

The world, he believed, is a globe of men who are trying to reach one another and can best do so by the help of good will plus culture and intelligence.

(E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India*)

## CONTEXT

This book is (inevitably) of its time. Multi-party interaction in a society that has experienced the collapse of modernism demands new concepts and fresh insights. People require relevant support.

What's different about life today? Before digging deeper into some of the processes at work, it is worth taking a superficial glance at the landscape. There are some rather obvious aspects.

Globalisation is a good entry point. Defined by Giddens (1990) as the decoupling of space and time, this is not a new phenomenon. The European merchant explorations of the sixteenth century kick-started the global expansion of the capitalist economy through world trade, a process that has continued ever since, notwithstanding dalliances with alternatives such as socialism. The earliest trading monopolies like the East India Company wielded civil as well as economic power and this dualism persists in the activities of present-day multinationals. But globalisation is far more than a matter of economics. The exchange of goods and services is just part of a wider picture of global communication which instantaneously shares knowledge and culture across the world. More generally still, globalisation is a perception of, as much as a feature of, the world today.

Since the mid twentieth century a global consciousness has developed. Prompted by the first images of earth from space, by the

Sixties 'oil crisis', by talk of global warming, by the spread of the Internet, as well as by national concordats and coalitions, the sense of world-wide interdependence is complete. Developments in theory parallel this consciousness. The striking question with which Edward Lorenz (1972) opened up the subject of chaos theory, 'Does the flap of a butterfly's wings in Brazil set off a tornado in Texas?', not only emphasised the rapidly divergent trumpet of possibility for any complex system, but also pressed home the sheer interconnectedness of things. Events anywhere may impact upon our lives.

Developments in technology facilitate, sustain and even enforce a global perspective. It is no longer possible to take a parochial view of events: to ignore the wider picture. Everyone is a potential customer. Competitors may be anywhere: so too may suppliers or complementors (defined by Nalebuff and Brandenburger, 1997, as those who provide complementary products or services). The Value Net – all those 'players' in the 'game' that any business plays – has world-wide scope. Furthermore, this net may turn itself inside out: reciprocal relationships abound and make unanswerable such questions as 'is information technology software-led or hardware-led?'

This sense of multiple involvements is symptomatic of the contemporary flux of identity at all levels. I may be at one and the same time your employer, partner, lover, customer, mentor and protagonist. Vanished are the historical certainties of hierarchy – whether of class, command or custom – and in their place is the confusion and complexity of a plurality of roles, intersecting responsibilities, flexible teamworking and constant change. We are supported by technology to achieve an amateur level of multiskilling: so half-competent catering, writing, athleticism, artistry, housekeeping and driving are facilitated by an underpinning of commercially available products and services. We come to know less and less about the more and more that we attempt.

Paradoxically, post-modern times (Crook *et al.*, 1992) are also characterised by hyperdifferentiation. The global marketplace supports a multiplication of entrepreneurial niches providing

uniquely customised products for individual customers. However, to capitalist differentiation of function and role is now added differentiation of structure: for instance, services can be provided by multinationals, homeworkers, co-operatives and so on. There is endless ambiguity in the proposition offered by any individual or organisation. A church can be a business and a community; it can offer solace and dividends; it can champion creationism and mass suicide. But hyperdifferentiation brings alive contradictory tendencies. De-differentiation involves bridging the relentless fragmentation of recursive specialism: for example, a surgeon who specialises in a vanishingly-narrowly-defined branch of neurology may relate professionally more strongly to experts in computer science or semiotics than to other surgeons. This blurring of boundaries is evident in the cultural arena where fragments of 'high art' are appropriated, repackaged and launched into the popular consciousness, and where 'lifestyles' are stitched together from the disparate bricolage of an exploded modernist culture. Elsewhere hyper-rationalisation destroys the notion of a single, totalising 'reason' and so undermines any sense of tradition: so styles of architecture, for instance, are simply a collection of ideas that can be drawn on in any manner that a designer chooses to create buildings that are rootless, without depth or allegiance to any particular historical context.

There is today an unravelling of management systems and focus. Indeed, we must pay attention to Lyotard's (1979) view that society as a form of unicity – that is as an organic, functional or even divided whole – is losing credibility, because of a growing incredulity towards legitimating 'metanarratives'. This removes at a stroke a clear purpose for coherent social action, and in turn it eliminates the possibility of universal acknowledgement for attempts to resolve or to adjudicate on social issues. To see the consequences one has to look no further for an example than the centre-periphery tensions demonstrated by apparently contradictory calls for devolution (i.e. local autonomy and self-government) and centralisation (e.g. the shifting of power to supra-state bodies or

global authorities). Local narratives replace some totalising rationale, and each is assessed by its performance, rather than within some framework of absolutes. This creeping commodification is an emerging aspect of social control. So scientific research is redefined as directed at market leadership, and a scientific breakthrough in bioengineering is by definition a patentable commercial breakthrough too. Shopping, the quintessential consumerist activity, has become the consumption of signs and icons, of logos and fashion statements, rather than merely of tangible goods and products, as the commodification of meaning has emerged.

The systemic Sixties harmony of 'one earth' is seriously challenged by post-modern fragmentation. Change in all spheres more than ever hinges upon the expression of political views and implementation of political agendas. The discourses that are permitted and the narratives that are treated as legitimate are powerfully established by politically-informed action. This political 'take' is now prevalent in all domains including the economic, cultural, social, scientific and personal as well as in the shrinking world of nation states. There are always many voices – hyper-rationalisation again – and so conflict emerges. Now politics is *par excellence* the domain of surprise; of uncertainty and discontinuity, as well as of passion and emotion. So terrorist acts, arbitrary inversions of stance, the collapse of regimes or businesses, and the flip-flops of fashion become the norm not the exception. The mathematics of catastrophe theory rather than that of Newton captures events.

The world is not only changed in terms of interdependence and scale; it is more than a matter of plurality, unpredictability and incoherence. Globally, people's concerns and sensibilities are altered too. As Daniel Bell (1974) foresaw, many people live more and more outside nature and beyond tools and machinery; for them these older contexts have been routinised and have faded from view. Today their 'reality is primarily the social world' and 'society is essentially a game between persons'. In Bell's words, 'society itself becomes a web of consciousness, a form of imagination to be realised as a social construction'. Not that this implies any degree of unanimity in the

visions for which people strive. For example, reverting to the opening theme of globalisation, it is evident from the strength of dissident – even violent – counter-opinion that not everyone is happy with the implications of a global economy and its fallout effects, either in the developed world or elsewhere. Indeed, polarisation and conflict are a key part of this planetary society.

Our encounters with one another define and remake us daily. But as Bell also points out, at heart we are unchanged. We are the same flawed creatures as our Neolithic forbears. And though we have in common with them social arrangements in which people specialise, swap and share, as we do so we also experience the same temptations to grab, to ‘free load’ and to cheat. While our times may centre almost obsessively and introspectively upon human interaction and relationship, our inclinations do not always equip us well for inhabiting this demanding world.

## CHALLENGES TO MANAGEMENT

Post-modern conditions demand exchange, discourse, dialectic, co-ordination, negotiation and the transcending of boundaries. As quickly as they fragment human endeavours, so the need to piece together ideas and enterprises grows. And it is this stitchcraft that is addressed here.

In a management context, there are immediate and compelling reasons for working on one’s ability to handle the challenges of collaboration, not the least of which is the seeming ubiquity of collaborative enterprise. Few organisations today have the material, economic or conceptual resources successfully to operate alone, still less to grow, for any sustained period in present-day conditions. There is a huge pressure to share capabilities, expertise and information so as to extend one’s reach to satisfy the twin demands of global markets and local customisation. Especially where expansion depends upon technological innovation, simple economics may force collaborative development, for instance as it has between telecoms companies building the next generation of mobile

networks. Joint working offers increased flexibility to trial new ventures and directions; a sense of fluidity and a chance for opportunism in the penumbra surrounding the core business. Not that this is a new phenomenon. The medieval monasteries in the English Fens and the French Marais, for instance, collaborated on huge land drainage schemes to mutual benefit. But today's partnerships are more diverse, multilayered, opportunistic and impermanent.

Placing the customer at the centre of the delivery process – the service mart concept – also emphasises co-working. Now that any organisation can present (or misrepresent) its services through the Internet to a world-wide customer base, it is essential to link together collaborators around each customer demand. In some cases these may be fairly traditional partners – component suppliers, an assembly function, a delivery service and after-sales support – but at other times bespoke and transient collaborations are needed on a one-off basis (e.g. to deliver a televised wedding-day spectacular for a pop singer). Virtual organisations can repackage and re-present novel assemblages of partners to exploit unique opportunities.

As local competitors acquire international collaborative links, so the pressure to join competing partnerships mounts: this escalation of competition up the organisational hierarchy can be seen today in the airline industry. There, the pressures of global markets have forced national governments to reappraise and modify their monitoring roles, and the consequent deregulation has been a further spur to joint ventures, alliances and mergers. Cross-border linkages have enabled the demands of global customers to be addressed by alliances of national flag-carriers, but not without concerns being raised about the concomitant dangers of economic collusion and profiteering amidst and despite the intense competition of a world-wide marketplace. However, the cultural barriers to effective international collaboration must not be underestimated and, not just amongst airlines, many organisations are presently faced with this challenge as they seek to work with others. Nor should it be assumed that cultural clashes are just a matter of nationality: at least as significant are the

contrasts between corporate cultures, which have led to the routine use of 'cultural audits' to screen prospective partners.

Within any collaborative venture, each party must seek to position itself at that point on the value chain where it can offer matchless and unique added value – to be elsewhere spells commercial erasure – and to work with others to delight customer needs. However, honing unique capabilities also creates advantage that is coveted by others. The result is a pervasive wariness that hampers seamless integration and information-sharing. Even when outright suspicion can be ameliorated, the fear of loss of identity can be a powerful countervailing force. Furthermore, collaboration creates fresh pressures on management by suggesting or imposing operating niches upon organisations, which from a unilateral perspective, or within a different alliance might not seem so appealing: there is a real danger of type-casting here. Inter-organisational alliances are fragile constructions and their vulnerabilities match the persistent theme of later chapters.

Despite all that has been said thus far, it would be wrong to overplay the significance of inter-organisational collaboration. As long as autonomous organisations pursue their distinct agendas, their involvement in ventures that include others remains as much a source of tension as of reward. Clearly, for many firms, partnerships are no longer peripheral or optional activities, but have become the mainstay of competitive strategy. This is especially the case, for instance, where knowledge-sharing (Inkpen, 1998) is a key motivator for collaboration: Sony is a prime example of a company that drives its product development process by knowledge acquired through alliances. Other companies create and exploit learning opportunities from alliance knowledge. Nevertheless the ultimate responsibility of management is to the stakeholders in their own organisation, and while this may include partners and collaborators, a more pragmatic focus remains the ownership interest – investors, shareholders and creditors – of the company. So collaborative working adds an extra strand to the already complex task of business management rather than causing a wholesale shift in its orientation. The inevitable

conflicts between the aspirations of individual organisations and those of the partnerships in which they have engaged forms a major theme in the narrative of this book.

The pressure to join with others is as intense in governmental and non-profit organisations. This is not merely the consequence of the deliberate splintering of public sector monoliths; and collaboration is not just a matter of ‘putting Humpty Dumpty together’ under another name. Instead it stems from a clear desire better to match service users’ requirements, and a recognition that smaller, nimbler, more flexible organisations stand a better chance of being able to deliver what people want. Furthermore, to tackle the ‘wicked problems’ (Rittel and Webber, 1973) of a complex society that transcend the responsibility, resources and expertise of individual agencies, multi-agency working is an imperative. So such inter-twined issues as public safety, misuse of drugs, urban regeneration and ethnic conflict are being addressed by ‘joined-up government’ and numerous partnership initiatives. Tragically however collaboration is frequently as apparent by its absence.

### **Sketch 1.1: Schizophrenic admitted thoughts of killing**

*Wiltshire, UK: November 2001*

A damning inquiry into the killing of a young mother and her unborn child has found that health and social services staff failed to warn the woman that her schizophrenic boyfriend had admitted thinking about killing her. The man, a paranoid schizophrenic with past convictions for rape, indecent exposure, and a long history of drug misuse only saw a forensic psychiatrist once in the seven years of his conditional discharge for assault. This left general psychiatric services to cope alone with a diagnostically complex and difficult patient. He had repeatedly voiced thoughts of killing his girlfriend, their two children and his parents in the four months prior to the homicide. However, his community psychiatric nurse failed to inform any of these people or other staff about this risk. Nor was the Home Office notified in line with procedure. The inquiry into his care and treatment by Wiltshire Health Authority and Wiltshire Social Services found that the bodies had no joint risk assessment procedure and were confused about their responsibilities for carrying out such reviews. Other criticism included poor communication between staff and failing to invite his relatives to case conferences. But the inquiry went on to say that ‘no single failure of services or professional care is found to have led to the homicide’. The inquiry report’s recommendations include improved staff and patient

supervision, more detailed guidance on reporting risks of harm to others and self-harm, the development of joint policies between health and social services and more specialist support for general psychiatric staff. Both the health authority and the social services department have vowed to make improvements to prevent such a tragedy happening again.

The effective management of public sector partnerships is far more than just ensuring that service users don't fall down the cracks; it is also more than ensuring rich and reliable communications. Rather it demands the integration of providers who may vary enormously in scale and influence, who may possess contrasting cultures, and who may be dominated by professionals coming from different disciplines based upon conflicting paradigms.

Unfortunately, as in the private sector, the longevity and achieved value of inter-agency collaboration is often disappointing. Many public sector partnerships are 'shotgun marriages' imposed by government, at worst as an inexpensive political slogan, and little better as an indirect and clumsy attempt to create geographical policy coherence. As often they are merely 'transitional objects' prompted by a shared wish to attract external funding by agencies whose commonality extends little beyond avarice, but which are bound together by the terms under which the monies are made available. Such imposed partnerships are usually crippled at the outset by the legacy of local history and embedded notions of authority and hierarchy; they are frequently hampered in undertaking even limited projects by multiple accountabilities and conflicting notions of community participation and responsibility; they are trapped conceptually by the institutional perpetuation of ideological differences and of repetitious arguments based upon dogma and prejudice; and they are finally and fatally floored by their inability to make a genuine commitment to put service users first. These partnership initiatives resemble nothing so much as dances at a ball in which, to the strains of the government's latest directives, 'the usual suspects' cynically take to the floor with each other and trace out some empty steps to create for the public an impression of co-ordinated movement.

## CO-WORKING

If the narrative above has not been about discontinuity, then it has certainly been about massive incremental change. And such transformation has, and continues to shape and alter the business environment. However, alongside this runs the age-old story of human collaboration.

It now appears likely (Sykes, 2001) that all modern humans have their ancestral origins in Africa within the last 150,000 years, and it is possible through mitochondrial DNA to trace the colonisation of the rest of the globe by a single one of the thirteen ancient clans. These early people lived by foraging and hunting, and their lives were dominated by the seasonal changes in vegetation and migrations of animals. But above all they lived together: they constructed a predominantly social world to cope with the vagaries and ferocity of nature.

Hunting mammoth was the classic act of Pleistocene collaboration. The killing of large animals – it is no coincidence that three-quarters of native American mammal genera became extinct within a few thousand years of man's arrival over the land bridge from Asia – could only be attempted by a group. But additionally, the hunters' prize sustains co-operation, since it provides a windfall of resources well beyond those that can be consumed by the immediate hunting band. In an economic sense those who make the kill create a public good.

However, a successful hunt creates social dilemmas (Ridley, 1996) as well as a food surplus. The carcass is accessible to those who have not faced the dangers of participating in the hunt as well as those who have. Why then should anyone take the risk of catching big game? This has been the subject of intense debate between anthropologists, but it seems that in addition to grabbing the choicest cuts of the quarry, the paybacks are prestige and anticipated reciprocation. The former delivers quite immediate social rewards (especially where sexual favours are concerned!), while the latter builds credit in the bank of mutual obligation. In this way what economists term the paradox of

collective action is averted. It makes good sense after all for public goods – modern examples include lighthouses, the police, the Internet – to be provided even though individual contribution to support these appears to be irrational. Similar pressures encourage the judicious exploitation of common resources (e.g. fishing grounds, fresh water, grazing) despite the temptation, frequently irresistible, to renege. The generic tensions of cooperation, between personal reward and collective benefit, will feature prominently in later chapters of this book [*see also Postscript 1.1*].

Human social instincts enable us to co-operate with others to their benefit and to our own. The earliest divisions of labour, for example the segregation of foraging tasks between male and female or the concentration of production upon making axes or spears, generated capability and capacity. The cumulative effects of divisions of labour, economists agree (West, 1990), have been the fuel for the economic growth of the modern world. These benefits are conferred by achieving greater competence in the adopted specialism, by eliminating the dislocation of switching tasks, and by making it worth investing resources to develop and innovate in the chosen field. At the same time, for the individual they offer an opportunity for focus and excellence in specialisation, a role and position in the social group, and the possibility of sharing in achievements beyond the reach of anyone alone. However, to the degree that specialisation emerges, so interdependence between specialists is concurrently created. It becomes impossible for people to function alone, either to produce an item or to serve a market. Taken to extremes, specialisation dehumanises work, creating jobs consisting of mundane operations that are entirely meaningless outside the context of some grand industrial system. At the same time further jobs are created whose purpose is solely to provide an organising framework for the workforce: machine bureaucracies are spawned. This is the modernist engine that created the industrial world of F. W. Taylor and of Henry Ford, as well as the grey expanse of state capitalism and the dead lives of administrative regulators.

But as the earlier brush with post-modernism suggests, fresh patterns are now emerging, partly as a result, it is argued (Crook *et al.*,

1992), of market saturation. The first, neo-Fordist response was in terms of diversification, internationalisation and automation, but as these in turn hit the limits of the global market, further realignments have taken place.

One possibility was anticipated by Bell (1974): post-industrial growth with the emergence of a service or knowledge society. The significance of this lies not so much in the small numbers of the workforce remaining in the primary (agricultural) and secondary (manufacturing) sectors, but rather in the proportion of service workers who may be described as in professional, technical or managerial occupations as opposed to routine service jobs. The conventional wisdom is that professional service work cannot be evaluated by crude, 'rational', economic criteria but must be assessed through collegial consensus and its outputs by peer review. Nevertheless a crisis of trust in the professions has recently led to an accountability revolution based upon an 'audit culture'. O'Neill (2002) views this development with concern and suggests that the principal impact has been to assert central control rather than to improve service or instil public confidence. The whole issue of trust in a fragmented post-modern world is a critical one that drives much of the argument of the present book.

Advanced mechanical and intellectual technologies have facilitated a new wave of petty entrepreneurialism and self-employment. This is a second realignment. Much of this growth is in the professional service sector where this form of working tends to prevail, though there is undoubtedly a trend toward contract working in traditional sectors that has also contributed to the change. These developments have altered relationships between parties from boss-subordinate or division-department to client-expert or customer-supplier.

The third realignment, and arguably the most significant, is flexible product and service delivery. Economies of scope can be achieved by a multi-skilled workforce able to generate outputs that are infinitely malleable and matched precisely to individual customer requirements. Like the other realignments, this change is market-driven as

advanced nations abandon any attempt to compete with second-wave producers in Third World countries and so compete on the criteria of customisation, quality and choice. A corollary has been a corresponding flexibility in organisational structures, involving dispersed authority and responsibility, coupled with greater autonomy for workgroups. The management cadre of Fordist organisations all but disappears to be replaced by the sense of a community of employee/owners.

The shadow of hierarchy, whether feudal, aristocratic, industrial, commercial or knowledge-based, has loomed over and behind pre-modern and modern manufacturing or service activity. Post-modern conditions have not blown hierarchy away but the differentiation of systems and the emergence of technical partnerships, sweatshops, artisan producers, homeworkers and contractors have transformed the nature of business relationships. Correspondingly there has been a growth in the need for intermediate agencies, integrators and others who can provide the 'glue' between transient project teams, or who can source appropriate skill sets to compose a bespoke virtual organisation. The pre-eminent role of relationship management in contributing to success in this environment is beyond dispute.

So approaching contemporary change, as we have done in this section, from an intra-organisational perspective, as opposed to the inter-organisational perspective adopted earlier in this chapter, has led to essentially the same end point. This is in part because centralised, multi-layered, hierarchical corporations have either exploded into constellations of enterprises or have achieved far flatter structures within a much looser envelope. In part it is because new organisations and lone entrepreneurs have appeared to fill market niches. Collaborative skills are needed both internally to cement non-hierarchical associations, and externally to operate across strange frontiers and deliver (or style) uniquely 'special' service to individual customers. There is no guide to acceptable practice in this exotic marketplace: a market in (for instance) air safety, potentially plays havoc with ideas of conscience and moral values, and also brings together strange bedfellows: government regulators, commercial

airlines, insurers and aerospace entrepreneurs. Perplexing ethical issues mingle with economic and managerial concerns.

## GRANULARITY

It is easy to be swept along on the tidal wave of ubiquitous collaboration without ever asking the naive question ‘why?’. The straightforward, instrumental answer has been given earlier: individuals and organisations working together seek to achieve ends that would otherwise be unattainable. But this answer leaves a deeper question: for what do people seek benefit? The recent, surprising answer to this further question has been given by evolutionary biologists. Living things act so as to maximise the long-term opportunities for their genes: in Richard Dawkins’ (1976) words, ‘we are survival machines...programmed to preserve the selfish molecules known as genes’. Such an answer may seem a long way from the management of a trading joint venture, or the working of an inner-city educational action zone, but this apparent distance is illusory. And significantly, as we shall see, the emotional implications of the selfish gene are felt whenever collaboration is attempted.

The realisation that the planet is being run by self-interested genes rather than by national governments or multinational corporations shifts the focus of attention. Teams of genes form chromosomes; of which teams form genomes; of which teams form cells; of which teams form bodies; of which teams form colonies: collaboration is taking place at every level. All this nested teamwork means that paying attention at the level of the individual or the organisation is rather arbitrary, understandable though it is to do so. Clearly it may well be the case that two companies enter an agreement to co-operate in a research and development (R&D) venture, and that it is worth scrutinising this arrangement in terms of the value that the contract appears to offer each party. However, the relevant motivating factors will include not only the ‘legitimate’ corporate ones – profitability, reach, market share – but also others – personal executive benefits, research scientist kudos – that are less willingly admitted. And in

turn, so the evolutionary biologists would argue, these are rooted in deeper drives to perpetuate the genetic heritage of the individuals concerned. Lest this is seen as allowing one's biological imagination to run out of control, note that selfish genes logically prompt apparently unselfish and familiar acts. To take an example: the roots of altruism ultimately can be adduced to the desire of individuals to sustain their (and their genes) self-interest. This occurs naturally (Frank, 1988) through a wish to appear to others to be a trustworthy potential partner, and so to be personally well-placed in the event of future ventures demanding collaboration. Altruism is just one example of the way that fundamental biological urges and human desires peer through the veneer of social interaction. What all this implies, of course, is that to understand collaborative behaviour attention must be paid to other levels than the most obvious one: and that people's actions will be coloured by deeper forces.

The genetic argument does more than simply cascade up and down the hierarchy of aggregation. It has other consequences. Characteristically humans, like other primates, are tribal animals who co-operate in the interests of their colleagues, because ultimately to do so is in their own selfish interest. In addition to paying attention to, and trying to manipulate social relationships within, their own group, people are ever ready to distinguish others and their associates as 'them' and not 'us'. There are no other creatures (Ridley, 1996) that exhibit such chronic and lethal rivalry between groups as do humans. Our use of weapons has heightened these conflicts, so that (unlike chimpanzees) battles between factions supplement the fight for status within the group. Interestingly, this warfare often forges coalitions between groups, perhaps in the face of a common enemy. So tribalism leads to both conflict and collaboration, even if the latter is temporary and reversible. The result is the dynamic, kaleidoscopic pattern of human alliances. Xenophobia, conformity, morality and genocide are all co-existing symptoms of our groupish behaviour. Collaboration ripples across the network of clans, and if we intervene in any part of this fabric we must pay some attention to the rest.

The recursive and interconnected natures of collaboration to which genetics draws our attention have another feature. Not only is behaviour likely to be influenced by what is going on at other levels and in other arenas, but such interactions are occurring simultaneously. Consider, for instance, a military commander negotiating a cease-fire with the leader of some insurgent forces. In addition to striking a deal across the table, each party to the settlement must subsequently 'sell' the agreement to his own side. So the insurgent leader must be confident that his men will comply with any decision to stop fighting, and also that any concessions that he makes to the military will be acceptable in turn to his bosses. Similarly, the military commander must achieve a settlement that conforms to the expectations of his superiors (and their wider grand strategic ambitions), that will be respected by his men on the ground in their face-to-face dealings with 'the enemy' and that by common consent his peers can accept or even admire. Co-operation has effects that move both up and down the chain of command and laterally across the hierarchy. Furthermore, awareness of these effects itself moderates the behaviour at the negotiating table: the result is two-way.

For many people the cold scientific abstractions of evolutionary biology are alienating and unacceptable. Surely, they argue, we humans are not simply lifeboats for selfish genes: where is the dignity – indeed the humanity – in that? But to argue thus is to take too unsubtle a view. A rather different 'take' on the matter has been offered by motivation theorists, notably Abraham Maslow (1970), who postulated a hierarchy of needs that individuals seek to satisfy. At the base of the 'pyramid' lie basic survival needs (e.g. food, warmth and sexual fulfilment); above these are psychological needs for safety and security; next come relationship needs (e.g. belonging, acceptance, love and esteem); and highest of all the need for self-actualisation (i.e. to express ourselves and realise our potential). It has been cogently argued (Crook *et al.*, 1992) that post-modernisation involves a shift in patterns of differentiation (and in turn of social inequality) from the social to the cultural sphere, and from

production to consumption: status depends more on one's access to codes (e.g. fashion style, leisure pursuits) than on one's location in systems of work or ownership. In these terms, we must pay attention to needs that are much higher in Maslow's pyramid. The earlier discussion took survival as the underlying motivator for collaboration, but clearly the attainment of other needs are likely to be at least as important in driving people to work together, even if ultimately they are merely the sublimation of the genetic imperative.

Collaboration can offer and deliver distinctive rewards. A company can provide its employees with adequate wages, a reasonably secure job and a measure of recognition for their contribution. The partnership of amiable workmates, the shaping of meaningful tasks and a leadership that imparts a sense of collective enterprise all enhance the experience. But such a narrow compass cannot offer the range and depth of satisfactions which can be found in a collaborative setting. Many professionals, for example, must look to peers outside their employing organisation for an expert appreciation of their qualities and abilities. Strategic alliances give participating managers access to knowledge, insights and opportunities that they would never access within a single corporation. And it is in the context of a joint venture that many executives get their first opportunity to realise ambitions to manage large-scale projects or to actualise talents for working across boundaries and cultures. As Drucker (1974) pointed out, as those needs which lie at the base of Maslow's pyramid are satisfied, so their capacity to reward an individual diminishes (though their capacity to create dissatisfaction if they are not provided increases). So in a world whose workforce is increasingly mobile, and where historic employee loyalty is undermined by the shock of arbitrary events such as take-over, collapse or corporate reinvention, the ability to attract talented individuals by offering them payoffs only, or more likely, to be found in a collaborative project has not gone unnoticed. And as such benefits become prevalent the level of expectation rises, so that a single organisation finds itself incapable of meeting the hungers that its potential recruits desire. Satisfying these cravings is contingent upon the performance of teams as well as of the individual and so, neatly,

collaborative activity becomes itself the necessary way of meeting the wants that it stimulates.

### **SUMMARY**

I have argued in this chapter that post-modern conditions of chaotic complexity and continuous change sustain a commercial imperative to collaborate. Commodification fosters a view of people as consumers of public services as well as purchasers of private goods and brings partnership firmly onto the public sector agenda as well. All managers therefore face the challenge of working effectively with others both to delight their customers and successfully to compete in the global marketplace. However, collaboration is as old as human society and the tensions that it engenders are familiar, if apparently intractable. They are rendered all the more problematic by occurring simultaneously across multiple arenas and at every level from that of personal self-interest to international concern. All of these features must be acknowledged, rather than simplified away, if a network of collaborative relationships is to be managed.