

## Understand Your Preferred “Lens” Through Which You View Organizations

One of the most frequent reasons that organizational consultants argue about the best methods for organizational change is because consultants often have different perspectives, or lens, through which they view organizations. The impact of these differences is often underestimated. For example, you can have two different consultants interact with an organization and they might later provide different descriptions of the same organization. Therefore, it is critical that consultants understand their own perspective and be sensitive to the organizational perspectives of others.



One of the most useful resources to explain these perspectives is *Reframing Organizations* (Bolman and Deal, Jossey-Bass, 1991). The authors depict four quite different and major organizational perspectives among researchers, writers, educators, consultants and members of organizations.

**Table I:3 – Various “Lens” Through Which We View Organizations**

Lens	Examples of What is Noticed or Talked About from That Lens
Structural	Goals, objectives, roles, responsibilities, performance, policies and procedures, efficiency, hierarchy and coordination and control
Human Resource	Participation, feelings, fulfillment, communication, needs of people, relationships, motivation, enrichment and commitment
Political	Power, conflict, competition, authority, experts, coalitions, allocation of resources, bargaining and decision making
Symbolic	Rituals, culture, values, stories, different perspectives, language, expressions, myths, commitment and metaphors

Note that these are horizontal lens regarding what different people notice across the activities in organizations. There are also many vertical lens through which we view intra-personal dynamics, for example, the many perspectives put forth in the increasing amount of books on personal development.

It is important for you to realize that no lens, or perspective, is better than the others. Experienced consultants have learned that the more perspectives that they can get from their clients about an issue in their organization, often the more accurate and useful are the plans to address that issue. Thus, the more lens through which you can view organizations, the more useful you will be to yourself and your clients.