

Discovering Agility in "The Open Organization"

By Tom O'Shea, CMC Organizational Agility Practice Leader

"Whenever I talk with leaders of companies in (all) industries ... I hear a consistent theme: Frustration that they can't move FAST enough, given the organizations they have, to stay competitive. They know that capabilities like SPEED and AGILITY are becoming the core of competitive advantage ..."



This is the context for why Jim Whitehurst, CEO of the \$2B Raleigh, NC based open source software leader called Red Hat, wrote the book entitled [THE OPEN ORGANIZATION](#) and shares his open source code of operating principles that have helped make Red Hat incredibly successful by all measures. Not bad to generate \$2 Billion in annual sales revenue and yet have a market value of over \$10 Billion. Lots of positive things have to be aligned and sustainable to generate that combination.

Whitehurst took over as CEO at Red Hat back in 2008 after a successful turnaround run as COO of Delta Airlines. As he was being recruited to join and lead Red Hat, it was clear that the culture of an "open organization" already existed at Red Hat therefore required a significant transformation from Whitehurst to move from more traditional command and control zone to what at first felt like a totally out of control zone. It makes perfect sense that the company founded and built on the premise and manifesto of an "open source", hyper-collaborative model of software development would instill those same tenets into how they develop and operate their organization as well.

The juggernaut to Red Hat success has been the capacity to connect all the dots - their people (*both internal and external*), purpose and passion in an energized ecosystem of a high engagement, full contact, transparent, authentic operating system that thrives on innovation, speed and accomplishment. Some might call that culture - but it really is so much more ... smart and activated culture or maybe enabled, dynamic culture. Or maybe just an open organization.

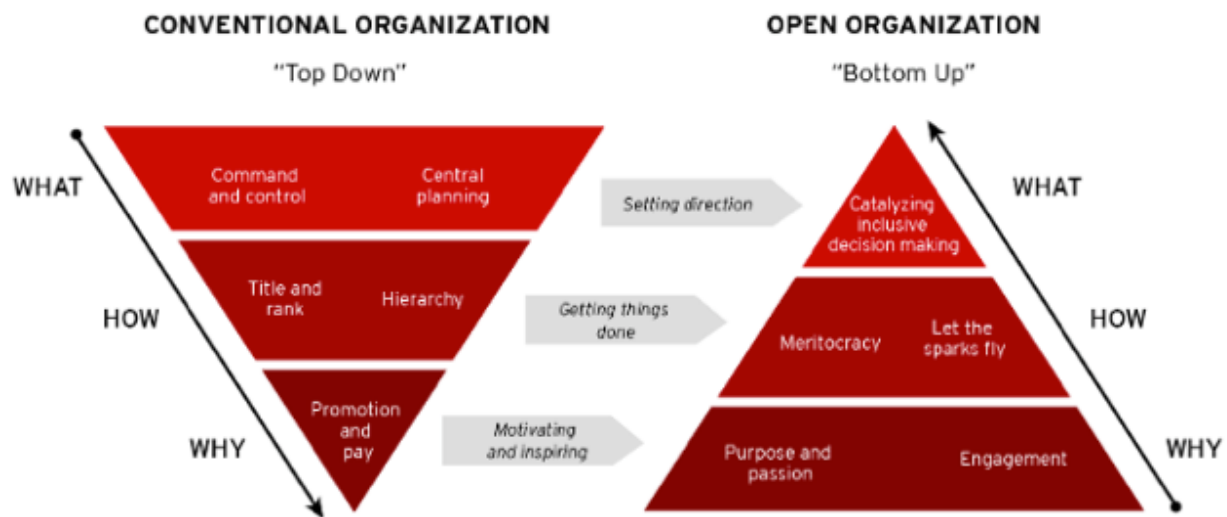
5.24.17

Also posted at: <http://agilityconsulting.com/your-agility-advantage/the-open-organization/>

Cultivating passion does not come naturally to all leaders - for many it requires a super conscious effort to give themselves and others permission and encouragement to show the emotional involvement needed to make it real. **Whitehurst's leadership tips** for leaders looking to create a more passionate, open organization:

- 1 **Passion is contagious** ... is yours positive, evident and noticeable for others to follow?
- 2 **Is there a clearly stated purpose or mission** ... real purpose (beyond profits) fuels real passion?
- 3 **Add passionate words to your vocabulary** ... like love, excited, amazing ... what evokes positive future sense?
- 4 **Look to hire folks that are passionate** ... questions like - what are you passionate about ... what inspires you?
- 5 **Create regular vehicles for people to show their "unvarnished" passion** ... outings, team building events, etc.

Red Hat believes in a different starting point than the traditional hierarchical organization ... turning the typical pyramid upside down and placing their emphasis on the Purpose (WHY) along with a much more AGILE and engaged operating method (HOW) to achieve extraordinary outcomes (WHAT).



This organizational model is much better suited for the rampant change and extraordinary speed of play in the business world today ... and tomorrow. As we outline in our book, [Focused, Fast & Flexible: Creating Agility Advantage in a VUCA World](#), organizational success starts with the strength of your Core Belief System. At Red Hat, their core belief system is nurtured, massaged, activated and energized everyday which makes it stronger, truer and more potent as a success enabler with nuclear capacity to attract and retain a full network of talented contributors ... a community of success.

The [Open Organization](#) and the [Agile Organization](#) share more than core belief systems - they share the realization that activated and empowered organizations need tools and capabilities to support decision making ownership and speed expected from all levels in the organization. Interestingly, both of us also promote the use of a simple yet elegant decision making tool first introduced by AF Colonel John Boyd back in the Korean War called the [OODA LOOP](#). The OODA Loop framework (Observe, Orient, Decide & Act) enables rapid and rigorous engagement to support decisions and action closest to the front lines of customer engagement. Click the link above for more background on OODA.

So, how are you doing in your organization in all of these dimensions? I encourage you to take a deeper look at The Open Organization and challenge yourselves on what you can learn from this open source of success. You will find the combination of our two frameworks to be quite complimentary. You can take a free self-assessment to explore your [Organizational Agility Profile](#) as well.

I would love to get your thoughts and feedback as always.



Tom O'Shea, CMC

Organizational Agility Practice Leader

tom@agilityconsulting.com

336-282-1211

skype-osheatom

