



INTO CONNECTION OR LEARNING TO PLAY WITH THE BLUE BALL

Summary

There are thousands of books on organisations, mergers and takeovers, management, leadership, teamwork, personal development and many other subjects that contribute to the improvement of business processes. All of these books focus on specific elements that play a role in organisations (leadership, culture, customer relations, teamwork, conflict management, etc.), and present various theories and methods to influence these elements. The theory of connection deals with the fundamental principles that define these relationships.

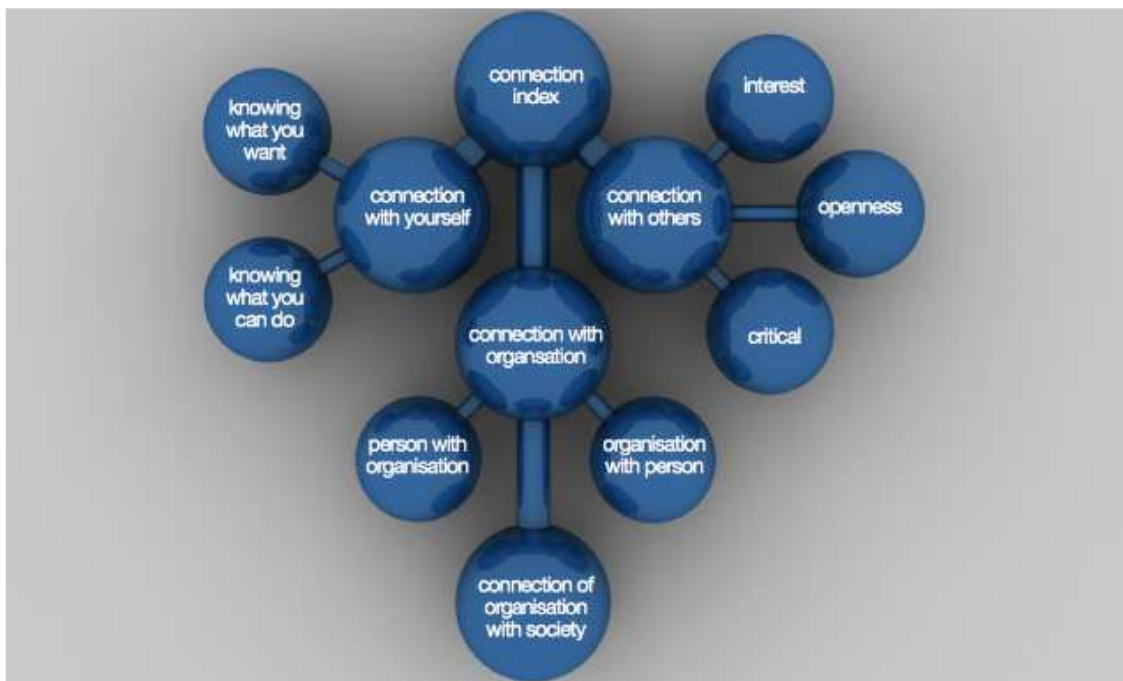
The connection index

We have succeeded in developing a tool that enables us to measure the degree of connection: the connection index. We have analysed the concept of connection, and made it measurable so that we can better understand and compare it. The connection index thus enables us to talk about connection in a generalised and quantifiable way. It has been drawn up on the basis of philosophical research, personal experience and interviews with other people. In the connection index, the definition of connection is determined by a number of factors and elements that we have converted into a questionnaire. The definition – and therefore also the questionnaire – encompasses three fundamental areas that together are definitive for connection in general:

Connection...

- *with yourself*
- *with others*
- *with the organisation*

These three categories are in turn made up of a number of components that will also be discussed in this book. The structure of the whole is as follows:

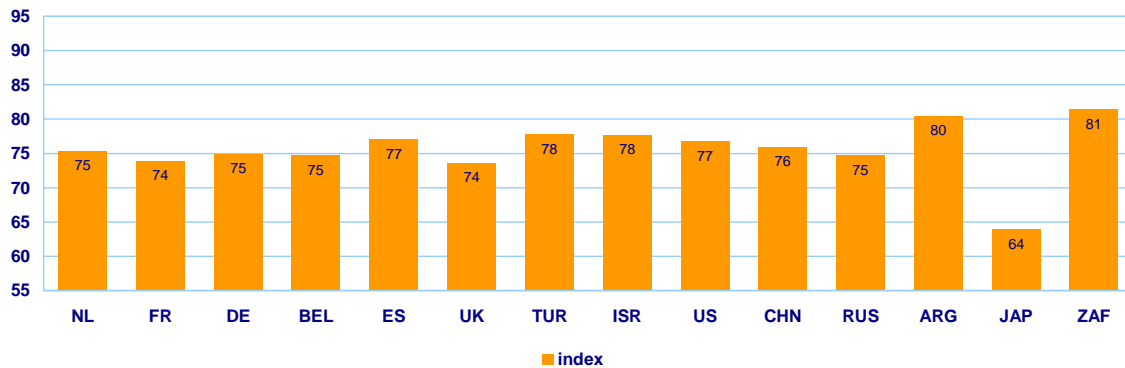




The model with which general connection is described is made up of three constructs, namely connection with yourself, with others and with the organisation. Your scores in each of these sub-categories together determine the general connection score that is shown in the centre of the chart: your personal index. In this way we can determine the average connection score, not only in general but also by country, population group or individual. These average scores subsequently enable us to look at people who have above average levels of connection (strong bonds) as well as people who score below average (weak bonds). In what ways do these groups differ? What are the consequences of this? What is it that people with strong bonds have, or lack, in relation to weakly connected people?

The research we have carried out shows the average connection score is 76 (on a scale of 100). People in Argentina and South Africa have the highest average score (80/81). People in Japan score low in relation to the average with a average score of 64. The average score for people in the Netherlands is 75, the same as in Germany, while Spain and the USA score 77.

Connection



We should mention here that the score in itself should not be interpreted as a 'pass mark'. Because of the nature of the questions, and the fact that people are asked to evaluate themselves, the scores in the research come out relatively high. They are mainly useful in terms of comparison and relative internal weighting. What we can therefore also examine is the difference between people who score low or high in relation to the average. The figures are then rather more shocking: only 4% of the Japanese people find themselves strongly connected. People in Argentina and South Africa are more connected: respectively 41.7% and 41.9% are strongly connected. 18% of Dutch people are strongly connected. Spain comes out slightly ahead, but only at 28%. Not even a third. In Germany the figures are even starker: over 48% are only weakly connected, followed by the Netherlands (43.7%), the USA (41.7%) and Spain (38.7%). This means that, in total only 44% of the respondents as a whole are weakly connected!

The point of departure for our research into connection was the following hypothesis: an optimum connection means more enjoyment and success, for both individuals and organisations. Understanding your own connections and knowing how to improve them can therefore have a great influence on your life.

By increasing and improving connection you literally create value. Not only emotionally, but also for example financially.



2. CONNECTION: GENERAL MEANING

Connection is concerned with a relationship between two entities: a coupling, link or merging. Connection means having contact with someone or something. A connection between two entities refers to that which holds these two elements together (the relationship, the binding factor).

A connection has many qualities: a connection can be physical, but also emotional. A physical connection arises when two things are brought into contact: they are literally in contact with each other or they are mediated between by a third entity. This third entity is also defined as a connection: a rope can connect two trees, and as such it is also the connection itself.

Connection is a subset of the concept of relationship, in particular the specific relationships that have a certain qualitative value for someone. This qualitative value stands for a positive emotional connotation with a minimal quality that is, in principle, subjective: there is no absolute standard that determines the minimum emotion of a connective relationship. In our definition, a connective relationship is always accompanied by the achievement of a particular *aim*. This aim can in theory be anything: the achievement of a certain result or performance, but also friendship or enjoyment. It is in any event at the least a particular emotion, but it can always be more. The basic principle of a connective relationship is that the relationship always produces more than the parties concerned could have achieved alone. The achievement of a (self-chosen) aim gives the relationship its special emotional value.

There are three different types of connection that we will concentrate on in this book:

1. The connection of individuals with themselves
2. The connection of individuals with others
3. The connection of individuals with organisations

3. CONNECTION WITH YOURSELF

All the relationships and connections that you can enter into as an individual begin with yourself. The quality of relationships and connections is ultimately dependent on your own personality. To help us clarify the issue we can think of a bridge as a connection between two fixed points: the strength and stability of a bridge over a river largely depend on the points where the construction must come to rest. To be able to enter into strong connections you therefore have to invest in yourself. To understand what it means to invest in yourself as the carrier of a connection, we need to acquire greater insight into the desired connection.

As the carrier of a connective relationship it is important that you have insight into your own abilities, desires and motivations. In the same way as the architect of a bridge must discover the strength of the foundations on which the bridge must be built, you yourself must have sufficient self-knowledge. We call this fundamental self-knowledge *having a connection with yourself*. It is therefore enormously important that you develop your self-understanding as far as possible, and in particular on the following points.

1. What am I capable of?

To enter into as good a relationship as possible, it is important that you know what you are capable of, both now and in the future.

2. What do I want?

Apart from the fact that you *are able to* carry a particular connection, it is important that you also *want to* carry and develop that connection.



To create more connection with yourself you have to continually work on two key areas: knowing what you can do, and knowing what you want. The next step you then take is to seek out an environment or situation in which your capacities and motivations are in balance with one another. An environment where your strong points find expression, and where you can do what you want to do. With a good understanding as a basis, you will be much more able to create an optimal environment for yourself within which you can function optimally and with maximum motivation. This process of self-reflection, where you try to find answers to the questions of 'knowing what you want' and 'knowing what you are capable of' takes place within four subdivisions of your own personality:

1. Rational

The area that is concerned with logic and rational relates to insight and knowledge.

2. Emotional

This area encompasses your feelings.

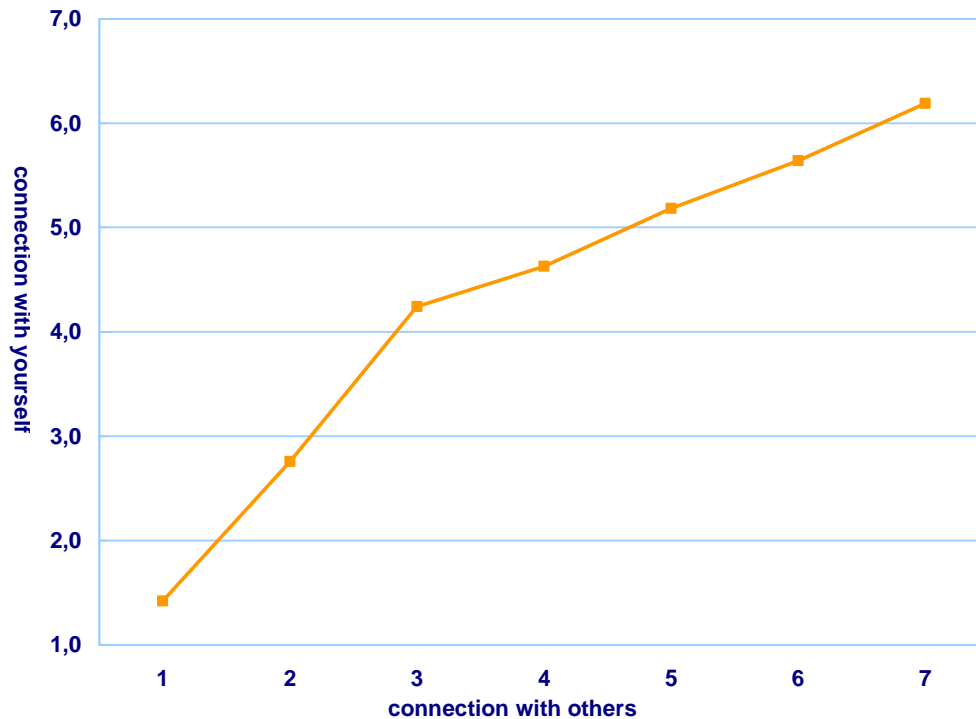
3. Physical

This area concerns your body. It is extremely important to know your own physical abilities and limitations.

4. Spiritual

The spiritual area encompasses convictions and intuition. It is crucial to develop good insight in this area, because it forms the basis on which most people act.

Knowing what you can do and what you want, rationally, emotionally, physically and spiritually, yields you many opportunities to connect with others. You are now far more able to determine what or whom you seek out to supplement or help you in these areas. You could decide, for example, to enter into a connection that is based on physical attraction, or on the other hand on an intellectual basis. We have seen that connection with yourself can be explained as an investment in self-knowledge and self-development. After all, a relationship between two individuals depends on the individuals who carry the relationship. This is also an important conclusion from our research.



There are three central preconditions to self-reflection on connection:

1. Genuine interest

Interest in yourself ensures the motivation to want to connect. Interest implies a certain curiosity; the will or the desire to find out more about something. Being interested in something or someone also means that you attach importance to that interest. Having an interest in something means that you care for that which you have an interest in, because ultimately you place significance in it. In this sense interest means wanting the best for yourself, and to achieve that you have to know exactly what the best for you is.

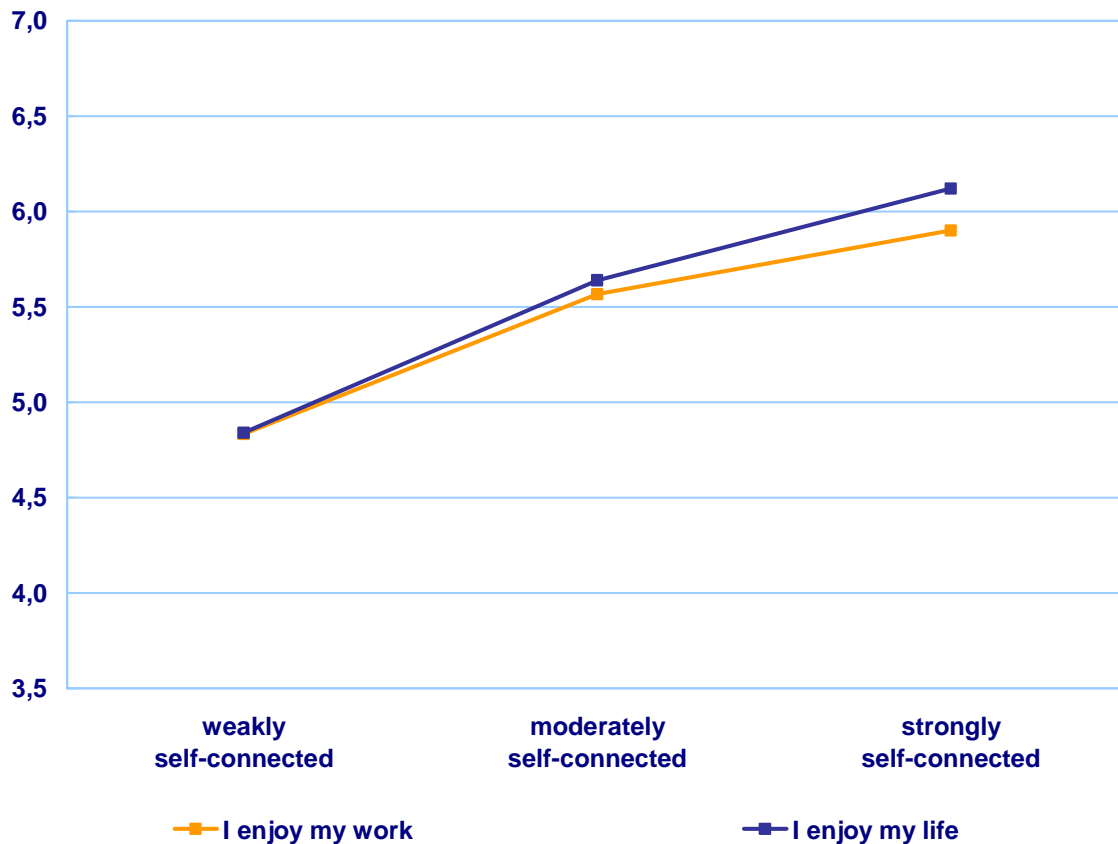
2. Openness

To know what you can do and what you want, to truly know who you are, it is essential that the process takes place in complete openness and honesty. In this way the actual and/or potential information and abilities can be fully revealed. Openness also stands for a certain objectivity: reflecting on both your good and your bad qualities, desirable and undesirable capacities, and so on.

3. Criticism

Be critical and honest. We have already seen that it is important that self-knowledge not only involves searching out positive qualities and capacities, but also negative and undesirable aspects. This not only creates a broader total picture, in this way one's personal qualities are also illuminated in a more objective manner. An important tool to increase the connection with yourself is the creation of a personal vision.

People who are strongly connected with themselves have more enjoyment in their work, and also in life.



4. CONNECTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL WITH OTHER INDIVIDUALS

From a basis of self-knowledge, which stated simply means that you know more or less what you have to offer and what expectations and desires you have, you can enter into connections with other people. This readiness to invest in the relationship, to please and satisfy the other, in combination with the fact that both of the individuals have an understanding of each other's abilities and motivations, means that high quality relationships have the potential to bring out the best in the other.

There are three other activities in addition to connection with yourself that are necessary to be able to form a high quality connection with another person:

1. Taking an interest

Taking an interest in someone means you are curious about them. You want to know what motivates the other, what goes on inside of them. At the same time, interest refers to a certain importance that you place in someone.

The *aim* of the connection is purely the connection itself. Connection does not have a fundamental functional aim; it is always an aim in itself. This is easy to understand if we think about the phenomenon of friendship: if we discover that someone has been posing as a friend but has a hidden selfish intention – for example because you always pay for everything for him or her – then we do not actually consider it a true friendship. We can even feel we have been deceived if we discover that a supposed friend is only seeking contact with us out of self-interest.



2. Being open

Interest alone is not enough. The relationship that arises out of mutual interest must also be deepened and strengthened. So be open to one another. To truly get to know one another, it is necessary to reveal your true personality to the other, as it were. In this way the other gets to know you better and better, and he or she also acquires an insight into your 'self'. Here again we see the link with connection with yourself.

3. Being critical and honest

To truly develop yourself, it is important to occasionally be confronted or challenged with particular issues. If this were not the case, then a connection would merely consist of a (re-) endorsement of the other. Nietzsche observes that a true friend is a friend who dares to be an enemy. Only in relation to such an individual will you be able to bring out the best in yourself. The confrontational, critical attitude represents a fundamental acknowledgement of the other as a total person.

As a component of the connective relationship, this mutual recognition thus implies the recognition of yourself: like a confrontational mirror, the other adds an essential element that you as an individual are not capable of alone. If we think back to the principle of openness as a readiness to open oneself to the other, then this critical honesty stands for the actual confrontation of the other with ideas and opinions that are new to him or her. Honesty then concerns the good intentions that should always underpin this confrontational attitude.

There are various gradations of connection. The foregoing text has possibly evoked the idea that connection is always a highly intense and demanding process; a deep, ideal form of friendship. It is important to realise, however that there are many levels of connection: from vague acquaintance to good colleague, from friend to lover. There are an infinite number of variations. What we are dealing with here is the basis of these special relationships and the way in which you – if you want to – could strengthen and improve them. The degree of connection must be determined by everyone for themselves. In the previous chapter we showed that you think and reflect in the four subdivisions of the rational, the emotions, the physical and the spiritual, on the basis of the two key questions of 'what you want' and 'what you can do'.

What is the state of connection between people worldwide? In general people score 78 on a scale of 100 in terms of connection with others. That is almost the same score as for connection with oneself. The more strongly people are connected with others, the more enjoyment they experience in life. The same goes for enjoyment in work, although this relationship is less pronounced.

	Not strongly connected with others	Strongly connected with others
I enjoy life	49%	83%
I enjoy my work	53%	79%

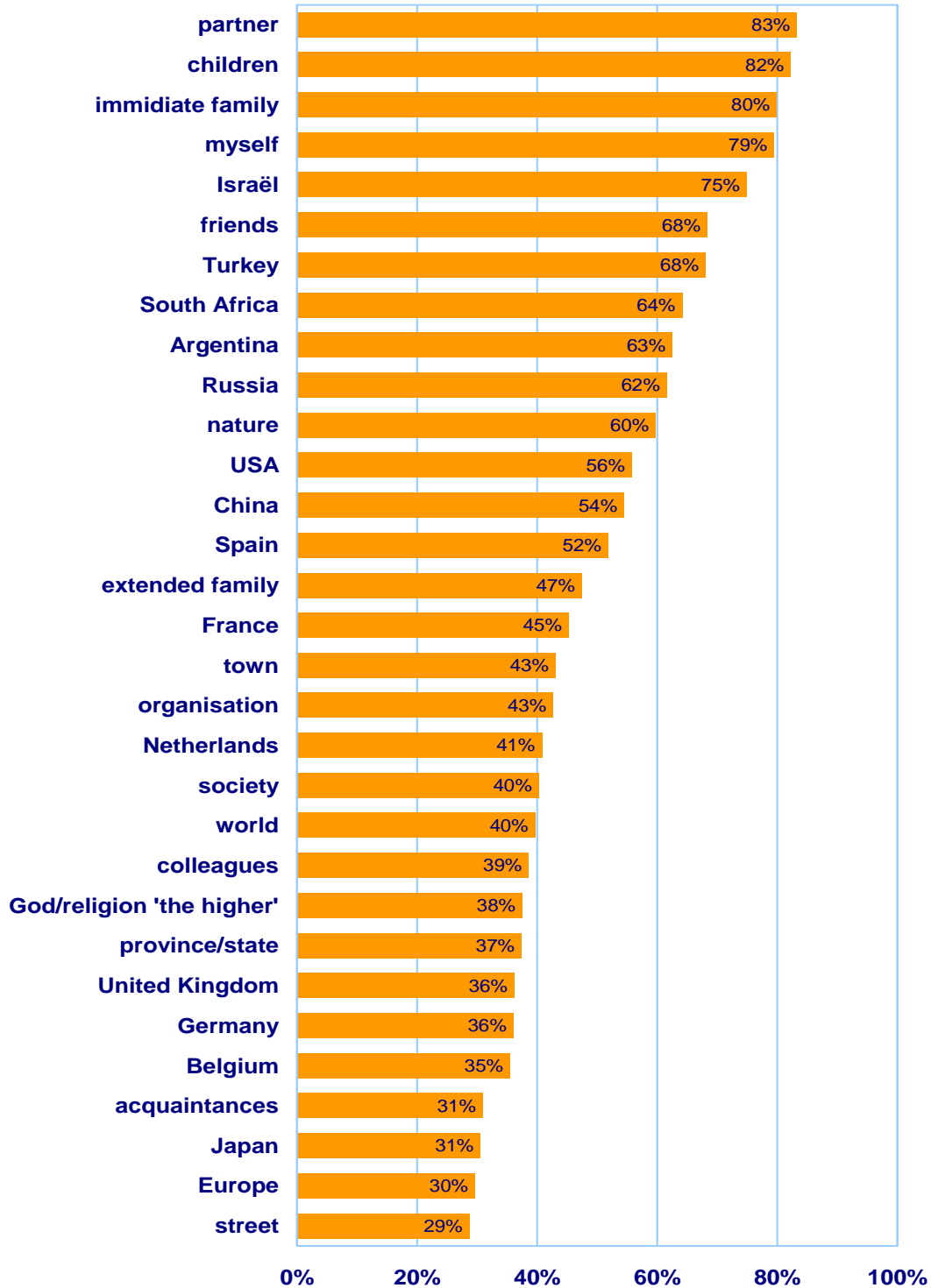
Nine out of ten people who are strongly connected indicate that they learn from others, are open to others, and like to discover new things. As could be expected, the people with the highest degree of connection are the most interested in others.

We asked people who and what they feel most connected with. In general people feel most connected with their partners, immediate family and children. Although to a somewhat lesser extent, a very large proportion still feel connected with themselves, their friends and



extended families. The high degree of connection with nature (60%) is a striking detail. A sense of connection with Europe is lamentably low.

I feel connected with...

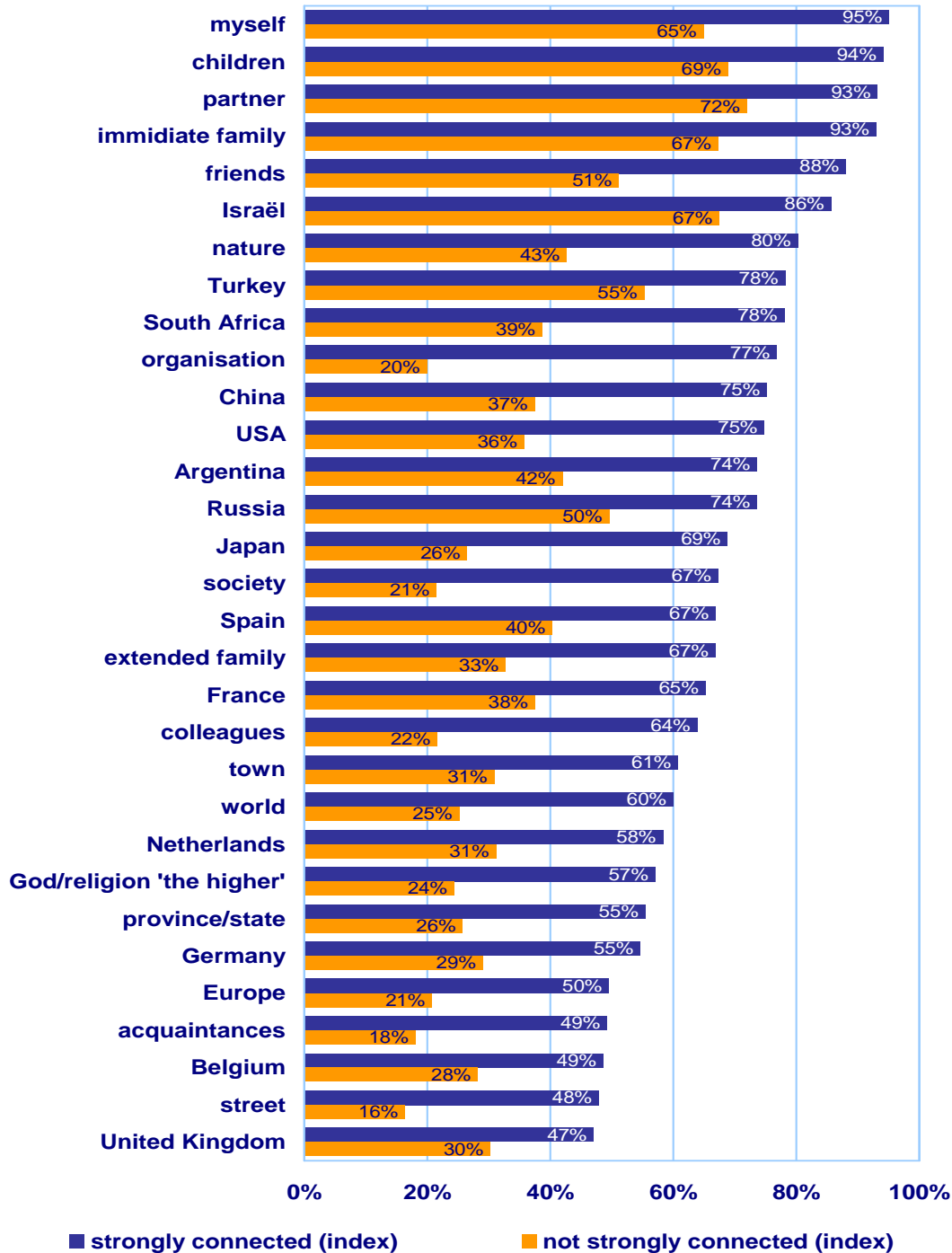


Striking is the difference between the sense of connection with their own country. People from Israel feel very connected to their country (75%), while only 31% of the Japanese



people and 35% of the Belgian people feel connected to their country. A somewhat saddening aspect is the low level of connection that people feel with their street and neighbourhood, both things that are in any event in close physical proximity. In Turkey people feel most connected with their street: 44% feels strongly connected. Things becomes even more interesting when we subdivide the above graph into people who are strongly or weakly connected:

I feel connected with...





People who are not strongly connected score considerably lower on all elements. On some points you can see large gaps where the difference between the two groups is even greater: for example the connection with the organisation, colleagues and society. Only 22% of the people who are weakly connected feel themselves connected with society. And the figure of 20% of the weakly connected people who feel connected with their organisation is alarming. This significant detail leads us on to the question of how people are connected with their organisations.

5. CONNECTION WITH THE ORGANISATION

Organisations are not only a fundamental component of our society (who does *not* form a part of an organisation?) but they are also responsible for the achievement of various forms of success. There is thus much to be gained from increasing our understanding of the basic principles of an organisation, so that they can be improved.

If we view an organisation as a network of individuals who work together to attain a specific aim, then it logically follows that a successful organisation is a collaboration that truly achieves or exceeds the stated aim.

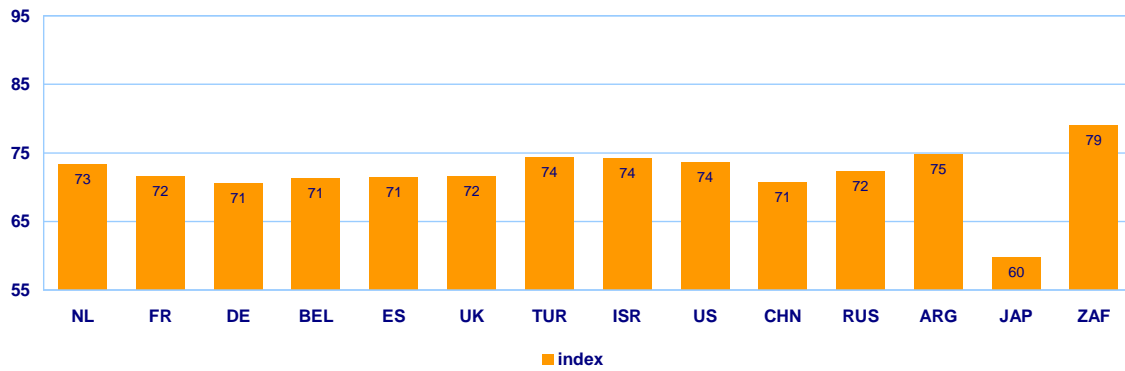
An organisation can actively work on the connections of and with its people, certainly when there are hierarchically structured layers: it can assign a specific role and task to each individual, and indicate how and with whom these roles and tasks must be carried out. Furthermore, if we think about the related concept of the organism, success will often be dependent on the best possible subdivision of the organisation into organs, each with its specific qualities and specific contribution, depending on the aim in view.

Just as self-knowledge is vitally important in a relationship between two people, it is also crucial for the organisation. After all, to be successful it is essential firstly to be fully and clearly aware of the aim that has been set, and secondly the organisation must have a clear view of its own structure in order to understand how this aim can be achieved as effectively as possible. We have seen how an organisation is made up of a collaboration of individual people. In a parallel with an organism, people organise (connect) themselves in loose organs that work together to achieve an aim. To form an organ that functions as well as possible, it is important that the right people arrive in the right places: suppose that an organisation realises (self-insight) that to achieve aim X three processes (A, B and C) are needed. It is then obvious that people who have skills in function A will take their place in organ A, people with qualities for function B will be assigned to organ B, and so on. The better these connections are, the bigger the successes will be.

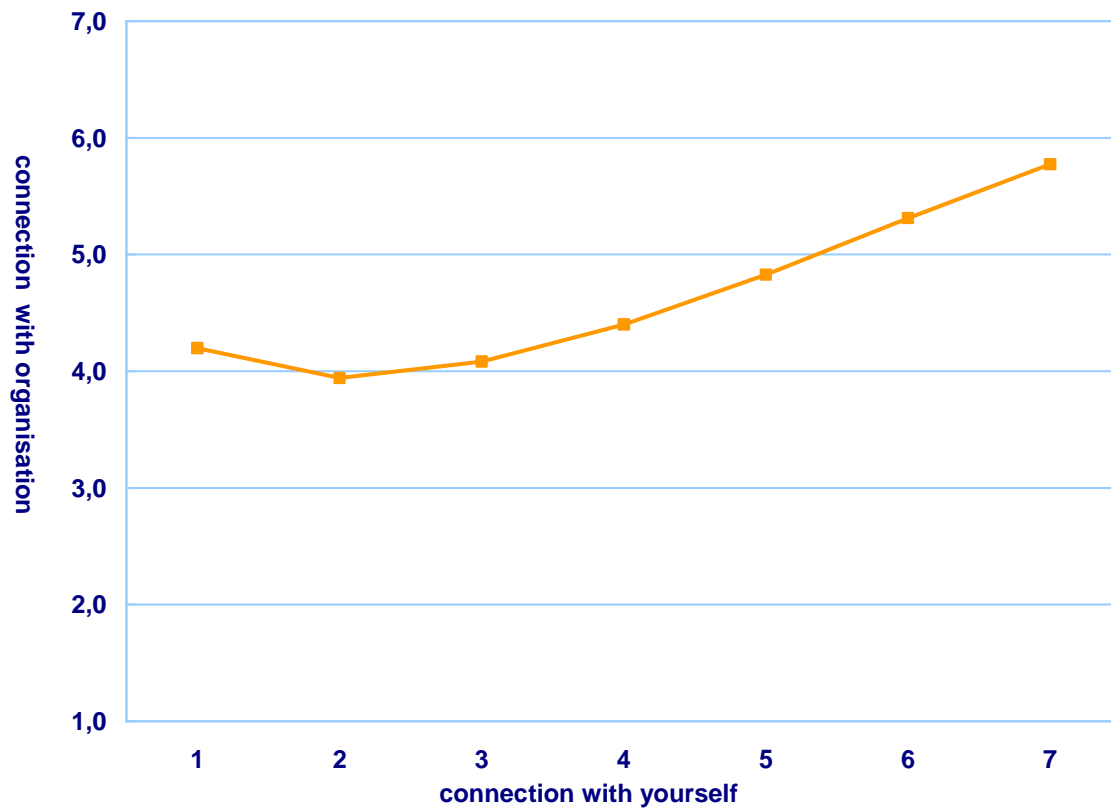
In general, people's connection with their organisation cannot be described as good. The average person scores 72. The average Japanese people scores 60, which is lowest of all countries. South Africa scores the highest: 79



Connection-organisation



Again we can see that connection with yourself has a major influence on the connection between you and the organisation:



People who are strongly connected with the organisation have a greater knowledge and understanding of what the organisation expects of them. The organisation also knows their qualities better, and takes more account of their personal desires and wishes. The one aspect appears to arise from the other: when you know someone well – you know what he is good at and what he wants – you can also deploy that person within the organisation on the basis of that information. And doing what you are good at, being involved in things that you really want to do, creates more enjoyment in your work. The underlying connection process



ensures that both the employee and the organisation get to know themselves and each other better and better, so that the positive effect will only be amplified.

We can therefore possibly conclude that people who are less strongly connected with the organisation are also less loyal: after all, why should you be loyal to an organisation where you do not feel at home? We can thus conclude here that it is enormously valuable for an organisation to invest in the self-connection of its employees.

Not only that the employee must possess sufficient self-knowledge to be able to function better within the organisation. It is just as important that the organisation has a clear vision of how the position of the employee should be given form. The organisation must know itself well in order to optimally determine what it needs from its employees. These two 'self-insights' (that of the individual employee and that of the organisation) that result from connection with themselves must therefore be brought together: they must be connected with one another.

The more strongly people are connected with themselves, the stronger are their connections with the organisation too.

What can an organisation do to strengthen internal connections?

To connect itself with its own people, it is important that the organisation truly finds out about its employees, using the same criteria as for connection between individuals (interest, openness and criticism). After all, a good connection means that you know the other – in this case the employee – well so that the organisation can make optimum use of the qualities of the employee. On the other hand, the organisation must – and can – take optimum account of the wishes of the employees: after all, it knows how they are put together and in what ways they are most at ease so that they also *want* to perform to the maximum.

The organisation has yet another task in this connection process. As a coordinating collaboration, it must attend to the internal connections. After all, an organisation wants to achieve its aims, and so by definition it needs the right people in the right places. Connection has to be brought about at all levels, both horizontally and vertically. This means that the organisation must facilitate the conditions for connection. It must free up space and time to initiate and maintain the process. We already know that self-insight is an elementary ingredient of connection. The organisation can provide tools (the development of a personal vision, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator psychometric testing, etc.) that can help the employee to improve his personal understanding. It is important that this occurs together with other colleagues, so that not only self-insight is improved, but also the mutual connections. It is important that the personal vision can be located within the vision of the organisation so that an optimum connection between the two can be created.

The sharing of self-knowledge by both the individual and the organisation means that there must be a culture of open communication. A purely technical evaluation is not enough. Optimal functioning is only possible if there is a personal relationship between people, with space for honesty and vulnerability. The organisation must create this space. People who are strongly connected with themselves and with the organisation are significantly more aware of the organisation's aims. They know more clearly what is expected of them, and what they can expect of the organisation. To be able to optimally profit from this major benefit, it is enormously important that the organisation in question also has as clear as possible a vision of what it is and where it wants to go. A very good means of acquiring this self-knowledge is the development of a vision. [1] A good vision forces the organisation to consider the reason for its existence, the aims it wants to achieve, the qualities it possesses to this end and the values that determine the way in which it wishes to operate. A vision is created by the



organisation itself, that is to say by the collaboration of people who make up the organisation. From this self-knowledge, and with the help of the guiding vision, connections can then be entered into to achieve the desired aims. A vision represents, in a concise, clear and systematic manner:

- The Higher Goal: answers the question of why an organisation exists (What is the essential contribution that the organisation adds to the world?)
- The Audacious Goal: comprises the answer to the question of where an organisation is going (What does the organisation want to achieve?)
- The Core Values: express what an organisation stands for (What values and norms are upheld?)
- The Core Qualities: show where an organisation excels (What is the organisation good at?)



Analogous with the mutually reinforcing effect of self-connection and connection with others, it also applies to the vision – as the self-knowledge or identity of the organisation – that it has an extremely positive effect on the connection between organisation and employee. After all, the clearer an organisation's identity, the better the individual employee can determine how he or she optimally fits into that identity. On the other hand, the ultimate identity of the organisation is anchored in the people who work there. The better these people know and experience the identity of the organisation, the more powerful it will be.

If an organisation actively deals with connection in this way, it will be able to make optimum use of its people in a more structured way. Investing in connection ultimately means that the organisation will get to know its people extremely well, in order to make optimal use of them. Conversely, people will value this special interest, certainly if optimum account is taken of their personal wishes and capacities. Only in this way will a win-win situation come about.

Conclusion

Although the inspiration and conviction are perhaps expressed rather idealistically, we have shown that connection goes together with well-developed and efficient systems that ultimately exist for the achievement of aims. Self-evidently, a number of these will always consist of 'hard aims'. When you take connection to heart, you will notice that the majority of the success factors you will encounter, or possibly already know, can be traced back to the simple principles of connection. In other words, the theory of connection is a super-tool, which supplements other tools and even makes them redundant.



Hopefully you share our enthusiasm for the enormous power and potential of connection. We sincerely believe that we must disseminate the principle as widely as possible, and in the coming period we will be working on connection initiatives in many ways. So at the conclusion of this book we also want to call on you to join with us. Go to our website and learn more about connection. Let's help one another to get the best out of ourselves, and together build a brighter future.

www.intoconnection.com