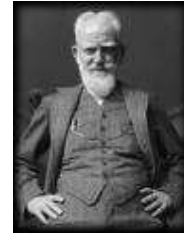


The cycles of history Can we learn from company history?

“If history repeats itself, and the unexpected always happens, how incapable must Man be of learning from experience.”

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)



Many give lip-service to the fact that history repeats itself and some have methods for looking at cycles. In the business world this is particularly prevalent in financial circles. However when it comes to looking at organisational development ideas and tools, most seem to have a linear, rather than a cyclic approach and many do not take history into account at all. Once a company is established, there is straight line of existence until the company dies for whatever reason.

One discipline which *is* based on cycles and has been used for thousands of years is astrology. Astrology, you are already thinking, I'm sure, is that fortunetelling rubbish that you can read on the train. How can only 12 signs cover everyone in the world? Indeed if that were true it would be amazing. Real astrology, however works with the symbolic idea of “so above, so below”. If the planets are together or in a certain place then that is reflected symbolically on earth. This does not necessarily mean that the planets are the *cause* of what happens to us. In fact that would be extremely unlikely in my view, although it is not impossible. It is more likely that the planets reflect a part of an even bigger whole. In other words what they are doing (symbolically)we are also doing.

The background to this art, is a study of the cosmos, and how this relates to the earth. In this way it is perhaps the original ‘integral’ view of Ken Wilber. We are part of a greater whole, and all connected. The cosmic objects mostly studied in terms of astrology, have particular cycles. The Sun seems to go round the earth (although it is really us that moves) with a yearly cycle. The Moon in a month. We can observe this cycle in the changing of the seasons and we can see the Moon change her shape. The planets that are further away such as Neptune, also have cycles but these are less able to be experienced. Neptune is invisible from the earth and it has a cycle of around 165 years, so we do not live long enough to observe a whole cycle and so it is more difficult to see patterns, even although they do exist.

Astrologers associate planets with Gods and archetypes. Originally there were twelve types. Arche just means first or source. So there were twelve basic types, according to Plato, which were associated with twelve Gods. Jung developed this idea further and relates the collective unconscious with the idea of archetypes. Planets and signs can also be seen as holons, a group of qualities that belong together. Symbolically this can give a wide range of possibilities for a particular planet. The God Neptune is associated with water, for example. As an archetype he includes victims and saviours. As a holon, drug companies, gas lighting and hospitals to name but a few.

Getting back to the theme of history repeating, and combining this with cycles, we can extrapolate from there and suggest that when Neptune is in a particular part of the sky, for example now in Aquarius (2008), then history might repeat what happened the last time he

was there. Astrology would say that it would be a repeat of the same *themes*, not an exact repeat of events, as the world does of course change in 165 years. However the idea is that there will be some resonance with what went before.

The seventy-two year cycle – the Company Clock

Another technique with which I have experience, is a 72 year cycle, with 12 phases of 6 years based on the order of the zodiac. I call it the Company Clock. Phase 1 is the Aries phase, phase 2 Taurus and so forth until the last phase from 66 to 72 years, which is the Pisces phase. The cycle then repeats, so that at 72 there is the opportunity for a new 'birth'. I have developed a company life cycle model based on this technique, originally from a Swiss astrologer Bruno Huber, and this uses the idea of certain planets being triggered at certain times for a company, depending on the start date of that company.

By looking at phases and these trigger times, we have a framework for looking at organisational development and asking relevant questions so as to be able to gain insight on problems and offer advice for solutions. It is a very practical and insightful tool for understanding patterns and making the most of a company's potential. The best way to describe this is to give an example and I will use two companies which were set up at very similar times. However it might be helpful first to give my vision on how I see a company in terms of a start date and what that may mean.

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.” is a well-known quote from the Bible and also from the rock group the Birds, “Turn, turn, turn”, for those of us old enough to remember them! Astrology applies this to people. The birth time, date and place indicates a character, a mission, a purpose. A soul.

Companies also have a birth date, time and place. My view is that they therefore also have a mission, a character and perhaps a spiritual mission, although I hesitate to use the word spiritual, as it implies many different things to different people. A 'Soul'. At the beginning of this year 2008, the Dutch newspaper, the Volkskrant, gave predictions for the coming year. The well known Dutch astrologer Peter Delahay, when talking about Pluto entering the sign of Capricorn this year, is quoted as saying: “Alle organisaties die geen bezieling hebben, storten in en alles wat bezielt is, krijgt vorm.” The literal translation is something like, 'Every organisation that isn't inspired will die and ones that are, will take shape'. However the word bezielt contains the word ziel which means 'soul'. I like to think of Peter's quote as meaning that any company whose actions are not congruent with its mission and soul purpose, will flounder. Ones that do, will flourish. Recently, I heard an interview about the idea of craftsmanship being important for the future of companies. The idea is that companies need to have a craft, something that they do well, to prosper. A true craftsman is passionate about what he makes. Companies should be too. The horoscope of a company can give ideas as to what the purpose and mission or craft might be. Companies as well as people are products of their particular time and this will be reflected in history.

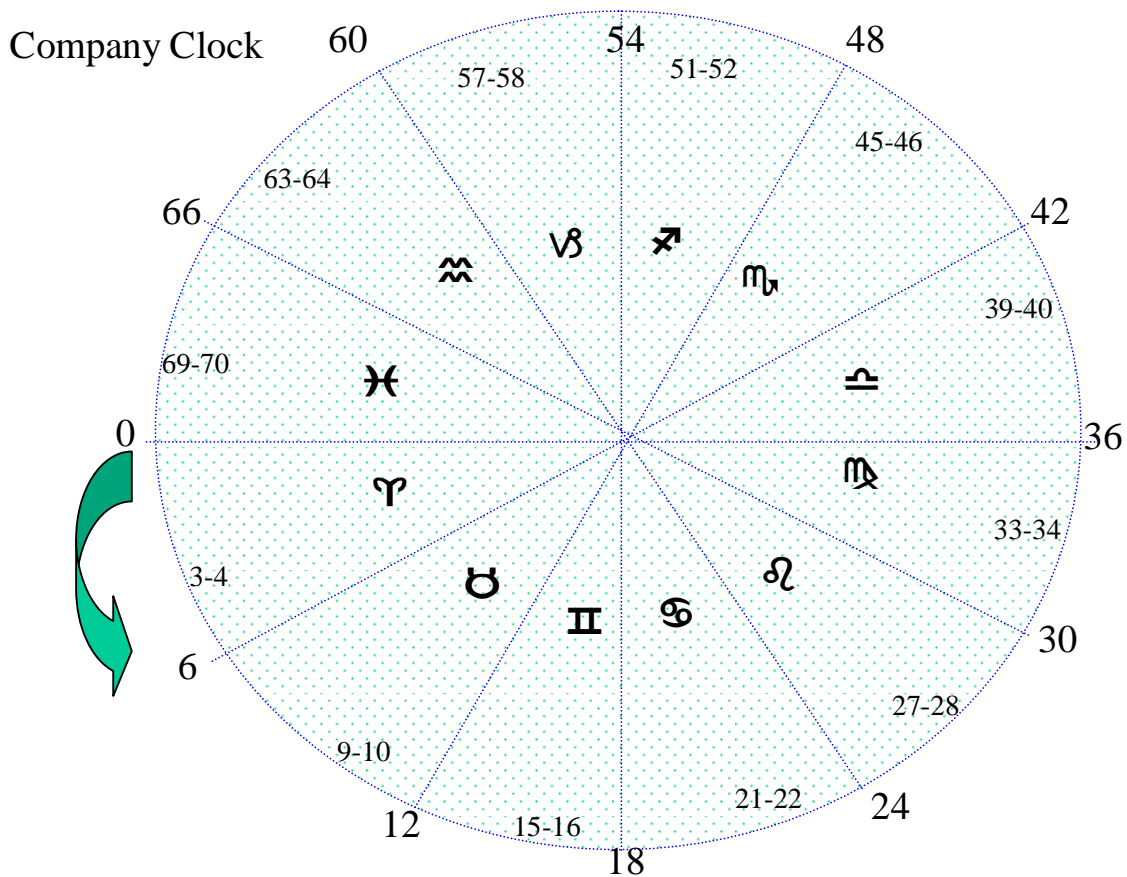
But back to the main topic of this piece, history repeating and company cycles and our two examples. One is the Volkskrant itself, born, October 2nd 1919 in Utrecht. The other is KLM, the international Dutch airline, born October 7th 1919 in the Hague so only a few days separate their incorporations. For some things in astrology this few days can make a big

difference but for longer cycles and in particular the 72 year cycle, it means that these companies will experience the same phases at about the same times and also specific holons will be triggered at similar times. What can be seen however is that these two companies made very different use of the opportunities presented.

At the time of formation for both companies, the Sun and the planet Mercury were close together in the sky, in the sign of Libra. For the Volkskrant they are closer together than for KLM. Much could be said of this 'conjunction' as astrologers call it, however I will give a few symbolic meanings here. The Sun represents the heart of a company, the management, the will within a company. The management culture. Mercury is known as the planet of communication, he was the God's messenger. It is not for nothing that many newspapers around the world have Mercury in the title, such as the San Jose Mercury News or the Mercury Newspaper in Hobart to name but two. So perhaps it is not surprising that the Volkskrant have Mercury highlighted by the Sun at their formation. Communication is at the heart of the company. Libra is the sign of balance, partners, harmony and sometimes indecision. It is a logical and reasonable sign. So we might expect a logical, mental management, a culture which requires a lot of communication, meetings and explaining, a will to communicate and a wish to have a partner. It is perhaps interesting to note that both companies work in cooperation with other companies. KLM has had many partners over the years, the most recent bigger one being Air France. The Volkskrant is part of a much larger publishing group so also has partners.

The down side of this aspect of both companies, is that there could be a hesitance about fighting and competing, the management will prefer harmony. (This may not be true for the rest of company, it may only refer to the management. There are dilemmas in these companies which can be seen in other aspects of the astrology, but this is beyond the scope of what I wish to cover here).

By setting up the horoscope of these two companies we can see when the Sun-Mercury conjunction is triggered in the Company Clock. This means that although this theme will always be important, there will be opportunities for development in these areas of the company(management, communication and partnership) twelve times, once in each phase, in the 72 year cycle. Two of these will stand out and that is where the 'clock' falls on the aspect and then opposes it 36 years later.



The company clock model with 12 phases starting at 0 – 6 years the Aries (♈) and finished with the past Pisces phase (♓) between 66-72 years. Each phase has a critical point 3-4 years in but that will not be covered here although it is very interesting) For both companies the Sun falls in the 3rd phase, so this will be between 12 and 18 years old. Mercury falls slightly later in the 4th phase, between, 18 and 24 years old. The oppositions fall 36 years later in the 9th and the 10th phases.

For those of us who prefer tables - to be exact:

	Sun conjunct	Mercury conjunct	Sun opposing	Mercury opposing
Volkkrant	December 1936 December 2008	October 1937 October 2009	December 1972 December 2044	October 1973 October 2045
KLM	February 1937 February 2009	April 1938 April 2010	February 1973 February 2045	April 1974 April 2046

What this means is that the two companies will have parallel ‘Sun’ opportunities in 2008 (VK) and 2009 (KLM), and Mercury ones in 2009 (VK) and 2010 (KLM).

These periods will resonate with the previous cycles in 1936 to 1937 (VK) and 1937 to 1938 (KLM) . Also the same themes will have been triggered from 1972 to 1973 (VK) and 1973 to 1974 (KLM).

In other words for the Volkskrant we are interested in the periods 1936-37 and 1972-73 And for KLM we are interested in the periods 1937-38 and 1973-74 as we want to be ready for the parallels in 2008-2010.

So what did happen? What questions can we ask if we take this cycle as a basis? And how could we use this information to ‘predict’ the issues and opportunities in the coming two years?

Volkskrant history

The information here is summarised and obtained from public sources. Obviously a more in depth study using information from inside the company would give a much greater opportunity to study these cycles and gain a better understanding of how they work in practice.



Until 1934 the Volkskrant was under the editorship of Jan Vesters, who was a catholic journalist. It was a catholic newspaper for the catholic working class. In 1934 the catholic bishop was asked to influence the editing of the paper. In 1935 the offices moved from Utrecht to den Bosch, and in 1937 (one of the years we are interested in) a Catholic lawyer, Carl Romme became the government Minister of Social Affairs and Employment (Sociale Zaken). Later after the war, this appointment had consequences for the Volkskrant. Romme who was involved in press issues during the war was thought by many to use the newspaper as a mouthpiece for catholic issues, when he later became one of the editors in chief..

Volkskrant new style

So we see that 1937 is the start of this management phase and we see after this a change in focus. From 1938 the Volkskrant was no longer a ‘workers’ newspaper and circulation grew.

In summary it could be said that there were big changes between 1935 and 1938 about the identity (the Sun) of the company. I expect that in '36-'37 this would have been quite a struggle. Although I can find nothing directly linked to Romme and the Volkskrant in 1937, his becoming a minister and being a political writer certainly influenced the history of the paper. The issues were probably about ‘who are we?’ and freedom of speech. How much power do editors have? What is the relationship between management (Sun) and the editors or

journalists (Mercury)? What type of newspaper are we? This was eventually solved but is it really? How is the relationship now? Has this period in history left its mark?

The next trigger in the same theme – 1972-73

Now a look at the other trigger point in 1972-73. As a run up to this in the 60's, the Catholic part of the title disappeared. In 1967 there were heavy discussions about working together with other organisations and newspapers and in 1970 there were big arguments about the identity of the paper. In 1972 there was a report published that came into power in 1973. (These are the years of interest.) It concerned the powers the directors and the editor in chief had and there was a bitter fight. An agreement could not even be reached about whether the paper should have the title 'morning' or 'daily' newspaper. In 1974 a new top management structure was introduced and this report from 1973 was again the basis for the same argument.

So what does it mean?

So from the history, it seems that for the Volkskrant, the triggers raise issues about the identity, the powers of the editors and the management and the relationships between them and this has not been struggle-free. It has also raised the freedom of speech issue. So it is reasonable to assume that these issues will need to be tackled again in 2008 and 2009. The problem here is a power struggle, which can be seen from the horoscope, but the history has also played a role. Perhaps there is still a wound that needs to be reopened and healed. My advice would be to do this. To look back at the original mission of the paper and to see how this can be used. The management and editors have the potential for a harmonious relationship but only if they both feel that they have influence and power. The paper should have a 'fair' (Libra) ethic and give information (Mercury) based on this principle. Its mission should be to be a quality newspaper and challenge in a fair way. The third phase, which both companies are now in(early 2008), is the Gemini phase which has an emphasis on Mercury related topics. What should be tackled in this phase is communication. Internet potential, company brochures, logos, company information both internal and external, fax, email, internal memos – anything that has to do with trading, agents, etc - all of these, are things to be looked at in this phase.

A special word of warning for the Volkskrant

Perhaps a worrying warning can be given to the Volkskrant. Looking back at these cycles it can be noted that during the 2nd World War, the paper ceased production in 1941, due to a dispute caused by the sacking of Vesters, which in turn caused the editors to resign. In the cycle, 1941 equates with 2013. Perhaps preparation now will allow this phase to be used in a positive way. So as not to repeat this history. What went wrong in the dispute and is the issue still needing to be resolved? More advice could be given on this with discussion and input from management as they are the only ones who know how all these aspects really work in the company and what the real challenges are.



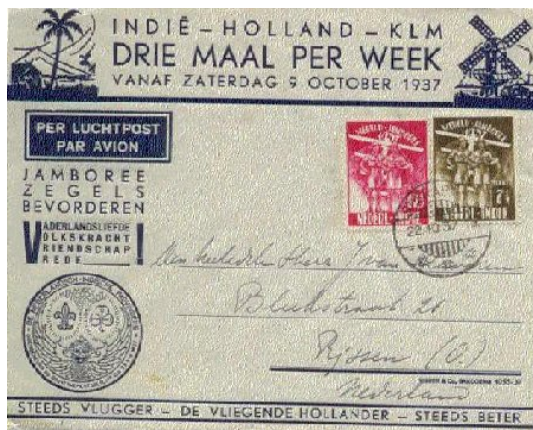
KLM History

Although KLM has the same themes, it has used the opportunities very differently, not only due to the different nature of the business. Again all information below is mostly from public sources although a few people from KLM were interviewed during my research when designing the model during the writing of my dissertation. Of course more inside knowledge would greatly add to discovering how the cycles work in practice. However a summary should serve to illustrate the point.

The first trigger years

The period of interest for KLM is 1937-1938. This equates with the coming period 2009 and 2010. Like the Volkskrant, KLM grew in this period. By 1939 it was the fourth biggest airline, growing from 18,000 passengers in 1937 to 160,000 in 1939. Again the third phase is active and the 3rd phase themes can clearly be seen. The carrying of mail is important, and competition from Imperial Airlines was very strong.

KLM became a force and was very successful - a positive side of the Sun being triggered - companies get noticed, they are in the spotlight. An example gives the flavour of 1937 below:



From KLM History “ The inauguration of the twice weekly service Neth.Indies-Holland was originally set for 9 Oct. 1937. Special envelopes were made available. However as a result of the loss of one of her aircraft KLM was forced to postpone the inauguration till 23 Oct.1937. Aircraft: DC-3 PH-ARB "BUIZERD". Captain: Tepas. Departure Bandoeng 23 Oct. and arrival Amsterdam 28 Oct.1937”

So the success was not without set-backs. During the third phase KLM also introduced reading tables and ashtrays into their planes. There were specialist radio personnel and there was a focus on quieter flights and ventilation. These are all part of the Gemini holon. Although the Sun point has not yet been reached at the time of writing (early 2008) the third phase has been active since the merger with Air France in 2003. This has resulted in even more internal communications being necessary with more languages. Internet bookings have been introduced (much later than other airlines) and the focus has been to create network hubs. These are some of the current Gemini themes today.

The Sun is also of course about management, so with Air France becoming more powerful it will be interesting to see how this works, as the Sun gets triggered in 2009.

KLM stopped normal flights because of the war in 1939. Their planes were used for other goals during the war but perhaps KLM should get ready for the parallel phase in 2011. Not that it might necessarily mean war, but there was a change in focus needed then, a whole new direction, albeit temporarily.

The next period triggered

To take a look at the other trigger, the relevant years are 1973 and 1974. By 1973 KLM had been through difficult times. They had had one of their biggest losses to date in 1971 and due to new jumbo jets and cheaper fares, there was overcapacity. They had invested in a huge new hangar and a new office. But hijacking was becoming popular for political ends. There had to be a new strategy and new marketing. Market focus was necessary and communication was a big part of that.

However just as business class was introduced, the oil crisis hit in 1973. Schiphol introduced growth limits but KLM survived by being very focussed on their goals. Communication from the management was very clear. By 1973 however the company felt stable and although times were meagre, by using the company strengths they came through. This is very much in keeping with what should work in the 10th Capricorn phase which started in 1973.

Again issues of management and communication would have been important at these times. The identity of the company would have been central, as would any outside relationships. (Libra). Advice for KLM would be to look at these periods and see how the strengths may need to be used again in 2009 and 2010. What KLM originally wanted to do will be vital and with Air France now having more power in this, KLM might have to stand up for their own mission. The mission of KLM should still be “to be competitive and to be a pioneer”. Their image should stay as one of “being the best”, offering quality. The management focus should stay on partnerships and communication is central to the heart of the company. By understanding the minds of the original founders, a clear focus can be achieved again.

These are short illustrations of how astrology can be used to foster discussion on both the past and the future. The 72 year cycle is an organisational development model that offers a good basis for discussions with company leaders. Directors who are new to their institutions may not know the history of their companies but when there is a model to research the history, rich rewards can be gained by looking at the past, learning the lessons learned there and projecting these towards future goals.

Faye Cossar

Consultant astrologer
Juxtaposition.