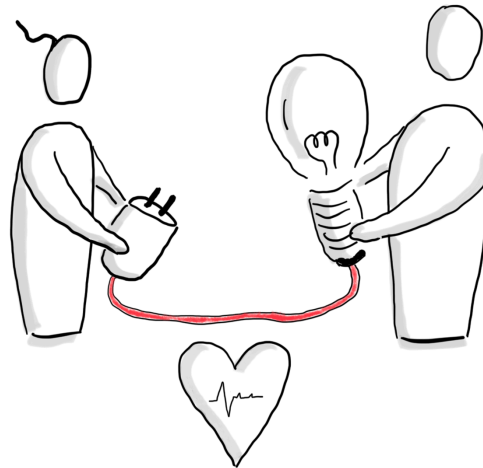


Tension – an underexploited resource.

20.03.2023, David Fiorucci



Without tension there can be no development, no life. Take a top, for example: unless is kept turning on its axis, it cannot remain upright and balanced. A rubber band, if stretched, stores up energy which is released when the tension is relaxed. Of course, you mustn't stretch it too far or the rubber band will snap.

The same applies to human beings, relationships, work, organizations. Tension in its different forms is often wrongly exploited, but it can be used wisely and to good effect.

Quotation:

"To develop, to remain competitive, you must keep moving." David Fiorucci

The word "tension", comes from the Latin "tensio", meaning the action of stretching. It is used to describe a situation in which a force is exerted on an object or person, creating a pressure or resistance.

Over time, the term has acquired a wider meaning, describing a state of excitement, agitation or irritation, which may be associated with emotional or psychological pressure.

Tension is a form of energy that may be regarded as a resource, as it can be used to perform work and promote development. However, tension is often wrongly exploited and, if used inappropriately, can cause damage and give rise to problems.

Here is some advice on how you can make good use of tension:

1. Recognize tension: the first step in making good use of tension is to recognize that you are experiencing this emotion.
2. Find a way of channelling tension: once you have identified the source of your tension, try to find a way of channelling it positively. For example, if you are tense because of an approaching deadline, use the tension you are feeling to motivate you in achieving your objectives.

3. Use tension as an alarm signal: tension can also be used as an alarm signal to help you avoid stressful or hazardous situations.
4. Avoid things or situations that trigger tension. For example, if watching the news makes you feel anxious, avoid watching it as much as possible.
5. Find a **buddy**: if you have difficulty in managing tension, try to find a colleague, friend or family member with whom you can share your feelings.

Accepted in this way, the experience of tension can give us a sense of urgency and motivate us to perform important tasks. Tension can help us to remain focused, maintain our energy level and face up to life's challenges.

From a **holacratic** point of view, tension is defined as the sensation or perception of a gap between reality as it is and how we would like things to be. It may be a problem, an opportunity, a need or a desire felt by an individual or group (team) requiring remedial action.

When tension is identified, it is expressed in a process referred to as a "governance round". This process enables the individual or team to describe and clarify the tension, and transform it into a proposal for action that will improve the situation.

The potential of tension in a holacratic environment is that it enables the organization to adapt rapidly to change and continually improve its processes and mode of operation. By rapidly identifying and dealing with tensions, an organization can solve its problems and grasp opportunities more effectively, which in turn contributes to better performance and leads to greater satisfaction on the part of employees.

Moreover, the process of resolving tension fosters cooperation and shared decision-making, which strengthens business culture and employee commitment.

Bias in working with tension

My experience with the companies I work with and/or know of that operate holacratically tells me that there is an escalation in dealing with tensions. Everything becomes a tension and every little problem or bone of contention is examined in a process or session instituted for this purpose.

As I have pointed out when speaking of accountability, people are less and less inclined to take personal responsibility or engage in self-reflection.

Indeed, many instances of so-called tension are unfounded or can be managed by the person concerned, or simply set aside, so as not to slow things down, hinder progress or inject unnecessary difficulties.

It is therefore important, before putting the tension one is experiencing on the agenda for discussion, to consider whether this tension really needs to be examined or can be safely set aside. Discernment is therefore important.

Buddy system

Let's consider for a moment the "buddy" idea mentioned under point 5 above.

Generally speaking, a buddy is a colleague or close friend, the term being used to describe someone with whom one has a relationship of trust.

For the last 30 years, I have used the buddy system in all the companies for which I have worked or which I now mentor.

Similarly, when I run training courses or workshops, I set up tandems (training and transfer partners) who play a role or perform tasks during training, between modules and, above all, after a course has ended.

Setting up a tandem is an easy task. The two people involved are given 15 to 20 minutes to discuss and share on three points:

1. In what ways are they similar?
2. In what ways are they different?
3. In what ways is the other person unique?

Thanks to the similarities, there is always a **“handle” for opening the other person’s door** and beginning a dialogue. The differences are a source of strength because they emphasize **complementarity** (we are stronger together), while the other person’s uniqueness leads us to give them due respect and **value** them appropriately.

Companies which adopt this practice of setting up tandems involving people from different units manage, by stages, to burst self-contained “bubbles”, foster trust and, above all, do away with prejudices.

I always give buddies three specific tasks/duties to perform:

1. **Challenge** their partner to do what he or she has said they will do.
2. Give the other person **positive reinforcement** by acknowledging their successes and pointing out the positive aspects of their actions and decisions.
3. Help the other person to **husband their energies** by making them aware that their resources are limited and they sometimes need to say “no”, take a break, recharge their batteries or take stock. The opinion of a person we trust can help us see what we prefer not to see, while their presence prevents us from feeling isolated.

I would encourage you to find a buddy within your company and have regular sharing sessions. This cooperation will help you to achieve your objectives and those of your organization, without exhausting yourself and losing your sense of enjoyment.