MANAGEMENT AND

SPIRITUAL ENERGY

The Report of

"The Hope of the Managers"

A MODEM Research Project

Edited by Bryan G.E. Pettifer

**This Project Report is dedicated
to the memory of
ALAN SAUNDERS
1938 – 2001**

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Contents

Acknowledgement

1.   Summary

If managers are spiritual beings, how does this affect their working lives?
In the context of management is there a spiritual energy at work?
How does this spiritual energy manifest itself in the life of an organisation?

These are some of the questions explored in a research project called "The Hope of the Managers". The project was set up to investigate spiritual energy at work in individual managers and in organisations. Thirty managers were invited to reflect on situations where they had, individually or as part of a group, been lifted to a new level of performance, perhaps achieving something they thought was impossible.

Initially the project aimed to explore how recognising the spiritual energy in managers and in organisations might enhance their effectiveness. During the course of the investigation it became clear that the evidence produced related to the conditions or circumstances, which facilitated the release of spiritual energy.

The concept of spiritual energy was not defined but participants were free to interpret it in their own way. The investigators assumed that persons are best understood as whole beings with interconnected physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects and that there is a spiritual aspect to their energy. However the investigation was very open ended and the participating managers were asked to describe their experiences in their own terms as they would describe them to a friend. They described experiencing the release of an exceptional energy, which can best be described as a spiritual energy.

The evidence was recorded verbatim as far as possible and the participants' statements were analysed under themes, which were suggested by their statements. The themes were then collected under four main headings:

> (a) the **Purpose** of the organisation,
> (b) the **Context** within which the managers were working and
> (c) their personal and group **Attitudes**
> (d) the **Nature and Source of the Energy**.

The first three headings identified the conditions, which facilitated the release of spiritual energy and are summarised as follows:

1. **An inspiring purpose** – something achievable and worthwhile and which the participants found to be stretching and requiring special effort.
2. **A liberating and empowering context** - one in which the participants were free to take decisions, to develop their potential and to work creatively with others.
3. **An attitude of hope, confidence and commitment** - ready to seize the opportunities on offer.

The fourth heading led to an analysis of the nature of the energy as it emerges from the statements of the participants and the sense in which it may be appropriate to call it a spiritual energy. The adjective 'spiritual' is sometimes defined as that which gives meaning and purpose to life and this seems an apt way to describe the experiences of the participants. From this it follows that the spiritual aspect of persons is the integrating function, which enables them to find meaning and purpose in life**.** This analysis suggests a working definition

of the spirituality appropriate to the context of management as: "those qualities or characteristics of persons or groups, which make them open and receptive to spiritual energy".

In considering the implications for the practice of management a convergence was noted between the conditions for the release of spiritual energy identified above and some aspects of the normative model of human resource management developed from the mid 1980's. This led to the conclusion that the quality of human resource management was likely to be a determining factor in whether the release of spiritual energy is facilitate or inhibit in an organisation.

MODEM – the sponsor of the project

A modem is a device for facilitating two-way communication and the organisation, MODEM, which sponsored this project aims to facilitate two-way communication between management and ministry. In the first eight years of its existence MODEM has mainly sought, through its activities, books and other publications to communicate management theory and practice to the churches and their ministry. This project is its first major attempt to communicate insights from spirituality and theology to the theory and practice of management.

The report in digest

This report is quite lengthy because in the next chapter we have included nearly all the comments of the participants. This has been done in the hope that it will encourage others to draw from our research and take the exploration further. However the material is carefully structured and each paragraph begins with a summary sentence, which should enable the more casual reader to skip through the material quickly.

The content of the report may be summarised for easy assimilation as follows. In chapter 3, we record the ways in which the participants described experiencing the release of an exceptional energy. From their descriptions we have identified and analysed in chapter 4 the conditions, which made possible the release of this energy. In chapter 5 we reflect on the nature of the energy described, we discuss briefly a suitable definition of 'spiritual' and we draw out from the findings a brief and general sketch of the spirituality, which the findings suggest is appropriate to the work context. Then in chapter 6, we make a connection between the quality of human resource management and the release of spiritual energy in an organisation. We review the content of the report in the final chapter.

2. **Background and Methodology.**

Background

This research was originally established to try to identify examples of spiritual energy at work in individual managers and in organisations so that the practice of management could be enhanced. It was an attempt to demonstrate spiritual energy at work in individuals and organisations, especially in private, commercial, profit –making organisations. The project was conducted in two phases. In the first phase all the participants came from this context but in the second some came from public and voluntary organisations.

Initially the project was conceived as being to test three hypotheses:

1. There is a connection between the individual's values and beliefs and their inspiration and motivation within which there will be a spiritual energy at work.
2. There is also a connection between recognising and engaging the spiritual energy in a manager and developing the manager's effectiveness in the role.
3. There is a connection between recognising the spiritual energy in an organisation and developing the effectiveness of the organisation.

At the end of the first phase we drew the following conclusions:

- Participating managers did describe situations in which each of the three hypotheses seemed to be valid, although they did not claim to deliberately harness the energy. Indeed they expressed views that they had no control over it.
- There were clear descriptions of circumstances and environments in which the energy of an individual or of an organisation could be allowed to flourish or be snuffed out.
- Behind the three hypotheses, participants described facets of individuals and organisations in relationship to the presence of a spiritual energy.

The initiation of the MODEM project predated the present growing interest in the subject of the spirit at work. It was therefore not entirely surprising that a ground-breaking study in territory, that is little explored or understood, should change direction in the light of the evidence, which emerged in the first phase. The hypotheses had focussed on how the spiritual energy experienced related to the development of the effectiveness of managers in role or the effectiveness of organisations. It was realised that the evidence emerging from the action learning sets, pointed mainly in another direction, namely towards the relationship between the spiritual energy and the condition, circumstances or environment, which enabled it to flourish and flow. In the light of the experience of the first phase, the purpose and aims of the project and the statement of the assumptions of the investigators were revised as follows:

Purpose:

> To investigate the energy at work in managers,
> to identify any spiritual dimension in that energy and
> to reflect on its significance for the practice of management.

Assumptions:

1. Persons are best understood as whole beings with interconnected physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects.
2. It is the spiritual aspect of persons and the spiritual energy at work within them, which is the least well understood and most in need of investigation.
3. There is something, which may be called the spirit of an organisation, which is derived from the deep bonds occurring when people share common values, principles and a sense of purpose greater than themselves.
4. The spiritual energy in persons and the spirit of an organisation may serve purposes, which are good or evil and the ethical evaluation of the purposes at work is therefore very significant in investigating the spiritual aspect of persons and organisations.

Aims:

1. To explore situations where managers have described an energy at work in their experience, some of which may be interpreted as a spiritual energy.
2. To reflect on the nature of this spiritual energy.
3. To offer for consideration a Christian interpretation of the spiritual energy.
4. To explore the significance of these considerations for the practice of management.

Research Methodology

It was decided to conduct the research by means of action learning sets where managers would be invited to share specific work experiences and discuss the energy present during the life of those experiences.

In the first phase of the project there were three sets, comprising fourteen managers in total. The sets met at Cranfield University School of Management, spending the morning sharing an experience of being personally very effective as a manager, and then in the afternoon sharing an experience of their organisation or team being very effective.

In the second phase there were fives sets, comprising sixteen managers. They met either in Nottingham as part of a meeting of the Nottingham local group of MODEM, or in Chippenham. On these occasions there was less time available and they were only able to share an experience of being personally very effective as a manager. There is therefore more data available in relation to the first task of the action learning sets, the individual experiences of managers than in relation to the second task set, the corporate experience of management. However the descriptions of individual experiences also reflect the corporate context in which they take place and in assessing the data the two areas will be considered together.

In the first phase the participants were mostly from private, commercial organisations. In the second phase they were more evenly divided between the private and public sectors and with three from voluntary organisations.

Aim 3 above refers to offering a Christian interpretation of the spiritual energy. This relates to a paper called "A spiritual and theological reflection", which was given to participants in phase two only. Time constraints prevented much discussion of this paper. Since it did not contribute directly to the conclusions of the project it has not been included in the main body of

the report but has been added as Appendix 2. Although the sponsoring body MODEM has a Christian stance the conclusions of this research have a universal relevance

The brief given to participants will be found in Appendix 1. In each phase the sets were facilitated and a recorder was present to write down the key things, which participating managers had to say. Generally, people told their stories in turn with little interruption, although people did ask questions. There was a period of discussion at the end of the sharing in each case, when they reflected on what energy seemed to be present and the nature and source of that energy. The notes taken by the recorder were verbatim quotes, which were clustered under themes and are recorded in the next chapter.

The purpose of asking people to share concrete experiences was to avoid theoretical debate and ensure that any reflection on the nature of the energy present in the lives of managers and organisations, should be grounded in reality. Interestingly, there was little disagreement, as participants seemed to recognise that what they were sharing was both true and quite significant in their lives.

The investigation was very open ended. Participants were asked to choose any story from their experience, which fulfilled the task set. They were to describe it in their own terms, as they would describe it to a friend. The data was therefore very wide-ranging and unsystematic and the interpretation of the data required discerning the underlying threads.

The concept of a 'spiritual' energy was presented in the statement of the project's purpose and aims but was not defined. Participants were free to use it or not and to understand it in their own way. They were not led to a particular understanding of what 'spiritual' might mean. Their descriptions were interesting, fascinating, at times even inspiring. They found difficulty in articulating their thoughts about the nature and source of the energy but were eloquent about the conditions, which were conducive to releasing the energy they experienced.

As the project proceeded it became clear that the main result was to identify conditions, which facilitated the release of spiritual energy within the management of organisations.

In the next chapter the statements made by participants will be clustered under themes

3.   The evidence – participants' statements clustered in themes.

In this chapter the statements made by the participants as they described their experiences will be collected under themes. There is a division between the personal and the corporate descriptions, which reflect whether they were giving an account of an individual experience or of the experience of a group. As already indicated there was insufficient time for the latter in the second phase of the project. However the descriptions of individual experiences also reflect the corporate context in which they take place. We did not detect any significant differentiation between the two types of experience and in the interpretation and comment, which follow in subsequent chapters they will be considered together.

The statements made by participants are recorded here with a minimum of comment. We have separated them into two major categories, **A. Personal** and **B. Corporate**, which relate to whether they were reflecting on the experiences of an individual manager or of a group. Under each of these categories we have listed separately statements relating to

> (e) the **Purpose** of the organisation,
> (f) the **Context** within which the managers were working and
> (g) their personal and group **Attitudes**
> (h) the **Nature and Source of the Energy**.

These distinctions will overlap at many points but they will help to classify for the reader what is in fact a large volume of information. The amount of material in the original verbatim reports has been reduced to some extent in order to avoid repetition and omitting some material, which reflected a very untypical context. However, as we hope others will take the findings of this research project forward we believed it was important to present the material in its fullness for the benefit of future researchers.

The Energy Described – A. Personal – (a) Purpose

There was a sense of assurance that the task was good and important and was the right task at that moment. There was a general commitment to the task which was undoubted and largely taken for granted. The challenge of the task was simply accepted as a given.

Doing the Right Thing

Some talked of doing the right thing: 'Belief that I am put here but do not know why'; 'Face the difficulties – an answer will always come'

Challenge

Responding to a challenge was described: 'is it not the challenge that creates the energy, which leaves the issue of success or failure outside of the equation'; 'strong sense of challenge and counter challenge - and a challenge that had to be met'; 'each failure is a successive challenge - you water down your ideal position and try a different tack'; 'I like challenges - nothing excites me more than sorting a mess out'.

Faced with a crisis the challenge was to handle it creatively: 'Downsizing from 700 to 500 employees – needed to create new futures for those leaving and new skills for those staying'; 'Frightening and daunting challenge for me for next 18 to 24 months and had to take risks'; 'Have faith that the need for people being affected to have faith in themselves would be met'; 'Created a sense of community by the way it was handled'; 'The numbers who got new jobs was an indicator of success – no one took us to a tribunal'.

Vision and Goals

Some people talked of drawing energy from having a vision: 'perfectly clear where we were going and felt it true to the roots of my being and could give clear explanations to others - clarity of vision'; 'involved a vast amount of thinking, writing and speaking'; 'time of great energy - had some very good models and ideas'; 'tremendous sense of looking forward'; 'seeing the bigger picture having climbed the mountain'; 'saw how things were so beautifully arranged in nature - whatever looked after that was also looking after me!'; 'turned an idea that I had to control everything into the opposite, surrendering and letting go'.

…or drawing energy from having a goal: 'I set myself the goal'; 'it was also the personal challenge, I should be able to do it'; 'to get some sort of energy level you need a goal - either imposed by others or self imposed'; 'several times I've bitten off more than I could chew - there must be something inside that knows you can do it'; 'there's a point in your life when you realise you can do **this** - whatever it is'.

Vocation, Ideals, Professionalism

Some people described the energy as arising out of their ideals: 'I wouldn't be as enthusiastic if I was just maintaining a system'; 'we had set ourselves a standard long before - and it was living up to it'; 'the energy comes when you have shared ideals or shared beliefs'; 'I don't think our ideals ever do change but values do'; 'values change at work because you have to be flexible to work with others who have other values'; 'wouldn't have had the sense of satisfaction at the end if I hadn't followed my ideals'; 'what is success, what is failure, what is the right thing - that really matters'.

…or arising out of professionalism: 'Need to live up to our standards, but to be seen to be out in front - came from the ethos of the organisation - it was professional and sparked innovation'; 'the energy was partly professional, partly stickability and supporting one another'; 'always set myself as being the best in the world at what I do'; 'sense of professionalism - knowing that the way we were going was about right'; 'based on doing a good job and respecting that in each other'.

…or arising out of a sense of vocation: 'All through my career I had a vocational sense'; 'Sense of being called to do something'; 'The energy that comes from a vision – when your heart and mind are together – something that goes 'ping'; 'Focus and vision needed to overcome challenges'; 'Focus on end-picture – finished look – vision'.

Rising to the Challenge

One person described an experience of overcoming quite extreme resistance: 'conviction of facing an evil force - came from my religious ideals/principles'; 'unless I got the re-enforcement from colleagues or the heroism from the drama, I could never have kept going'; 'it never occurred to me that I might never overcome the opposition'.

They went on to describe the resolution process: 'somewhere I have to get an insight into the opposition to understand the other side'; 'each party dilutes the other to some effect'; 'I had to separate between the singer and the song - I became sympathetic to the people who were in opposition'; 'challenge of breaking the stalemate'.

The energy they described was: 'a force between my ideals and their resistance'; 'something goes on in the space between - became a virtuous circle'; 'there's a process with a catalytic action which gives rise to energy'; 'there's an initial surge, the energy level drops, and then another surge'; 'adrenaline is a very short-lived thing - you'll soon wear out'.

There was the need to find the resources to be persistent: 'Enthusiasm of junior doctors is a high point - offset by the antagonism and negative attitudes of the hierarchy'; 'Disarmed people by encouraging

them in what they were doing and helping resource them'; 'All sorts of blockages overcome – not least being money'; 'Got to find alternative routes and be flexible to overcome the system'; 'Need an innate stubbornness to find a way through'; 'The sheer stickability because of our background that makes us persevere'

A. Personal (b) Context.

The context includes the management style and the general culture of the organisation and how it impinges on the individual manager. It includes such issues as whether it empowers and liberates people to participate fully or whether it demotivates them. As is to be expected there is more material about team work and related matters under the Corporate heading.

Support and Sharing

Some people described an energy that arose from interaction with others: A question of sharing and not just looking at it as a personal achievement, but a team one'; 'finding the energy to share the responsibility and delegate'; 'contrast an ego trip alienating people with sharing the energy and giving people confidence - it's contagious'.

The importance of being trusted was emphasised; 'I've always been lifted by people who trusted me'; 'people have shown confidence in me'; 'had full management support from the top'; 'the company trusted by boss's judgement';   'convinced my boss and he backed me up';   'support within the organisation - people wanted me to succeed and to help me do so';   'always necessary to have someone you can feed on and draw energy from';   're-enforcement came from campaigning colleagues'; 'it's an approach you can spell out very neatly - people need support, encouragement and getting to know those above them'.

In managing transport for a refugee crisis real teamwork emerged unexpectedly: '30 nationalities – had to improvise – find interpreters'; 'Humility – I was the boss, but they looked after me because they knew I was new'; 'Good atmosphere, good action, looking after people'; 'Looked after and guide by subordinate staff who had local knowledge'; 'Some driving force behind it all – energy about people dealing with people for people and under stress'.

Developing

Some people described their experience of the energy as being developmental: 'it's about me evolving as an individual'; 'part of the wonder of this was knowing I was going to grow through this - learn something'; 'energised by the chance to understand how the whole business worked and the chance to influence how it works';   'The desire to bring others with you – develop them – up and out of themselves'; 'Trusting other people'; 'Seeing anything through together'.

A. Personal, (c) Attitudes

Confidence

Several people talked of feeling confident: 'confident that I was in the right place'; 'I felt confident and assured about the exercise'; 'it's a confidence thing that can be held on to in moments of self doubt'; 'felt reasonably confident and calm – not worried about it'; ' I just felt it would work'.

The source of the confidence was also described: 'I felt myself to be moving forwards, being in a flow of some sort without really knowing where I was going - sense of confidence to follow my instinct and stay on the path'; 'having the sense that I think I'm right, because I've thought about it a bit'.

Deadlines

For some people deadlines were a great source of energy: 'when one is focused on the job at hand - that's when the energy comes';   'just the act of writing monthly reports raises your energy levels'; 'pretty clear deadlines for doing something'; 'enjoyed the very sharp focus - milestones, targets and timetables to meet'.

Trying and succeeding

A few people raised 'trying': 'trying is what counts with me'; 'not trying is a sin, but failure is not a sin'; 'there are different levels of achievement depending on the starting point. It is the journey that counts to me - you're achieving something by trying'.

Success got some mention: 'I must succeed rather than just try, otherwise I find it very de-motivating'; 'success or failure was important, I felt proud of what we achieved'; 'at a community level overall you must succeed or everybody would fail'; 'success is the personal measure of success that you set'; 'nobody sets a low target for themselves, you create your own success'; 'my not failing is what I call success - overcoming my fear of failure'.

The aftermath of a rail disaster was an unlikely context for having a sense of success: 'After the accident people had to work long hours to bring order out of chaos': 'Tremendous spirit of cooperation and togetherness in response to the crisis'; 'Aim of mine was not to screw people to contracts, but to work in a negotiating way'; 'A tremendous feeling of achievement was felt by those involved'.

Fear

The fear of failure was a key source of energy for some people: 'a will to succeed - none of us wanted to fail'; 'what I had to do was with others, but personal feelings of fear and uncertainty were there'; 'underlying fear of failure, but will to succeed dominated the mind'; 'driving one's energy is not wishing to be seen to fail'; 'fear is sometimes a necessary pre-requisite of some form of energy'; 'fear is a motivator that gets you going - and then there's a freedom that's a source of energy'.

The fear was described by some in more extreme terms: 'seeing the task as rather awesome'; 'fear that what was out there couldn't be got hold of or grappled with'; 'clearly remember nearly giving way to despair'; 'swung round to a sense of, well, we might actually do it!

Not Letting People Down

A number of people were concerned about not letting others down: 'loyalty to the person who had chosen me - and an overwhelming desire not to let them down'; 'determined to achieve what the company had set out to do - not let them down, nor myself or my family'; 'felt I had to do my best for these people'; 'Treat the human resource as a human resource'

'I felt a moral commitment from me and my organisation'; 'I felt so committed that other things had to give way in order to fulfil the commitment I had made'; 'a commitment to the rest of the team, your company and the project'; 'these people have entrusted me - I'm going to prove them right'.

Resistance

Some people talked of a resisting force: 'always have resistance to the unknown'; 'soon found myself having to sell the exercise'; 'went to talk to them about it having been told I wasn't trusted an inch'; 'the good experience was after a few months when resistance became loyal support and proud of it'; 'put out an awful lot of energy to do better with those who see what you want as impossible'; 'the link

between trust and energy is important'.

Christian Tradition

This section includes the statements of participants who were working in the church or other voluntary organisations. The descriptions contain some interpretations of the experience from a more explicitly Christian standpoint than in most of the preceding reports.

The Christian tradition was identified by some as the source of their energy: 'part of a continuous process over thousands of years in a parish'; 'people often overwhelmed with crises and clergy often overwhelmed themselves'; 'one way to deal with pressure is to take exercise – spiritual adrenalin helps to focus'; 'intuition providentially driven, interacts with things I have known and acquired – sustaining hope without which there is no future'; 'draw on Christian tradition – find own still centre – a reservoir of energy'.

Faith and listening to god were mentioned: 'my fear and timidity was replaced by a new spirit of faith'; 'With all my lack of self esteem I could still be used and others would still respond'; 'You find qualities and responses in people that you would never expect when you really get to know them – go through the barrier'; 'Problem of relationships – if I will be quiet and listen to God, I will get answers to problems that pop up'; 'If I can encourage people around to take time and contemplate in a practical way, solutions will come out'.

Another focussed on the Kingdom of God: 'need to gain trust and confidence between firm and clients – heavy pressure to sell more'; 'focused on guarantees for parts to address reliability problems'; 'brought new area of work writing up agreements – under pressure – established new methods and new standard'; 'was younger then – more energy – but had also just become a priest'; 'Kingdom of God makes you more sympathetic to other people – more free to do things'; 'have to have an object to give you hope'.

Finally, risk-taking: 'the ability to leap into the dark'; 'to be a risk taker'; 'got to because Christ was a risk taker'; 'it is an imitation of Christ as a risk taker'.

A. Personal, (d) The Nature and Source of the Energy.

This final section includes material recorded at the end of the exercise as participants reflected on the experiences they had shared.

Energy Level

A number of people talked about an energy level, a feeling driven or of a contagious energy: 'my energy rose and fell to meet the needs'; 'my own personal energy adjusted to meet the requirements - the flame that was required was there in an appropriate form'; 'I did feel energetic - had good health and worked long hours'; 'as things went better, my energy went up'; 'you get the energy you need'; 'hard thing is maintaining the energy level when everybody else's is going down'; 'something about being in touch with the energy - it came from within - something that's on tap'; 'go through cycles of feeling very swamped and then feeling great - you just set to and do it and somehow it works'.

There is enthusiasm, exhilaration, excitement and commitment: 'Tremendous feeling of excitement - exhilarating when you make it happen'; 'tremendous buzz-growing something'; 'moments when I feel really driven - not wanting to give in however unreal the deadline'; 'revolved around that commitment - like a fire burning inside you - that is giving you the drive to complete the task'; 'without the fear - without the risk - there is unlikely to be real growth'; 'Was very elated when we won the contract'; 'the energy can be very contagious if people are being enthusiastic'; 'the energy was dormant in us and came together in one day's push'; 'I drew on something inside myself that I knew I had, but had

A Power or Hidden Source

Some people talked of a power to draw on from a hidden source: 'the power within ourselves'; 'can see it as an external thing you draw on'; 'the force that drives your beliefs'; 'sense of energy - reaching from something we had never reached for before'; 'sense that maybe we can - having to draw on your inner self'; 'you are able to draw on resources - even though you are dead tired - a second wind - somehow you realise you are not going to achieve what you set for yourself, unless you find the energy'; 'maybe there is some hidden energy'; 'having a sense that there is some knowledge out there that I can tap - providing I go about it the right way - you have to feel around for it, have a sense of it'; 'like there was a script out there, that I couldn't see, but I knew the script existed'.

Overcoming the mental blocks to releasing the energy: 'the biggest problem was my thinking – I learned to look at the end product not at the hurdles to jump'; 'not a religious person, but came up with ideas I could not possibly have come up with myself'; 'I believe there is an influence'; 'Do not know where the energy came from – spirit?'; 'I had experiences I cannot explain – vision of a design – it just came to me'; 'I asked for help in this difficult period. I believed it would be there and it was there'.

A Force that is Irresistible yet Vulnerable, Creative yet Destructive

There were people who described the energy in dichotomous ways of creation and destruction, vulnerable and irresistible: 'feel that you are in the hands of the most worthwhile and irresistible forces that there are'; 'it is elusive - you can recognise it, use it - but you can't control it'; 'it's the work of the Holy Spirit'; 'it is power and yet at the same time is vulnerable'; 'there is something about it coming into existence and disappearing - very elusive'; 'energy is like a candle - can quite easily be snuffed out'; 'feel far worse when your idea is snuffed out by someone pulling rank'; 'the steady burners use the energy in a controlled way'; 'lot of very successful people have sufficient energy to avoid it being snuffed out - succeed in spite of set back after set back'.

'It's power to make things better - not to be used destructively or neutrally'; 'a force to achieve change or improvement'; 'a fundamental force of creation and love that is behind everything'; 'it could be described as creativity'; 'it's got the power of creation and destruction'; 'that energy can also be tapped in a negative way'; 'the energy can kill other things with it'; 'energy can be created and destroyed'.

The energy described – B. Corporate, (a) Purpose.

The corporate energy comes from confidence in a common sense of purpose. This is focussed by a shared vision and the role of a leader is important in sustaining that vision. The vision ensures that each task is seen to have a place within a bigger scheme of things. Founders often hold an important place within an organisation because their vision defines its values and becomes part of its corporate culture, which often persist long after the founder has departed

Vision and Leadership

Some people saw vision and purpose as coming from a leader: 'it's the vision, the inspiration'; 'impetus of a vision can start off by an awareness of failure'; 'make a huge difference if you've got a good leader'; 'if the Chief Executive really wants it, it gets done - it has to come from the top'; 'been where a very dynamic person has come in to lead - their personality has got everybody going'; 'it's down to leadership quality all the time'; 'President was really gregarious and up front'; 'he was a very good trainer - left a team of people who could operate without him'; 'each level of leadership has to be good to make it hum'; 'need a cornerstone - a leader - but all the other bits have to work together'; 'looked after and guided by subordinate staff who had local knowledge'.

Founder and values

Some people described the energy of their organisation being vested in the person at the top who began it or later in the corporate values they established: 'down to someone who had the dynamic to get things going'; 'there's an interaction between the leader and the life of the organisation - a certain rapport - and there is an energy from that as it becomes self-conscious'; 'whoever sets the company up, set an acceptable set of ground rules - a way of operating that we can all work with - a way in which we like working'; 'great companies have a sound in the woodwork that was put in by the founder which sustains them'; 'this awareness of what makes the organisation tick - the wonder of what's going on - this sort of magic that goes on - I recognise it as energy';

What happens when founders and leaders leave? 'Greatest legacy was that when he died the organisation didn't miss him for a year - operated as though he were there'; 'I think an organisation gets to a stage when you can tell they're established'; 'an enshrined set of values that people subscribe to when they join'; 'tradition is what it is - tradition that is carried forward'; 'how we do things here'; 'the embodiment of the organisation and the values of the organisation in the people who work there'; 'empowerment, guiding principles;' 'the chief was the energy source - the catalyst - but when you take that away the energy goes'; 'if it's just one person then it goes with them'; 'you can see the difference in how the company operates - in 8-10 years lost 100 years of history as men at the top changed every few months'.

B. Corporate, (b) Context.

The vision, the culture, the values, the ground rules are all crucial aspects of the context and they can be crucial in enabling the flow of energy in an organisation. The context can liberate people and enable people to pull together.

Enabling

The energy can be released, some felt, by enabling it: 'freeing up of potential'; 'it can happen in a small way - a small team'; 'they probably have the energy, but you've found the way to release it - that's magic'; 'don't determine everything that happens - enable it to happen'; 'it's that trust, faith in the person, belief in the person and that you are not going to let them down'; 'if people have confidence in you, you have a new view of yourself'; 'that energy/enthusiasm/vision can be dampened down dependent on the environment or manager that you have'

A key factor in the succession from the founder or leader is how they have enabled people in the organisation to realise their potential: 'the leader has the ability to communicate with everybody else the freedom to explore their own potential - the trust developed through the rapport'; 'a set of values - a good set of rules - opportunity for people to work in accordance with their own ideals - some form of flexibility and opportunity'; 'Is the energy from an individual or from the set of values that they leave behind? I think it's interaction, it's that intercommunication - that ability to help people find the way for themselves.'

Freedom

A number of people described a sense of freedom: 'suddenly free - could go anywhere and do anything - and that sense of freedom was intoxicating'; 'suddenly this freedom to make this happen'; 'one day you had people just doing their job, the next there was real enthusiasm, a sense of empowerment, all of a sudden being given the power to change things'; 'just this enormous energy that poured out'; 'a liberation, a freedom, a sense of: "We can really contribute to this and make changes"'; 'it changed the whole organisation around, a lot of enthusiasm, a real buzz about the place, a complete step change'; 'element of relief, of unburdening'; 'the job satisfaction is from being given more freedom'.

Pulling Together

There was talk of positive energy, in pulling together: 'all got enormous job satisfaction'; 'everyone was working hard - everyone was really on a buzz'; 'a tremendous time - everyone within months pulling together - we're not going to be sold'; 'it just all gelled together - getting them to think along the same way'; 'very quickly gelled together as a team from nothing'; 'organisation pulled together and supported the new team'; 'the rapport that everyone had with one another'; 'had a lot of co-operation from the organisation'.

IT brought radical changes to management and to working relationships: 'Impact of IT brought frightening change, but immense responsibility'; 'It was pioneering because computing would relieve drudgery'; 'attending a management course affirmed my management skills, which was a surprise. Other people said they were happy to work with me and said I had a lot to offer. I therefore felt that I could take more risks in how I related to people'; 'back at work a terrific spirit in the group of 50 people – real energy, buzz'.

What happens when people know they are respected: 'Observed a group working together, burying their natural rivalries, demonstrating mutual respect'; 'saw it as an opportunity to show what they could do'; 'there wasn't anyone who was going to lose out on it'; 'lot of harmony, they were enjoying it'; 'sense of being in control of the process - were there by consent and contributing by consent'; 'people were learning things they wanted to know - could help with their career'; 'could see a benefit in it - make things better in the future - that what they wanted was listened to - they owned it'.

Incentives

For some people incentives played an important role in raising energy: 'put all managers on a fairly substantive incentive scheme'; 'some of the energy was money'; 'knew what they were doing, knew how they were going to do it and there were incentives'; 'source of energy was proving that we could make a significant return from this business'; 'big turning point was making, £2 m profit in the first year of operation - there is some money in these clubs, I thought'; 'so flushed with success that we had no trouble obtaining capital for other locations'.

Bounded Opportunity

Some observations were made that energy could arise from providing opportunity, but within clear

boundaries: 'it was self-limiting - a specific task in a specific time - fitted in with a wider process - it had limits'; 'it was bounded in time'; 'self facilitated to an extent within a framework'.

Gung Ho

There was the description of an energy that was quite 'Gung Ho': 'total sense of "we are going to do this", no obstacle'; 'is a gung ho organisation, virtually in conflict with everyone'; 'average working day of 8am-7.30pm'; 'enormous sense of achievement, "can do", everybody wanted to be part of it'; 'energy came from person at the top saying "go for it!", and everyone empowered to go for it!'; 'what we are talking about is the skill that an individual has to create a team. It creates the energy'.

B. Corporate, (c) Attitudes.

Shared attitudes in groups are very significant in enabling energy to flow. Therefore respecting people, including those from whom one differs, is crucial, so too is confidence in oneself and in each other, team spirit, drawing out people's potential, affirming them and their capabilities and enabling them to give of their best.

Collective Belief and Confidence

Confidence and a collective belief were described as a source of energy: 'there was great excitement'; 'the limits on company thinking had shifted'; 'self-belief in each individual had a synergistic outlet;' 'absolute belief that everybody would do their bit, but at the same time there is support for one another';   'an electricity that was not there usually - we can make this work';   'there was this atmosphere of relative flexibility'; 'confidence, agreement on what was needed, good experience of growth';   'a lot of sense of unity in the people who were actually pushing this development'; 'confidence in it became invested from other national bodies - government and national agencies'; 'became willing to invest money in it and place confidence in what it did and said, because the value of it was seen.'

Working with People

People experienced energy emerging from working with others as equals: 'saw the aim as not telling them how to run their operation, but rather working alongside them'; 'energy soared amongst the people running the programme'; 'overwhelmed by being treated as equals and having things learnt from them'; 'strong spirit between the two sides, realised we were developing mutual understanding'.

When team spirit is strong: 'Feeling of all being in it together – all have jobs to do and get on with it as a team'; 'high professionalism – pride and competition with other units'; 'incredibly positive response – three day plan to get ready in a great rush'; 'sudden change of plan'; 'a 'focus on people – openness – giving confidence.'

… but when team spirit is weak – 'team working is almost entirely lacking – many clock watchers – rule driven'; 'once needed to gather a group to work overnight to solve a problem – worked really well together'; 'MD has the right words but there is no real personal dedication and commitment'; 'encourages a similar attitude in the workforce'; 'managers hear, but do not listen – keep deferring meetings'; 'personal satisfaction is high, but scope for extending the corporate energy and achievement is limited';

Motivation

People are energised when they are trusted, empowered, self motivated and fulfilled: 'What brought people together was adversity'; 'part of something bigger than myself - the bigger the team sense the more you feel you can achieve - away from my little self';   'when they are trusted, empowered people believe they can deliver'; 'it's people that have ambition and motivation - not organisations'; 'energy

comes from the motivation and to be motivated you need an ambition'; 'liberation of people being given the opportunity to realise their ambition - self-motivated and a sense of personal fulfilment.'

Breaking Out

There was energy as a result of people taking control of the structures and rules in the interest of working better at the task: 'we were encouraging them to break the rules to realise the overall objective'; 'generated the ideas that something's got to change'; 'released a lot of energy'; 'thrashed out a new organisation structure and a new way of working together'; 'it was the belief that the rules were stupid - there was a better way of working'; 'people worked together and thrashed out the problems'.

Adversity, Rules, Low Trust

A number of people talked about low energy levels in conditions of adversity, rules or a climate of low trust: 'lots of antagonism to me at first'; 'lots of negative attitudes'; 'people not involved would look in and say we don't do things that way here'; 'a lot of the organisation were happier as they were'; 'generated a short term energy, but not in the long term as was so set in it's ways'; 'the organisation didn't really benefit from the energy other than for that particular event'; 'everyone was on a high and pleased with the way the event had gone, but it was a one-hit wonder'.

Certain conditions resulted in low energy levels: 'rule makers had very low energy'; 'it's the rule makers that often snuff things out'; 'lawyers and accountants sabotaged it'; 'based on the assumption that the other person will take advantage, there was lack of trust and lack of co-operation'; 'hadn't involved everybody and people who were absent said no, you're breaking the rules'; 'created a shared vision and shared objectives - then someone snuffed it out'; 'You want the energy for people to be creative, it's rules that deflate energy'; 'putting physical rules in place because of the absence of trust and because the expectation is that people will not behave in a moral, honest way'; 'a loss of confidence crept in'; 'failed to become strong enough to deal with some of the challenges'; 'participants lost their nerve and organisations like Central Government saw it as a threat'; 'an example of something that sustained a wave of energy over a long period of time, but it came to an end -it exhausted itself'.

B. Corporate, (d) The Nature and Source of the Energy.

As under A Personal these comments record the reflections of the participants at the end of the exercise as they reflected on the experiences they had shared.

Images of the Energy - Interaction, Fusion, Chain Reaction

When asked what the energy **was**, they replied: 'image of a firework display - with every now and then a rocket going up'; 'to keep the energy building and building is very difficult'; 'something that is current - between people - in their relationship'; 'an interaction between people that builds something'; 'when individuals are working well together there is this compound produced'; 'it's something to do with people being supported or stimulated'; 'the content of the group is not as important as it's ability to tap into the source of the power'; 'the fusion of all the elements creates something far, far greater'; 'the energy growth was a bit like a forest fire feeding on itself'; 'a bit like a chain reaction - not any negative energy around'.

The Nature of the Energy – Elusive and Mysterious

The energy cannot be taken for granted: 'there is a difference between a dynamic energy and an absence of energy or dynamism'; 'energy is only released in an organisation when change takes place'; 'you've got to keep going back and injecting the energy - it does need an input every now and then'; 'you don't get the energy boost unless you know you've given it all you can'; 'it's where anticlimax comes in when the performance doesn't remain as high'.

And the nature of the energy cannot be defined: 'We're describing the effects of the energy rather than the energy itself'; 'it's elusive and we can't control it'; 'it's the same sort of energy that is applicable to any kind of situation'; 'maybe we're entitled to treat it as a mysterious phenomenon'; 'you can't describe the power of God, but you can see it's effects'; 'something like the flutters, the apprehension before an exam'; 'I feel it is something I am given, rather than I produce myself'; 'interesting how one day it wasn't there and the next day it was'.

4. The findings – conditions for the release of spiritual energy.

The participants described a sense of empowerment by an energy, which was exceptional and often unexpected. They used expressions such as: success beyond expectation, a contagion of enthusiasm and the results they observed included: the development of the organisation, personal growth, an enhanced reputation and the need to rest. They found themselves being able to deliver results, which they would normally consider to be beyond their capability. Their accounts described the conditions or circumstances, which made possible the release of this energy

This investigation has found that three primary conditions or circumstances made possible the release of an exceptional energy in the experiences described by the participants in this investigation. **The conditions, which will be developed in the succeeding sections, are as follows:**

1. **An inspiring purpose – something achievable and worthwhile and which the participants found to be stretching and requiring special effort.**
2. **A liberating and empowering context - one in which the participants were free to take decisions, to develop their potential and to work creatively with others.**
3. **An attitude of hope, confidence and commitment - ready to seize the opportunities on offer.**

1. An inspiring purpose

- something achievable and worthwhile and which the participants found to be stretching and requiring special effort.

The participants spoke of energy being generated by having a vision, an inspiration, a guiding purpose, a goal and a shared understanding of the task. The vision needed to be clear and communicable to others in the group to enable them to see their work as part of the bigger picture. For some the vision was driven by a sense of vocation and professionalism and sustained by a set of values, ideals and standards. However values may be temporarily suppressed because of the need to be flexible in order to work with others who have different values.

The sense of purpose came in some cases from a dynamic person at the top, Chairman or Chief Executive, but each and every level of leadership had to be good to make things hum. Some people described the energy of their organisation as being vested in the founder of an organisation or later in the corporate values they established. The values and tradition of the organisation became embodied in the people. An inspiring purpose seems to lead people to "go the extra mile".

The challenge of the task was exciting and created energy. Curiosity about, interest in, and enthusiasm for the task were important motivators to working well. So also was a conviction that what they were doing was right and that they were making a good job of it.

2. *A liberating and empowering context*

- one in which the participants were free to take decisions, to develop their potential and to work creatively with others.

The participants described a sense of being in control, of owning the task and of being given the opportunity to change things. Energy was generated as a result of being allowed to take initiatives. They felt liberated by being trusted to deliver and experienced greater job satisfaction as a result of the greater freedom and responsibility given. People had a sense of being in control of the process, of learning what they wanted to know and of being listened to. Empowerment gave people a sense of the freedom to do what was required.

Energy emerged from working alongside people, learning from colleagues, and treating them as equals. Developing mutual understanding with groups, from whom one had differed and burying natural rivalries produced a spirit of respect for each other. Companies treated the work force as intrinsically valuable and set ground rules, which provided a way of operating that all could work with. Some individuals had the skill to build up teams, which continued to operate well and this created energy.

Collective belief was a source of energy and excitement, along with confidence in the task. They experienced unity and found that they developed personally and professionally in the process. There was a sense of freeing up of potential, releasing energy and creating synergy among the members of the group. Synergy is defined as: "what happens when the combined performance of an organisation's resources is greater than the sum of its parts". (Armstrong M. and Long P. (1994), *The Reality of Strategic HRM,* London: Institute of Personnel and Development, page 8.)

Facing a crisis together developed a strong sense of community. People were encouraged to break the rules in order to realise the overall objective. They thrashed out a new organisational structure and a new way of working. They found togetherness in adversity and a sense of being part of something bigger than themselves. They were given the opportunity to realise their ambitions and as a result became more self motivated and found personal fulfilment in the task.

3. *An attitude of hope, confidence and commitment*

- ready to seize the opportunities on offer.

The participants described experiencing hope and spoke of confidence in the future, of stepping out into the dark. The universally high degree of commitment to the task was an indicator of a powerful if largely unexpressed sense of hope. One participant working with people often overwhelmed by recurrent crises found a sustaining hope and a reservoir of energy by finding his own still centre. Another person faced with an impossible task in an even more impossible time scale asked for help and believed it would be there but did not know where the energy came from.

A shared vision or purpose inspired qualities of loyalty and a feeling of rightness about the task. There was a sense of being the right person in the right place at the right time. Their

commitment to the task meant that it was vital to seize the opportunities provided by the present moment

They developed confidence in themselves and in each other and spoke of confidence to follow their instincts. They spoke of overcoming fear, timidity, anxiety, lack of self-esteem. There was also fear, fear of failure or of being seen to fail but also fear of letting people down, a sense of being entrusted by others and having a commitment to the team and organisation.

Summary

They talked of feeling driven and of a contagious energy, "you get the energy you need". They referred to a hidden source, a power within themselves, of being dead tired but drawing on their resources and being able to tap into a source of power. There was a belief that energy is only released in an organisation when change takes place. The source of the energy was elusive and its nature mysterious and it was not to be controlled. It was something that was given not something one produced oneself.

There was also an awareness of the ever-present possibility of failure, of loss of nerve and lack of confidence. There was a danger of low trust and the imposition of a rule bound culture, which could snuff out shared vision and shared objectives and deflate energy. Thus the converse of the conclusion is also true that the absence of the three primary conditions or circumstances denies the release of exceptional energy.

The descriptions of experiences of exceptional energy, which the participants in this investigation described, have indicated three preconditions or circumstances, which are conducive to these types of experience and these have been expanded above.

We therefore repeat the findings of this investigation, stated earlier, that three primary conditions or circumstances made possible the release of an exceptional energy in the experiences described by the participants in this investigation:

1. **An inspiring purpose – something achievable and worthwhile and which the participants found to be stretching and requiring special effort.**
2. **A liberating and empowering context - one in which the participants were free to take decisions, to develop their potential and to work creatively with others,**
3. **An attitude of hope, confidence and commitment – ready to seize the opportunities on offer.**

In the next chapter we shall explore the energy at work in the experiences of the participants, consider in what sense it may be appropriate to call it a spiritual energy and seek to articulate the spirituality implicit in their descriptions.

5.   Interpreting the findings – spiritual energy and implicit spirituality

This project was set up to investigate the spiritual energy experienced by managers. They were invited to reflect on their experience without being given a definition of spiritual energy. In this chapter we shall first examine the concept of spiritual energy as it emerges from the descriptions, which the managers give of their experiences. Second we shall seek to identify the qualities or characteristics in the managers, which enabled them to be open and receptive to the spiritual energy. Finally we shall suggest that by, identifying these qualities or characteristics in the managers, some aspects of an implicit spirituality are being outlined.

Spiritual energy

The participants described experiencing an exceptional energy, which enabled them to achieve far more than they anticipated would be possible. In most of the responses this energy or power was unexplained. A few did go on to describe it in terms of the power of God or of the Spirit, but for the most part it remained a mysterious and elusive phenomenon. It was something given rather than something produced by the participants, either individually or in a group. **The adjective 'spiritual' is sometimes defined as that which gives meaning and purpose to life and this seems an apt way to describe the experiences of the participants. From this it follows that the spiritual aspect of persons is the integrating function, which enables them to find meaning and purpose in life.**

The source of the energy is hidden but nonetheless the energy can be relied on. It is available to anyone but you have to be open to it. It becomes more accessible by trusting in it and acting in reliance on it. As you face a challenge you find a new resource of energy to meet it. It is only if you give it all you can that you get the energy boost. They described being professional, having ideals and a sense of vocation as sources of energy and purpose.

In the context of the organisation, they provided vivid descriptions of the energy and of the sense of direction coming from having a collective belief, or well established organisational values. They described the role of leaders in providing a climate where there is a collective belief that the organisation can succeed, in laying down values that contribute to the organisation's success and in providing the energy and the will to overcome obstacles.

They also talked about the power coming from organisations that supported their employees, believed in them and trusted them. They described the energy released by giving people freedom and empowering them to act, by encouraging them to break constraining moulds, by enabling them to use their abilities.

Energy and effectiveness came out of the experience of people gelling, pulling together and working with one another; 'when individuals are working well together there is this compound produced'; 'the fusion of all the elements creates something far, far greater'; the energy growth was a bit like a chain reaction'; 'like a forest fire feeding on itself'; 'something that is like a current between people in their relationships'. The suggestion here is that the spiritual energy creates a synergy, something that is more than the sum of the individual contributions.

They also described the effects of loss of nerve, or the imposition of rules based upon low trust in stifling initiative. They said that the energy was vulnerable, could be snuffed out like a candle, and was very elusive in the way it comes into existence and then disappears.

Receptiveness to spiritual energy

What is it in managers, which makes them open and receptive to the spiritual energy described?

One of the basic qualities needed is an attitude of belief, faith, trust and confidence. It includes a measure of faith and confidence in oneself. It is also related to the goal or objective of the task and a belief in its rightness at that time. There is confidence that the task, however apparently impossible, can be achieved. But also significant in the experiences described, is trust in something beyond oneself, a potential source of power or energy.

Closely related to this is an attitude of commitment. There is commitment to the task, sometimes also to the beliefs, goals or vision of the organisation, often to the group one is working with. They will try hard to achieve and will not be satisfied unless they succeed. Fear plays its part but this is especially fear of failure or fear of letting other people down. It would therefore seems to be a function either of commitment to the task or of commitment to the working group.

Challenge is an important motivating factor and it was often the response to a challenge, which led to a higher degree of commitment and which also led to the confidence that they would find the resources to complete the task however difficult. Openness both to the challenge and to the resources needed to complete the job is clearly important, together with a willingness to take risks. So too is a readiness to both give and receive support and to share the energy in a group. These qualities are the basis of the team spirit and pulling together, which was so significant especially in the corporate experiences described.

Spirituality

The range and scope of definitions of spirituality are enormous. Sometimes it is suggested that spirituality means interconnectedness and that it has four dimensions: a sense of being connected with self, with others, with nature or the environment and with God or a higher power. However this analysis of spirituality as having four dimensions falls short of being a definition. For the purposes of this investigation and the interpretation of its findings it seems appropriate to define spirituality as:

> **"those qualities or characteristics of persons or groups, which make them open and receptive to spiritual energy".**

The statements collected in this investigation come from 30 individuals and the various working groups to which they have belonged. It is therefore only feasible to sketch the spirituality of the participants rather generally, in relation to the four dimensions referred to above.

We have noted that the participants have been connected with a spiritual energy from a source, which transcended both the individual and the group but in most cases they were unable to attribute the energy to an identifiable source such as a higher power or God. We did not find evidence of a sense of being connected with nature or the environment. We have, however, noted a strong sense of being connected with others in terms of team spirit, synergy, commitment to the working group and so on. Finally there is a strong sense of

being connected with self, leading to confidence, belief in oneself and in the values of what one is undertaking, commitment to the task, readiness to respond to challenges, to take risks, and so on.

We conclude that this investigation has made explicit some of the features of an implicit spirituality, which is appropriate to the working context because it is open and receptive to spiritual energy.

6.   Implications for People Management.

Human resource management.

The result of this project is to identify conditions, which facilitate the release of spiritual energy in managers and in organisations. It therefore has implications for the theory and practice of management, principally in the area of the management of people. Since the mid 1980's a new model has evolved called human resource management (HRM) and this term will be briefly explained before relating it to the results of the project.

HRM was developed from the late 1980's through the 1990's by academics and management consultants, who were seeking to give greater cohesion to the personnel dimension in organisations. There was also added impetus from line and general managers. With the growing realisation that skilled employees were a major and often scarce asset to an enterprise, there came a change of attitude and a rethinking of many policies. For example, retaining and developing employees was increasingly seen as a key means towards gaining and retaining competitive advantage, especially in high tech industries. There was also a change of attitude to the organisation, with a greater awareness of the importance of the culture of the organisation in sustaining its effectiveness. Storey offers the following definition:

> "HRM is a distinctive approach to employment management, which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce, using an integrated array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques." (Storey J. (ed.), (1995), *Human Resource Management: A Critical Text,* London: Routledge.

With the development of HRM, both in theory and in practice, it became clearer that it was not simply a development in the personnel function, important though that was, but it was a shared responsibility for all involved in the management of an enterprise. The management of people throughout an organisation began to acquire new norms and criteria and a greater significance for the future of the organisation, especially in organisations requiring high skills.

There are three further characteristics of HRM, which will help to clarify ways in which it is relevant to the results of this project. The first is an emphasis on the importance of culture, including the values, organisational climate, and management style, which affect the quality of the organisation's work. This includes a sense that culture is something, which needs to be managed and also exemplified from the top and throughout the management of the organisation. The second is an emphasis on developing a common sense of purpose and a shared commitment to change, in pursuit of that purpose. The third is the way people are treated as individuals by their line managers and how the organisation supports and empowers them and facilitates their development and encourages initiative. There are many ways of managing people but HRM is a normative model, which values the human resource as an asset to be nurtured not just a cost factor on the balance sheet.

A convergence noted.

As the results of the project emerged it became clearer that there was a convergence between the conditions identified in the project for the release of spiritual energy and the model of good HRM. This will now be examined in relationship to the primary conditions for the release of a spiritual energy, as noted in the last chapter.

An inspiring purpose.

In recent years many organisation have focussed their purpose in the form of a mission statement. This can be an official statement, which seems to have little impact on the life of the organisation. On the other hand it may encapsulate something of its common purpose, vision and organisational climate. HRM puts great stress on developing and managing a corporate culture in the belief that if staff participate in the creation of this culture it leads to greater consensus, flexibility and commitment.

This chimes in very well with the first condition of "an inspiring purpose" or a shared vision, which inspired loyalty, commitment and a sense of rightness in the task.

A liberating and empowering context.

HRM is based on the belief that an organisation should not merely seek from employees compliance with rules and regulations, but strive for the much more ambitious objective of commitment. To facilitate this a 'can do' culture is generated and people are encouraged to accept responsibility and to take initiatives. It therefore creates a climate of empowerment, which draws out people's capabilities and potential. It encourages cooperation, teamwork and the integration of complementary skills. HRM seeks to build synergy.

Such a liberating and empowering context was the second condition identified in the responses of the participants in the project.

An attitude of hope, confidence and commitment.

HRM requires the development of personal attitudes in managers. Positive and hopeful attitudes towards the future will encourage long term commitment to the organisation and its task. Trust and confidence are essential in the individual manager and in the group. The acquisition of inter-personal skills are needed and so are the encouragement of openness and the absence of defensive attitudes. A change in the culture of the organisation is sought to encourage cooperation and to reduce conflict.

The responses of the participants in the project indicated a sense of hope and confidence in the future and a very high level of commitment to the task. There was a determination to grasp the opportunities before them.

Conclusion.

Clearly the conditions for the release of spiritual energy identified through the project do not cover all aspects of the HRM model. On the other hand, no points of contradiction have been found. Nevertheless the points of coincidence of the two are remarkable and the findings of this project confirm a number of features of the HRM model

We conclude that the quality of human resource management is likely to be a determining factor in whether the release of spiritual energy is facilitated or inhibited in an organisation.

7.   Conclusion.

MODEM's Hope of the Managers project was set up to explore spiritual energy at work among managers. The participants were encouraged to describe their experiences in their own terms and therefore the research was very open ended and the data not susceptible to quantitative analysis.

Nearly all the participants recognised the importance of taking time out to reflect. Like most managers they felt under pressure at work with little or no time to take stock. As a result they said that they had valued the experience of the action learning sets as an exercise in its own right.

The initial hypotheses raised questions about the relationship of spiritual energy to effectiveness in managers and organisations. As the project progressed it became clear that it did not yield significant evidence about this relationship but did show the conditions or circumstances, which facilitate the flow of spiritual energy in managers and in groups within an organisation.

In reflecting on the experiences of the participants, three inter-related conditions have been identified, which facilitate the flow of spiritual energy in a manager or in a group within an organisation:

1. An inspiring purpose – something achievable and worthwhile and which the participants found to be stretching and requiring special effort.
2. A liberating and empowering context - one in which the participants were free to take decisions, to develop their potential and to work creatively with others,
3. An attitude of hope, confidence and commitment – ready to seize the opportunities on offer.

Out of a great variety of open-ended descriptions of experience it has been possible to discern a spiritual energy active in the working situation and to identify some of its characteristics. We have also explored what it is in managers that makes them open and receptive to this energy and suggested that this sketches in outline a form of spirituality appropriate to the working context.

Finally, we have noted that some of the central elements in human resource management, understood as a normative approach to people management, are confirmed by the results of this investigation. We conclude that the quality of human resource management is likely to be a determining factor in whether the release of spiritual energy is facilitated or inhibited in an organisation.

Appendix 1

The brief for the action learning sets.

The actual brief sent to the participants in advance was as follows:

> *"The aim of the research project is to explore the energy at work individually in managers, and corporately in organisations, and in what ways and to what extent it is a 'spiritual' energy. We believe that this in itself is a worthwhile activity for all of us. It will offer us the opportunity to make and implement more conscious decisions about ourselves, and our work, through making this energy more explicit and harnessable.*
>
> ***Task of the Day - Set A***
>
> *Please think about 2 or 3 individual experiences at work, which lifted you to a new level of performance achievement, perhaps achieving something you thought was impossible. Choose one to describe to the set.*
>
> *Please describe the energy you felt arose within you. How would you describe this energy to a friend?*
>
> *At the end of the set discuss whether the set feels there are common features in what you have been sharing.*
>
> ***Task of the Day - Set B***
>
> *Please think about 2 or 3 experiences at work where the organisation has seemed to be at a new level of performance, which you thought impossible. Did the energy generate a momentum to increase that sense of moving forward? Choose one to describe to the set.*
>
> *Please describe the energy you felt arose within the organisation. How would you describe this energy to a friend?*
>
> *At the end of the set discuss whether the set feels there are common features in what you have been sharing."*

Appendix 2

A spiritual and theological reflection.

Introduction

We have been seeking to investigate the spiritual energy at work in managers. Our concern has been with the spiritual aspects of persons and corporately with the spirit of organisations. How do you interpret the spiritual aspects of such phenomena?

Two preliminary questions:

1. Is it just a function of individuals? Do we look for a psychological interpretation? That is certainly part of it but the participants pointed to something beyond themselves, a strange but elusive motivation and empowerment.

2. Is it a group phenomenon, simply a matter of social psychology? This is also part of it, but there is usually in the experience described a sense of a group gelling and working together in a remarkable way, an experience which seemed to be much more than the sum of the participants, a synergy, a spiritual energy from beyond, an experience of a power which transcended the group.

This is a spiritual reflection in the sense that it presupposes that a human being is spiritual as well as mental, physical and emotional. The human spirit is evident, for example, in morality, culture and religion. The human spirit is also capable of relating to a transcendent spiritual reality, namely, God. This is therefore also a theological reflection because it seeks to explore this aspect. In simple terms theology is God-talk, a term most at home in the three western monotheistic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In these faiths God is the power, which brought the space-time universe into being and is both beyond it (transcendent) and at work in it (immanent).

The area of human spirituality is one in which there are many options and no final and irrefutable interpretations. Faith is about trusting in an interpretation of the world and of life and acting on it. We have called this investigation The Hope of the Managers and hope is faith or trust directed to the future. We are exploring how managers act in hope.

Christian theology has operated for two millennia with the hypothesis that God can be experienced in three ways. God is creator and initiator, who set it all going, the "the big bang", but continues to sustain it and direct its evolution. God was also known in human form as Jesus, redeeming a fallen world, change agent for the better, seeking the rule or kingdom of God in human affairs, confronting evil, suffering and dying in the process but rising to new life.   Thirdly, God is the Holy Spirit, Spirit of love, working creatively in human relationships, making things new.

This hypothesis provides a frame of reference for interpreting the experience, which the managers have shared in the course of this investigation. The method will be to relate the findings to some key themes in Christian theology and spirituality and to consider whether these themes illuminate the experiences of the participants. We shall ask whether they have been experiencing the immanent activity of a transcendent God and whether the Holy Spirit

was operating within the spirit of the participants and within the groups of which they were part.

The kingdom of God

In the experiences described there is a strong conviction about the rightness of the tasks in view at the time and of the importance of using right ways of achieving them. There is a sense of vocation without being articulate about who or what is calling them to the task. There is a stress on holding to one's ideals, on being professional, and a conviction about the energy which comes from shared values and beliefs.

The task is seen as given; it is a challenge to rise to, to remain open to in the face of difficulty. To rise above failure is part of the continuing challenge of going on trying. It is like a journey, a common theme in spirituality. "Failure is not a sin", but "not trying is a sin" - presumably because it is turning away from the task and refusing the challenge.

At the centre of Jesus' teaching was the image of the kingdom of God, a state of affairs where God ultimately ruled and where people worked in harmony with God in achieving his purposes. Jesus encouraged people to let go of their anxieties and to live by faith: "Set your mind on God's kingdom his justice before everything else." (Matthew 6:33, REB). This applied to any area of life and is therefore relevant to management.

The paradoxes of faith.

From the paragraphs on confidence, a word very close in meaning to faith, "Felt myself to be moving forward...without really knowing where I was going - a sense of confidence to follow my instinct and stay on the path". Sometimes the energy is perceived as from within: "I drew on something inside myself that I knew I had, but had never tested", "something dormant within us came together in one day's push", something contagious. On the other hand it is also described as: "something I am given not something I produce myself".

Similarly St Paul writes of the paradox of grace: "… not I, indeed, but the grace of God working with me." (1 Corinthians 14:10 REB) Christian faith is about making a choice, a decision, taking risks, venturing, but also faith is a gift.

Agape – the love, which come from God.

A basic respect for the humanity of others was evident in two ways. First, as the participants told their stories there was a respect for each other and for the experiences being described, a recognition that what was shared "was both true and quite significant in their lives". Second, respect for others seemed to have been a basic condition for the kind of relating described by the participants, pulling together, mutual support, "sharing the energy and giving people confidence".

Agape, God's kind of love, is based on respect for persons and is the inspiration of the best in human love. "We love because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19) In Martin Luther King's evocative phrase "the power to love" is from God. Seeing people as those for whom Christ died affects how we relate to others and how we relate to their humanity.

Sin – separation from God.

There was an awareness of the fragility of the peak experiences being described, of the danger of being cut off from the source of the energy. They encountered antagonism and negative attitudes, onlookers who said we do not do things that way here. The benefit was short term because the experience and its energy were confined to one part of the organisation and the rest resisted the change. A climate of lack of trust and lack of cooperation led people to fall back from living in faith and hope and instead to stick by the rules. "Lawyers and accountants sabotaged it", "rule members had very low energy", "we created a shared vision and shared objectives – then someone snuffed it out".

There is an important distinction between sins which are actions contrary to God's will and sin which is the human condition of being separated from God, but which God is always seeking to overcome. Jesus' anger was fiercest against people who sought security in rigid adherence to selected laws and gained a sense of self-righteousness from doing so. They were not ready to take risks in faith, to be vulnerable and to venture in trust. In the process they were cutting themselves off from fullness of life. Isaiah wrote prophetically of a Christ-like figure, a suffering servant: "I have put my spirit on him... He will not break a crushed reed or snuff out a smouldering wick; unfailingly he will establish justice." (Isaiah 42:1, 3, REB)

"Only connect" (E.M .Forster)

The implications of these and other possible spiritual and theological themes for contemporary management are worth pondering.

The connections suggested above are NOT offered as evidence that God exists and is active. On the other hand an interpretation of the experiences described on the basis of the hypothesis that God is active in them may invest the events with new meaning for those willing to accept it. Furthermore these reflections could be developed to discover the conditions which would enable people to work more effectively with God in a management context and to experience more fully the power of the Holy Spirit in human relationships.

Certain strands within protestant faith have argued that the work of the Holy Spirit is confined within the boundaries of communities of fully committed Christians. The evidence of the participants, not all of whom were members of the Christian Church, implies that this is a case of being doctrinally blinded to the wider work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God was there from the beginning of creation. The results of this project suggest that the signs of the working of the Spirit are also evident in contemporary management.