

Metaphorical Representations of the HR Consultant

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***Abstract:** Metaphors are among the most important means of constructing an organizational reality and, as such, are one of the foci of scientific research in the organizational arena. That this focal point has failed to develop more fully is probably due to the methodological difficulties involved in studying metaphors. Q methodology, with its fundamental accent on the scientific study of subjectivity, brings with it both an epistemic orientation and the technical means to tackle the problem. The present study adopts a Q-methodological frame in order to investigate common metaphors applied by human resources (HR) specialists to the HR consultants they work with. A qualitative wave identified 14 metaphors, with active meanings in seven areas of construction. From these, 57 statements were selected and sorted by 41 HR managers and general managers in top Romanian companies. Four factors emerged, covering rather unexpected constructions that, in some ways, diverge from the classical metaphors known to organizational consultants.*

Scope and Background: Organizational Change and Psychological Representations

Organizational change is one of the main themes in organizational theory, focusing mainly on *induced* change, as opposed to the fuzzy and less theoretically sound *emerging* change. Perhaps a main driver of this interest is the strength and prowess of the managerial consulting business in change-related issues.

The concept is growing in importance, but a look at the research corpus produced so far suggests that a real breakthrough has yet to happen. Existing research focuses mainly on case studies, on recipes of the “10-steps-to-success” type, or on grandfatherly good advice, which overpowering management gurus attempt to market from their own limited experience. The theoretical basis for change remains little advanced from the legacy of Kurt Lewin. As a result, we agree with those researchers who hold that

understanding of organizational change is limited and continues to pay tribute to some wrong postulates, both about changing and about the nature of organizational life.

Some authors suggest that one of the many ways that we may be able to achieve a more profound understanding of the phenomenon of organizational change could be by exploring the symbolical aspects of the organizational life (Alvesson, 1995; Jones, 1983; Smircich, 1983, 1985; Trice & Beyer, 1984). The reasoning behind recommending such a symbolical/constructivist approach is based on the depth and pervasive influence of cultural aspects on all organizational processes (Czarniawska, 1997a; Rosaldo, 1989; Wilkof, Brown, & Selsky, 1995).

Cultural interpretations and symbolic constructions are reflected by and reflect on the organizational change process in its whole, as well as on all the actors who are part of this process. As one of the most important actors in every induced change process, the organizational consultant always plays a part in the labeling of perceptual constructions and tacit barriers (Margerison, 2001). Even when it's not about labels, but about non-verbalized and unconscious presumptions, postulates or nonverbal frames existing within the target-organization, these psychological representations influence all the interactions of the organization with the consultant (Williams, 2003).

Understanding the nature of the consulting process and the role of the consultant is important in a very practical sense. It is generally accepted that the success of the consulting process is a direct function of the relationship and the interaction between consultant and client organization (Argyris & Schön, 1976; Senge, 1990). Up to now, this relationship has been explained from a very limited perspective, focusing only on the behaviors of the consultant and prescribing general rules for correct behavior (Margerison, 2001).

However, like every interaction, the consulting process should be analyzed with regard to both poles of the relationship. Much of the nature of the consulting interaction may be prescribed to the client. Indeed, the client is the receiver of services and the ultimate judge of their quality. In order to build up an optimum consulting relationship, the consultant should make reasonable efforts to fit into the expectations of his/her client. However, in order to do this, one needs to acknowledge the client's expectations and to represent those expectations as differential measures.

In a practical sense, the whole consulting process is based on psychological representations and on symbolical frames, and these are active in the following areas, among others:

- receiving the research brief;
- selecting or rejecting the consultant following first contact;
- negotiating and receiving the consultancy contract;
- defining the client's targets;
- setting the frame of analysis and the conceptual patterns;

- setting permissions and the subsequent freedoms and territories opened or denied to the consultant in the consultancy project; and
- evaluating final outcomes.

Metaphors in the Study of Organizations

The metaphor offers a way to study the cultural or individual representations that influence the interaction between the organization and the consultant. Metaphors have been conceptualized within the Western scientific tradition as linguistic artifacts and their study limited to language scientists or artists. During the beginning of the 1980's, through the work of Lakoff & Johnson (1980), Morgan (1980) and Pundy (1983), among others, metaphors began to be understood as cognitive artifacts and conceptual constructions. Current scientific understanding of metaphors explains that, while being means of literary expression, they also structure our perceptions and our understanding of the world. The essential point of Lakoff's work states that non-metaphorical thought is only possible when we talk about purely physical reality; abstract ideas need one or more layers of metaphor for expression.

Social researchers tend to work at an unconscious level with metaphors, and sometimes even at a conscious level. They are caught in their own perspectives and their own assumptions. They build, understand and interpret the social reality in partial and sometimes incorrect ways. But these interpretations may have a strong functional and adaptive dimension: they are practical and, at that concrete level, they may hit the mark. Through the fact that they work continuously with representations that change their own image about reality, and exactly because they are aware of those, researchers in the social sciences are more skillful than others regarding the identification of such psychological representations when these are used by the people surrounding them.

Metaphors have for a long time been defined from a methodological point of view as major representatives of a subjectivity the positivist researcher should avoid at all costs (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). Only lately have metaphors been accepted as legitimate ways of knowledge (Radman, 1995), and acknowledged as heuristic symbols and mechanisms for expressing these symbols (Pugh, Hicks, & Davis, 1997). As such, metaphors are wordless (tacit) ways of behavior and verbal transmission of some meanings, which are either non-verbalized and unconscious, or too complicated to be verbally transmitted – or, perhaps most often, both of these. Under these conditions, we consider that studying metaphors in organizations is not only possible, but necessary.

Although endless in their possibilities of articulation, metaphors in a given occupation tend to cluster in certain favorite, usual forms. Most of the professional areas have their own dedicated metaphors, some of which have been explicitly studied in the past. The metaphors, representations, parables and symbolical verbalizations used in areas surrounding organizational studies have been addressed in a variety of applications, including human

resources management (Dunn, 1990), learning and pedagogy (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999), psychology (Leary, 1990). Finally, there is no way to ignore famous studies like those of Morgan (1997), Argyris, Putnam & Smith (1985) or Kendall & Kendall (1993).

In our activities as consultants, we have often met reified metaphorical representations, which subtly manage the interaction of the organization as a whole, or of some of its segments, in its relationship with consultants. Some have approached the use of metaphors in organizational research and consultancy practice as a “third methodology,” neither qualitative or quantitative (Grubbs, 2001; Daley, 2001). In our view, the metaphor is an extension of the qualitative, narrative approach, providing a predominant focus not on what the subject says, but on what stands at the base of his or her verbalizations. Thus, metaphor-driven research is much more suited for the study of *subjective* realities inside the organization than are positivistic approaches based on prior conceptualization and standardized measures.

In light of the above, we state that knowledge regarding predominant symbolic constructions about the essence of the target organization, the ontology of its problems (the basis for calling upon consultants), and the expectations the management and the employees have towards the consulting process and the consultant as an organizational actor should prove to be of the utmost importance for the consultant in order to tailor his/her presence, interaction and performance on-site. The reason is not only self-centered impression management, but the drive for smooth and cooperative relationships, which lead in the end to successful consulting projects.

Difficulties in Using Metaphors

The use of metaphors also brings with it some serious problems that sometimes are impossible to overcome. Research conducted on metaphors addresses some logical, procedural and analytical design difficulties, which are generally inherent to the research of speech, dialogue and text (Short, 2001; Keenoy, Marshak, Oswick & Grant, 2000). In this area of investigation, quantitative research has not really been able to provide a pertinent point of view, and the only research approach is the qualitative one, which is often speculative, ambiguous and lacks experimental stringency and the positivistic stance that some believe should animate scientific approach (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000).

The major difficulty is not to be found in epistemological viewpoints as such, but rather in the fact that exactly the potential a metaphor has in giving a uniform and profound understanding of a given situation, is at the same time the biggest enemy of the researcher. Thus, the main problem in using metaphors in organizational research is the challenge of *deconstruction* (Sackmann, 1989; Daley, 2001), which may be conceptualized in two ways:

- (1) Correct deconstruction of the meaning. From this point of view, the challenge is to discover the real significance of metaphors for the individuals that use them or who are receptive to them. The same phrase,

the same metaphor, may have different meanings for different individuals or different groups in the same organization. Therefore, the researcher may not coherently understand it, may not completely understand it or may use it in the wrong way.

(2) Deconstruction of the correct layer. Research has shown that a relatively small number of metaphors are dominant at a given point in a given organization or in a given scientific frame, thus closing the path for the appearance (or deconstruction) of other metaphors (Morgan, 1997). For instance, metaphors of the organization as an organism and as a mechanism are so dominant that, according to Kraemer (2001), 90 percent of the time one of these two solutions will be the first metaphor offered by an individual describing his or her own organization. Accordingly, serious skills in qualitative inquiry are needed in order to overcome the deconstructive barriers raised by the existence of dominant metaphors.

Another problem that should be noted especially with regard to the present study, is the problem of verbally *stating* metaphors when including them in a study. If we accept the modern point of view, and see metaphors as linguistic expressions of higher-order conceptual constructions, we have inevitably to assume that these constructions may be verbally expressed in more than one way, each of these marred by potential imperfections. Indeed, a significant part of the metaphors used in the present study are not phrased as metaphors (*X is Y*), but as similes (*X is like Y*).

At least two different theories address the question of simile-metaphor difference. The conventionality hypothesis (Bowdle & Gentner, 1999; Gentner & Wolff, 1999; Gentner & Bowdle, 2001) states that figuratives with high conventionality are usually expressed as metaphors, while those with low conventionality are expressed as similes. The relational-attributional hypothesis (Aisenman, 1999) states that relational links are expressed as metaphors while attributional links are expressed as similes. The metaphoric form (i.e. *the organization is a machine*) is considered stronger than the simile form (i.e. *the organization is like a machine*) in both these theories (Glucksberg & Keysar, 1990; Zharikov & Gentner, 2002), but the simile is still acknowledged as a legitimate form of metaphoric expression (Kittay, 1987), and may differ from the metaphor by linguistic convention alone.

Under these circumstances, we tried during the present study to stick to the metaphorical form whenever possible, but accepted the simile form of a metaphorical judgment whenever this was the preferred mode of expression of the participants during the interviews.

Method

A strong case has been made above for the subjective quality of the matter under study, so that using Q methodology seems to recommend itself, as Q methodology has been explicitly developed in order to inquire into subjective

views. Examples of such subjectivity are limitless and, while including political judgments and attitudes, aesthetic taste, preference for musical styles, humor etc., they certainly also include metaphorical representations.

Q methodology was developed by William Stephenson, in the first half of the 20th century, as a means for gaining scientific insight into subjective viewpoints. After unmerited criticism, Q methodology gained an ever-wider approval at the end of the millennium and is now on its way to become established in mainstream research. Q methodology has been previously used for the study of organizational metaphors; excellent examples are Robert Lipgar's analysis of leader/facilitator types (1997), Jill Woodilla's analysis of attitudes toward organizational change (2000), Slavet & Butterfield's analysis on the glass ceiling phenomenon in women's careers (1999) and McKeown, Stowell-Smith & Foley's analysis of nurses' industrial relations (1999). But to only cite these examples would be unfair to the bulk of the Q literature, as Q is fundamentally about studying representations, mental constructions that are difficult to grasp consciously and even harder to communicate: Q methodology is fundamentally about metaphors.

Q methodology has never been a corpus of turn-key norms, such as they are abundant in more traditional methodological approaches (Brown, 1980). A Likert scale is basically a Likert scale, no matter how much the researcher tries to tweak and fine-tune. Compared to this, a Q-methodological study really shows its kinship with the eternal tweaking and optimizing typical for qualitative inquiries, as it asks for a number of technical decisions, among which we only enumerate the concourse sampling and elicitation of statements, the quest for an optimal number of statements, the decision regarding forced-choice vs. free-choice distribution, the decision regarding the range of the evaluative anchors, the shape of the distribution, the selection of evaluators, the extraction method, the decision regarding mathematical vs. judgmental rotation etc. Suffice it to say that the present study has taken as classical a stance as possible in Q methodology, aiming at a medium-sized Q-deck and opting for a forced-choice distribution with a quasi-normal shape.

Instrument and Selection of Items

Generation of a Q sample is usually done through concourse sampling, this being one of the main reasons for the generally acknowledged abductive power of Q Methodology (Stephenson, 1961; Brown, 1980; McKeown, 1998) and its compatibility with the concept of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Although often the researcher takes the stance of an armchair scientist and bases his or her reasoning about the relevant concourse on his or her own experience and on theoretical considerations, it is generally considered good practice to sample the concourse of the relevant community through direct contact.

We opted for a thorough concourse sampling. The first step in selecting the investigated metaphors was purely qualitative, using Shindell and Willis'

model (2001). Their model was based on unstructured interviews and on the critical incidents technique proposed by Flanagan (1954), which resulted in the extraction of practical examples of metaphor use in situations of factual consultancy. In our case, review of the concourse has focused on discussions with four consultants and 11 medium- or top-level managers from companies that had been involved with consultancy for various HR-related aspects within three months of the interview.

The researchers scanned the discourse and the verbalizations of interviewed individuals in order to find metaphors or subjective representations about the consultancy process without resorting to prompting techniques. The interviewees were people with a sound managerial background and not at all unfamiliar with the domain under question, so prompting could have led to some spontaneous deconstruction. All the metaphors collected in interviews were then subjected to a focused discussion in four workshops with a number of specialists in organizational consulting, including some who took part in the first phase. The objective of this phase was to explicitly state the metaphors identified and to explain specific differences. All participants were specifically urged and prompted to state metaphors explicitly. Thus in the end, we did not need to infer any from the concourse.

In this manner, 14 metaphors in use by HR specialists and HR consultants alike to describe organizations, organizational performance, organizational problems, the consulting process and its outcomes were revealed and structured. Additionally, the workshops enabled us to identify seven areas of significance where these 14 metaphors operationally differ from one another. See Table 1. A complete description of the metaphors is included in Appendix A.

Even though these metaphors and their representations seem valid, with a fair consistency and internal logic, it is highly improbable that all of them are operational in all consultations. The aim of the Q analysis was to collapse these 14 constructions into a smaller number, to identify those professional constructions which are operational and how they are articulated.

The workshops were also used for the actual selection of Q-sort items. One group task was to identify seven representations of specific behavior(s) for each of the 14 metaphors. The 98 statements thus generated were considered to make up too voluminous a Q-deck, so they were again submitted to the participants, who ranked them in order of their similarity. For example, the psychologist behaves in certain areas very similarly to a doctor; as does the designer or engineer to the architect. The cleric/priest and the astrologist share some similarities, too. Excluding strong similarities, the final Q-deck of 57 items was obtained (see Appendix B).

Table 1: Metaphors and Their Representations

14 Professional Metaphors	
Doctor	Police officer/detective
Psychologist	Astrologist
Teacher	Firefighter
General	Mechanic/engineer
Priest/cleric	Farmer
Designer/stylist	Coach/trainer
Guide	Architect
Representations in Expressions	
A common vision about the organization ("I generally see my organization as...")	
A common vision about the organization in need of consultancy ("when it needs consultancy, I see my organization as...")	
A vision about the difficult situations experienced by the organization ("the situations that force me to ask consultancy are like...")	
A vision about the consultant's activity ("what the consultant does...")	
A vision about the consultant's contribution ("I expect the consultant to come with the following in a project...")	
A vision about how much time the consultant spends in the organization ("I expect the consultant to spend time in the organization, as follows...")	
A vision about the endpoint of the consultancy ("for me the endpoint of the consultancy is...")	

Data Collection

Q sorting was done by 41 HR managers or general managers, one from each of 41 top Romanian companies, most of them multinational. All the 41 companies are companies with high advertising expenditures. Each had hired consultants at least once in the past 12 months. Data collection was done only after a preliminary discussion with the respondents regarding the general focus of the study, and was followed by the usual 15-minute post-sorting discussion, with the objective of gathering the kind of qualitative data a researcher is able to collect from a research subject explaining his or her own vision, attitude, opinion or outlook on a particular topic. The preliminary discussion, the Q sorting and the post-sorting interview were all done in the Romanian language.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Q-Sorts were entered into *PQMethod* and the 41 x 41 correlation matrix was submitted to a principal component factor extraction. Judgmental rotation was used to produce a simpler structure and a four-factor solution was finally selected, based both on ease of interpretation and on the aim of integral inclusion of the 41 sorts in the factors. The four factors account for 52.9 percent of the variance in the Q sorts and have very weak correlations with one another.

A first and important conclusion, drawn from the post-sorting interviews, relates to the fact that even though in the concourse analysis phase of the

study metaphors seemed to be clear-cut, the sorting procedure has found subjects to be significantly less amenable to adhering to one all-covering and all-explaining stand in this regard. Most of the sorters, having a sound background in management education, have been able to identify a large part of the metaphors operationalized in the Q statements, but none were eager to acknowledge a single metaphor as their sole position on the subject matter. This could possibly be attributed to the grouped nature of the statements. The Q statements reflect metaphors active in seven different areas and the presence of these different manifestations and the subsequent parallel language could have set up some subsidiary levels of sorting. However, the overlapping of metaphors and their co-occurrence in the same cognitive frame has been generally assumed by modern scientific thought (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Pondy, 1983; Aisenman, 1999).

The four factors were dubbed Teacher, Commander, Stylist and Doctor. A short discussion of each follows.

Factor 1: The Teacher

The client preferring this consulting approach emphasizes the input the organization will gain from the consultant. This client focuses less on the client's own image about the organization, the time spent by the consultant, and the finality of the consulting process.

The ideal consultant thus is a teacher or trainer, transferring knowledge to the organization. Sometimes this is done after the consultation proper and its diagnosis of the lack of knowledge in the organization, but this phase is optional. The main scope of the consulting process is to provide the means (through knowledge) for the organization to solve its own problems. Sometimes the consultant is expected not only to teach, but also to train members of the organization in new skills, and possibly even to transfer a vision and to imprint an attitude.

The boundaries of the consultant role are narrow. The consultant is mainly expected to deliver knowledge, not to fight alongside the client. The boundaries regarding his or her initiative are also clear and limit the areas where training should be provided. The consultant is thus a provider, though an educated one, but not a co-fighter.

This client is opposed to consulting practices that only style the image and soften the bumps. Instead, a long-term gain is desired. The client has a do-it-yourself attitude. This approach seems to be found mostly in smaller organizations, with an entrepreneurial culture and a do-it-yourself outlook on business and challenges. Table 2 provides some key statements and factor scores for this factor.

Table 2. The consultant as Teacher. Statements with strongest and weakest agreement

Statement	Factor score
The ideal consultant transfers knowledge to the organization.	5
Final point of the consultation is new knowledge for the organization and its members.	4
Usually, I see my organization like a team in a sport.	4
The ideal consultant diagnoses the disease.	4
The ideal consultant suggests new ways of farming the field, new seeds etc.	3
When in need of consultancy, my organization is like a pupil in need of knowledge.	3
When in need of consultancy, my organization is like a player, in need of training.	3
Usually, I see my organization like a farm, functioning because of the farmers.	-3
The consultant does not spend much time with organization. He does not need it, because he only suggests best technical decision, without consultation.	-3
The ideal consultant fights the flames engulfing the organization, with little or no regard for wreckage he may produce.	-3
Final point of the consultation is victory in a very specific situation, task or confrontation.	-4
The ideal consultant acts like a stylist, suggesting a new haircut or new clothes; has mainly an artistic role.	-4
Usually, I see my organization like a complex system, impossible to be completely known except by initiates.	-4
Final point of the consultation is a shiny façade, an attractive image	-5

Factor 2: The Commander

This type of client is centered on the personality of the consultant. The client sees the organization largely as a system of rules, with the consultant brought in to ensure that the organization attains its goal no matter the costs. The goal is usually narrow and short-term. The costs are easily understood as costs to the employees (which could be seen as the commander's cannon-fodder). The consultant is sometimes brought in to preserve the rules, punish the rule-breakers and establish again the rule of the law.

Boundaries for the consultant are large, even though the expected role is narrow: The consultant may do almost everything, as long as it's authoritarian. Exercises into participative decision-making, for example, could be looked upon with puzzlement.

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The consultant has to be hard as stone; not a soft facilitating, non-controlling, continuous negotiator. The consultant is brought in as a commander. Part of the role is full participation both in victory and defeat. The consultant's contract is sometimes associated with a success fee. Also, it is inconceivable for the consultant not to fight alongside the organization on the battlefield. The client usually expects the full-time engagement of the consultant, who also brings a team along.

This consulting style seems to be preferred for large-scale investors, with a show-me-the-money attitude.

Table 3. The Commander. Statements with strongest and weakest agreement

Statement	Factor score
When in need of consultancy, my organization is like a legal system which has just been broken.	5
The ideal consultant finds the guilty ones, the lawbreakers.	4
Usually, I see my organization like a building, with solid architecture and a clear technical plan.	4
The ideal consultant identifies breaches and makes the system more secure for the future.	4
The ideal consultant trains the army for war.	3
The ideal consultant has legal knowledge and experience as a detective.	3
The consultant should spend quite some time in the organization. He documents, questions, interrogates, stays until sanction is applied.	3
Final point of the consultation is a tension-free (non-neurotic, emotionally stable) organization.	-3
The ideal consultant does nothing - the organization actually does everything.	-3
When in need of consultancy, my organization is like a deranged personality, in need of therapy.	-3
When in need of consultancy, my organization is like a man asking the oracle what the future may bring.	-4
Usually, I see my organization like a traveler, journeying towards his destination.	-4
When in need of consultancy, my organization is like a lost traveler in need of a guide.	-4
The consultant spends some time in the organization, but not as much and not during the most problematic of times. He coaches the players, but does not play himself, he makes suggestions before and after game, but not during.	-5

Factor 3: The Stylist

Clients adhering to this vision are centered mainly on the finality of the consultancy process and on the methods the consultant uses. The client is very centered on what the consultant *is*, and has only a fuzzy image about what the consultant *is not*. The consultant's boundaries are clear and narrow: the client has a very clear-cut image about what the consultant is expected to do, and what territories are permitted. The consultant stays in the organization for only a short time, is called in when styling has to be done, then goes away. There rarely is time for a follow-up and in principle there is no bonding between consultant and organization. There is no clear need or expectation for a diagnostic phase in this type of consultancy; sometimes the consultant simply knows better what is needed, based on experience, professional knowledge or aesthetic sense.

Consultation usually focuses on PR issues, internal or external, or on issues having some connection to the image of the organization or of its management. Sometimes there is no real need for consultation, but rather the client expresses an "I-too-want-one-of-those-shiny-things" attitude. This seems to be the preferred way for organizations active in industries where organizations have a high visibility, usually advertising-intensive industries.

Table 4. The Stylist. Statements with strongest and weakest agreement

Statement	Factor Score
When in need of consultancy, my organization is like a pop star going to the stylist.	5
The ideal consultant acts like a stylist, suggesting a new haircut or new clothes; has mainly an artistic role.	4
The ideal consultant has experience from other battles, strategic knowledge of terrain (market) and adversaries (competition).	4
Final point of the consultation is a shiny façade, an attractive image	4
Final point of the consultation is repairing or re-engineering of the machinery.	3
The ideal consultant changes what is broken, fixes the problems.	3
The consultant should diagnoses the disease, prescribe the medicine, then go away. Maybe he should schedule a follow-up to check on patient.	3
When in need of consultancy, my organization is like a deranged personality, in need of therapy.	-3
The ideal consultant has arcane and initiatic knowledge.	-3
The ideal consultant diagnoses the disease.	-3
The ideal consultant has legal knowledge and experience as a detective.	-4
The ideal consultant transfers knowledge to the organization.	-4
When in need of consultancy, my organization is like a pupil in need of knowledge.	-4
When in need of consultancy, my organization is like an army in need of a vision and guidance.	-5

Factor 4: The Doctor

Clients preferring this style of consultation are highly centered on the final result of consultation and on the consultant's behavior, not on their own vision about the organization. The consultant has a clear role, with an expectation for a diagnostic phase in consultancy. Boundaries regarding things permitted to him or her are rather large. It's interesting that the "organization as organism" metaphor does not apply so much to this model of client as the "organization as mechanism" metaphor, even though the reverse would have been expected.

This style is actually a combination of doctor and priest, based on the principle of completely surrendering to the authority, knowledge, experience of the consultant. As complicated as the consulting situation is, the consultant is expected to have the (arcane) knowledge to solve it; the consultant's decisions and recommendations are rarely questioned. Under these circumstances, it's not at all unexpected that this client has a passive stance in consultation, awaiting everything from the consultant. The client even abhors the idea of the organization having to learn about all the principles involved in healing and is very convinced the problem is a one-time occurrence. This is why this type of client is not very inclined to prophylactic activities and to learning what went wrong before.

This outlook has a strong "metaphysical" component, which underlines the fact that the organization functions in an environment which is by definition chaotic, subtle, undetermined, difficult to understand and impossible to control without the existence of someone initiated, the bearer of arcane knowledge.

It's also puzzling that this style, expected to be devoted to the organization as organism, has a very strong "engineering" component, which focuses on the fact that the organization is a complex system made of several sub-interdependent systems. In this context any force vector applied in any point of the system induces modifications in all its sub-assemblies. Therefore all the "wheels" must function exactly in order for the whole machinery to work properly. Scientific (not necessary arcane, but surely complicated) knowledge is needed in order to make this work.

This preferred style has been observed as a pattern in clients with no formal education in management science, as well as in businesses that are rather more resource-driven than knowledge-driven.

Further Analysis

Even though metaphorical constructions of the consultant may be identified in many shapes and hues, not all of them are valid for large enough groups of people. The 14 metaphors identified in this study are no doubt operant, as the preliminary interviews prove. But Q analysis was only able to identify four chunks of subjectivity.

Table 5. The Doctor. Statements with strongest and weakest agreement

Statement	Factor Score
When in need of consultancy, my organization is like the human body with fever and diseased.	5
The ideal consultant prescribes the medicine.	4
When in need of consultancy, my organization is like a sinner going to the priest and expecting salvation from a higher will.	4
The ideal consultant diagnoses the disease.	4
Usually, I see my organization like a well structured and controlled mechanical system, with clear laws and procedures, where every wheel has to turn the right way.	3
Final point of the consultation is a healthy and symptom-free organization	3
The ideal consultant has knowledge about diseases and their treatment.	3
The consultant spends some time in the organization, but not as much and not during the most problematic of times. He coaches the players, but does not play himself, he makes suggestions before and after game, but not during.	-3
Final point of the consultation is a shiny façade, an attractive image	-3
When in need of consultancy, my organization is like a pop star going to the stylist.	-3
The ideal consultant trains the army for war.	-4
The ideal consultant does nothing - the organization actually does everything.	-4
When in need of consultancy, my organization is like a pupil in need of knowledge.	-4
Final point of the consultation is new knowledge for the organization and its members.	-5

Thus, we were interested to see just how our 14 metaphors grouped in the four areas of subjective construction. This presents a difficulty from a methodological point of view, as the metaphors in themselves are not analyzable entities, but are expressed to a smaller or a larger degree in individual opinions. A shortcut to the solution is an approximation, based on the loadings of those interviewees who were identified during the interviews as very representative, very "typical" for every one of the 14 metaphors.

Table 6 presents factor loadings for 14 individuals, each of whom most closely adhered to the core descriptions of each metaphor. (See Appendix A for profiles of these individuals.) This exercise reveals certain convergences. For example, Factor 1 has high components of the metaphors of teacher (.93), coach / trainer (.70), guide (.51), priest/cleric (.46) and, to some lesser extent, architect (.37). Factor 2 sums up images of police officer / detective (.42), firefighter (.53) and general (.86). Factor 3 gathers the representation of designer (.88) and, to a lesser extent, firefighter (.49). Factor 4 includes

the images of doctor (.96), mechanic/engineer (.55), priest/cleric (.61) and farmer (.57).

Table 6. Grouping of the 14 metaphors on the 4 factors

		Factor 1 Teacher	Factor 2 Commander	Factor 3 Stylist	Factor 4 Doctor
1	doctor	0.21	-0.08	0.14	0.96
2	police officer / detective	0.11	0.42	-0.28	0.35
3	psychologist	0.14	-0.29	0.31	0.22
4	astrologist	0.16	-0.10	-0.16	0.41
5	teacher	0.93	0.20	0.13	0.21
6	firefighter	-0.23	0.53	0.49	0.31
7	general	-0.45	0.86	-0.32	0.17
8	mechanic / engineer	0.38	-0.36	-0.24	0.55
9	priest / cleric	0.46	-0.22	0.26	0.61
10	farmer	0.44	0.08	-0.35	0.57
11	designer / stylist	0.24	-0.36	0.88	0.19
12	coach / trainer	0.70	0.39	-0.49	0.22
13	guide	0.51	-0.12	-0.39	0.35
14	architect	0.37	-0.25	0.29	0.13

Some of the identified 14 metaphors are really operant pieces of subjectivity. They are clearly represented with high loadings in one or more of the four factors, like doctor (.96 on Factor 4), teacher (.93 on Factor 1), general (.86 on Factor 3), priest/cleric (.61 on Factor 4), designer/stylist (.88 on Factor 3), etc. Some others are less clear, like the image of the consultant as architect, with its highest loading of only .37, on Factor 1, or the image of the consultant as astrologist, with its highest loading of .41 on Factor 4.

Practical Use

Q methodology is a very efficient tool in successfully applying metaphors to organizational studies, mandated as such by its fundamental focus on subjective constructions.

Metaphors may yet become a common language of HR professionals, a new Esperanto. At the least, metaphors should be regarded as extremely useful tools for all the professionals involved with human capital issues at the organizational level, but especially for the organizational consultants as they strive for smooth interaction with their clients.

Both experience and professional literature show that one of the most important characteristics in a consulting relationship, if not the most important one, is the quality of interpersonal relationships established between client and consultant. It's not as much a matter of friendship as a matter of resonance with something usually named as "style." At least part of

the variance of this concept should be understood as a matching between the role of the consultant and the expectations the client has towards this role, prior to the actual interaction. A lack of fit could generate a poor relationship, characterized by lack of trust, with the client feeling that the consultant does not do what he or she "should," questioning every step taken by the consultant. What results from this kind of consultation is rarely effective and could even lead to a premature interruption of the contract.

A good fit between consultant behavior and client expectations will probably lead to a good relationship. We feel that the client evaluates the consultant not only based on technical aspects of his/her job; indeed sometimes these technical aspects are too complicated or out-of-range for the client to understand and thus to evaluate. But the client evaluates every consultant, from the first interaction, unconsciously scanning the way he or she acts. This evaluation is done according to a personal mental model and to what is seen by every client as being a legitimate behavior of the ideal consultant.

Of course consultants have consulting styles. It would be too much to ask from a consultant who strongly believes in a nondirective approach to adopt an authoritarian approach only because this is expected by the client. The consultant would also not have the necessary skills and experience for working in this frame. Based only on such blind responsiveness to client expectation, the consultation process has a high probability of failure. What we suggest is that a good knowledge of the client's expectations and mental constructions regarding the consulting process provide important information for the consultant to adopt those modifications in his or her own personal style that are possible to be adopted, based on personal experience, principles and formation.

Conclusions

As noted, metaphors have been previously used in organizational studies, with some success but with rare practical implications others than meditative ones. The current study suggests that current literature on this topic could be misleading, because the most usual metaphors—the organization as "organism," "mechanism," "army," "sports-team," etc.—are not active around-the-clock and in every situation, even for those who consciously and declaratively adhere to them. Instead, they become modified in different situations and interact during the consulting process in a peculiar construction, one that does not resemble exactly any of the input metaphors. This means that, as a whole, they are never recognizable in their pure form and might as such be easily treated as "ideal types."

The current study suggests that the metaphors of Teacher, Commander, Stylist and Doctor might be the ones with best-structured empirical foundation. Of course, generalizability of these findings is still small. Supplementary research is needed first and foremost because the current findings may be artifacts of the current state of organizational consultancy in

Romania, still heavily marked by the developing nature of the country's economy.

The current study also suggests that there may be different metaphors active for individuals when describing their organization in a general manner, when describing an organizational crisis, when describing their need in consultancy, when describing the outcome of the consulting process, etc. We feel that there is still much room for research in this matter, with the potential for conclusions to contradict current common expectations.

The practical impact of the present study is twofold. At a more general level, it suggests the need for every consultant to adapt to the conceptual frame, to the subjective construction of the client and of the client organization when doing organizational consultancy. This could radically improve the interaction between consultant and client and could boost the consulting relationship. At a more specific level, it gives the consultant four general metaphorical frames of construction which could be identified within the client organization.

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Appendix A

Fourteen Professional Metaphors Described

1. *The consultant as DOCTOR*

The individual who asks for the consultancy sees his or her organization as a sick organism which the consultant has to cure. The client does not have the knowledge and tools to solve the problem directly, so he or she asks for the specialist's help, whose competence and superior experience he or she unconditionally recognizes. The doctor intervenes in the organization only when symptoms of sickness are exhibited, bringing into the organization mainly knowledge about possible diseases. In principle it's enough to ask "where does it hurt" in order to evaluate the factual situation and make a diagnosis. In this way, the participation of organizational structures in the consulting process is minimal. The management only has to accept and to exactly follow the prescribed treatment. The doctor comes into the organization, establishes the diagnosis, prescribes the treatment and walks away. It is, however, possible for the doctor to pay a later visit, to follow up on the patient's evolution and to check if the treatments were correctly administrated. The endpoint of the whole process is to restore or to maintain an important attribute of the organizational life. Sometimes this end is

functional-specific but most of the time it is conceptualized in a very general manner as “the health of the organization.”

From all the interviewed persons, the most representative for this point of view was Adrian. Adrian is the 46-year old HR manager of a multinational company active in the bottling of soft drinks. He has been working for the company for 8 years and had been hired directly for the position he now occupies. The company was just emerging then and he was recommended for the job rather by his potential than by his experience, because he never had any formal training in the HR field. As an engineer, and because of his acknowledged lack of technical understanding in the field (aside from the strategic management part, which he does with proficiency), he trusts his consultants completely and adheres to the consultant-as-doctor metaphor.

2. The consultant as POLICE OFFICER

The organization is an institution which is governed by strict norms, and observing these norms is vital. The organization is extremely dependent on the legal frame in which it functions. The procedures and rules are the essence of a continuous and correct workflow. Identifying the individuals who are guilty of transgressions from the norm is the consultant's purpose. The policeman-consultant is thus the person who intervenes when the law is broken, with the objective to identify the guilty ones, to find out the moment when the trouble happened, as well as to document circumstances and the cause for that particular event. The consultant has extensive knowledge about the ways in which one could steal, how one could hide mistakes, how one could cover ineffectiveness. In addition, the consultant knows about investigative and interrogative techniques, and is familiar with the internal rules and procedures as well as with the external legal system. Sometimes the consultant remains longer in the organization after identifying the crime in order to assist the infliction of punishment or retribution on the guilty ones. Sometimes the consultant will also stay in order to set up the new procedures. The consultant as a police officer is a model which is mainly used in consulting related to accident prevention or for other similar legally anchored situations.

From all the interviewed persons, the most representative for this point of view was Marcel. Marcel is the 50-year old HR manager of a privately owned construction entrepreneur, one of the biggest in the country. He has been working for his current employer for the last 20 years and has climbed the hierarchical ladder from a simple construction engineer to his current position. He is overly concerned with safety regulations, especially considering the fact that the company had a sad history of work accidents and that his main objective as HR manager has been the limitation of these accidents. He needs consultants who investigate these accidents and the events that made them possible, as well as consultants who are able to design ergonomic safety regulations, which are going to be followed by his workers.

3. The consultant as PSYCHOLOGIST

The organization where the psychologist intervenes is compared to a neurotic human mind. This model seems also to be used when no neurotic symptoms are yet evident, but when the organization needs more self-esteem or a drive for the own development. The organization has potential, but it is not confident enough in its own forces, it does not have the predicted performances because it does not capitalize on its strengths, etc. Symptoms are usually not related to physical problems, to diseases that may justify calling in the doctor, but are related to strange or unexpected behaviors under an apparently perfect physical health. The psychologist has a significant role in terms of experience in such “mental” problems. But, of course, the most important thing is that the organization wishes to change and the psychologist only helps to internalize this problem. The consultant doesn’t prescribe, like the doctor, doesn’t make interventions (operations). Instead this consultant mediates and facilitates to help the organization reach a superior level of articulation, according to its interests, representations, possibilities and will.

Among the interviewed persons, the most representative for this point of view was Elena. Elena is the 38-year old owner of a stationery distribution company. She is the founder of the business, which has grown from 3 to 450 people in only 6 years. Strong-willed and with the vision of an entrepreneur, but with virtually no knowledge of modern management systems, Elena now appears oblivious to high rates of deviant behaviors among her workers. When made aware of this reality, she does not enforce stronger punishments, but reverts to an approach typical for her nurturing, warm and affectionate nature: she asks herself not how she would change the environment of her company, but how her co-workers would like it to change.

4. The consultant as ASTROLOGIST/ACTUARY

The organization where an astrologist/actuary intervenes is an entity evolving in a very tumultuous and dynamic environment. The organization has to anticipate changes in the environment in order to exhibit a proactive behavior on the market. At the same time, the space where the organization gravitates is a vaguely shaped one, without the certainty of rules. The organization needs from the consultant a map, a prediction of the future, an analysis of the environment in which it functions. The consultant brings along statistical, mathematical (or more arcane, possibly magical) knowledge of prediction, together with experience in that field, flair and empathy. Some of these consultants may also come with an equivalent of the “crystal globe,” the “horoscope” or some other esoteric method for reading the future. At first, the consultant collects the necessary data for the analysis and then arranges it and presents the results. The consultant’s predictions are not questioned, but taken for granted, as they are usually surrounded by hubris.

The most representative interviewee for this point of view was Mihaela. Mihaela is the 33-year old managing partner of a local advertising and PR

agency. This market has proven to be a turbulent and dangerous one, especially for small local companies, because all the larger international advertising companies are expanding rapidly, claiming their smaller-agency clients and thus seriously endangering their business. In this turbulent medium, the most important need is the need for information about other expected or possible moves on the market. This need, together with Mihaela's natural low tolerance for uncertainty, suggests a consultancy approach where the consultant is seen as initiate and owner of a superior wisdom.

5. The consultant as TEACHER

The organization where the teacher-consultant is called to act is an entity which is continuously learning and which needs to be constantly evaluated. The efficiency of the organization is seen as possible only when the organization has all the possible knowledge in order to face the challenges from the environment. The organization is preoccupied with evolution, and the essence of evolution is assimilation of knowledge through training. The ideal consultant must track down the needs for training and nourish them. The consultant may intervene at some definite moment in time, usually when the knowledge of employees does not meet with technological or environmental requirements. The consultant may be permanently employed in those situations when the organization focuses on continuous learning. The consultant brings theoretical knowledge into the organization. The time spent by the teacher in the organization will be short or long according to the objectives of the training and on the ability of the students to absorb the knowledge. When faced with negative results, the teacher will stay longer and will sometimes apply punishments. The teacher-student relationship is usually intense. The consultant trains others, holds lectures, assigns homework, evaluates, gives grades and punishes those who have been too lazy or those who haven't met requirements.

The most representative interviewee for this point of view was Dan. Dan is the 39-year old HR and communication manager of a retail distribution company, specialized in direct sales. Dan strongly believes that the performance of his sales team is directly connected to their knowledge and that, subsequently, every drop in performance is caused by them not being up-to-date with evolutions in know-how. He sees organizational development as closely related to individual developments and the last as closely related to know-how. Thus, he envisions training as being the cure to every organizational or group illness and reverts to this cure as often as possible.

6. The consultant as FIREFIGHTER

The organization calling for the firefighter is like a building on fire. The consultant intervenes in full crisis, when the catastrophe has already happened and, therefore, must use all possible resources to fix this incident. Most of the time, the consultant is in the forefront, fighting the flames, and

risking his “life,” meaning his or her reputation and career. Those affected will follow the firefighter’s lead and will give full credit for solving the crisis, as the consultant is the only person who knows what must be done. The firefighter’s entrance in the organization is tumultuous, as strong intervention is the only point. Crisis over, this consultant packs up, often leaving behind a devastated territory. Even though the organization has overcome the crisis, they may have a hard time repairing what the consultant leaves behind. Most of the time repairing the damage is not the firefighter’s responsibility.

The most representative interviewee for this point of view was Alexandru. Alexandru is the 51-year old general manager of a local meat producer who has built up his business from nothing. He had a serious HR crisis six months ago, when, following a long history of underpayment and grievances, a significant part of his workforce left the company in order to enlist with an international competitor who had just opened up a factory in the region where Alexandru’s company is also active. All he wanted from his consultant was to solve the problem, never mind the rubble left behind.

7. The consultant as ARMY GENERAL

The organization is an army in need of a leader, of a strategic mind with a vision and a will, in order to fight its battles and win its wars in the market. The general is called into the organization in cases of serious changes in direction and when it needs a strong hand for guidance; or when it goes to war, in preparation of a battle or after the last battle has been lost. As a general, this consultant establishes and coordinates the strategies, the fighting tactics and the assembly of troops. The consultant may come alone into the organization, or be accompanied by staff. In this way, the consultant brings all the knowledge from the wars and battles that have been fought before into the organization, and draws on techniques used in previous battles. When the organization engages into a long war, the strategist may spend a long time in the organization.

The most interesting point of view for this metaphor was Robert. Robert is 45 years old and is one of the three owners of a national retail store chain, specializing in marketing consumer goods. Robert is already sick and tired of the buildup of the business, as he has been doing constant battle for over 14 years now. His decision (and that of his partners), after the last large crisis, was to pull out of the management of the business and to hire a management team in their stead. Subsequently, he was in search of a good consultant with experience in the market, willing and able to take up the leadership of this management team, for a time span of up to 18 months.

8. The consultant as MECHANIC/ENGINEER

The engineer is the person who intervenes in those organizations which are seen as mechanical entities, which, in order to function and achieve performances, need to have all the functional components working together perfectly. The engineer intervenes when a component does not function, but

also when only one little wheel is broken and affects others. The vision about the organization states that it may be repaired and made functional anytime it is broken, however the damage is done. The structure of the organization and the interactions are most of the time considered in a very formal manner, without regard to long-range influences, interactions between subsystems etc. The mechanic will address directly the broken chain, but won't need to disturb the rest of the organization, which is ignored. The mechanic/engineer is called upon when one part or component or system does not function to the established parameters, when there is a wish to design or redesign a component or in order to insure the maintenance of elements. The engineer is familiar with the plans of the machinery, has the knowledge to assure repair and maintenance, and has the right substances to "oil" the wheels so that they function properly. After this consultant's intervention, the machinery works according to standards, with few and short interruptions.

The consultant as mechanic or maintenance engineer is a rather common one. One of the most interesting interviewees who adhered to this image of the consultant was Maria. Maria is the 38-years old human resources manager of a big cement producer in Romania, owning four large factories across the whole country. Maria looks upon HR consultants in a very technical way and employs their help on a regular basis. Every evolution, every development, every new system and every reengineering of an old one is discussed in a consultancy. Also, she runs a yearly organizational diagnosis and assessment, with the objective of doing maintenance work in her HR systems and procedures.

9. The consultant as PRIEST/CLERIC

The organization needs a priest-consultant when its accent is set on seeking the "right" path and on doing the "correct" thing in a "virtuous" way of achieving its goals. It needs only the supervision of a superior authority, whose opinion is of course supreme. The vision about the organization is a humanistic one and relates most often to issues of corporate responsibility. The consultant's authority is acknowledged without raising rational or argumentative problems, because the consultant has superior and relevant knowledge. The consultant is a guru, spending little time in the organization. This consultant may not come into the organization. Instead the client visits from time to time for doses of wisdom and guidance. The consultancy is a continuous process because the relationship between the organization and the consultant becomes quickly a relationship of dependence.

The most interesting of these opinions was the one expressed by Daniela. Daniela is the 28-year old HR manager of a factory active in the textile industry. Daniela is new to her job and her job is entirely new in the company. Daniela is very concerned about fairness towards of the employees. She is ready to make more efforts than absolutely necessary (including financial ones) in order to ensure the correctness of her employment practices. The role of the consultant is exactly this: to ensure

that procedures, practices and strategies are correct and fair for all. Also, Daniela is not very experienced in the HR field and lives under the impression that there is a “correct” way of implementing a certain change. What she asks from a consultant is knowledge of this “correct” or “optimal” way, knowledge that she almost never questions.

10. The consultant as FARMER

The farmer acts in an organization that feels about itself and acts like a plantation with no chance to produce a crop unless ploughed, planted, watered, cared for, etc. The farmer-consultant intervenes when some vital activities have not been planned and, therefore, harvest is poor or lacking altogether. The farmer brings the necessary tools for planting and harvesting, as well as farming knowledge and the ability to anticipate the next phase of the process and to plan the “rotation of crops.” Sometimes this consultant also possesses knowledge about news in the domain of fertilizers used for the stimulation of certain crops. Often, the farmer stays in the organization at least for a complete cycle of production in order to cover all the steps of the cycle.

From all the interviewed persons, the most representative for this point of view was Ioana. Ioana is the 31-year old marketing and sales manager of a salty snack producer. Ioana focuses in her strategy not only outwards, but also inwards, on new product development and on the development of her team. This is especially important because the company has no human resources manager. The company was just in the middle of a consulting project at the time of the interview and what Ioana asked from the consultant was for her own tools (measurement tools, performance management tools, job analysis tools) and a good knowledge of when certain activities should be done: “when we should hire,” “when we should train,” “when do the performance evaluation,” etc.

11. The consultant as DESIGNER/STYLIST

The designer-consultant intervenes in an environment with high public exposure, in an organization which needs to seem attractive. The organization is full-grown and functional, it only needs image-related adjustments, or needs to be in line with the fashion. The designer/stylist intervenes only when the exterior image is not what it should. This consultant works through his or her own knowledge about how to manage the looks of the company and does not address symptoms or strategy. Any collaboration with the company is punctual, usually short-lived and stops after meeting set objectives.

From all the interviewed persons, the most representative for this point of view was Mircea. Mircea is the 28-year old human resources manager of a public relations agency. Mircea has a keen interest in technological gimmicks and regards his activity in the human resources area as technology. Not the least unusual for the PR field, he is focused towards having very flashy and well-designed policies, systems, procedures. The last consultancy

project has focused on implementing a performance evaluation procedure, and the whole focus was on how well the behaviorally anchored rating scales have been crafted. Mircea takes pride in the HR systems designed under his supervision and often goes to conferences where he presents “what’s new” in his company. Under these circumstances, the shape and style of his systems is of importance – even more so than their real use.

12. The consultant as COACH

The organization is like a sports team in which every person should know very well his/her role and “the whole” works only because of the collaboration between all the members. Consultancy is necessary when the organization fails to reach the standards of performance. The consultant must know all about motivational tactics, as well as be able to “physically” train the team in order to bring it back on the field in a competitive manner. The coach intervenes when the players lose some of their abilities but, also, when in need of tactical or strategic adjustment according to news in the field. The coach is characterized by charisma, and has some psychological knowledge about motivational levers. Most of all, the coach was once a player and knows all about the game.

From all the interviewed persons, the most representative for this point of view was Florin. Florin is 49 years old and is member of the board for an investors’ fund which had just made a new acquisition on the pharmaceutical market. The new factory is a remainder of the communist age, with a huge market potential and good technology, but with a terrifying climate and attitude among the employees. Florin is sure that these people, in the most part great specialists, are trainable. The consultant he hired had to have not only HR knowledge but also market knowledge. The objective of the consultancy is formulated in a general manner, as “improvement of performance.” Aside from this, the consultant, in collaboration with the management team, is free to implement any innovation, as long as Florin gets his results.

13. The consultant as TRAVELING GUIDE

The organization is at the beginning of a journey or at a new start. It needs guidance, orientation. The consultant is, therefore, the most appropriate person to indicate traveling destinations, the most appropriate route etc. The consultant provides a map and description of the destination, and describes the routes one should take. The guide travels along beside the organization all the way and helps it to overcome the difficult parts of the road, using previous experience in such situations and due to the fact that the road has already been taken with other travelers.

The most interesting of these opinions was the one expressed by Luca. Luca is the associate and managing partner of a newly founded credit company. The company only started one year ago with six employees, but is seriously growing, especially because of its expanding sales force, now counting 80 members. Luca believes “in the thrill of the development” and

not “in the crooning of the target” and as such has sought out a consultant able to guide him through all the steps of building up a human resources function in his company. Luca is especially thrilled by the fact that by being part of this development he also develops himself. He is eager to experiment and learn new skills in the HR area and would not let an occasion pass to ask his consultant “why” something should be done one way and not the other.

14. The consultant as ARCHITECT

The organization is a building, with foundation, structural strength, walls, windows, façade, working rooms etc. It is a building which needs consolidation from time to time, certain fissured areas demand periodical reconstruction or painting. This type of consultant acts most often on the “outside” but also sometimes on the inside of the organization. The architect’s purpose is to align newly constructed parts with the rest of the building, and to cement the whole complex together. This consultant intervenes in the organization when called in, sure about his or her good taste and flair and, also, about calculations regarding structural resistance. While this consultant’s decisions or solutions may sometimes be questionable regarding flair and aesthetics, they never are regarding structural strength. Sometimes the consulting process is done as a one-time-deal, without much regard for future interventions.

The most interesting opinion expressed by an interviewee in this metaphor was that of Mariana. Mariana is the 38-year old partner in a large attorney company. She is mainly interested in the functionality of her HR function, focusing on important pillars: selection, training, motivational procedures etc. She seeks a consultant able to build up these pillars to a sound position and able to assort them well with the rest of the organization and with the past practices. Also, she wants her consultant to be able to make a convincing design for new jobs, new work groups and new departments.

Appendix B

Q Sample with Factor Z-scores

Usually, I see my organization like:

		F1	F2	F3	F4
1	a well structured and controlled mechanical system, with clear laws and procedures, where every wheel has to turn the right way.	-0.17	0.12	0.21	1.42
2	a farm, functioning because of the farmers.	-0.80	-0.42	0.34	0.13
3	a living, growing organism, continuously developing and adapting.	0.82	-0.15	-0.15	0.66
4	a building, with solid architecture and a clear technical plan.	0.23	1.79	-0.62	0.39

		<i>F1</i>	<i>F2</i>	<i>F3</i>	<i>F4</i>
5	a complex system, impossible to be completely known except by initiates.	-1.53	-0.67	-0.47	0.86
6	a traveler, journeying towards his destination.	-0.19	-1.88	-0.04	0.15
7	a team in a sport.	1.62	0.46	-0.46	0.43

When in need of consultancy, my organization is like:

		<i>F1</i>	<i>F2</i>	<i>F3</i>	<i>F4</i>
8	the human body with fever and diseased.	0.53	0.23	-0.08	1.86
9	a legal system which has just been broken.	-0.50	2.08	-0.49	0.79
10	a deranged personality, in need of therapy.	-0.09	-1.66	-0.69	0.51
11	a man asking the oracle what the future may bring.	-0.64	-1.85	-0.43	0.47
12	a pupil in need of knowledge.	1.30	0.12	-1.10	-1.74
13	a building on fire.	0.16	0.14	-0.41	0.31
14	an army in need of a vision and guidance.	-0.33	0.64	-1.51	0.61
15	a machinery in need of maintenance and engineering.	-0.25	0.02	-0.19	0.31
16	a sinner going to the priest and expecting salvation from a higher will.	-0.20	-0.25	0.58	1.62
17	a farming ground in need of better plants or farming technology	0.54	0.01	0.24	0.23
18	a pop star going to the stylist.	-0.42	-0.54	1.79	-1.06
19	a player, in need of training.	1.09	0.57	0.13	-0.53
20	a lost traveler in need of a guide.	-0.15	-2.10	-0.22	-0.46
21	a building in need of consolidation.	-0.19	0.08	-0.61	-0.65

The ideal consultant:

		<i>F1</i>	<i>F2</i>	<i>F3</i>	<i>F4</i>
22	diagnoses the disease.	1.53	0.48	-0.90	1.54
23	prescribes the medicine.	-0.28	-0.33	0.15	1.67
24	finds the guilty ones, the lawbreakers.	-0.49	1.88	-0.32	-0.41
25	identifies breaches and makes the system more secure for the future.	0.06	1.74	-0.18	-0.12
26	does nothing - the organization actually does everything.	-0.07	-1.58	-0.55	-1.56
27	makes initiates' predictions about the future.	-0.14	0.12	-0.42	-0.46
28	transfers knowledge to the organization.	2.02	0.00	-1.03	-0.53

		<i>F1</i>	<i>F2</i>	<i>F3</i>	<i>F4</i>
29	fights the flames engulfing the organization, with little or no regard for wreckage he may produce.	-1.08	0.16	0.20	-0.20
30	trains the army for war.	0.26	1.48	0.09	-1.18
31	changes what is broken, fixes the problems.	-0.09	0.27	1.32	-0.26
32	suggests new ways of farming the field, new seeds etc.	1.37	0.37	0.51	-0.76
33	acts like a stylist, suggesting a new haircut or new clothes; has mainly an artistic role.	-1.45	-0.28	1.66	0.10
34	suggests the destination and the best road to that destination.	-0.20	0.17	-0.50	0.69

The ideal consultant has:

		<i>F1</i>	<i>F2</i>	<i>F3</i>	<i>F4</i>
35	knowledge about diseases and their treatment.	0.43	-0.39	-0.25	1.09
36	legal knowledge and experience as a detective.	-0.68	1.31	-0.92	-0.47
37	facilitating skills.	0.33	-1.47	-0.13	-0.36
38	arcane and initiates' knowledge.	0.63	0.43	-0.72	0.38
39	experience in fighting the fire, as well as will to risk own reputation.	0.53	0.30	-0.07	-0.62
40	experience from other battles, strategic knowledge of terrain (market) and adversaries (competition).	0.28	0.75	1.63	-0.38
41	training skills, knows how to sustain the vision and to make everyone try harder.	0.91	0.65	0.16	0.23
42	knowledge about the best "destinations" and maybe of the ways to reach them.	-0.79	-0.30	-0.17	-0.08

Time spent by consultant in organization:

		<i>F1</i>	<i>F2</i>	<i>F3</i>	<i>F4</i>
43	The consultant should diagnoses the disease, prescribe the medicine, then go away. Maybe he should schedule a follow-up to check on patient.	-0.27	-0.45	1.22	0.59
44	The consultant should spend quite some time in the organization. He documents, questions, interrogates, stays until sanction is applied.	-0.74	1.26	-0.61	0.09
45	The consultant stays a lot in the organization, and is a moral support for everyone.	-0.17	0.14	-0.06	-0.69

		<i>F1</i>	<i>F2</i>	<i>F3</i>	<i>F4</i>
46	The consultant stays as long the crisis lasts and fights in the forefront, then goes away – he rarely or never cares what happens after this.	0.71	0.42	0.13	-0.57
47	The consultant spends all the possible time in the organization – he fights both with the soldiers and with the generals, from start to finish.	-0.24	0.97	0.21	-0.44
48	The consultant does not spend much time with organization. He does not need it, because he only suggests best technical decision, without consultation.	-0.80	-0.12	0.31	0.62
49	The consultant spends some time in the organization, but not as much and not during the most problematic of times. He coaches the players, but does not play himself, he makes suggestions before and after game, but not during.	0.28	-2.13	-0.06	-0.76
50	The consultant spends all his time with the organization until the objective is reached – he leads the organization to its destination, then cashes in and goes away.	-0.18	0.56	1.02	0.30

Final point of the consultation is:

		<i>F1</i>	<i>F2</i>	<i>F3</i>	<i>F4</i>
51	a healthy and symptom-free organization	0.46	0.02	0.25	1.27
52	new procedures, warding against repetition of the fault.	-0.10	0.11	0.11	0.28
53	a tension-free (non-neurotic, emotionally stable) organization.	0.08	-1.55	0.21	0.98
54	new knowledge for the organization and its members.	1.95	-0.44	0.01	-1.86
55	repairing or re-engineering of the machinery.	0.20	0.11	1.47	-0.56
56	a shiny façade, an attractive image	-1.78	-0.26	1.59	-1.01
57	victory in a very specific situation, task or confrontation.	-1.36	0.86	-0.44	-0.17

Editor’s Note: Each statement was presented to participants with its introductory text; these have been removed for ease of reading in this article.