

# Part 3

## **CIRCUIT 4**

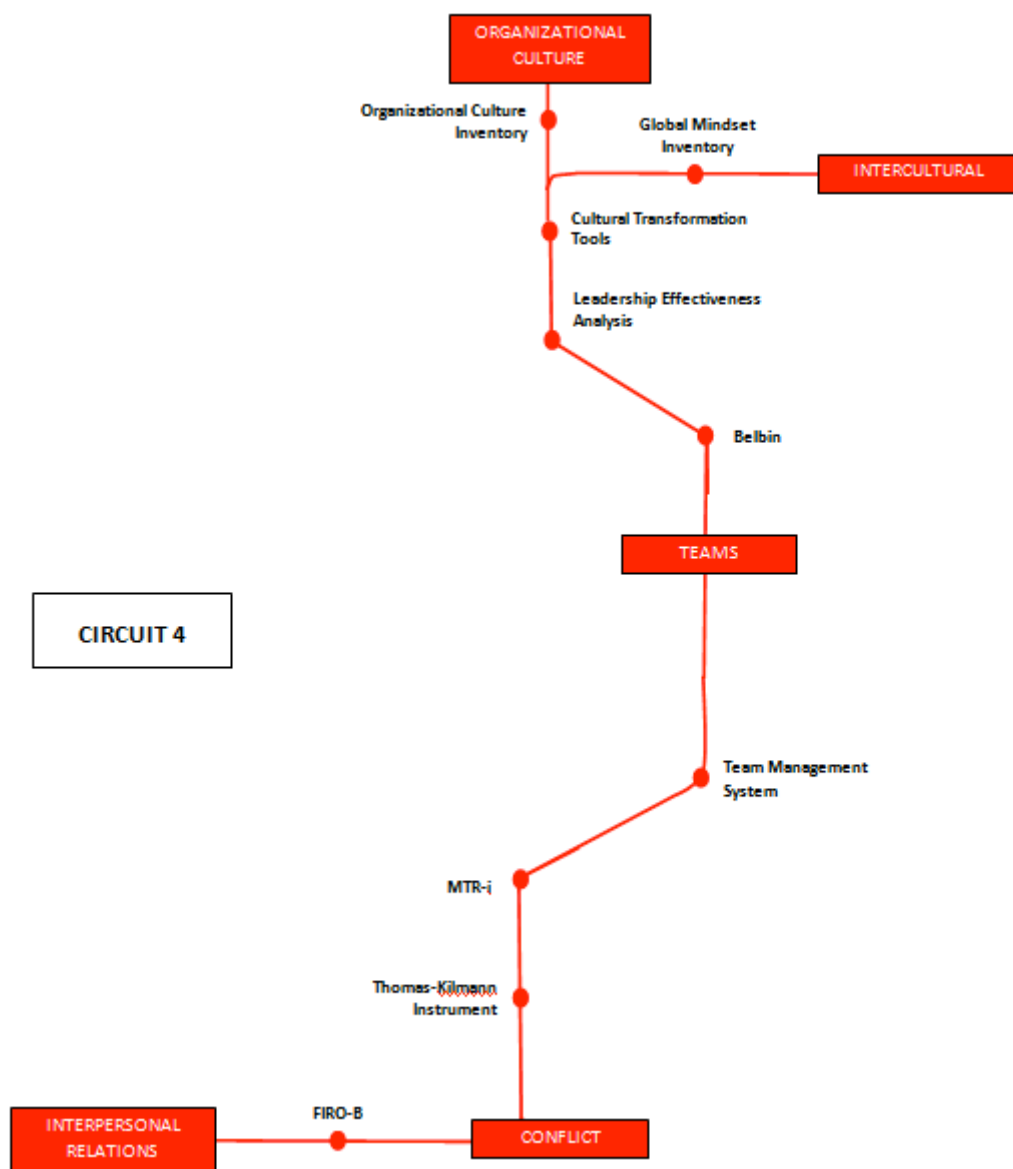
**INTERPERSONAL  
RELATIONSHIPS -  
CONFLICT - TEAMS  
- ORGANIZATIONAL  
CULTURE -  
INTERCULTURAL**

**N**ine instruments make up this circuit which examines our relationships to others.

The circuit starts out with interpersonal relationships, between individuals or in a group context, and then moves on to the notion of conflict (so soon!). It

then looks at team characteristics, their dynamics and functions, especially with regard to roles (this intersects with the first personality circuit). Building from this collective level, the circuit continues by looking at tools which measure culture - corporate or organizational - by trying to group or allocate individuals according to common practices. A final fork leads off to the supra-cultural dimension - that is to say, the intercultural.

We therefore start off at the interpersonal level examining it from a psychology angle, and move gradually towards the behavioral level, seen from a sociological perspective.



All the tools have a dual perspective: a) introspection about one's own behavior towards others and b) the organizational context which gives a precise meaning to this introspection. We are what we are, and we behave the way we do in a specific environment, and invariably in relationship to this environment. The logic of these tools would thus have it that we behave differently in different contexts. We do not try to understand how a person is in an absolute sense, and certain tools (**Belbin**®...) take ignore personality completely. The further along the circuit we go, the more group dynamics - from the immediate team to the whole organization - is treated as a subject in its own, in a more and more supra-individual way.

The specificity of this circuit has consequences on the interpretation of the questionnaire results. Since the tools depend on context, the feedback must necessarily take the context into account in order to be fully relevant, and this takes more time. The understanding comes from interaction with others (at team level) or the "fit" (at company culture level). This implies more respondents. Results are less reliable over time: if the context changes, an individual's results might be different. This means it is necessary to take the questionnaire more frequently. Sometimes, especially in a team, a small change (such as the arrival of a new team member) can have an immediate impact on the relationships of the whole team. Even at company culture level, just a CEO change can generate a whole host of micro-changes that ripple through the organization.

Equally, the way this circuit is orientated means that collective interpretation and feedback in *teambuilding* sessions, is preferable as the "actual truth" is doubtless to be found "between" (or amongst) the different individuals, or at team level in combined perceptions. Group work can also help to prioritize how to deal with issues and to focus on those most critical to development.

**Conflict** figures in this circuit, as it is a universal ingredient in relationships with others. The larger the team, the greater the potential for conflict. Conflict is natural, inevitable and even desirable (so as to avoid levelling phenomena such as *Groupthink*) and manifests itself - in various shapes and forms - every time we are faced with important stakes. Conflict is often the flipside of engagement, and is necessary to obtain it (Tuckman's "*storming*" phase of *teambuilding*). In the least interpersonal sense, conflict is the natural expression of diverging individual interests. At the same time, if you talk about conflict, you must talk about problem resolution. What is important is to be able to deal with conflict other than by systematic avoidance. What is more, it is often the existence of one or several interpersonal conflicts within a team that is the main reason for exploring these relationships, and for calling in a consultant.

As we move through the circuit, we look at the cultural aspects with an increasingly wide focus. Culture can be defined in general terms as "what is common to a group of individuals", and company culture as "a collection of shared assumptions and beliefs that the group has learnt, as it has resolved its problems in adapting externally and internally" (Edgar Schein). Culture conditions the way we perceive, think and feel, in relation to these problems. Culture can thus be corporate (CTT, OCI<sup>®</sup>, LEA), by sector and/or national (GMI). At this last level, the interactional challenges are of another nature altogether. The work of Hofstede and Trompenaars/Hampden has amply demonstrated the unsuspected impact of societal values on personal values.

All the tools we look at here presuppose that a team or an organization has common aims and objectives, with a clear end, and that the members are diverse

and interdependent. Team diversity is often seen to be a guarantee of effectiveness. The quality of interpersonal relationships thus becomes critical, and these tools as a result become very applicable to the professional business world.

The **FIRO-B**<sup>®</sup> tool is simple but subtle, and has the great merit of identifying the extent to which a person takes initiatives in his relationships with others, and the extent to which he expects others to take the initiative. It looks at: the need to include others (or to be included), the need to control (or be controlled), and the need for closeness to others. Of course, there is often a gap between needs and expectations in different people. The individual might sometimes behave the same with everybody, regardless of who they are, even though his position in the organization chart and the expectations attached to his role might require more varied and tailored behaviors. FIRO-B<sup>®</sup> can thus reveal the gaps between a person's natural relationships and the demands of the role he occupies.

The **Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI)**<sup>™</sup> is devoted to the subject of conflict management alone. The questionnaire helps the candidate to understand which of five conflict resolution strategies he most and least often uses (competition, avoidance, compromise, collaboration, conciliation). What is more, in this way, the instrument raises the participant's awareness of the existence of a range of different strategies, which can be used for different conflict situations, in order to increase effectiveness. The analysis is done while removing the personal aspects of conflict, and according to criteria which tend to the more "objective" (or linked to the **interests** of the conflicting parties), as opposed to the participants' own personalities or fundamental motivations.

The **MTR-i**<sup>™</sup> (**Management Team Roles Indicator**) was born from the desire to apply Jungian personality types strictly to the team roles, in order to look for a balanced collection of profiles in global team dynamics. Thus eight team roles are correlated with 16 MBTI<sup>®</sup> types. This then is the tool that places the most emphasis in the circuit on the impact of personality on a team (and hence the crossover with circuit 1: personality - behavior). Myers starts out with the notion that every member of a team brings her personality first and foremost, but that the situation