The Science Bit

"Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing"

Albert Einstein

The origins of the SPICE Framework

The SPICE Framework has been designed to help manage today's complex, uncertain and ambiguous world, enabling leaders, teams and individuals to make accurate and balanced decisions.

The SPICE Framework has emerged from over 30 years experience supporting people into innovation and entrepreneurship. It draws on research from the UK, USA and Netherlands and current thinking in behavioural psychology, neurosciences and moral philosophy.

It is the brainchild of Michael Croft, CEO of Innovation People; an original ideas company focused on the conception and nurturing of people focused market changing innovation. Michael Croft has a track record in promoting sustainable enterprise in multiple contexts stretching back to the mid-1980s.

The SPICE Framework is a product of the reflections and practice of Michael Croft.

Perhaps more importantly, The SPICE framework was conceived through developing entrepreneurial habits in individuals and organisations at a very practical level in some of the most challenging business environments, inner-urban and multi-cultural and faith communities.

This original work of Michael Croft that spawned The SPICE Framework has been recognised by both the UK Government and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The 6 principles that underpin the SPICE Framework

1. Humanity is "hyper-social"

Our behaviours are driven by underlying social norms and complex, networked relationships. The SPICE Framework goes beyond Social Networking to improve communications, arguing that all business and enterprise is social. We put a fresh spin on "Social Enterprise". For each person has their part to play in business communities and human society. Organisations and businesses work best when people work together and play to their strengths. This "hyper-social" principle infuses The SPICE Framework building humanity at the heart of organisational development.

2. Reflective, reflexive and recursive thinking

SPICE is a framework and not a method. It is infinitely variable in application allowing it to be used in a wide range of applications. The Framework is underpinned with considerations of reflective, reflexive and recursive thinking in order drive development within an organisation.

Reflection will be very familiar for many people involving and understanding of what was done and what happened. Reflexion is the ability to grasp why it happened or was done attributing meaning to events and actions and is often related to our beliefs and values. Recursive thinking is the ability to embed our thoughts within other thoughts. Recursion helps us to conceive of our own thoughts and to place ourselves in others shoes and understand their thinking patterns and world view. It also enables us to share our ideas with others, imagine different possibilities and reshape our environment.

In thinking through the future direction of an organisation, problem solving and decision making it is the ability to think recursively that allows us to create future scenarios, draw on past experiences and insert these into present consciousness. The most successful leaders act beyond convention through reflexive and recursive knowing, - through trial, error and learning from cause and effect.

The SPICE Framework takes into account the latest thinking related to brain function and the contribution that differing techniques for promoting reflection, reflexion and recursion have on self-coaching and personal development.

3. Graphics and symbols habituate behaviours

The SPICE Framework draws on the study of semiotics (the study of signs and symbols) and is built around "hyper-simple" graphics that focus on five coloured disks.

Behavioural sciences have demonstrated that if people can give meaning to symbols then they can embed behaviours within their intuitive and habitual thinking system. As such the use of simple colours and graphics leads to the habituation of desired thinking styles and provides standardised resources for reflection and individual decision-making.

4. Soft systems approach

At the heart of the SPICE Framework is a Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) that also draws heavily upon the influence of Henry Mintzberg.

Developed by Peter Checkland in the 1960's SSM is a learning and meaning development tool that helps us structure our thinking about the real world, enabling us to untangle complex situations.

Systems thinking is a dynamic way of viewing organisations as part of a system, where there is a relationship between all the elements in the system. Soft systems methodologies treats the system as an epistemological notion (i.e. viewing the system as a mental construct used for our understanding and defined by the perspective one takes on a situation) rather than an ontological entity (which defines the system as something existing in reality such as a computer system).

Depending on what perspective we take, we will have a very different understanding of an organisational system. The SPICE Framework is based on a soft systems approach to allow people to view an organisation, challenge or problem in its entirety and from multiple perspectives. This ultimately prevents the unintended consequences of good intentions which can often occur when we fall into silo'd or process driven thinking. Being able to view an organisation as a system with all the intricate interconnections can help us to think through challenges, see opportunities and make decisions with greater accuracy.

The Five Elements of SPICE (Strategic Intent, Patterns, Individual, Context and Emergence) represent the development within any human system.

5. Thinking Zones

People prefer to make binary choices between alternatives. However we are often faced with "noisy" signals from our environment and distortion in our decision-making pathways with reduces the accuracy of decision making.

The SPICE Framework has integrated the mental preference for binary choices into a Framework that enables us to understand complexities, reducing noise from the environment and enabling more accurate decision making.

The Framework poses a series of paired thinking options across thinking zones to allow our minds to more easily make decisions.

The SPICE Framework helps us think through decisions in the "Activating Zones" – where users can balance decision-making across Strategic Intent and Emergence - and in the "Regulating Zones" – where we can think through decisions related to Context and Individual that take account of considerations around ethics and beliefs and behaviours and values.

6. Balanced decision making

The decision-making architecture of the SPICE Framework draws upon Behavioural Psychology, Neurosciences and the Moral Philosophy of John Rawls to provide an approach that seeks to drive value creation across both traditional KPI's and People Focused Needs.

SPICE actively increases the accuracy with which we develop strategies, action plans and predict future outcomes (known as Heuristics) and enables users to make the best possible choices through weighing a pattern of associations.

The ideas of balance and accuracy are fundamental. They draw upon approaches to decision-making that track back to ancient Greece that have been the building blocks for decision-making in Western culture for the past 3,000 years.

About Michael Croft

Michael is first and foremost a practitioner, working directly with businesses and communities. He has also conducted doctoral research in the development of Innovation Systems.

Michael is also an Anglican clergyman. Ordained in the late 1980s, he has worked in challenging inner-urban and multi-cultural faith communities. This work led Michael to develop a strong commitment to put values and ethics at the forefront of leadership and organisational development.

Michael received the Home Office "Local Hero" award in 2005 and was, uniquely featured by the Archbishop of Canterbury in his presidential address to the general Synod. In fact the Rowan Williams, the then Archbishop of Canterbury, gave over his Presidential Address to the General Synod of the Church of England in 2006 to feature Michael's work in developing sustainable enterprise and community leadership amongst challenging multi-ethnic and multi-faith communities.

Michael founded Innovation People in 2008 to help leaders uncover and nurture entrepreneurial and leadership habits in their people and to put ethics and values at the heart of regulating organisational behaviour.

Innovation People's training programmes are both endorsed by the Institute of Leadership and Management and embedded within accredited learning programmes.

Michael has moved from challenging urban parish clergyman to innovative thinker to develop a regional, then national and soon international business.

"The third-rate mind is only happy when it is thinking with the majority. The second-rate mind is only happy when it is thinking with the minority. The first-rate mind is only happy when it is thinking."

A.A. Milne

This overview has been produced by Innovation People.

Innovation People are the original ideas company dedicated to finding new ways to harness and deploy innovation. We help uncover and nurture innovation habits in people.

Innovation People has grown out of 30 years experience developing entrepreneurial habits in individuals and organisations at a very practical level in some of the most challenging business and social environments.

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