



The following reflections are based on the work of my friend and mentor [Peter Koenig](#) who has researched the role of “source” in organizations for many years.

### *Source*

1. any thing or place from which something comes, arises, or is obtained.
2. the beginning or place of origin of a stream or river.
3. a book, statement, person, etc., supplying information.

## **The role of source**

Any enterprise, project or event always goes back to a single source; the person who gave the spark of life to an idea and had a compelling vision that wanted to be realized.

In instances where one might feel that “we” had the idea together, closer investigation of the path of creation will always lead back to **one** particular person. The person who has the role of source has an energetic connection to the endeavour quite unlike any other member of the organization or team. The energetic connection is derived from the source-person being the first person in time to take a risk, i.e. make an investment in manifesting the idea. Often the first risk was taken in communicating the idea to a second person.

As a result, the source has an intuitive knowing about what the next steps are and will have strong reactions, often viscerally, if these insights are not honoured. For the source, the “Gestalt” of the idea can be sensed, even if others can at times have more accurate language to describe it. The effects of the importance of source can be observed, whether or not the source is acknowledged. However, acknowledgment of source will lead to an ease of flow in processes and decrease potential for conflict.

### A metaphor for source

If an idea, a project or an organization was an individual we could attempt to trace back how this being first came into existence. At the beginning of the child's life, there was the act of creation, which required a father and a mother.

Let's assume there was a field or a dimension in which all ideas and all creations exist; the field of limitless potential. Let's say this field is the “father” in this metaphor. The field chooses a carrier, the source, a “mother” that will bring the child into existence. This person is inseminated with the idea; the source might indeed feel as if “going pregnant” with the idea for a while prior to it's birth.

Even after the baby (the idea, project) is born, the connection to it's creators (the field and the source) is very strong. The field and the source are the genetic parents of this baby and regardless of who will help to raise the child to be an independent person – the birth parents will always remain the birth parents.



For the success of the child in life, it seems to be vital that this primary connection is recognized and honoured, even if other people do a bulk of the childrearing work or if the child is going to be adopted by another parent in the future.

### The role of helpers

The role of others as supporters and helpers for the success of a project envisioned by the source is paramount. As in the metaphor of the child, a single parent would never be able to do as good a job raising the child as a whole community could. As they say: It takes a village...

The bigger the original vision the source brings into existence, the more likely the source relies on others for realization of this vision. The helpers can take on all kinds of different roles; from translating the idea into concepts or tasks, to taking on roles as "sub-sources" with full responsibility for a sub-project that feeds into the larger source. The more connected the helpers feel energetically to the idea/vision of the source - and this comes not just from liking the project content but from their relationship to the source and acknowledging the source's source role - the more they are able to realize and exercise their own source within the project. This increases the momentum of the endeavour.

Each helper can form his or her special connection to the project and become a central figure in the growth process – but the source as the point of origin must be recognized. If anyone unrightfully claims ownership of the idea, the balance in the system is disturbed and will suffer a multitude of consequences.

### The source of organizations

Every organization has a point of origin, the moment when the idea was conceived and someone gave shape to what was previously shapeless. This idea of source in organizations is especially observable in family owned businesses. However, it is important to note that identifying the source may not always be as obvious as it might appear at first sight. Often, the founding of the company is attributed to one person (for example the patriarch), but the driving force behind the endeavour was in fact another (for example the matriarch of the family). It is therefore essential to examine closely who was the original life force behind the organization before drawing premature conclusions about the source.

The source can be inherited or passed on from one person to another. The passing on of the source is not a legal but an energetic act. Even if due diligence has been done to ensure that all the right contracts are in place, the source can remain with the original founder and the transmission has not occurred. If this is the case, the new leader/CEO, and subsequently the organization, will be weakened. Succession can only occur if the person passing it over and the person receiving it are conscious and open to the process. Without full transmission of the source, a struggle for dominance and recognition ensues.



A few of the tell-tale signs for the source not having been transferred (or not transferred fully) can be:

the newly appointed leader

- feels disconnected from the business,
- is unsure about next steps, has no vision,
- does not feel what his or her place or purpose in the endeavour is,
- has no execution even though has all the legal power,
- experiences power struggles with other people in the organization,
- is not accepted by others in the organization as the new leader.

It is important to know that **only one person can fulfil the role of source**. The ownership structure of an organization or the distribution of profits are not tied to being source, but the final say about strategic decisions is.

In family run businesses, it is not unusual that the passing of the source skips one generation. If the source remained with a grandparent that has already passed, the transfer might be accomplished through a personal ritual of initiation that honours the vision and importance of the source, before the new CEO steps fully into his or her new responsibility as the new source of the organization. If the person fulfilling the role of source is still alive, this is a ritual that can and should be conducted in person.

### The role of source in leadership

In any organization, there are numerous sources for numerous projects. The vital importance of accepting that the source will “sense” what has to be done should not be underestimated. If the leader is the source, this might be easier than if another employee is the source for a particular thought or project. Regardless of the position of the source in the hierarchy, the source needs to be recognized in order to function as the channel through which information flows into the organization. Furthermore, a lack of recognition of source is noted by members of the system and feels unfair or unjust; members of the organization/team will revert to “just doing their jobs”. Trust in the leaders and or the organization as a whole is diminished. Acceptance of source creates harmony and trust and is also the key to all people being able to realize their own source potential. The recognition of source is thus key to innovation.

If the role of source is not acknowledged in leadership, this either results in a dictatorial approach to running the company (“I am the new boss now and you will do as I say!”) or in a spineless egalitarianism (“we are all the same and we all have equal say”). The first often leads to organizations with a high number of sick days and a work morale weakened by fear whereas latter leads to inefficiency and a culture that values comradeship over performance. Both will bleed the organization of talent since intelligent and self-responsible individuals will neither choose to work for an organization in which submission to an authoritarian leader is required, nor an organization in which every process is stalled because no one ever feels empowered to take a decision.



This short article on source was written by Nadjeschda Taranczewski and Peter Koenig in July 2012. Please feel free to copy onto your own letterhead by mentioning the authors.