates, most people would not guess that it would prioritize individual development as a fundamental part of its success. Yet, its members say things like, "every day I get up and I am absolutely clear what I am working on—myself." That is the sign of a culture built for human development.

Life in a DDO: Weakness Is a Strength; Error Is an Opportunity

Near the end of a company-wide email whose subject line read, "I fail every day," Bridgewater leader Ray Dalio challenged the members of his organization to sit with this question: "Do you worry more about how good you are or about how fast you are learning?" At Bridgewater, learning from one's mistakes is a job requirement. The company's culture supports treating errors as opportunities for growth through a variety of tools and practices.

First, every employee is required to record problems and failures in a company-wide "issues log", one that requires detailing one's own and others' contributions to mistakes. The logging of errors and problems is, in fact, applauded and rewarded, but failure to record a mistake in the issues log is viewed as a serious breach of duty. The data collected in the issues log is treated as a resource for collective diagnosis of root causes—both individual and organizational—of failure.

Another reflective practice involves recording one's experience of psychological pain at work. A "Pain Button" app, standard-issue on every Bridgewater employee's iPad, allows employees to record and share experiences of negative emotions at work—especially times when one's ego defenses are activated by specific interactions with others. Open sharing of these experiences then triggers follow-up conversations among the parties as they seek to explore the truth of the situation and identify what individuals might do to directly address underlying causes. This practice is aimed at helping individuals "get to the other side"—a Bridgewater term for working through and coming to actively manage forms of emotional self-protection that can otherwise be barriers to personal growth.

In these and other supportive processes at Bridgewater, the company destigmatizes (and even celebrates) making mistakes. More than that, it treats the ongoing, often painful experiencing of one's imperfections as valuable data collection for learning rather than nonproductive blame.

3. Weakness Is a Strength; Error Is an Opportunity

To an extent we are only beginning to appreciate, the prevailing stance of most people at work (even very accomplished people working in highly respected organizations) is to *act so as to preserve or enhance my personal standing,* to make sure my "stock" is not falling, and hopefully even rising. In order to manage others' perceptions of us (at the expense of managing the responsibilities and opportunities of our work), we constantly seek to cover possible weaknesses and promote our greatest assets. If the vulnerable, less-than-perfect, or even less-than-adequate self has any *chosen* expression in our work life, it is in rare moments, behind closed doors, with official or unofficial "trusted advisors" who swear to privacy and confidentiality. The *unchosen* expression of our vulnerability—demonstrations of our incompetence or inadequacy in a given instance—is a good

definition of most people's worst "work nightmare," the thing we *most* dread or *least* would like to happen. (Interestingly, it may not be true that Western and Eastern work cultures differ as much as we imagine, often described by a much greater emphasis on "saving face" in Eastern cultures. Rather, it may be that in Eastern cultures this preoccupation often expresses itself in terms of

subordinates looking out for the public standing of *others* as well as themselves, and that in Western cultures the *same* preoccupation is present but channeled into looking out for the public standing of *oneself.*) In either case, to a greater extent than we want to admit, most people at work, no matter how dedicated they may be, are diverting some portion of their valuable energies to a second job no one has hired them to perform.

In contrast, what we see at DDOs is a *pervasive* (and often, effective) effort to protect and preserve a dramatically different workspace that counters this overwhelming tendency toward hiding any evidence of weakness. A DDO enables people to surface and value their growing edge, and experience themselves as still valuable *even as they are screwing up*—potentially even more valuable, if they can overcome the limitations they are exposing. In ordinary organizations—even high-performing organizations—people waste inordinate amounts of physical and mental energy preserving or enhancing their reputations, putting their best selves forward, and hiding their limitations and inadequacies—from others and themselves.

In a DDO, people's limitations are seen as their growing edge, a company resource, an asset which should be continuously and publicly engaged. Paradoxically—especially to those of us working outside of DDOs—the identification of weakness or lack of experience provides the key to growth, both for the individual and the organization. Managers at Decurion, for example, actively seek to identify situations that will promote development ("pulls"), where members of the organization will find themselves in over their heads in some way, just enough to stimulate them to grow in order to do their jobs.

Being this vulnerable on a regular basis is not always comfortable. People across Decurion and Bridgewater say a similar thing, "It's not always fun; it can even be very painful to work here—*and it's the most exhilarating place I have ever worked, and I would never consider working anywhere else!*" People also say, across different DDOs, that the environment is not for everyone, and higher than usual turnover (especially among newcomers) is not unusual (or alarming).

Life in a DDO: "Interdependent Bottom Line"
"Process Integrity" Trumps "Outcome Achievement" in the Definition of Success

In the ordinary company, the sun rises and sets on the achievement of periodic targets. "Did we make our numbers this quarter?" "Does our year-on-year growth match our projections?" "Have we reduced [cost, time to market, employee turnover, production stopouts, etc., etc.] by X%?" DDOs do not ignore the numbers, and they do not eschew targets. When we were last at Decurion, the theater business made continuous reference to specific strategies to increase net profit. Bridgewater obviously wants the returns on its different funds to outperform the market.

But in a DDO, outcome achievement is not the ultimate measure of success. "Given all the extraneous factors that go into whether a project or business succeeds in the traditional sense," Decurion's president, Christopher Forman, says, "there is no way we can be said to control or cause the outcome. The only thing we can come close to controlling is our own actions." He recognizes that seeing success as a matter of outcome achievement is the view held by most people. "But we think there is a deeper level of success associated with how one conducts oneself in the face of the challenges life presents. Does one act in accordance with one's own highest values?" Referring to Victor Frankl, in *Man's Search for Meaning,* he asks, "Did we create or do something significant? Did we care for another person? Did we face difficult circumstances with courage?"

Bridgewater's ex-Chairman, Ray Dalio, is making the identical point in his own idiom when he distinguishes between a poor outcome and a mistake. "If we relentlessly pursued the truth," he says, "especially those truths about ourselves and the world that are most uncomfortable and least convenient—if we did our best to uncover *what is*—and the business outcome is still not to our liking, we didn't necessarily make a mistake. We are not living in a world of certainties and 100% probabilities. We stayed true to our process. But if we ignore *what is*, we have, without any doubt, made a mistake—*whether we got the money or not.*" You can hear how "process integrity" trumps "outcome achievement," to borrow a phrase from Fred Kofman, if you listen, as we did, to Dalio talking to his people about his feelings after the fund results came in on a particularly sensational year: "I worry about us more after a year like this, because we can delude ourselves by confusing big returns with doing a good job relentlessly pursuing our process."

"Process integrity" only *trumps* "outcome achievement." This means that "outcome achievement" is still an important part of the game; it is a high-ranking card in the deck. Forman and Dalio care about their numbers. You can't *have* a place where people can "flourish" or "evolve," if there isn't a flow of revenue to pay people's salaries and the electrical bill. But they are asking a new question, "Which will be the master?" In a DDO the sun rises and sets on a different kind of day.

4. The "Interdependent Bottom Line"

We have seen the leaders of both Decurion and Bridgewater asked an identical question, "How often do you run into having to make a choice between the 'profit motive' and the 'human development motive,' and which one do you

prioritize?" And we have seen them give identical answers: "You are presuming a distinction we don't make. We don't think about it like this. We don't experience such a tension."

A for-profit DDO is as interested in profit as any other for-profit organization, but differently so. It does not subordinate profitability to some supposedly more exalted goal, like human development. It does not consider profitability a merely necessary means to the more-valued end of sustaining a place for people to grow. It is not a question of one motive having priority over the other, nor even their being co-equal in importance, the "double bottom line."

In a DDO, the goals of profitability and fostering development are part of a single whole.

In a DDO, the goals of profitability and fostering development are not a "both/and"; and they are not an "either/or." Rather a DDO looks at the way *very bold institutional aspirations*, on the one hand (such as high profitability, or breaking the mold in one's sector), and *further-developed human capabilities*, on the other, *are part of a single whole*. They each depend on the other. There is as much interest in how the profit motive is a spur to development, as how development is a spur to profit. As one of Decurion's leaders told us, "For us, pursuing profitability and human development emerges as one thing. We do not see a tradeoff, and the moment we consider sacrificing one for the other, we recognize that we have lost both."

Life in a DDO: Destabilization Can Be Constructive

At Decurion, members expect to be regularly, but manageably, in over their heads. A complementary set of practices allows the organization to continually match individuals and groups to developmental opportunities. In ArcLight cinemas, managers use data about individual growth to identify each week's ideal job assignments for individuals—assignments meant to maximize both individual crew-member growth (creating a "developmental pull" for the employee) and the business needs of the operation. As one theater manager explained the use of these "energy maps," "We talk about not just where to place people, but most importantly—*why*." This practice is supported by Decurion's commitment not to build "person-dependent systems." In other words, no job relies on or is completely identified with one person. This allows for intentional movement among roles to create conditions for learning. Decurion also regards suspiciously the profession of one's expertise, which the company knows can otherwise lead to overidentification of a person with a narrow role. In this way, job rotation provides a powerful way to create development pulls for individual growth. At Decurion, just when someone is comfortable with a work process, he or she can expect to move on to a new challenge.

Developmental Practices

DDOs live out their developmental principles through an immersive and seamless set of practices. These practices range from the ways that meetings are structured, to how employee performance is monitored and discussed, to how people talk to one another about their work and the challenges that they face personally and in advancing the interests of the company. These practices represent another set of discontinuous departures from the routines, language, and structures of most organizations. Importantly, these practices are natural extensions of, and deeply aligned with, the growth-based principles at the heart of the company.

5. Destabilization Can Be Constructive

DDOs do not just welcome and make use of their members' inadequacies or incompetencies. Because they regard these as resources—as something by which the organization can profit—they actively *promote* these experiences. At both Decurion and Bridgewater it is apparent that if you can perform all your responsibilities to a high level, you are actually no longer in the right job! (And if you would prefer to stay in this job, having finally mastered it, you would be seen as someone who prefers to coast, and not in the right company.) At Decurion, people regularly say, "As soon as something is working perfectly, it is time to blow it up and move to the next level." At Bridgewater there is a lot of attention, as in any organization, to finding the right fit between the person and their current role (finding the "click"), but "good fit" does not actually mean, as it is likely to mean in most organizations, "She can do the job as described."

"Good fit" is more likely to mean, "She will run into plenty of useful trouble and she will know how to use her trouble to learn and grow from it." Talk about a discontinuous departure! This is nearly the *opposite* of business as usual in most organizations, where the conservative side of human nature tends to conspire with the conservative side of human organizations: The employee seeks to *reduce* the complexity of the work by establishing and mastering its routines; and the organization looks at "employee support" as finding ways to keep the person happy in the role they are successfully (and repeatedly) performing for as long as possible.

"*Constructive* destabilization"—both words are very important. If you talked to people at Decurion or Bridgewater about their cultures, and then did a "Wordle" display of the speech, three very *large*

There is no penalty for participating honestly and openly, only for failing to participate authentically.

words would be "trust," "pain," and "care." Feeling regularly destabilized is more the rule than the exception in both the junior and senior ranks at Bridgewater and Decurion, but not shamefully (at least not for long), not depressively, and not masochistically. And why not? We think this has everything to do with people's experience of the *intent.* The process of "getting to root cause" of one's actions at Bridgewater may be relentless, but, practiced properly, there should be absolutely nothing hostile or aggressive about it. To be sure, one principle held by the organization frames the experience of pain as normal and expected, creating real opportunity for growth: "Pain plus reflection equals progress."

People in both organizations talk about periods of being in pain, but in the same breath talk about feeling deep and genuine care, and a precious sense of community, in the same experiences that are causing them the pain. As important, perhaps, is their sense of what the pain leads to—their own fuller self-realization. People in both organizations talk about the difference between "destructive pain" and "labor pains," the latter—however excruciating—leading to new life.

6. Closing the Gaps

In a typical organization, individuals expend enormous energy protecting themselves. People hide parts of themselves, avoid conflict, unwittingly sabotage change efforts, and subtly enforce a

separation between "the me at work" and the "real me."

In a never-ending quest to protect ourselves, we allow gaps to form between people, between plans and actions, and even between parts of ourselves, to keep ourselves safe in the workplace. Rather than remain aligned around a shared vision for the execution of an important project, for example, we may allow participants to each go their own way; we may quietly hope to deliver a less than full effort and not be called on it; we may say one thing about how a colleague is managing the effort in a private chat and say a very different thing in a larger meeting. "Gaps" in organizations, in this sense, are most often defined by the conversations we're *not* having, the things we're not discussing, the synchronicities with others that we are not achieving, and the work that, because of some self-protective fear, we are avoiding. Gaps may arise between:

- what we do and what we say,
- what we feel and what we say,
- the water-cooler conversation and the meeting-room conversation,
- the real-time occasion of performance and the feedback on performance,
- knowledge of the organization's principles and the application of those principles.

In a DDO, a constant effort to expose and close these gaps, rather than allow them to widen, is an essential part of day-to-day practice, knitting people together in their work even as this same "fabric" is always acknowledged to be fraying. This is not about typical forms of managerial coordination. Qualitatively different from project management, members of a DDO engage in continuous efforts—in nearly every setting and form of communication—to achieve interpersonal and cognitive *immediacy* (rather than allowing members to hide themselves or their thinking in order to stay safe). Beyond merely setting goals and monitoring progress towards them, DDOs take a more fundamental approach to keeping collective work on track, despite the discomfort doing so may cause individuals. At Decurion, every meeting is seen as a chance to "align intentions," and at Bridgewater the most valued state in the organization is to hold a common detailed "visualization" of how value will be created and then to work to stay "in synch" continuously with one's colleagues.

DDOs understand that we make the greatest progress on the toughest business issues if we can overcome ways of thinking and acting that serve only to protect ourselves from conflict and embarrassment. They create the conditions,

Life in a DDO: Closing the Gaps

In a DDO like Decurion, every day provides multiple opportunities to connect one's larger life to one's day-to-day work, and vice versa. In the ArcLight cinemas, each meeting provides an opportunity at its start to focus on reconnecting with one another and to providing time for each participant to share voluntarily anything he or she chooses with colleagues. These "check-ins" at the start of each meeting foster a critical way of closing gaps, reducing the possibility that members will be disconnected, operate on autopilot, or forget that at Decurion people are "ends rather than means." As one Decurion leader told us, "Full humanity is not just welcome but *required* here. This is a space to allow individuals to become fully present." Meetings also have "check-outs" which help maintain authentic connections among members. As another leader explained, "When conversations become difficult, we check in with each other's humanity". These check-ins and checkouts are part of a range of practices for engaging authentically with one another. In the end, ArcLight members experience over time that even "hot" conversations with high stakes for individuals and the company take place in a context that combines support with authenticity.

conversational routines, and leadership support for their members to have more immediate access to the core business issues, and to work through the understandable pain that can inevitably arise from breaking silences, confronting one's weaknesses directly, or openly experiencing interpersonal disagreement. In another paradox of the DDO, the genuine business issues become *more* discussable only once the organization develops ways of fluently working through the non-business issues keeping individuals from doing their best work.

A DDO understands the emergence of gaps as part of natural human defensive routines, and so creates the conditions for safely working through these gaps in ways that prioritize speaking the truth about what is going on in a setting of trust—one which assumes the continued growth and good intentions of all involved. To gain more immediate and unmediated access to resolving the *business issues* at stake, DDOs create special discussion formats that allow their members to be authentic in talking about the personal dimensions of business issues, helping people to discuss the aspects of working life that are, in other organizations, not discussable. These forums—whether a group "probing" of one's reasoning at Bridgewater or a "fishbowl" conversation at Decurion—are shared crucibles for individual and group development. In these settings, there is no penalty for participating honestly and openly, only for failing to participate authentically. Identification of gaps to be closed, of new ways of working together, is celebrated.

In this way, DDOs create a community of continual practice which, over time, earns the trust of its members. For the people in the organization, the continual practice of risking one's own vulnerability becomes less risky and is seen as worthwhile as individuals witness over time that despite the exposure of conflict, revelation to one's colleagues of a growing edge, or discussion of some other "undiscussable" matter, *we are all still going to be okay in the end.* In other words, members of a DDO come to trust the organization as an ongoing engine for growth of its members. Perhaps a truer statement of the critical equation would be, "Pain + Reflection (in a sufficiently safe and trustworthy community) = Progress."

In the end, one of the DDO's most surprising and hopeful accomplishments may be converting its members' default "unimaginably bad" result of being vulnerable to others (*"if I risk showing my weaknesses, it will be just horrible!"*) into a sense of trust in a longer-term developmental process (*"if I risk showing my weaknesses, I'll probably learn something, and I will still be okay in the end."*)

7. Timescale for Growth, Not Closure

When people first see or hear about a DDO, a common first reaction is, "I can't believe the time they devote to the people processes," usually in a tone that suggests something like, "This has got to be crazy! How can you do this and get anything done?" But Decurion and Bridgewater are not just successful incubators of adult development; they are very successful by conventional business benchmarks, too. Clearly they *do* "get things done," and very well. Nevertheless, these first impressions do point to something important: DDOs have a discontinuously different concept of "value for time."

The difference may be understood through the Bridgewater distinction between *first-*and *second-order consequences*. The Bridgewater culture holds that we have a tendency to conflate these. We may not like to exercise because the first-order consequence is discomfort or lost time, but the second-order consequence is better health and more energy. If our fundamental goal is greater vitality (rather than minimizing discomfort), regular exercise is a good choice, even granting it can be uncomfortable and takes time.

Conventional organizations may analyze problems, and pride themselves on their efficiency, their ability to get to a new plan and agreement in short order. DDOs might suggest these organizations total up all these "efficient" meetings (from the point of view of first-order consequences) and consider if the reason they have to have so many of them is due to the fact they did not identify the personal and group limitations that are creating recurring versions of the same problem in the first place. Efficiency and effectiveness are two different things. In a DDO, what looks very inefficient (in the first order) may be highly effective (in the second). By addressing the personal and group "root causes," in Bridgewater's terms, DDOs invest time learning and growing now for all members of the organization in order to create the conditions for even greater success in the future.

8. "Interior Life" Is Part of What Is Managed

In the ordinary organization, that which is valued is that which is tangible and outwardly visible. It is no surprise, then, that this is where leaders will think to direct their attention. "Operations" of the business will understandably refer exclusively to *external* behaviors and visible processes on behalf of collective and individual KPIs, deliverables, and goals, serving *external* strategies. In the DDO, *interior* operations—

internal behaviors and psychological strategies— are no less real for being intangible or invisible.

Admitting "the interior" to the world of what is managed does not mean that leadership aspires to a form of mind control. It means that the culture as a whole, and each individual within it, places inner experience "in bounds" rather than "out of bounds" in the life of work. DDOs explicitly surface and overturn the customary pretense that "work is public, the personal is private, and so the personal should not be part of work." Everyone who has ever worked anywhere knows that work is intensely personal. We all bring our whole selves to work every day. In ordinary organizations, we regard this as an inconvenient truth we would rather ignore, and we essentially try to "manage around" the inevitable manifestations of the personal. In a DDO, routine practices openly encourage, and seek to make regular room for, the personal and the interior, on behalf of explicitly *welcoming* the whole person into work every day.

At Decurion, for example, most team meetings begin with a practice of "checking in" that can unexceptionally take up to an hour with a large group. What goes on during these check-ins? First, when people choose to speak (and all speaking is voluntary), they begin by saying their name ("I am Carlos"), even though it would be a rare day that anyone in the group would not know the name of another team member. So why do they do this? To remind themselves, and their teammates, that they seek to stand fully in whatever they are about to say, that it comes from their person, not their role. They will then say whatever they need to, to bring themselves fully, as a whole person, into the workspace. They may share an internal state, such as what they are feeling excited or nervous about, or they may report where they are on some interior goal—for example, how they see this very meeting as a chance to engage their efforts to be more open to others' competing ideas—or they may let the group in on something that is happening at home that inevitably is a part of how they are "showing up at work" that day—an upcoming celebration of a daughter's First Communion, or that a visiting relative is wearing out his welcome. The prior category ("Timescale for Growth, Not Closure") speaks to why they consider these unusual investments of *time* valuable and effective. But DDOs also widen the *space* that is consciously and continuously managed. The interior world is also explicitly welcomed in.

In its own way, Bridgewater's culture works to expand "the space to be managed" in the identical direction. First, its members seek a much deeper level of alignment among themselves around all important initiatives. A common phrase is "getting in synch," and it speaks to the need not just to have all the stakeholders sign off on a given plan of action, and who will do what by when, but for each to have an understanding of how the plan aligns with, and implicates, interior passions and proclivities (including proclivities that could derail the initiative). Second, no debrief of less-than-satisfactory outcomes is complete if it only deals with what went wrong externally, and what, externally, should be done next time. A Bridgewater debrief must get to the interior world—what can you learn from the choices you made about the way you work psychologically? Third, given Bridgewater's central focus on overcoming our tendencies to distort reality (which is what pursuing "what is true?" amounts to in practice), one of its universal practices is to help people better understand their own version of those automatic, reflexive patterns of self-protection that can lead any of us to be blindsided. In Bridgewater parlance, examining deeply enough to "touch the nerve" is not undertaken to make someone uncomfortable. It is done to show a young hire, for example, how his interior strategies to protect himself from being displeasing to his boss, or to show a senior hire how her interior efforts to preserve her prior professional stature, can systematically lead them to distort reality.

Developmental Communities

One of the most striking lessons from inside the work setting of the DDO is the central role that community plays in individual development. These organizations understand that only through membership in workplace *communities* in which individuals are deeply valued as individual human beings, constantly held accountable, and engaged in real and sustained dialogue can growth happen for individuals. DDOs evidence several discontinuous departures from typical organizations in the way that they nurture strong forms of community and the way that these communities serve as vehicles for enacting and negotiating the developmental principles and practices of the organization.

9. Rank Does Not Have Its Usual Privileges

In most organizations, the higher you climb, the more you are deferred to and the less you are criticized in front of your face. Fewer and fewer people "have the right" to take you on, and there

DDOs recognize that leadership's tendency to use its power to design and sustain structures that protect itself from challenge sets a limit on the organization's ability to exceed itself.

are more and more layers of interference or insulation between you and those in the lower ranks. "Rank hath its privileges."

Bridgewater and Decurion are *not* "flat" organizations. They do have hierarchies. People report to other people. But—and this is the discontinuous departure—"higher" gives you no free passes on the merits of your ideas, freedom from the disagreement or friendly advice of those in lower ranks, or immunity from the requirement to keep growing and changing to serve the needs of the business and yourself.

If you would find it impertinent or offensive for people many years and ranks your junior to tell you to your face, in front of colleagues, that they do not agree with the way you are carrying out a particular responsibility, or to suggest, as you embark on some activity, that you might do well to watch out for your tendency to dominate or get too involved in the details, then you might find yourself regularly offended in a DDO. In these organizations, "a meritocracy of ideas" is the ideal. At both Decurion and Bridgewater, titles are viewed as unimportant, and professions of "expertise" are seen as mild power plays that get in the way of truly sharing ideas (creating yet another form of potential "gap" among members of the community, one that may ultimately get in the way of good business results by stifling opportunities for learning).

Ordinary organizations tend to protect their most senior members from ongoing challenge. They take each other to task only rarely, for extreme violations that put the organization at risk, as if senior leaders are completely grown, finished products, and the only necessary accountability is to punish wrongdoing. DDOs recognize that leadership's tendency to use its power to design and sustain structures that protect itself from challenge sets a limit on the organization's ability to exceed itself.

Life in a DDO: Everyone is HR

At Decurion and Bridgewater, "professional development" is not something one does away from the office. The senior leaders of the companies are themselves the teachers in work-integrated learning that uses individual and group challenges in the life of the business as content.

At Decurion, company-wide seminars on self-management are facilitated by senior leaders. Through these seminars, members of the organization explore their individual capabilities, areas for growth, and defensive routines that shape behavior. Discussions and exercises draw on the actual work dilemmas and projects that members are living, treating them as the most valuable resources available for learning. Decurion members call this approach "the operations as curriculum," where development as a professional and person happens through treating one's own current work challenges as case studies. For company executives, serving as part of a bench of seminar facilitators is an essential responsibility. One Decurion leader explained that his colleagues thought he wasn't yet experienced enough at the practice of self-reflection, and so, in a move typical of this DDO, he was asked to take over leadership of the seminar.

At Bridgewater, too, senior leaders are the chief "people developers." Time and again, employees describe the most senior leaders spending many hours of their week in candid dialogue coaching the most junior employees in the company. Members of the Management Committee themselves lead company-wide learning experiences on applying the principles and values of Bridgewater. Executives are also curators of an evolving curriculum of video-based and textual stories of individual learning called "tidbits" that are shared and discussed as case studies across the company. At any time, routine business discussions at Bridgewater can shift into a classroom-like form of dialogue. It is common to pause for a "step-back moment" in the middle of a meeting to take stock of errors, diagnose their root causes in an individual's behavior and thinking, and identify what individuals can do to learn from those errors—potentially casting a developmental spotlight on any meeting. Finally, every manager is expected to coach his or her direct reports, but everyone in the organization is also part of the coaching team. Daily reflections are sent by employees to their supervisors, and these reflections are also available to everyone in the company to read, making it possible for everyone to appreciate the developmental challenges and emerging insights of individual colleagues.

10. Everyone is HR

In most organizations there is a Human Resources (HR) department, or the equivalent, with a mandate that goes beyond technical attention to employment particulars to include support to the ongoing *development* of the organization's people. HR is the go-to place for learning more about how you tick, how that shows up as a set of work-strengths and limitations, and where you might access resources—learning programs, coaching, mentors—that could help you overcome your limitations.

The discontinuous departure in the DDO is that—although they may well have HR departments handling the technical aspects of employment—the "people development" side of HR in a DDO is *everyone's* responsibility. In most organizations when something is "everyone's responsibility" it means that no one is doing it, and it isn't getting done; but in a DDO, it is everyone's responsibility *and it is getting done every day.*

This seamlessness between the support to the development of one's people and the "business of the business" (for Bridgewater, the managing of hedge funds; for Decurion, the management of movie theaters, senior living facilities, and real estate properties) is captured in the Decurion phrase, "nothing extra." People-development is not a separate activity, or an "additive" to the

business engine, it is an essential and integrated component of the business engine.

The shared responsibility for development was captured in our first visit to Bridgewater in the first five minutes of a meeting with several investment strategists. Our team had been interviewing management-committee members who talked easily and with depth about the culture, and the meeting with investment team members was billed as an opportunity to really hear about the "business of the business," the technical work that goes into creating and managing a hedge fund.

We were going to meet with several men who had spent their lives in banking, and we expected to hear about banking. In our two-minute introduction we said something like, "it will be good to hear what you do, and at some point we will also want to talk with you about how you experience the culture, the effect it has had on you personally." In the first few minutes of their speaking, it became clear this distinction was meaningless. They did talk to us about banking—for example, how they had been working on a study of how banks extend credit. What they were telling us simultaneously, however, was about the way that the critique they received of their first draft of the study led to the uncovering of some of their own personal limitations. They spoke of experiences of senior leaders probing their thinking process that were painful and productive at the same time, and that ultimately transformed not only their analysis, but *them.* Even when we sought to discuss aspects of the experience that were technical and not expected to illuminate the developmental culture of Bridgewater, the role of personal growth was an essential part of even the most technical aspects of finance. The "business of the business"—at Bridgewater and Decurion—is as much one's own development as the running of the hedge funds or the movie theaters.

11. Everyone Needs a Crew

If people must be willing to be vulnerable in order to grow, they then need a community that will support them in—and through—their vulnerability. In a DDO *everyone* (from entry-level to CEO) has a "crew," an ongoing group that can be counted on not only to be an *instrument of* your vulnerability—calling you on your own blindspots and reactivity—but a support to your own growth as a result of that vulnerability. Consider how this dramatically departs from business-as-usual in even the most "supportive" and "productive" of work-teams. A good team in a conventional company not only produces its work in a timely

way at a high quality (which, of course, a good DDO team must do as well), but does in fact offer forms of "moral support"—i.e., you feel you can trust and talk with your team members about personal things that relate to work, and life beyond work. But notice that this "personal side" is about supporting people to *cope* through the bumps and stresses of the job, and perhaps the way "private life" stresses may interfere with the job.

Coping is essentially about how to *maintain* oneself in the face of potentially destabilizing forces. But development occurs precisely through "constructive destabilization," a willingness to surrender a familiar equilibrium for what will eventually be a new, more adaptive one. In the meantime, the waters can be rocky. At Decurion and Bridgewater, people regularly talked to us about periods in which they feel "ill-equipped," "out on a rope without a net," "beyond my competencies," "repeatedly ineffective with no guarantees I would get it". (And keep in mind, these included leaders who were extremely capable, with work histories in prior organizations marked by extraordinary success.) But notice that a team that tries to support you by *reducing* this destabilization, to help you restore the old equilibrium—business-as-usual in the best of teams—would, in a DDO, be seen as doing you no service at all, yet another "discontinuous departure." "Pain + Reflection (in a sufficiently safe and trustworthy community) = Progress."

12. Everyone Builds the Culture

Like all companies, each DDO has its own distinctive *culture*—among other things, a set of routines and practices for getting work done, a unique language, and shared deep assumptions about "how the world works," how problems can get solved, and what is valued (Schein, 1984). In many companies, employees receive recognition for "living out the values" of the culture through their attitudes and standards, ways of behaving, and interactions with others. In a DDO, individual alignment with the best of the organization's culture is also essential—but is not sufficient. All employees in a DDO are expected to contribute to the *shaping* of the culture, to step forward at any time to improve how the *organization* does its work. From the entry-level analyst to the CEO, everyone is expected both to embody the culture *and* to strengthen it by participating continuously and collectively in the redesign of the organization's structures and routines.

DDOs like Decurion and Bridgewater have an especially intense focus on the shared designing of

processes by which work is done. If something isn't working optimally, it's not "someone else's problem to fix"; it's everyone's responsibility to scrutinize and address the design of the underlying process. If a new line of business is being launched, a community of individuals will spend comparably lavish amounts of time on designing the right process for doing and managing the work. Each DDO also has a broadly shared language for describing process design. Bridgewater employees at all levels talk relentlessly about understanding and revising a given "machine," by which they mean the design of any process or system for producing outcomes (including an *individual's* habitual ways of thinking). Likewise, Decurion members operate with the assumption that "structure drives behavior" and so often focus on subtle aspects of organizational design (including how offices are arranged, how frequently conversations happen, what task structures will require that certain people will naturally *need* to collaborate, and more).

Why this insistence on getting the processes and routines right in the organization and in involving everyone as designers? In a DDO, quite simply, the way the work is done is the way the developmental principles of the organization are given life. If people are to develop, then they

"Radical Transparency": Every Meeting Is Recorded

At Bridgewater, every meeting is recorded, and (unless proprietary client information is discussed) every recording is available to every member of the organization. Every office and every meeting room is equipped with audio or video recording technology. If, e.g., your boss and your boss's boss are discussing your performance, and you didn't happen to be invited to the meeting, the tape is available for you to review. And you don't have to scour every tape to find out if you were the subject of some closed-door conversation. If your name came up, you are likely to be given a heads-up, just so you *will* review the tape. In effect, there is no such thing as a "closed door conversation."

Why would a company adopt such an extraordinary practice, which, as you can imagine, its attorneys strenuously advised against? A fast answer is that Bridgewater believes it takes radical transparency to relentlessly pursue "what is," and that the practice of taping everything is one way of living out "radical transparency." But notice that it is also a way in which this important feature of the culture is being built and re-built by every member of that organization every single day.

And by the way, the attorneys now feel differently. In three lawsuits subsequent to initiating the practice, all three rulings favored Bridgewater *precisely because* they could produce the relevant tapes. "And if the tapes show we *did* do something wrong," one senior leader told us, "then we *should* receive a negative judgment." That's radical transparency, too.

require the right processes both for doing excellent work and for their own growth. In the same way, if the company is to be successful, then all of its people must be naturally developing through doing the work. To enact these developmental principles in the culture requires constant attention to the way that people are interacting routinely in doing the work. Unlike quality improvement approaches such as Lean Six Sigma, a DDO's focus on improving processes is just as likely to be about improving the quality of work done on members' individual *interiors* and collective *communities* as it is on the *external* (e.g., measures of production-process errors and anomalies).

In DDOs, every employee—whether crew members making caramel corn in a theater location or senior leaders in the management committee—is reflecting on, talking about, and redesigning processes together, creating new "structures" and revising "machines". As a result, two common forms of drag on performance seen in some other organizations are minimized.

First, no one in a DDO is given cover to be passively going through decontextualized motions, and no one is permitted to be merely an actor in processes of someone else's design. As Decurion members say, "the crew runs the business," and "everyone is teaching and learning." Second, business outcomes and even small actions day-to-day are constantly and productively reframed from being seen as single, one-off events to being regarded as the results of *business processes that can be understood and can be revised.* For employees in a DDO, outcomes whether immediate or company-wide can be improved by collectively inspecting and remaking the people-centered processes that lead to those outcomes.

We heard stories from all levels of Bridgewater and Decurion of the excitement and challenges of constantly working to redesign the conditions of your own work (something that would be considered "above one's pay grade" in many other organizations). First, *front-line employees* are not subject to someone else's operational rulebook, for example, for negotiating a rental agreement or cleaning a theater. Rather, they are expected to help write and revise the rulebook every time they see something that could be improved. In turn, *managers* are not implementers and enforcers of standard operating procedures; they are instead shapers of the conditions and structures that will allow crew members on the front lines to continually participate in improving the way they work. Finally, *executives* do not merely develop strategy and then oversee its execution by others; they are instead trustees for the principles that

guide process-design efforts across the organization. They are coaches and mentors in the complex, ongoing process of organizational adaptation of which everyone in the DDO is a part.

Because "the company" is, at any given moment, the emergent result of the existing processes for people working together in communities, everyone in a DDO is expected to be able to contribute to the observation, diagnosis, and revision of the processes at the heart of the work. Moreover, failures of organizational design may not only limit business results directly but waste precious opportunities for the development of members, the longer-term engine of business success.

The DDO Whole Is More Than the Sum of Its Parts

It may be possible to adequately describe the deconstructed elements of a DDO while still missing "the soul of the whole." We would do a disservice to Decurion and Bridgewater not to name an unmistakable quality we believe is the outcome of their distinctive principles, practices and communities.

Many fine organizations which are clearly not DDOs, and may have no interest in becoming one, are nonetheless able to create cultures fostering an unusual quality of "family fellowship," we-feeling, or human solidarity. While such organizations are clearly a minority, they show there are many ways

to unleash a deeply meaningful sense of human connectedness at work.

But if Decurion and Bridgewater are to be taken as examples, the DDO may create a special kind of human community, one that arises from the gifts of vulnerability and the growth that can flower from it. Experiencing yourself as incomplete or inadequate—but *still included, accepted, and admired*; experiencing the very capable people around you as incomplete and inadequate—but no less admirable; these seem to unleash qualities of compassion and appreciation that we might all hope for in our relationships, and that characterize an underlying feeling in a DDO.

As psychologists, we have sometimes seen this unusual kind of connection in the *temporary* communities that can be fostered in a multi-day personal-learning program, or a facilitated support group over several months. From such groups we can glimpse possibilities of new forms of community as we take up the interior work of our own growth, but, of course, such groups and programs are not built to take up the work of the world, nor to last permanently. Imagine a group or a program that was.

The Promise of the DDO: Beyond the "Learning Organization"

We call this type of company a *deliberately developmental* organization for a reason. Companies like Decurion and Bridgewater systematically work at creating the conditions to drive human flourishing and business flourishing as part of one interdependent and mutually reinforcing set of goals. Guided by growth-focused principles, they do this through implementing a deeply aligned and complementary set of practices, in the context of a community devoted not just to the "learning" of their people, but to their further unfolding. Creating conditions where these twelve discontinuous departures can take hold requires commitment to nurturing a very different kind of culture—one that sees individual growth not only as a means but as an end; error and inadequacy as opportunities to transcend current limitations; and powerful communities at work as homes for the deeply rewarding disturbances that develop personal and organizational potential.

DDOs like Decurion and Bridgewater offer an "existence proof" that the quest for business excellence and the search for personal realization need not be in tension. As these companies are demonstrating, employees and organizations *are* the essential ingredients for one another's thriving.

Quick Test for a DDO: Five Questions

If we came into your company, chose five people at random, and asked them each the following five questions, what would we hear?

1. Can you tell me a personal-growth goal, or self-improvement issue, you are working on at this time? (For shorthand, we'll call this your OBT, your "one big thing")

2. Can you tell me how making progress on your OBT would make a big difference for you personally, for the company, and for your life outside the company?

3. Can you name others in the company who are aware of your OBT, whom you talk with about it, who might give you feedback about it, who *care* whether you make progress on it?

4. Can you tell me how regularly you have the chance to be "at work" on your OBT during the normal flow of your work activities? When was the last time you were aware you were working on your OBT?

5. Can you tell me—when you *do* make progress on your OBT—how is this noticed or acknowledged in the company? Does it "register," and, if so, how?