

Introducing the Eddie Yu 3H Holistic Management Framework

What is the 3H holistic management framework?

Contemporary management practice often grapples with fragmented approaches that address symptoms rather than systemic causes. The 3H Holistic Management Framework addresses this limitation by proposing that organizational success depends on the synergistic integration of three metaphorical domains: Heart (H1), Head (H2), and Hand (H3). These domains represent the alignment of key organizational elements, such as leadership, purpose, culture, strategy, structure, and competence.

The framework posits that organizational performance (OP) is a function of the leadership's ability to integrate these domains, as represented by the equation: $OP = f(H^1 \cap H^2 \cap H^3)$. Here, the intersection ($\cap$) signifies the deliberate synthesis of the H domains, creating multiplicative effects. While all three domains are necessary, their relative importance may vary; the Heart domain (H1), encompassing leadership and culture, often carries greater weight as it fuels the motivation to execute strategy (H2) and develop competence (H3).

For managers and management students, the 3H framework serves as a conceptual map, dividing the vast field of management into three intuitive domains to facilitate a more structured and holistic understanding.

Yu's 3H holistic management defined

Holistic management is the art and science of managing organisational performance in an all-encompassing and synergistically integrated approach.

Why the 3H holistic management framework?

The 3H framework posits that a holistic approach is the most effective way to manage complex organizational issues. It is not a rigid template but a mental schema for leaders. When embedded in the manager's mindset, the framework enables spontaneous and integrated management of all key domains.

The costly failures in managing the COVID-19 pandemic¹ at a national level serve as a stark example. Many nations possessed the strategic intent (H2) and technical competence (H3) but failed in the Heart domain (H1)—specifically, in unifying public will and showing compassionate leadership—or in integrating all three domains with sufficient speed and willpower. This case underscores the framework's core tenet: sustained performance requires both the *necessary conditions* (adequacy in each H domain) and the *sufficient condition* (their effective synthesis). Other studies² also suggested, if leaders could spontaneously think and act with the 3H framework, they would be more likely to holistically manage their organisations or projects to achieve their intended goals.

¹ Yu, E. (2021) 'An analysis of China's strategy in combating the coronavirus pandemic with the 3H framework', *Public Administration and Policy: An Asia-Pacific Journal*, 24(1), pp. 76-91.

² The author's doctoral students have conducted research on over 30 organisations with the 3H framework. Up to 2025, nine doctoral candidates have applied the framework as the key theoretical backbone for their theses and successfully completed them.

The conceptual framework - 3H's metaphorical expression (also see the endnote for 12 scenarios)

Organisation performance, the dependent variable, is a function of the leader's driving force to integrate among Heart (H¹), Head (H²) and Hand (H³) domains, the independent variables, of that organisation.

$$OP = f(H^1 \cap H^2 \cap H^3)$$

OP = Organisational Performance

$\cap$ = Intersection of each H domain, level of synthesis among 3 H domains by deliberate integration, which creates multiplicative effects contributing positively to the organisational performance.

H¹ = Heart domain and its related constructs, which are typically human relation skills related: leadership, emotional, moral and ethical appeals; motivating, engaging people and team building abilities, etc.

H² = Head domain and its related constructs, which are strategic, organisation and business model related: vision, pathfinding, logical & strategic appeal, hierarchy of strategy, planning & controlling, organisational design (structure & systems), ability to articulate strategy for strategic alignment and execution, etc.

H³ = Hand domain and its related constructs, which are task-oriented issues and competence related: supporting, coaching and training to ensure people possessed the operational/functional skills and abilities required to implement strategies, programs and activities, etc.

Each H's domain may carry different weights of importance in managerial decision makings. Often, H¹ carries heavier weight than H² and H³, whereas H² carries a relatively heavier weight than H³. Reasons being, even though an organisation's strategy, systems and competence are well thought through and sound, if the leader cannot unify and motivate people to implement the strategies, the organisation cannot achieve its strategic goals.

The 3H framework assumes, all key constructs, which are essential for business success, shall be categorised into one of the H domains. Each construct shall be hosted in a designated H domain even though it may also be relevant to other H domains. For example, leadership is hosted in the Heart domain, but ideally, the leading style should be consistent across different levels and divisions in the organisation, which also involves Head and Hand domain activities.

The notions of effectiveness and efficiency refer to both measurable intended outcomes of an organisational or project performance driven by the 3H framework. **Effectiveness** means strategic goal-driven activities, and **efficiency** means operating organisational or project activities with the least possible resources and costs.

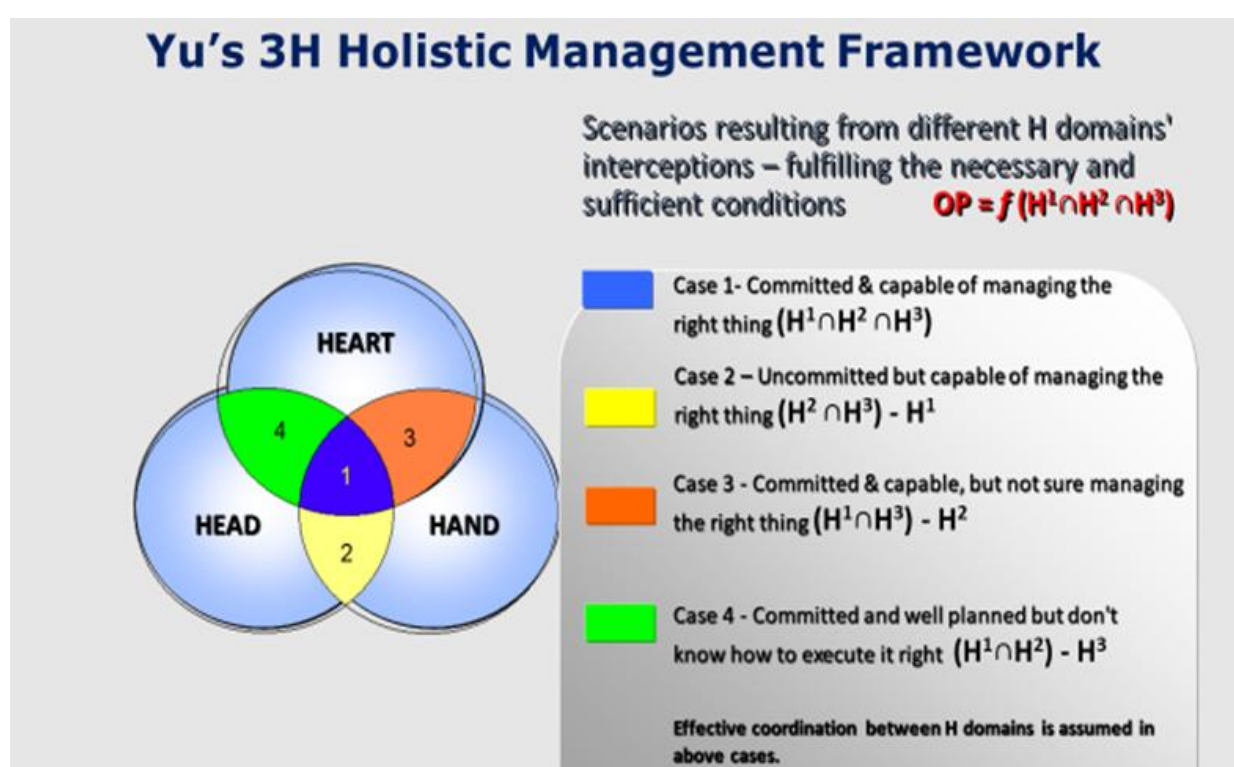
The synthesis created from the effective coordination among the three domains of H¹, H² and H³ shall secure the **necessary** and **sufficient** conditions for effective and efficient organisational performance.

Case 1 in the diagram above illustrates the conditions. ***The level of holistic management hinges on the level of synthesis created in integrating the H¹, H² and H³ domains. ¹All three H domains (necessary factors) and the synergistic integration (sufficient³ condition), representing the***

³ Sufficiency here does not mean a synergistic integrated all three H domains framework would guarantee to achieve the target organisational performance. It merely means it is sufficient to function the intended purposes of the framework. The organisational performance can be affected by unexpected events, such as COVID 19 pandemic, geopolitical threats, which are beyond the control of business leaders though theoretically, an effective 3H framework implementation helps organisations survive better than their rivals.

independent and moderating variables, respectively, are contributing to the effective and efficient organisational performance,⁴ the dependent variable.

1. Effective leadership (H1⁵), which motivates and engages employees to achieve common organisational purposes and goals, is a necessary but not sufficient condition for effective and efficient organisational performance.
2. Effective strategy (H2), which guides how the organisation competes and grows, is a necessary but not sufficient condition for effective organisational performance.
3. Efficient workforce competence (H3), which determines how well the organisation operates, is a necessary but not sufficient condition for efficient organisational performance.
4. *Synthesis*⁶ across the three domains of H1, H2 and H3 seamlessly shall secure the necessary and **sufficient** conditions for effective and efficient organisational performance. (see Case 1 on the diagram). The greater the congruence area, the better the synthesis created from integrating the three domains.



⁴ The dependent variable can be at the corporate level, e.g., organisational performance, or at the project level, e.g., merger and acquisition success, digital transformation. The dependent variable should be quantifiable and detailed about how it will be measured.

⁵ H1, H2, H3 represent the domains of Heart, Head and Hand, respectively. Researchers or managers shall select one or more proxy variables to represent the firm specific condition of individual H domains, e.g., leadership as a proxy variable for Heart domain.

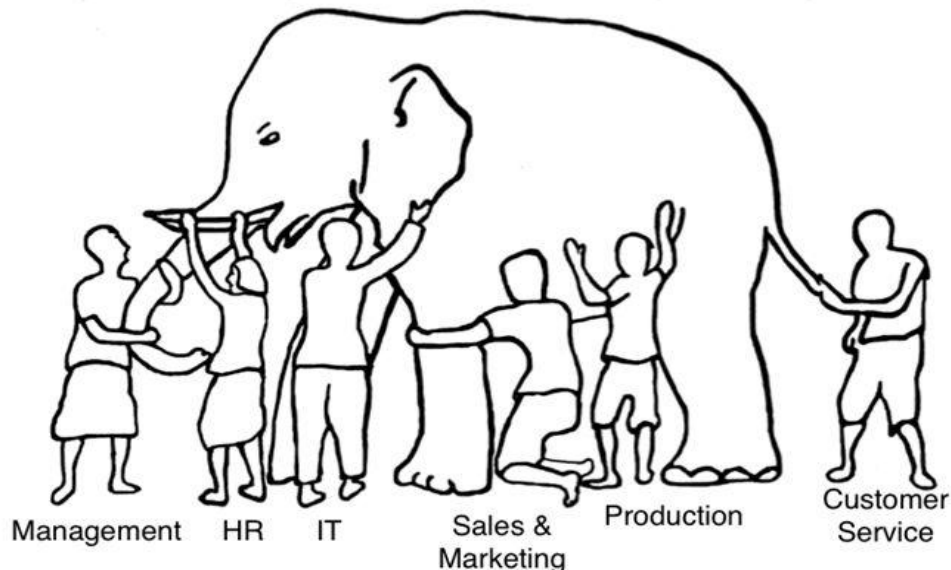
⁶ Organisations possess all 3H domain factors only fulfil the **necessary** condition of the 3H framework; it is a synergistic integration among all 3H domain factors that fulfils the **sufficient** condition for the **holistic** management framework effects its ascribed functions Synergistic integration among all 3H domain factors seldom happens by chance. Leaders have to make it happened through meticulously organisational design with emphasis on fostering a conducive culture, supportive communication, guiding policy, relevant code of practice, effective staff performance evaluation & remuneration systems and other people engagement measures.

Business school education makes or breaks holistic management?

One of the prevailing controversies of business school education is that through subjects such as competitive strategy, promotes a zero-sum game mentality. For instance, the guru in the competitive strategy—Michael E. Porter, most of his works emphasises competition, which often connotes “zero sum” mentality. The 3H holistic management framework advocates *Daoism* approach—seeking long-term mutually beneficial relationship with stakeholders (employees, customers, business partners, suppliers, financiers/investors, regulators, environment, community, etc.) to create a bigger pie so that every participant can enjoy a larger reward; minimise unnecessary and avoidable costs and focus on value creation for all stakeholders. The goal is to foster a harmonious environment and an amiable relationship among all parties of the 3H domains to achieve a win-win outcome.

A business school is typically structured with business functional faculties, such as Marketing, Organisational Behaviour, HRM, Accounting & Finance, Information Systems, Operations, etc. Students, invariably, will choose “majors” among these functional units/departments, with which their university education will focus on the courses/modules provided by these functional areas. Upon their graduation, they will typically pursue their careers in the field related to their chosen majors. For example, Marketing major will begin as a Marketing & Sales Coordinator/Assistant or Customer Services Officer, whereas Accounting & Finance major will aim to begin their career with a CPA firm as an Audit Associate or Accounting Assistant; HRM major graduates will get an HR & Administration Officer/Assistant job.

Taking a silo view of an organisational problem is often narrow or counterproductive.



Source: CMS Wire

Many business graduates had their business education and career entirely focused on a single business function, be it as Marketing, Accounting, Information System, etc. As Maslow cautioned: "If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail." Also, as depicted in the blind describing an elephant diagram above, people tend to describe an organisation problem with their frame of reference, which is mainly shaped by their business school education and reinforced by their corresponding professional work experiences. Such a framed perspective promotes a silo mentality, which often causes turf fights or seeing major organisational issues from a narrow perspective.

They may not understand the importance of teamwork and of analysing a major organisational issue from different perspectives. Consequently, they fail to offer a comprehensive solution to major organisational problems.

Managers should take a treetop view of the entire elephant, so that they can observe different parts of the elephant's body, how they coordinate with one another to move the colossal body ahead. The 3H framework enables managers to widen their perspective so that they can clearly identify the characteristics of 'individual trees without missing that of the forest'. With such a corporate mandate, managers are more likely to manage people and organisational issues holistically.

The framework's classical Chinese philosophical roots

The contemporary geopolitical and business environment is widely characterised by volatility, distrust, and a pervasive dominance of reductionist paradigms. Scholars and practitioners alike note a trend towards short-termism, zero-sum thinking, and the marginalisation of ethical considerations in favour of predatory competition as we witnessed a distinct exemplar in 2025 tariff war initiated by president Donald Trump, leading to a pervasive crisis in trust and justice between America and almost the rest of the world. Management theories that espouse amoral, agency-driven models of human behaviour partly perpetuated this environment, legitimising a "jungle predatory" mentality. In response to this crisis, the 3H Holistic Management Framework emerges not as a novel invention, but as a modern synthesis of timeless wisdom. This section posits that the theoretical robustness and practical relevance of the 3H framework are fundamentally derived from its deep roots in classical Chinese philosophy, which provides a coherent system for developing leaders capable of rectifying the chaotic conditions of our time.

Another critical problem of modern management is its tendency to analyse issues through a silo perspective, offering fragmented solutions that address symptoms rather than systemic causes. For instance, a financial crisis may be met with cost-cutting (an operational "Hand" solution), ignoring the strategic missteps ("Head") and the erosion of employee morale and ethical culture ("Heart") that contributed to it. The 3H framework, with its philosophical grounding in Chinese holistic worldviews, is explicitly designed to remedy this blunder by insisting on integrating three domains:

- Heart (心): The purpose and value foundation and the efficacy of leading influence.
- Head (腦): The strategic and organising abilities for effective management.
- Hand (手): The competency enabled capacity for efficient action.

This tripartite model finds its profound epistemological foundation in the interconnected worldviews of Confucianism, Daoism, and Chinese strategic thinking, offering corrective measures to the fragmentation plaguing contemporary leadership.

Philosophical foundations of the 3H domains

2.1 The Heart (心): The Confucian Moral Compass

The "Heart" domain addresses the *why* of leadership—its purpose and moral foundation. Confucian thought, which posits that legitimate authority springs from virtue rather than coercion, overwhelmingly informed this. Confucius asserted that the character of the leader is the primary determinant of organizational order and effectiveness.

Salient Concept: 仁義 (Rén Yì) - Benevolence and Righteousness. A leader guided by 仁 (Rén) demonstrates humane care for their stakeholders, while 義 (Yì) ensures decisions are made based on moral rightness, not mere expediency (Chan, 1963).

- Exemplary Citation: 「為政以德，譬如北辰，居其所而眾星共之。」 (*The Analects* 2.1 論語).
 - *"He who exercises government by means of his virtue may be compared to the North Polar Star, which keeps its place and all the stars turn towards it."*
- Managerial Relevance: In an era of ethical scandals, a leader with a cultivated "Heart" builds trust and loyalty, creating a resilient organizational culture. For example, a decision to retain and retrain employees during a downturn, guided by *Rén*, fosters immense loyalty and productivity upon recovery, a stark contrast to the short-term gains of immediate layoffs, which damage social capital.

2.2 The Head (腦): The Strategic Intellect of Sun Zi 孫子 and the I-Ching 易經

The "Head" domain concerns the *what*—the formulation of adaptive, intelligent strategy. It is here that the wisdom of Sun Zi and the I-Ching proves indispensable, moving beyond rigid planning to dynamic navigation. The core premise is that the universe is in a constant state of flux, and wisdom lies in anticipating and adapting to these cycles (Baynes, 1967).

- Salient Concept 1: 不戰而屈人之兵 - Subduing the Enemy Without Fighting. This is the pinnacle of strategic wisdom, emphasizing victory through superior positioning and psychological influence, thereby avoiding the costs of direct conflict (Sun Zi, *The Art of War*, Ch. 3).
- Salient Concept 2: 易 (Yì) - Change. The I-Ching teaches that change is the only constant; wisdom lies in anticipating and flowing with these cycles (Baynes, 1967)
- Exemplary Citation: 「是故百戰百勝，非善之善者也；不戰而屈人之兵，善之善者也。」 (Sun Zi, *The Art of War*, Ch. 3).
 - *"Hence, to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the supreme excellence."* (Adams and Griffith, 1963).
- Managerial Relevance: A company facing aggressive competition, instead of engaging in a destructive price war ("fighting"), should innovate a new business model that makes the competitor's offering obsolete ("subduing without fighting"). This strategic foresight prevents the value destruction inherent in a purely reactive, siloed competitive strategy.

Another important philosophical root of Head stems from Daoism. The concept of Cosmic *Dao* – the *Way* how the cosmos balances itself through *yin* and *yang*, opposed yet complementary forces. 萬物負陰而抱陽，沖氣以為和。 (Lao Zi 老子 *Daodejing*, Ch 42 道德經). Cosmos in the modern business sense, can be interpreted as the entire ecosystem of the business, which consists of macro, industry, market environments that the incumbent organisation interacts with. *Dao* conceives of the environment as a particular way of a domain or a class of domains (heart, head, hand) has its own course of development. The *Dao* of such a domain is incorporated into and exerts impacts within the Cosmic *Dao*, and it flourishes or stagnates depending upon the degree to which it harmonises with or strays from the *Dao*. The organisation flourishes when the key domains attune themselves to the Cosmic *Dao*'s natural course. Following this *Dao* principles, managers have to be aware how the courses of individual components of environments within the Cosmo system are functioning and how the organisation's course of actions should attune in harmony with

the courses of the grand Cosmos system. It is amazing to find out such important insight has already been advocated 2500 years ago and which is still considered to be relevant to the latest strategic management theory and practice.

2.3 The Hand (手): The Unity of Action from Wang Yangming 王陽明

The "Hand" domain addresses the *how*—the translation of intention and strategy into effective reality.

The most powerful philosophical support comes from the Neo-Confucian thinker Wang Yangming, who directly challenged the silo separation of thought and deed.

- Salient Concept: 知行合一 *Zhī Xíng Hé Yī* - The Unity of Knowledge and Action. Wang argued that true knowledge inherently implies action, and action is the completion of knowledge. A failure to act, therefore, indicates a failure to truly *know* (Wang, c. 1529).
- Exemplary Citation: 「知是行之始，行是知之成。」
 - "*Knowledge is the beginning of action; action is the completion of knowledge.*" (Chan, W.T., 1972).
- Managerial Relevance: This philosophy counteracts the common organizational blunder where strategic planning ("Head") becomes an endless exercise, divorced from execution. Wang's philosophy demands a "test and learn" approach, where a minimal viable product is launched to ground the strategy in reality, thus completing the knowledge cycle and ensuring the "Head" and "Hand" domains are unified.

The synthesis: holistic harmony as the antidote to fragmentation

The true power of the 3H framework is not in its isolated components but in their dynamic integration, a concept embodied by the Chinese ideal of 和 (Hé - Harmony). This synthesis is a direct antidote to the silo-based, fragmented management practices. The framework creates a virtuous self-correcting cycle where each domain informs and validates the others.

- The Heart Guides the Head: A leader's moral compass (*Heart - Rén, Yī*) must inform their strategy (*Head*). A brilliant, amoral strategy is sociopathic and unsustainable, as evidenced by corporate failures rooted in ethical lapses.
- The Head Informs the Hand: Strategic analysis (*Head - Sun Zi's Shì, I-Ching's Yī*) identifies the most effective and adaptive path for action (*Hand*). Action without strategy is wasted effort, a common outcome when operational teams work in isolation from strategic direction.
- The Hand Validates the Head and Heart: Action (*知行合一 Zhī Xíng Hé Yī*) is the ultimate test of both strategy and character. Virtue and wisdom that do not manifest in the world are, according to Wang Yangming, incomplete. This forces a continuous feedback loop, ensuring that managerial decisions are not made in abstract silos but are grounded in practical reality and ethical consequences.

This integrated model prevents the common managerial failure of addressing a problem with a single-domain solution, thereby creating unintended consequences in the other domains.

A framework for rectifying a chaotic world

The unreason and chaos of today's political and business worlds are not merely the result of external factors, but are the direct outcome of an impoverished and fragmented leadership

model—one that isolates the predatory "Hand," corrupts the "Head" with zero-sum logic, and severs both from the moral "Heart."

The 3H Holistic Management Framework, rooted in the profound depths of classical Chinese philosophy, offers a timely and powerful rectification. It provides a coherent system to counteract silo-thinking by:

1. Providing a Moral Foundation (Heart): Countering predatory selfishness with the Confucian imperative of benevolent and righteous leadership, thus ensuring strategy and action are ethically grounded.
2. Furnishing a Superior Strategic Logic (Head): Replacing costly, zero-sum conflicts with the creative, positive-sum wisdom of winning without fighting and adapting to change, thereby aligning long-term strategy with sustainable value creation.
3. Instilling a Discipline of Effective Execution (Hand): Overcoming bureaucratic inertia and the theory-practice gap by uniting knowledge with action, ensuring ethical strategies are realized effectively in the world.

For the executive facing ethical pressure, the politician trapped in partisan conflict, or the entrepreneur navigating a disruptive market, this framework offers not just a set of tools, but a path to cultivating wisdom. It argues that the most effective way to navigate a chaotic world is not with greater force applied within narrow silos, but with greater harmony, virtue, and strategic intelligence applied holistically. By re-integrating the "Heart," "Head," and "Hand," leaders can cease to be mere predators in the jungle and become architects of a more sustainable, prosperous and humane order.

The 3H holistic management framework is unique

People often compare the 3H holistic management framework with McKinsey's 7-S framework. With due respect to the world-renowned strategy consulting firm's management tool, there are distinctive differences between the two frameworks, in terms of the 3H framework's underlying principles and philosophy.

As alluded above, the fundamental principle of the 3H framework strives to create a people-oriented, win-win and responsible culture—starting from the leader to his/her followers, organisation to organisation, industry to industry, community to community, nation to nation.

As also argued, the underlying philosophy of the 3H framework follows the *Daoism*. 3H framework believes it is counter-cognitive to pre-determine a specific of number of organisational elements (in McKinsey's framework is seven S acronyms) as that may bound or frame managers' perspectives in analysing people and organisational issues.

As alluded to above, three metaphorical domains are plain and sensible, thus easy to remember. Just like Albert Einstein's theory of relativity equation $E = mc^2$, this powerful equation can be so simply presented, easy to remember and communicate with. The 3H framework can also simply be represented by the equation of $OP = f(H^1 \cap H^2 \cap H^3)$. There are 11 other possibilities to identify factors that can undermine an organisation's performance, as illustrated at the end of this essay. Managers can clearly communicate with the incumbent equation to discuss the deficient H domain element(s) with concerned parties conveniently.

The 3H framework emphasises organisation/context-specific elements to be examined, analysed and planned for. Its generic key elements, such as leadership, culture in the Heart domain; organising and control thinking in the Head domain; competence in innovation, agility and speed in Hand domain (Cheung and Yu, 2021), are not included in McKinsey's model.

The 3H framework apart from having strong classical Chinese philosophical roots, the theoretical foundation each of its H domain is essentially built on the shoulders of giants, in terms of modern management theories– for the Heart domain's related literature including the seminal works of, for instance, Gary Yukl's contingency leadership and James Burns of transformational leadershipⁱⁱ in energise the 3H framework, Edgar Schein's organisational culture is also plays an instrumental role in strengthen the efficacy of the framework but both constructs have not been discussed in the 7S model. For the Head domain's related literature, including Jay Barney, Margaret Peteraf and Birger Wernerfelt of resource-based theoryⁱⁱⁱ, Michael Porter's industry analysis, value chain, competitive advantage, Henry Mintzberg of strategic planning and Robert Kaplan of strategy map^{iv}. The 7S model does not concern how a competitive advantage can be created and sustained and how strategy should be articulated and implemented, but these are the key concerns of the 3H framework. For the Hand domain's literature mainly contributed by C. K. Prahalad and Gary Hamel of core competence^v and incumbent business functional/professional principles, such as Marketing, Accounting & Finance, HRM, Operations, AI-IT, R&D, etc. As alluded to earlier, Hand domain advocates building CRIQES (customer responsiveness, innovation, quality, efficiency and speed) advantages, which also makes the 3H holistic management framework unique (Cheung & Yu, 2020).

The choice of literature for each H domain is to be determined by the organisation required specific elements (proxy-variables for individual H domains), of which researchers or managers selected for focusing on studying or using to theorise about their experiences and practices. That is why the 3H framework is highly applicable for DBA or MBA dissertations and theses.

With the above-discussed characteristics, the 3H framework is arguably unique among other management frameworks, McKinsey 7S included.

The importance of 3H alignment with willpower and speed

Holistic management can only be realised through a synergistic alignment of all 3H domains. That means, not only the hard elements, such as strategy, policy, systems, structure, physical units, departments of an organisation, but the soft elements, such as culture, VMV, have to be seamlessly aligned to achieve an organisational common purpose and goals. Often, managing an organisation's own strategic alignment is not sufficient to secure long-term business success; the alignment should be extended to connect the upstream and downstream value chains of those business partners.

Organisations may still fail even though they manage to practise strategic alignment of all their H domains. Why? As Yu (2021) using COVID-19 cases to illustrate, at a national level, many countries learned painful and expensive lessons from the pandemic crisis. They fell short of the expectations not because they did not have the determination to save people's lives, or they did not have modern medical care strategy and competence. Their key shortcoming was their failure to harness speed and execution power. Bureaucracy tends to be biased in favour of the status quo and established procedures with its compliance culture and risk-averse mindset. Unprecedented and pervasive challenges such as COVID-19 required quick actions with imaginative solutions.

As the coronavirus is highly infectious. Time, in terms of hours in detection, containment and treatment, could make the difference between life and death to an infected patient, especially to the elderly and vulnerable groups. Public healthcare specialists are well aware of the importance of focusing protection and treatment on the elderly and vulnerable groups to reduce the infection,

critical illness and death cases. Few countries can execute such a policy well ; consequently, a great majority of deaths in these groups still happened.

At the corporate level, Kodak's case demonstrates the company's vision (developed the world's first digital camera in late 1970s), and the company had known for staffing with superb marketing and R&D professionals; however, people doubt about Kodak management's will power in developing the new business somewhat as advocated by Christensen's disruptive innovation strategy—a new business unit to explore new market potential. When the company was enjoying great profits with the cash cow film products, few would have the willpower to cultivate the new product in the new market. By the time they realised the threat exerted by digital photography technologies and products, Kodak had missed the boat in capitalising on its digital photography technologies.

Integration of 3H domains to create holistic management

It is a behavioural and social action instead of a mechanical or engineering action, though the management must have a well-thought through plan and policy for the integration and have it meticulously executed.

The process of integration often appears to be ambiguous and is seldom explicitly articulated. The nature of action makes the integration a challenging mission; hence, a holistic management framework can never be achieved by accident or luck. It has to be supported by a conducive culture and mindfully implemented by effective management tools, such as a strategy map.

3H approach promotes caring people and corporate social & environmental responsibility

With an increasingly challenging and hostile business environment, if organisations ignore the individual wellness of their workforces, the work-life imbalance will cause lots of personal health and social problems. The 3H framework promotes heart-to-heart relationships between people and organisation with the ultimate goal of building a loyal, highly motivated, engaged and productive workforce. The organisation is keen to take care of its employees' well-being and enable them to maintain a balanced work-life, which in turn helps build a healthy and harmonious work environment. A loyal and productive workforce is a distinctive competitive advantage of an organisation.

Heart-oriented managers, apart from caring about the wellness of their subordinates they are also mindful about the impact of their decisions and organisational activities on the environment. They practise fair trade and fair deal principles and would not exploit customers, trading partners or suppliers even though they possessed stronger bargaining power in business deals. Eventually, all stakeholders, communities, nations and, indeed, the entire world would benefit from such an altruistic mentality.

3H framework can be descriptively and prescriptively applied

Post-mortem analysis on former leading corporations in their respective industries, for instance, Kodak in photography films, Motorola in telecommunication, Thomas Cook in travel services, Li & Fung in global sourcing, manufacturing and logistics, Esprit in apparel retailing, their downfalls are typically due to deficiencies in addressing one or more H domains and certainly failed to sustain the holistic approach of synthesising 3 H domains for a lengthy time. Arguably, if their leaders and managers were indoctrinated with 3H holistic approach in managing their businesses, they would have sustained their leading positions or successfully transformed themselves into leaders of a new

industry, for instance, like the case of Apple Inc. Apart from analysing an organisation's failures, 3H framework can also analyse the key success factors of industry leaders (e.g., Apple Inc, Amazon, Tencent, Samsung, etc.) or of a project. That said, the 3H framework can be applied as a descriptive (explaining causes of success or failure) approach or a prescriptive (predicting chances of success or failure of an incumbent project/organisation's performance) approach in business management research. Apparently, the conceptualisation and operationalisation of related constructs of each independent domain and the dependent variable, e.g., project or organisational performance, have to be clearly defined and validated.

The 3H framework is most useful for people with substantial managerial or professional experience. They can apply it to provide a structured analysis and rational interpretation of their experiences through retrospective analysis of the success or failure factors of the project(s) they had managed or observed. Alternatively, 3H framework can be applicable for project planning, which, of course, is a forward planning and prescriptive oriented.

For students without much managerial experience, they can apply the 3H framework to analyse people and organisation management cases, which is essentially based on secondary data and information.

As the 3H framework is a new management perspective, if you apply it with academic rigour, your original thoughts will be considered as a contribution to advance the theory development. If your experiences and expertise have been theorised with the 3H framework, it would be considered as a good contribution to the managerial practice as well.

Conclusion: Towards a holistic future in management

The 3H holistic management framework presents a paradigm shift from reductionist management practices towards an integrated, synergistic approach. By distilling the complexity of organizational management into three core, metaphorical domains—Heart (H1), Head (H2), and Hand (H3)—the framework provides a powerful yet accessible lens for diagnosis, analysis, and action. Its central proposition, that organizational performance is a function of the leadership's driving force to integrate these domains ($OP = f(H^1 \cap H^2 \cap H^3)$), underscores that excellence in any single domain is a necessary but insufficient condition for long-term success. The sufficient condition, from the frame functioning perspective, lies in the deliberate creation of synthesis among all three H domains.

This essay has argued that the 3H framework's uniqueness stems from its philosophical grounding in *Daoism*, its emphasis on context-specific elements over a fixed set of factors, and its strong theoretical foundations across leadership, strategy, and competence literatures. It serves not as a rigid template, but as a dynamic mental schema that empowers managers and students alike to see the proverbial "forest *and* the trees." The framework's utility is demonstrated both descriptively, in explaining the failures of erstwhile industry leaders, and prescriptively, in planning for successful project and organizational outcomes.

Ultimately, the 3H framework is more than a managerial tool; it is a call for a more responsible, humane, and effective form of holistic management. In advocating for the Heart domain, it champions the well-being of people, organisation and the environment. In integrating the Head and Hand domains, it ensures that the strategic vision is realized through competent execution. As the business landscape grows increasingly volatile and interconnected, the ability to think and act holistically becomes not just an advantage, but a necessity. The 3H holistic management framework offers a clear path forward, guiding current and future leaders to build organizations that are not

only high-performing but also sustainable, harmonious, and resilient. We will have a better world if leaders are believed in and practised 3H holistic management framework principles.

ⁱ Except the ideal Case 1 depicted in the Venn Diagram above, there are at least another 11 scenarios from Case 2 to 12 below, each reveals different degree of deficiency in individual H domains and or weakness in coordination between H domains, which may adversely affect the organisational performance thus have to be identified and deal with.

Organisational Performance OP =

1. $f(H^1 \cap H^2 \cap H^3)$ Adequacy of all 3H domain factors and effective integration of all 3H domains.
Ideal case of holistic management.
2. $f(H^1 \cap H^2 \bar{H}^3)$ Deficiency in Hand domain factors and weak coordination between H2 & H3 domains
3. $f(H^1 \bar{H}^2 \bar{H}^3)$ Deficiencies of Head and Hand domain factors and weak coordination among all 3 domains
4. $f(\bar{H}^1 \bar{H}^2 \cap H^3)$ Deficiency of Heart domain factors and weak coordination between H1 and H2 domains
5. $f(\bar{H}^1 \bar{H}^2 \bar{H}^3)$ Deficiencies of Heart and Head domain factors and weak coordination among all domains
6. $f(H^1 \cap H^3 \bar{H}^2)$ Deficiency of Head domain factors and weak coordination between H2 and H3 domains
7. $f(\bar{H}^1 \bar{H}^2 \bar{H}^3)$ Deficiencies of Heart and Hand domain factors and weak coordination among all 3 domains
8. $f(H^1 \bar{H}^2 \cap H^3)$ With adequacy of all 3H domain factors but weak coordination between H1 and H2 domains
9. $f(H^1 \cap H^2 \bar{H}^3)$ With adequacy of all 3H domain factors but weak coordination of H2 & H3 domains
10. $f(H^1 \bar{H}^3 \cap \bar{H}^2)$ Deficiency of Hand domain factors and weak coordination between H1 & H3 domains
11. $f(H^1 \bar{H}^2 \bar{H}^3)$ With adequacy of all 3H domain factors but weak coordination among all 3H domains
12. $f(\bar{H}^1 \bar{H}^2 \bar{H}^3)$ Deficiency in all 3H domain factors and weak coordination among all 3H domains

Scenario Legend:

Except the first ideal scenario, the other 11 scenarios (2nd to 12th) reveal the deficiencies, malfunctioning or unreadiness of one or more H domains, which would adversely affect the organisational performance. Generally, Heart failure (as in human health) could be more harmful to the organisational health than brain (Head) disorder; whereas, handicap (Hand) issues may not be as fatal though that could lead to inefficiency of operations. Nevertheless, the significance of impacts is often firm specific thus organisations should be carefully examine how these H domain failures, disorders or handicaps affect specific areas of the organisation. If Management can prepare timely and effective remedies to these H domain problems, they would help get the organisation back on track again.

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