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## **Opportunizing: A classic grounded theory study on business and management**

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### **Abstract**

*Opportunizing* emerged as the core variable of this classic GT study on business and management. Opportunizing is the recurrent main concern that businesses have to continually resolve, and it explains how companies recurrently create, identify, seize or exploit situations to maintain their growth or survival. Opportunizing is the recurrent creation and re-creation of opportunities in business. *Opportunizing* is basically what business managers do and do all the time. The problematic nature of *opportunizing* is resolved by a *core social process* of *opportunizing* and its attached sub-processes that account for change over time and for the variations of the problematic nature of its resolution.

*Opportunizing* has *five main facets*. These are *conditional befriending* (confidence building & modifying behavior), *prospecting* (e.g. information gaining), *weighing up* (information appraisal & decision-making), *moment capturing* (quick intervention for seizing strategic opportunities), and *configuration matching* (adjusting the business organization to abet the other activities of opportunizing).

On a more abstract level, opportunizing has three more organizational facets: the physically boundary-less, the value-hierarchical, and the physically bounded. The first of these called perpetual opportunizing. This emerges from the conjunction of conditional befriending and prospecting. The second facet is called triggering opportunizing. It arises from the coming together of weighing up and moment capturing. The final facet is called spasmodic opportunizing. This happens when moment capturing and configuration matching unite.

Thus, the three facets of opportunizing are sub-core variables, while the five facets of opportunizing are sub-sub-core variables.

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The five facets can also be seen as stages of the *core process of opportunizing*. Yet, they are more than stages, because *weighing up* is involved throughout.

Each of the *five facets* of opportunizing also attach to sub-processes that account for the resolving of still more tangible dimensions of opportunizing. For example, *confidence building* and *modifying behavior* are two categories of *conditional befriending*. It is not possible to create opportunities in business without *modifying people's behavior*, but this latter is impossible or difficult without *confidence building*. The model of opportunizing will assist managers in focusing on the most important and problematic. Practitioners will be able to adopt and adapt the theory according to the variation in the data that their individual contexts manifest.

### **Introduction**

The methodology used in this research is the set of “classic” GT procedures that Dr. Barney Glaser originated in the beginning of the 1960s and has maintained since (Glaser, 1978; 1992; 1998; 2001; 2003; 2005). It will be assumed that the reader is familiar with this methodology and its terminology (i.e. conceptual levels, substantive concepts and theoretical codes, types of theoretical codes such as basic social process, basic social condition, amplified causal looping, bias random walk, etc; the distinction between a basic social structural and basic social psychological process, and so forth). A few data incidences will be used as examples to illustrate some of the building blocks of the emergent theory. Literature comparisons will be delimited to just a few.

The empirical data for this research were collected from a theoretical sample of twelve small and middle-sized companies in the Faroe Islands. Most of the data were qualitative and collected by interviews with company managers, owners, board members and employees. The research was sponsored by BP Amoco Exploration LTD (Faroes). Dr. Andy Lowe was the author's methodological coach during the critical phases of the research.

### **The Core Variable of Opportunizing**

The *core variable* that sums up the most important and the most problematic for those being studied and explains most of the

variation in the data, is the concept of *opportunistizing*. It is a new English word, which has been created to capture the meaning of this particular pattern. It is derived from the English word “opportunity”. It is defined as “*the recurrent creation and re-creation of “convenient occasions” [or “convenient” situations, occurrences, moments, conditions, means, places, outcomes, circumstances, combinations, junction of circumstances] for the deliberate pursuit of competitive advantage in the business*”. *Opportunistizing* could also be explained as “*the recurrent seizing of business opportunities*” by the recurrent creation of *actual* out of *potential* business opportunities. It explains how companies recurrently create, identify, appraise, seize or exploit situations to maintain their growth or survival. It sums up and explains the main concern and its recurrent solution of those being studied. *Opportunistizing* emerged as the most clear and stable meaning behind practically all emerging behavioral patterns, also patterns that otherwise were very different. An important high level property of *opportunistizing* is “*economizing*” (i.e. applying the principle of less action or less resistance or less waste) by “*matching*” and/or “*economizing*” by “*influencing*”.

In hindsight, it appears more or less self-evident that “*opportunistizing*” or “*the recurrent seizing of business opportunities*” is a *core variable* in business. However, *opportunistizing* is very different from the “hard core” variables of all commonly accepted theories of business and management. Some readers may be familiar with most of these theories (e. g. neoclassical, game, behaviorist, principal-agent, agency, transaction cost, evolutionary, resource-based, complex systems, value-based, quality pursuit). Yet, *opportunistizing* does not undermine the validity of these other theories or views as representations of multiple realities of business. Instead, the theory of *opportunistizing* adds substance to these other views by adding some new elements. These elements are e. g. the conceptualization of the agenda of business leaders and the importance of conceptual levels when explaining behavior.

### The Main Dimensions of Opportunistizing

The theory of *opportunistizing* is best explained by first explaining the *five main dimensions of opportunistizing*: conditional befriending, prospecting, weighing up, moment capturing and configuration matching. As sub-sub-core variables, they reflect

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five main dimensions of the main concern issue of *opportunizing*, but they also attach to sub-processes that account for the resolving of still more tangible dimensions of *opportunizing*. Together with their lesser-level sub-dimensions (categories) they account for most of the variation in the behavior. The five main dimensions of opportunizing are the following:

Conditional befriending:	Creating business opportunities by confidence building & modifying people's behavior
Prospecting:	Identifying business opportunities, <i>e.g. information gaining</i>
Weighing up:	Appraising business opportunities by information appraisal & decision-making
Moment capturing:	Seizing of strategic business opportunities when quick intervention is critical for the outcome
Configuration matching:	Exploiting business opportunities by adjusting the current business organization to abet the other activities of opportunizing

These five dimensions emerged from the methodological treatment of the data in the same sequence as they have been mentioned. They were found to be exhaustive, i.e. to cover any pattern of behavior found in the data.

### **Conditional befriending**

The pattern of *conditional befriending* may be defined as offering something on conditions or net preconditions that sustains the competitive advantage of the business. Ultimately, it is about *modifying people's behavior* in such a manner that the company's survival or growth is sustained. These people, whose behavior it is important to modify by incitement or prevention, are employees, business partners, customers, suppliers, vendors and other stakeholders. However, such *behavior modification* is impossible or difficult if it is not based on the appropriate *trust*.

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Consequently, in addition to *modifying behavior*, *confidence building* (trust-building) is also a category of *conditional befriending*. Most of the data incidences that indicated *conditional befriending* were actually indicators of *confidence building*. The data indicate that *confidence building* and hence *conditional befriending* is a perpetually occurring activity in a business.

Most of micro-economics is also about modification of people's behavior, and prices have an important role in this. "Pricing" decisions are of course important for company revenue and for modifying customer behavior. However, "pricing" decisions did not emerge as problematic in the studied companies. The more or less automatic forces of supply and demand give the sufficient clues that are needed for "pricing" decisions. Consequently, the "pricing" issue did not emerge as any direct main concern issue. However, cost concern issues as well as product and service feature issues were more problematic issues, and they are related to "pricing". Conceptually, they emerged as different properties of opportunizing, e. g. "economizing", "matching" and "influencing", and their resolutions are conceptually explained by the five dimensions of opportunizing and their sub-processes.

The pattern of *conditional befriending* was very frequently indicated in the data as different varieties of "fostering relationships" - and sometimes as "neglecting or terminating relationships". In many other classic grounded theory studies of special business issues, similar "relationship concerns" have emerged: "cultivating relationships" in a study by Simmons of the milkman and his customers (1993, p. 4-31); the concepts of "keeping clients in line", "pseudo-friending", "affiliating" (a property of *confidence building*) and "obligating" (a property of *modifying behavior*) in a study of veterinarian practices by Guthrie (2000, p. 50-100); the core variable of "default remodeling of relationships" that emerged in a study by Lowe (1998) of the post-merger aftermath. In a study of re-humanizing knowledge work through fluctuating support networks (Holton et al., 2006, p. 4), the first two developmental stages of such support networks were found to be "attracting" and "engaging". These two concepts are also properties of *conditional befriending*. *Conditional befriending* is also reflected in the concept of "networking" (Gummesson, 2002).

### Prospecting

The pattern of *prospecting* may be defined as the identification of business opportunities by e.g. gaining information. *Prospecting* is made possible by *modifying people's behavior* (i.e. *conditional befriending*), but *prospecting* is also necessary for *conditional befriending*. This means that *conditional befriending* and *prospecting* are mutually dependent and each other's "spin-offs". This dependency of *conditional befriending* (confidence building & modifying behavior) also means that *prospecting* in one form or another is a perpetually occurring activity in a business.

Information gaining starts as predetermined searching that occasionally leads to genuine-original information gaining. Thus, the two categories of prospecting are *predetermined prospecting* and *genuine-original prospecting*. Serendipity is a property of the latter. A few data incidences can illustrate the concepts. Indicated or implied concepts are mentioned in brackets:

We keep a large part of our large financial assets liquid. Part of the explanation for this is that we are interested in attracting potential partners for investment. They know it. We prefer that they come to us. They bring knowledge to us. Yet, we are very discriminative. We did not go for.... [*Configuration matching abetting confidence building and modifying behavior that leads to prospecting, (predetermined prospecting possibly leading to genuine-original prospecting), weighing up.*]

Our servicing of [Name of product] has been very important in giving us contact to many businesses and to learn more about them as our potential customers for other products. They are really many. The "spin-offs" of this product has been very important in the generation of the present net worth of the company. [*Accumulated outcome of configuration matching abetting conditional befriending and prospecting (predetermined and genuine-original).*]

### Weighing up

The pattern of *weighing up* is different from the other four dimensions of opportunizing, because *weighing up* is involved in any act of opportunizing. This means that all the other four

dimensions of opportunizing are directly dependent on *weighing up*. The data also indicate that the theoretical code of *company self-identity* is in an overruling relationship to *weighing up* and all categories of *weighing up*. This identity is indicated in some unique characteristics in each company's actual behavior. It means some "path-dependency" for any company. It can be explained metaphorically as some "weights" *a priori* have been put on the "balance" – or that *a priori* some kinds of "weights" will never be put on it. This difference becomes especially noticeable for companies of similar size and within the same industry. How this preconceiving or preconditioning in *weighing up* is actually carried out is also different in different companies. It may, for example, be indicated as differences in their actual balancing or unbalancing of some paired opposite positions in their *prospecting* and *weighing up* activities, as for example the paired opposites of "immediate - distant future", "inductive - deductive", "explicit - implicit", "manifest - latent", "informal - formal".

*As mentioned, weighing up* is defined as assessments of business opportunities that take place as information appraisal and it includes decision-making. What are being *weighed up* are outcomes from *prospecting*. This means that *prospecting* leads to *weighing up*. But like the other four dimensions of opportunizing, *prospecting* is also directly dependent on *weighing up*, which indicates a straight mutual dependency between *weighing up* and *prospecting*.

A distinction can be made between the categories of *weighing up* according to the involvement of *weighing up* in the four other dimensions of *opportunizing*. This means that there are basically four categories of *weighing up*. Each of them is attached to one of the four dimensions of opportunizing. These categories are "*weighing up for match/influence in conditional befriending*", "*weighing up for relevancy in prospecting*", "*weighing up before a moment capturing*", and "*weighing up for configuration matching*". A few data examples can illustrate these four concepts:

During the final negotiations about the license, I was very afraid that they would ask about my formal education and training. I had only had 7 years in primary school. They did not ask. They liked me. They only considered me an ordinary joiner-carpenter with some uncommon

idiosyncrasies..... [*Indicated or implied concept: weighing up for match / influence in conditional befriending*]

“*Weighing up for relevancy is prospecting*” sometimes involves that the “prospector is prospecting on the prospector”. This indicates a linking to *company identity*. This kind of *weighing up* is sometimes facilitated by use of advisors. The data indicate that core foci in this kind of *weighing up* are “matching” and “influencing”. The data also indicate a better performance of companies where “*weighing up for relevance in prospecting*” spans over and/or balances and allows interaction (inter-feeding) among one or several paired opposites such as: “immediate - distant future”, “inductive - deductive”, “explicit - implicit”, “manifest - latent”, “informal - formal”. The category seems to be pivotal among the categories (lesser-level concepts) of opportunizing.

It became a disaster for them. They thought it was close to their logistics business, but what was to be stored and processed were quite different from what they were familiar with. They must have got some wrong information about the quantities and when they could be available, or in any case they have not been able to collect and process this information properly. I know the people that got them interested and maintained their interests..... [*Indicated or implied concepts: relevancy derived from “matching”, weighing up for relevancy in prospecting.*]

We had a competitor in the vicinity using the same iron fittings in a plastic product that we used in our wood product. This factory went bankrupt, and was bought by the bank. Of course, I was interested to buy. Now this bank persuaded me to buy, but on their terms.... [*Indicated or implied concept: weighing up before a moment capturing.*]

My next step was to make ready for the new production. I got advice from a consultant, but I could not use it. It would be far too expensive. I decided to rebuild the hall myself with some hired people. It got it at a fraction of what the consultant had calculated. This, of course, later became very important for my competitive advantage.... [*Some indicated or implied concepts: Configuration matching, prospecting, weighing up for configuration*]

*matching, act of configuration matching, configuration matching abetting conditional befriending.]*

### **Moment capturing**

The pattern of *moment capturing* is defined as the spasmodic seizure of strategic business opportunities where quick intervention is critical for optimal outcome. The pattern of spasmodic *moment capturing* occurs in all units and situations where quick intervention is critical for optimal outcome. As a concept of the theory of opportunizing, *moment capturing* is limited to strategic events, but not just memorable events such as mergers and acquisitions.

The data indicate that there is always a *weighing up* before a *moment capturing*. As a strategic event, a *moment capturing* has consequences for the business organization, and consequently, a *moment capturing* leads to a *configuration matching*. This also secures that any opportunity being created due to *moment capturing* subsequently reaches its full potential.

While an event of *moment capturing* is spasmodically occurring as a single point event, the concepts of moment capturing also involves a process with some stages or categories. Besides the single point event, two categories of *moment capturing* emerged. Firstly, there is a *perpetual awareness of the moment capture concept* that may affect *weighing up* predispositions.

In 1971, when I was producing on small scale, I became aware of some iron fittings that could revolutionize my production. I tried to get a license for production, but the local market was considered too small for production, and they instead gave me the sole sales agency in the area for the products with these fittings. This did not suit me particularly well. I continued to pursue a license for my own production. It took a long time and it was not easy. Finally, I got it in 1975. *[Some indicated or implied concepts: genuine-original prospecting, weighing up, perpetual awareness of moment capture concept, moment capturing.]*

Secondly, the data also indicate the significance of a *weighing up of weighing up regarding past moment captures* that also may affect *weighing up* predispositions.

He made some wrong decisions concerning investments in hardware (buying used cheaply), unaware of the speed in obsolescence nowadays. He also aimed at some wrong people in management. It became a disaster for the company.....We proceeded from that. [*Some indicated or implied concepts: moment capturing & weighing up of weighing up, company identity issues.*]

These two categories of *moment capturing* are closely related to the categories of *weighing up*. The data also indicate that these two categories, together with *company identity*, have an overruling affect on *weighing up* predispositions. This means, on the one hand, that *moment capturing* via these two categories is closely related to *weighing up*. *On the other hand, moment capturing* is also via its single point event closely related to *configuration matching*.

### **Configuration matching**

The pattern of *configuration matching* is defined as the spasmodic adjustment or fitting of the tangible business organization to facilitate the other activities of *opportunitizing*. This also means that *configuration matching* differs from the other five dimensions of *opportunitizing* because it attaches to a *basic social structural process*. The other four facets of *opportunitizing* are attached to *basic social psychological processes*.

The accumulated outcome of *configuration matching* is the tangible structure and organization of the business, within which the other processes of *opportunitizing* are abetted. The accumulated outcome of *configuration matching* is thus a structure for the recurrent exploitation of business opportunities.

Basically, *configuration matching* is the main concern and the consecutive process of *matching* the internal organization of the business to the organizations of suppliers, customers, employees and/or strategic partners. The *social structural process* of *configuration matching* is the spasmodic adjustment of this structure by *acts of configuration matching* and by relying on *signs of matching/influencing in configuration matching*. These latter are the two categories of *configuration matching*.

### **Some Indicated Theoretical Codes**

Each of the *five dimensions* of *opportunitizing* can be

conceived as substantive concepts or main concern issues. However, they can simultaneously be conceived as theoretical codes that explain the resolving of these main concern issues.

### **Basic social processes**

*Conditional befriending* and *prospecting* together with their attached *weighing up* categories are perpetually activated in a business. The event of *moment capturing* only occurs spasmodically and the same applies for an event of *configuration matching*. It has also to be taken into account that the *accumulated outcome of configuration matching* in the form of the physical structure and tangible organization of the business upholds the other activities of opportunistizing, which operate “within” this structure. *Configuration matching* just means the adjustment of this structure to abet these other activities of opportunistizing.

This means that one of the five dimensions of opportunistizing, *configuration matching*, is attached to a *basic social structural process*. This process has three main sequential stages that form a loop, and the stages are “*act of configuration matching*”, “*signs of matching/influencing in configuration matching*” and “*weighing up for configuration matching*”. This loop will be explained later. *Moment capturing* can also be conceived as a distinct theoretical code or a variety of a *basic social psychological process*, and the same applies for *weighing up*.

*Conditional befriending* and *prospecting* can be conceived as two closely related *basic social psychological processes*. Each of them has three main sequential stages that also form a loop. The stages of *conditional befriending* are “*confidence building*”, “*modifying behavior*” and “*weighing up for match/influence in conditional befriending*”. The stages of *prospecting* are “*predetermined prospecting*”, “*genuine-original prospecting*” and “*weighing up for relevance in prospecting*”. These two loops will be explained later.

The five dimensions of opportunistizing can also be conceived as five stages of the *core process of opportunistizing*, and this process forms a loop. Inside this *core process* there are sub-processes as loops, or loops within a loop. The stages of the process may be sequential, but may also be simultaneous and serendipitous. Starting with *conditional befriending*, the sequence may be, but not necessarily, as follows: *conditional*

*befriending, prospecting, weighing up before moment capturing, moment capturing, configuration matching that abets conditional befriending, conditional befriending, prospecting, and so forth. A sequence may also surpass a moment capturing and be as follows: conditional befriending, prospecting, weighing up for configuration matching, configuration matching facilitating conditional befriending or prospecting, conditional befriending, prospecting, and so forth. Other sequences are, of course, also possible.*

Without being able to *modify people's behavior* effectively, no company can survive or grow. This is the dimension of *conditional befriending* that also includes the category of *confidence building*. However, the other four dimensions of *opportunizing* can be considered as equally important. They are also stages of the core process-loop, and achievements or lack of achievements in one of the dimensions will affect the other dimensions.

### **Amplified causal looping**

The theoretical code of *amplified causal looping* is also indicated in the data. Thus, as consequences continually become causes and causes continually become consequences, one sees either worsening deterioration or improving progression. The data indicate that such a looping may become triggered by *confidence building* directed towards key business partners or towards the employees of the company. However, it cannot be ruled out that *amplified causal looping* can be triggered anywhere else in the model of *opportunizing*. Efficient *confidence building* may lead to efficient *behavior modification*, which in turn leads to efficient *prospecting*, which leads to efficient *weighing up*, which leads to efficient *moment captures*, (including bolstering of *company identity*), which leads to efficient *configuration matching*, which then leads to efficient *conditional befriending*, which leads to efficient *prospecting*, and so forth. If the looping is triggered by “negative” *confidence building*, the outcome may be worsening deterioration instead of improving progression. Here are some illustrative data incidences (indicated or implied concepts in brackets):

The founder of this trading and fishing company started his business by buying a fishing ship [moment capturing] in partnership [*“saming” in confidence building*] with a

captain with a very good fishing and management record [*“distinguishing” in confidence building that affects modifying behavior that affects prospecting & weighing up*], and the captain was closely related to the founder [*“saming” in confidence building*]. The founder’s wife had good insight into business and was his closest advisor [*“saming” and “distinguishing” in confidence building that affects modifying behavior that affects prospecting & weighing up*]. The ship was chosen selectively [prospecting & weighing up] and was better suited and equipped than similar ships [*configuration matching*]. The profits were high, also because good crews are attracted to good fishing captains and good ships [configuration matching that affects conditional befriending (*confidence building & modifying behavior*)]. He repeatedly did the same again in partnerships with different other captains with good fishing and management records and became the owner or co-owner of a large fleet. [*Amplified causal looping: efficiency in conditional befriending, prospecting, weighing up, moment capturing and configuration matching*]. He also diversified successfully.....

### **The PDCA-cycle as a basic social process**

Before the basic social processes of configuration matching, conditional befriending and prospecting are explained, it may be helpful to explain a theoretical code that connects their respective categories. This is the PDCA-cycle “or Plan-Do-Check-Act” cycle. It is not among the theoretical codes that are listed by Glaser (Glaser 1978, pp. 73-82; Glaser 1998, pp.170-175; Glaser 2005, pp. 7-30). The PDCA-cycle has been emphasized in quality management activities where people are confronted with successive data outcomes, and in investigating, learning, continuous improvement, or innovation activities. Its four stages have been explained as follows by Deming (1993, p. 135): “PLAN: Plan a change or test, aimed at improvement. DO: Carry out the change or test (preferable on a small scale). CHECK: Study the results. What did we learn? What went wrong? ACT: Adopt the change, or abandon it, or run through the cycle again, i.e. return to PLAN.” The importance of being consciously aware of all the stages of this loop has been stressed, as well as the importance of not skipping lightly over any of the stages, and especially not the

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“ACT” and “PLAN” stage. Even though it may appear to be natural, effortless and innate to follow the steps of the PDCA-loop, it can be just as natural, effortless and innate to not be consciously aware of the PDCA-cycle or its stages, or to put less or different emphasis on some of its stages. This innateness therefore justifies its conception as a theoretical code, and as a theoretical code it also fulfils the requirement of being a basic social process (Glaser, 1978, pp.100-102).

The use of the PDCA-cycle is also a question about using induction, deduction or inductive-deductive balance for increasing the efficiency of a task. Without some minimum of both, no activity is possible, yet the balance between them may be very different in different contexts. This balancing may be different for different people, and it may be dependent on company culture or identity. One manager relies on an MBA for logical deductions regarding expansion plans, using the three dimensions of “old or new customers”, “new or existing products/tasks” and “new or existing employees”. In another company in the same industry, the manager takes a very different perspective and puts more emphasis on induction:

As a manager, I always start collecting information from where I am positioned at the moment. This means, based on the previous information that I have. And each time I gain more information, I will combine it with what I know so far for obtaining the best use of it for my next decision. This allows me to achieve a more advanced position each time. I learned this in working with practical technology (error-testing), and I use it in my management of people as well as in partnerships and relationships to customers.

A more definite interpretation of the stages of the cycle with regard to induction and deduction is as follows: The DO stage of the PDCA-cycle seems to be entirely neutral regarding induction or deduction. It is just an execution stage subsequent to the PLAN stage. The CHECK stage of the PDCA-cycle is a stage of immediate prospecting and seems to give unlimited room for both deductive and inductive reasoning. Hence, it can also be conceived as neutral with regard to induction and deduction. The ACT stage of the PDCA-cycle may be the major stage of induction. This is the stage where decision is made regarding “a test’s” consequences for a “hypothesis” or for a “theory” that has been deduced a priori. This is a stage where deductive reasoning

coincides with inductive reasoning and where even deductive mindsets in a sense become inductive. Thus, in a sense, use of induction is forced into this stage, and it is also a stage of weighing up. The PLAN stage of the PDCA-cycle may be the major stage of deduction. It is positioned before the DO stage, and PLAN in anticipation of DO without some logical deduction for prediction regarding possible outcomes seems less likely at this stage. Thus, in a sense, deduction is forced into this stage, and it is also a stage of weighing up. This means that the ACT & PLAN stages are also stages of weighing up. This means that the PDCA-cycle also can be conceived as a three main-stage cycle of DO, CHECK and WEIGHING UP.

### Three Types of Opportunizing

The close connectedness between the perpetual occurring processes of *conditional befriending* and *prospecting* has been explained. Similarly, the close connections between the categories of *weighing up* and the non-spasmodic categories that attach to the spasmodic event of a *moment capturing* have been explained. Also, the close connection between spasmodic event of a *configuration matching* and the most immediate consequences of a spasmodic event of a *moment capturing* has been explained.

These connections indicate that on a higher conceptual level (i.e. sub-core level) *opportunizing* may have three more organizational dimensions. The first of these emerges from the conjunction of the perpetually occurring processes of *conditional befriending* and *prospecting*. It may be called *perpetual opportunizing*. It also signifies the *physically boundary-less* organizational facet of opportunizing, as well as basic social psychological processing.

The second of these arises from the coming together of *company identity* (a theoretical code), the categories of *weighing up*, and the non-spasmodic categories that attach to the spasmodic event of a *moment capturing*. These categories account for *weighing up* that triggers the acts of opportunizing. It may be called *triggering opportunizing*. It also signifies the *value-hierarchical* organizational facet of opportunizing.

The third of these happens when *moment capturing* and *configuration matching* unite, i.e. when the immediate consequence of a spasmodic *moment capturing* lead to a

*configuration matching*. It may be called *spasmodic opportunizing*. It also signifies the *physically bounded* organizational facet of opportunizing as well as basic social structural processing. In a similar classic grounded theory study by Ng (2005) on “managing collaborative synergy” (or “mutually opportunizing”) among companies within the crane industry in the Far East, the junctions between these three main dimensions of *opportunizing* seem to emerge.

### **Triggering opportunizing**

A company’s self-identity (a theoretical code) and its attachment to the two non-spasmodic categories that attach to the spasmodic event of a moment capturing (“weighing up of weighing up regarding past moment captures” and “perpetual awareness of moment capture concept”), seem to have a superseding role in triggering opportunizing.

The other categories of *triggering opportunizing* are the four categories of *weighing up*. Among these four categories, the category of “*weighing up for relevance in prospecting*” seems to be pivotal. It is triggered by needs of output from *prospecting* as input to *weighing up*.

The remaining categories of triggering opportunizing are “weighing up just before moment capturing”, “weighing up on configuration matching”, and “weighing up for match/influence in conditional befriending”. These are dependent on outcomes from prospecting that have been through a “separating out” process of “weighing up for relevancy in prospecting”. Practices studied by Andriopoulos et al (2000) for enhancing organizational creativity can be seen as special procedures for handling this joint sub-process of *prospecting* and *weighing up* (i.e. “*weighing up for relevance in prospecting*”) without bringing the main process of opportunizing in these companies out of balance.

The categories of triggering opportunizing are of a different kind than the categories of perpetual and spasmodic opportunizing. This is partly because of their involvement in the other acts of opportunizing, and partly because of their superseding and value-hierarchical nature.

### **Spasmodic opportunizing**

As mentioned, the immediate organizational consequences of a spasmodic *moment capturing* lead to or are tantamount to a

*configuration matching*. This also means that *spasmodic opportunizing* can be explained as a *configuration matching*.

The social structural processing of spasmodic opportunizing (or configuration matching) can be explained by the PDCA-cycle as a theoretical code. The category “*act of configuration matching*” represents the DO stage of the PDCA-cycle. The category “*signs of matching/influencing in configuration matching*” represents the CHECK stage of the PDCA-cycle. Finally, the category “*weighing up for configuration matching*” represents the ACT & PLAN stages of the PDCA-cycle. An *inductive stage* of this *weighing up* process (ACT) precedes a *deductive stage* (PLAN). The *inductive stage* of the *weighing up* process relies on *prospecting* outcomes that by their nature are *inductive*, while the *deductive stage* relies on *prospecting* outcomes that by their nature are *deductive*. The data indicate a better performance of companies with an inductive-deductive balance.

### **Perpetual opportunizing**

The two mutually dependent sub-processes of *perpetual opportunizing* are *conditional befriending* and *prospecting*. The social psychological processing of these two processes can also be explained by the PDCA-cycle as a theoretical code. The processing of conditional befriending with its three categories of “confidence building”, “modifying behavior” and “weighing up for match/influence in conditional befriending” can be explained as follows:

The ultimate goal and desired outcome of conditional befriending is to modify people’s behavior in such a manner that the company’s survival or growth is sustained. To modify people’s behavior by intervention without basing the intended behavior modification on generated trust is impossible or ineffective. Consequently, the main means to obtain this modification of behavior is confidence building, and confidence building is a perpetual activity in business. Consequently, the category of “confidence building” represents the DO stage of the PDCA-cycle, and the category of “modifying behavior” represents the CHECK stage of the PDCA-cycle. Finally, the category “weighing up for match/influence in conditional befriending” represents the stages of ACT (inductive) and PLAN (deductive) in the PDCA-cycle. Individual managers and companies differ regarding the

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inductive-deductive balance in their weighing up, as well as in noticing signs or patterns of behavior modification in the CHECK stage of the PDCA-cycle.

The processing of prospecting with its three categories of “predetermined prospecting”, “genuine-original prospecting” and “weighing up for relevance in prospecting” can be explained as follows. Prospecting begins as predetermined prospecting. Occasionally, outcomes of prospecting are gained in genuine-original prospecting. Thus, the essential “doing” in prospecting is the unavoidable and perpetual predetermined prospecting with a main aim of obtaining occasional changeover to genuine-original prospecting for obtaining prospecting outcomes that are genuine-original. Consequently, the category of “predetermined prospecting” represents the DO stage of the PDCA-cycle, and the category of “genuine-original prospecting” represents the CHECK stage of the PDCA-cycle. Finally, the category “weighing up for relevance in prospecting” represents the stages of ACT (inductive) & PLAN (deductive) in the PDCA-cycle. Individual managers and companies differ regarding the inductive-deductive balance in their weighing up, and in noticing signs or patterns of gains in their genuine-original prospecting outcomes in the CHECK stage of the PDCA-cycle.

The mutual dependency between the conditional befriending and prospecting sub-processes of perpetual opportunizing is explained as follows: (1) Conditional befriending triggers prospecting by modifying behavior into predetermined prospecting. (2) Via the connected weighing up categories, prospecting triggers conditional befriending as a means for facilitating prospecting.

The close linking between the two perpetual opportunizing processes of conditional befriending and prospecting may alternatively be explained as follows: (1) The CHECK stage of any PDCA-cycle can be conceived as its immediate prospecting stage. However, the requirement for a prospecting outcome for “weighing up for match/influence in conditional befriending” may be of such a scope that the conditional befriending PDCA-cycle triggers a subsidiary and separate prospecting PDCA-cycle. (2) The requirement for prospecting may be of such a scope that a prospecting PDCA-cycle triggers a subsidiary conditional befriending PDCA-cycle to modify some people’s behavior in order to facilitate prospecting. Thus, as perpetual opportunizing,

conditional befriending and prospecting are each other's spin-off.

**Confidence building and modifying behavior as two related sub-processes of conditional befriending**

Before some possible consequences of the model of opportunizing for quality improvements in business are explained, it may be helpful to elaborate on the model of *conditional befriending*. As mentioned, the aim of the process of *conditional befriending* is an outcome of *modified behavior* in such a manner that the company's survival and growth is sustained. The two categories of *conditional befriending*, *confidence building* (DO stage of the PDCA-cycle) and *modifying behavior* (CHECK stage of the PDCA-cycle), are two main concern issues, but they also attach to two distinct "bias random walk" like sub-processes for the processing of these two main concern issues.

**The sub-process of confidence building**

The confidence building sub-process of conditional befriending has the four elements of "direction", "saming", "transparency" and "distinguishing", and the outcome is "trust". The element of "direction" signifies the group of people (e.g. employees, customers) or the issue, which a given confidence building (and consequently also behavior modification) is aimed at. "Saming", "transparency", and "distinguishing" are general trust-building techniques or trust-building constituents. Together with direction they become the four main dimensions or constituents of trust. This means that the concept of trust has to be conceived as multivariate with four main dimensions, and each of them may have many sub-dimensions.

"Saming" signifies e. g. some kind of common identity, unity or sameness of interests, as well as the notion of "win-win", and it also implies some kind of predictability. "Transparency" e. g. means that there are no hidden agendas or absence of obscureness. "Distinguishing" means different and better and is the possession, exhibition or formation of highly regarded or excellent features embedded within trust, and the opposite are features that withdraw *trust*. Any sub-dimension of "saming" can be conceived as having negative values, as for example seen in "management by fear". The same, of course, applies for "transparency" and "distinguishing". Some sub-dimensions of saming and transparency may even need to have "negative"

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values in order to modify behavior. These four constituents of trust are interdependent when combined, and some combinations may become very powerful. This especially applies for some combinations with high saming and distinguishing values. Confidence building occurs in a “bias random walk” like manner by the mixing of these four elements to create an appropriate multivariate trust to facilitate behavior modification. Some data incidences indicating these concepts are as follows:

He had obviously a very high regard for the community. [saming with direction]. He was a very socially conscious man. [saming with direction]. Everybody could see that. [transparent]. His accomplishments speak for themselves [distinguishing, transparent]. Even as the main owner and manager of the company, his lifestyle was not much different from his employees. [saming]. He was simple, yet he was complicated. He had some idiosyncrasies that everybody knew about. [idiosyncrasies make distinct]. He received many distinguished orders....[distinguishing].

I have never hesitated in being open about my religious conviction. I have always gained respect for that, also in my affairs with foreign suppliers. At our annual meeting and breakfast before Christmas I do the same. [*idiosyncrasies make distinct and transparent*]. I also make no secret that all my employees are in my daily prayers. [saming]. I also deliberately treat everybody in the same way, high as low [saming].

When foreign partners visit us, we always give them at least one moment that they will never forget. [*distinguishing*]. We....

What characterized this company is that many families through many generations have been attached to it as employees [saming]

### The sub-process of modifying behavior

The modifying behavior sub-process of conditional befriending has the elements of “trust” (outcome from confidence building) and “intervention”, and the outcome is modified behavior. On the basis of the created trust, behavior is modified by some intervention or some kind of “obligating”. However, without the appropriate trust, this modifying of behavior becomes

an impossible or an ineffective task.

### **Some Possible Research Implications for “Quality Management”**

It is e.g. obvious that most of the speaking and most of the behavior of a politician is confidence building with the aim of modifying behavior, and especially the behavior of his/her targeted group of voters when they will cast their votes at the ballot box. It is equally obvious that much of the behavior of business managers is also confidence building with the aim of modifying behavior of some targeted group of people, but these managers have obviously not consciously conceptualized and understood their activities in this manner.

Some years ago, quality management was a hot topic in business management. Why do some business managers focus on this issue? The answer to this question is simply that quality management programs as change programs are for confidence building with the aim of modifying the behavior of some groups of people in such a manner that the company's survival and growth is sustained.

Thus, in this case, “confidence building” may be replaced with the term “quality building”, and the concept of trust may be replaced with the term quality. The concept of quality may also be the most important property of the concept of trust. However, in this case quality has to be conceived as a multivariate concept with the four main dimensions of direction, naming, transparency and distinguishing. This means that quality in this context cannot be conceived as a univariate concept as it usually is (Reeves and Bednar, 1994). Such a different conception of quality is supplementary to other definitions of quality, or perspectives on quality, and it does not replace them. Because the eventual aim of quality building is to modify customers' behavior via modified behavior of employees, partners and suppliers, it may also require that business managers modify their own behavior in their confidence building that is directed towards their employees, partners or suppliers. This means that the concept of quality, like the concept of *trust*, also applies for people's relationships in business. This is usually forgotten by quality management experts.

It may be crucial for the effectiveness of any change program

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in business that it is closely attached to the main concerns of those persons, who are mostly involved and have most at stake in its implementation. If this is not the case, then these people could care less about it. The theory of opportunistizing suggests that these main concerns and their recurrent solutions are expressed by the concepts of the model of opportunistizing. Consequently, it is suggested that the implementation of such change programs should be aligned with these concepts and their relationships. The model of opportunistizing could be used as a device for practitioners to skip trivia and to focus on the most important and problematic issues. The underlying, but often unexpressed, aim of business managers, interested in implementing quality programs in their businesses, has often been the notion to trigger some beneficial version of amplified causal looping in their business. The data in this study indicate that amplified causal looping is triggered by the conditional befriending sub-process of confidence building by some particularly efficient mixtures of direction, saming, transparency and distinguishing.

One issue within quality management theory and practice has been that of minimizing the variation around a target in process control of items in mass production. When items with the targeted physical properties, and with minimum variation around them, are assembled to make the final product, a perfect fit will secure maximum reliability and durability of the product. This is the “six sigma” issue within quality management. This aspect of *quality* can be defined quantitatively.

The other issue within quality management theory and practice has been what kind of management practices in general should be used to manage a system of interacting parts, when the objective is *quality*. Most seem to agree with the view that the system outcomes mainly are made in the interactions between the parts of the system, and that the same applies for quality. However, it is not so straightforward to define or to quantify these aspects of *quality*.

So far, it has not been possible to unify these two issues of quality management by a theory that uses the same concepts (Deming, 1986; Aguayo, 2000; Deming, 1993). The model of opportunistizing could provide a solution to this problem. For example, to minimize the variation around a target (increasing predictability) is explained by the concept of “saming” within the model of opportunistizing. Other concepts of the model of

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opportunizing, including the concepts of *direction*, *saming*, *transparency* and *distinguishing in confidence building*, may sum up and explain many issues that are described in the quality management literature. However, this is a topic for another article.

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