

Organizational Diagnosis Models

GUIDE

Introduction

Organizational diagnosis is a structured approach to driving organizational performance. Using a methodical and evidence-based process, you can understand how the organization works as a system within its context. This uncovers what the organization's strengths and developmental areas are to ensure it can effectively deliver on its strategy.

This resource will present **three well-known models for organizational diagnosis** and questions to get you started with using each model. These models provide a structured way to gather and analyze data. This data can be used to identify the interventions needed to help the organization address risks and issues.

Organizational diagnosis models can be used in situations where the business is dealing with:

- Changes, for example, entering a new market or implementing a new technology solution.
- Organizational strategy as a way to prepare and understand what the strategy needs to address.
- Organizational design, to better understand how the current organization functions.
- Mergers and acquisitions, to see how the transition process needs to be managed.

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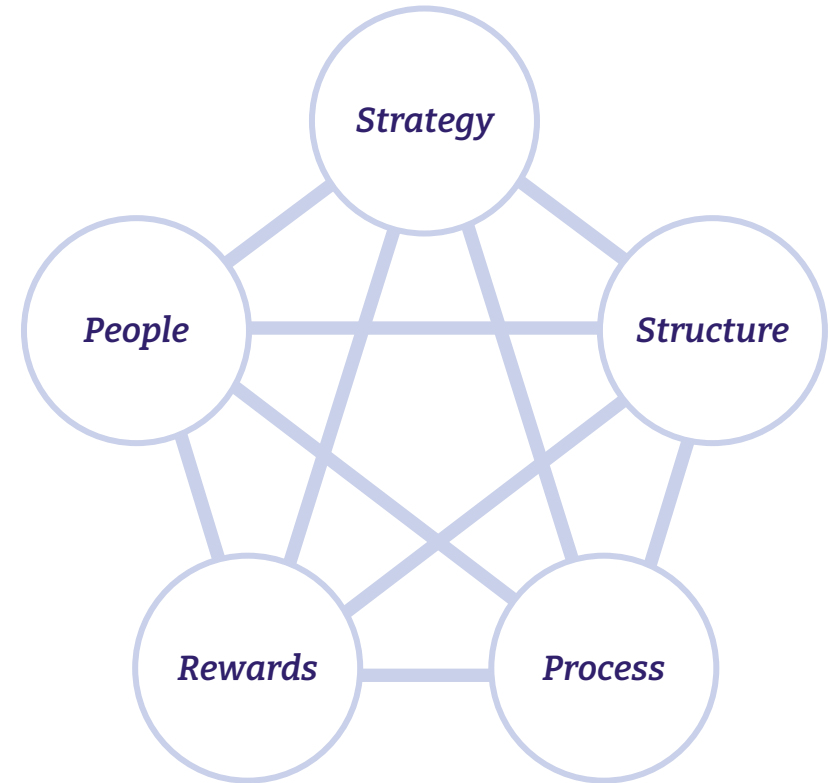
Galbraith Star Model

The **Galbraith Star Model** is probably the most well-known model in organizational diagnosis. It provides an understanding of how the organization works by looking at five dimensions.

You begin with the strategy element, asking if there is a clear strategy with priorities and expectations. This leads to structure, asking if this is aligned to the strategy, and from there, process, ensuring the processes are connected to the structure.

It explores the rewards element to determine if the organization is incentivizing the right behavior and analyzes if the right talent and skills are available in the people element.

The star pattern is made by showing the connections between the elements. An organization is healthy when all aspects align and interact harmoniously.



Strengths

- Simple to explain and understand
- Recognized within strategy circles

Limitations

- Does not explicitly focus on the external environment and technology (systems of work)
- Limits the people box to skills and resources, not focusing on behaviors or relationships that underpin the organization

Use when:

- Investigating processes or practices that are not influenced by the external environment
- In preparation for strategy, organizational design, or change initiatives

Example:

- An organizational development specialist uses the model to help their business understand how to address performance issues.

Galbraith Star Model

Diagnostic questions for data collection

Below is a list of key questions you can ask about each element in the Star Model to get started with your organizational diagnosis.

Strategy

Guarantee that the survey is completely anonymous to encourage honest and open responses. This fosters trust and increases the likelihood of obtaining accurate feedback.

Structure

Employ a combination of question types to gather comprehensive data. Include closed-ended questions (e.g., multiple-choice) to quantify responses and identify trends. Incorporate open-ended questions to allow employees to express their thoughts and feelings in their own words for valuable qualitative insights.

Processes

Design a concise survey that directly addresses the key areas of concern. Avoid unnecessary or redundant questions and maintain a clear focus on the topics of stress management and work-life balance.

Rewards

Before launching the survey organization wide, conduct a pilot test with a small group of employees. This helps identify any potential issues with the survey's clarity, relevance, or technical aspects. Use the feedback received to refine and improve the final version.

People

Transparently communicate the purpose of the survey and the potential benefits to employees and the organization. Explain that it aims to identify areas where the company can improve support and resources to enhance employee wellbeing and work-life balance.

Weisbord Six-Box Model

The **Weisbord Six-Box Model** focuses on purpose rather than strategy, going deeper into the reason the organization exists. It explores how the structure of the organization enables that purpose, and if the rewards in place are incentive enough to achieve it.

It looks at helpful mechanisms, such as systems of work and technology, and questions if the right relationships are in place to achieve its purpose. Leadership stands in the middle, demonstrating how the right leadership needs to be at the right maturity level for the organization to keep the other boxes balanced.

This model also considers environmental factors, such as the economic climate and governance, contextualizing the organization.

Strengths

- Simple and easy to work with
- Acknowledges the external environment

Limitations

- Fails to capture the full extent of interconnectedness within an organization
- Does not define the effectiveness of the informal organization (unwritten rules and unofficial behaviors)



Use when:

- Assessing organizational health as part of an environmental change, such as industry or legislative changes

Example:

- An HR manager uses the model to do a change impact analysis and understand the current workforce and ways of work before implementing a large-scale technology project.

Weisbord Six-Box Model

Diagnostic questions for data collection

Below is a list of key questions you can ask per each box in the Weisbord Six-Box Model to get started with your organizational diagnosis.

Purpose

Is the purpose of the organization clear?

Structure

Are the structures of the teams well designed?

Rewards

Are the salaries being paid equal to the jobs being done?

Leadership

Do managers provide the support needed to ensure employees work effectively?

Helpful mechanisms

Do employees have access to the information they need to do their jobs well?

Relationships

Are the relationships needed to be successful in each role established?

Burke-Litwin Model

The **Burke-Litwin Model** is a comprehensive model that highlights the interconnectedness of the different organizational elements within the context of the external environment.

It divides its elements into three factors. Strategic factors include mission and strategy, leadership, and culture.

Operating factors cover structure, management practices, and systems such as technology and processes. It differentiates between leadership and management, highlighting the different requirements from each group. It also looks at the work group climate, which assesses how things are going in the organization at that exact point in time.

The individual level factors look at the right skills at the right places, linking back to the structure of the business. Elements such as motivation, individual needs, and skills allow you to assess things like employee engagement initiatives, employee experience, and the employee value proposition.

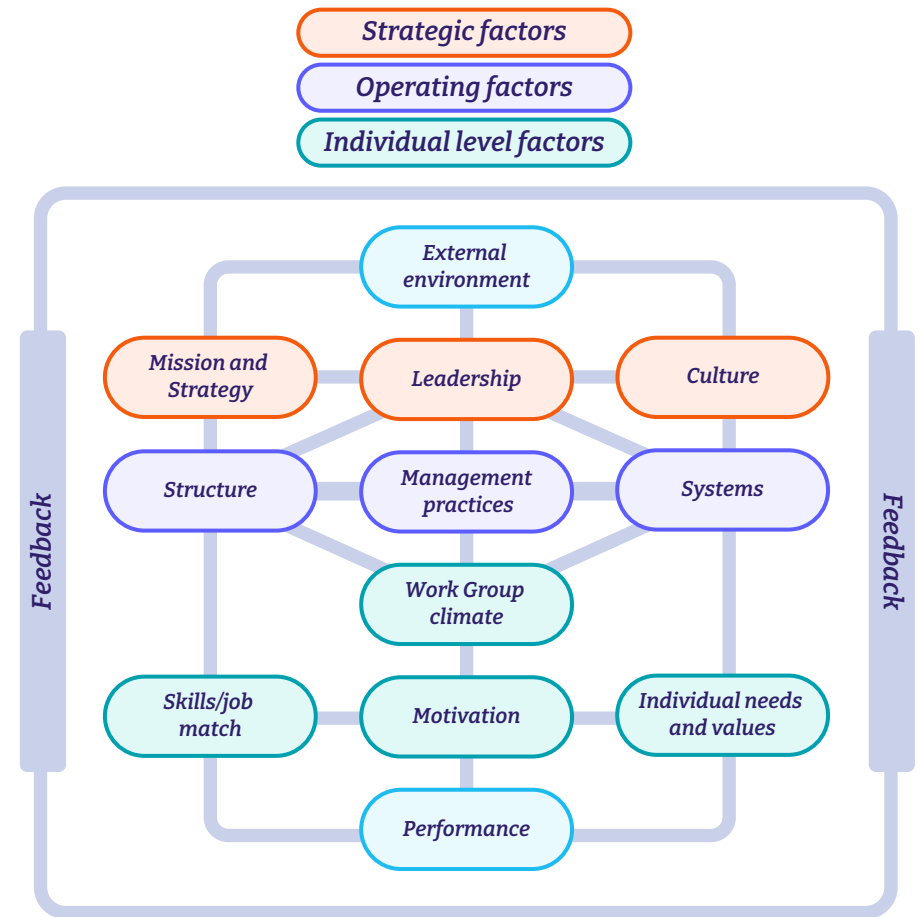
In this model, each element will influence the other, and ultimately individual and organizational performance, with feedback loops enabling continuous adjustment.

Strengths

- Balances the operational aspects of the organization (e.g., structure, systems, individual needs) with the transformational aspects of the business (e.g., external environment, mission and strategy, leadership)
- Considers performance as a strong outcome of the balanced elements

Limitations

- It is a complex model and can be overwhelming.
- Causal relationships aren't always clearly considered, and one needs to map the full model with supporting data to reap the benefits of the model.



Use when:

- A comprehensive analysis is required
- Diagnosing a complex environment

Example:

- An HRBP uses the model to assess an organization that they will acquire to identify how to approach the integration plan.

Burke-Litwin Model

Diagnostic questions for data collection

Below is a list of key questions you can ask per each element in the Burke-Litwin Model to get started with your organizational diagnosis.

External Environment	What are the most significant external factors currently affecting our organization?	Work group climate	How would employees describe the overall atmosphere and relationships within their work units?
Leadership	How does the organization's leadership provide direction and influence its employees?	Skills/job match	Are employees' skills and abilities well-matched to the requirements of their roles?
Mission and strategy	Is there a clear and shared understanding of our organization's mission and strategic direction?	Motivation	What factors are significantly influencing employee motivation to achieve organizational goals?
Culture	What are the core values and norms that shape behavior within our organization?	Individual needs and values	What do employees value most in their work, and how are these values being addressed?
Management practices	How effectively are managers utilizing resources to implement the organization's strategy?	Performance	How is the organization's overall performance being measured, and what are the key drivers of that performance?
Structure	How is the organization structured to facilitate effective work and decision-making?	Feedback	To what extent are we effectively using feedback loops to understand the impact of changes and adjust our strategies?
Systems	Are the organization's policies and procedures effectively supporting its goals?		

Best Practices

Now that you've seen which model would be best for your organizational diagnosis, here are some final tips and tricks to ensure success.

1

Let the data lead you.

If you find that you've started with one model, but your data shows that another element is at play that isn't part of the model, don't be afraid to incorporate it into your analysis.

5

Balance your information by inspiring action.

Credible and trustworthy information is crucial, but organizational diagnosis is only useful when action and next steps are provided.

2

Clearly define the specific problem you intend to investigate.

It is important to stay focused and have a clear scope of what you are aiming to solve.

6

Stay curious.

Go back as many times as you feel is needed to understand the system so you can have a validated view.

3

Stay objective.

Make sure that your findings are evidence based, and you can back them up through both quantitative and qualitative data. Ensure your recommendations are based on this data.

7

Confidentiality is important.

Make people feel safe when they share sensitive information with you and treat this information responsibly.

4

Set strong boundaries.

Be sure to not let your own opinions cloud your judgment, especially if you are internal to the organization. Be clear about what your role will be in the process.

8

Keep it simple

Do not overcomplicate the process and overwhelm the stakeholders with your report. Keep it simple and focus on what matters.



SEE IT IN PRACTICE

Watch our [live event with Dr Dieter Veldsman](#) to see an organizational diagnosis model applied to a use case.