



NEUROCAM INTERNATIONAL
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Letter of Submission

I have been tasked by the Nautonier and the Acting Chief Executive Officer with conducting an assessment of the current status of Neurocam International, and determining:

- the immediate priorities of the organization;
- how these can best be serviced; and
- potential future directions and priorities for the organization.

I hereby present this report, comprising my findings, to the Nautonier Liaison.

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Thursday, 24th August, 2005

Introduction: The Current Situation

Neurocam International currently has a roster of approximately 250 supposedly active Operatives and a considerable public profile. Contrary to widespread belief, correspondence is being processed in full, and a small number of minor special assignments are being carried out by Operatives - but for all serious intents and purposes the organization at time of writing is effectively dormant.

This has been the case for approximately seven weeks, since around the 13th July. Throughout this period:

- Routine assignments, the bulk of Neurocam's day-to-day business, have not been issued. These are still are not being issued.

- The website has been - and still is - down; consequently, new applications have not been accepted, despite substantial demonstrated interest.

As a result of these two circumstances, it appears to many, if not most, people who are paying attention that Neurocam International has more or less vanished from the face of the Earth.

Internally, Neurocam's management structure has been decimated by the various suspension, dismissal, and resignation of the Chief Executive Officer Bridget Fischer, Director of Human Resources Security Gertrude Zelle, Inductions Officer Miles Carrefour, and Deputy Head of Operations Ottilie Votavova.

Charles Hastings, under normal circumstances the Director of Operations, has been acting in the role of CEO since Ms Fischer stood aside due to conflict of interest concerns on the 12th of July.

The positions of Chief Executive Officer and Director of Operations were advertised to suitable applicants on the 18th of July. This attracted a total of 7 applicants from a field of 10. Charles Hastings reapplied for the position of Director of Operations and was formally reappointed on the 17th of August. The new CEO will be appointed soon.

There is still a substantial amount of interest and energy surrounding Neurocam International. Many Operatives who have not received an assignment in over 28 days have emailed the organization asking why, and offering help, and healthy traffic continues to flow on the 'Neuroboard', the Neurocam IRC server, Neurocam-related weblogs and so forth. A range of special assignments are being conducted, albeit in secret.

However, this energy seems likely to dissipate fairly quickly unless the organization can demonstrate convincingly that it is not defunct within a reasonably short space of time. There is, therefore, some urgency to our situation.

Part 1: Immediate Priorities

Overview of Immediate Priorities

Neurocam is currently without a Chief Executive Officer. Remedying this state of affairs is the first priority.

Charles Hastings is collaborating with the Nautonier Liaison in assessing candidates for CEO. It is anticipated that this situation will be resolved prior to Monday 29th August.

Although currently retaining 6 full-time staff and 8 Inducted Operatives (not all of whom have been contacted since an update mail from ALSU Team Leader Herbert Finch on 31st July), Neurocam International is largely without a coherent management structure or strategy. I have attempted to address this issue within the recommendations contained within my report.

In the short term, existing Inducted Operatives will shortly be contacted, apprised of the current situation, and invited to take on special assignments working temporarily as Enquiries and Induction Officers - facilitating the relaunch of the website, which will include an application form.

New applications will then begin to be processed.

I propose at this point to send a mail to all Operatives, assuring them of Neurocam's continued existence and apprising them briefly of the current situation.

Inducted Operatives will, additionally, be advised that they will be offered or invited to apply for one of several positions subject to the promotion of more entry-levels, and the decision of the newly-appointed CEO.

New management proposals will be discussed with the CEO to the extent that the CEO wishes.

The CEO should write a letter to all Operatives, advising of the new managerial arrangements, new protocols (to the extent deemed necessary), and advising on a date when new assignments will be issued. This date must be as soon as is realistically possible - and it must be met.

At least 5 entry-level Operatives must be promoted.

Recommencing the issuing of assignments is the overwhelming priority, although this cannot and must not be done until there is sufficient infrastructure in place to deal successfully with the traffic.

Once this has begun to happen, Neurocam must focus on the three goals of functioning stably and effectively under the new arrangements, resolving certain procedural and technical shortcomings, and resolving its looming assignment shortage problem, which is another issue I have addressed herein.

If these three challenges can be met, 2006 looks to be an exciting year, with the likelihood of expansion, greater publicity efforts, and eventually the pursuit of funding.

The CEO

The Role Of The CEO

As is the case in many organizations, the role of CEO will be in many respects that of a figurehead. The CEO's primary responsibility will be to present as the public leader of Neurocam International. In practice, the Director of Operations is the head of the organisation and the CEO will defer to him.

This is not to say, however, that the CEO is a mere puppet figure - although this may be the case if it is the wish of the appointee.

Since the CEO is effectively the face of the organization, her role will be inherently tied up with public relations. As such, she may choose to take on a role amounting to supervising public affairs.

Alternately, depending again on the appointee's wishes and on how successfully she and the DO prove able to work together, the CEO may choose to engage closely in the running and direction of Neurocam International.

Following discussions between Robert Henley and Charles Hastings, it has been decided that although the appointee seems likely to be male, the CEO should be given a female name and identity, with the aim of encouraging a comparably successful public dynamic to that achieved by Charles Hastings and outgoing permanent CEO Bridget Fischer.

Appointment Of The New CEO

Candidates for the position of CEO are currently being interviewed by Charles Hastings and the Nautonier Liaison in Melbourne. Once final interviews with the three leading candidates have been completed, a decision will be reached and the successful applicant will be informed. The role of the CEO as outlined above will be explained to them, and they will be forwarded a copy of this report.

If they decide that they wish to assume the role, they will become the new CEO of Neurocam International. If they decide that they do not wish to assume the role, one of the other applicants will be similarly approached.

The Website

Neurocam's web presence, neurocam.com, is effectively the only public shopfront of Neurocam International, and as such a key aspect of the operation. It is currently down, displaying a 'returning soon' message, and the enquiries@neurocam.com email address.

The system has been fully resecured following security breaches, and work is currently being undertaken on a redesign of the site, which will, when it goes live, be a strong statement of Neurocam's return to functional operation.

The relaunch of the website - complete with application form and contact emails - will generate some considerable interest, and will have to be timed to coincide happily with the enlistment of Enquiries Officers and an Induction Officer, ideally from within the ranks of extant Inducted Operatives.

It is anticipated that this can occur possibly as soon as September 1st.

Applications

The processing of new applications will be handled by at least two Induction Officers, who will initially be preexisting Inducted Operatives. These will be responsible for going through applications received via the website and via email, determining which of these should progress to their Perception Assessment, administering the Perception Assessment, and deciding on the basis of this whether to grant Operative status. Applicants in areas suitable for dead-drop transfer of an identifier should also be guided through this.

Note Regarding Special Skills

It should be noted that the organization has great use for skilled individuals and these should be favoured, both for admission and promotion.

In particular the organization must place a high value on individuals with strong backgrounds in both the creative and the technical aspects of media production, theatre, 'alternate reality gaming' and computing of various kinds.

Promotions

The following promising Operatives (and several others at the discretion of the DO and the Nautonier, and possibly subject to discussion with the CEO) should be fast-tracked to preinitiate status and inducted as soon as possible:

- Adam Tenex
- Bob the Mediocre
- Gideon Windermere III (a.k.a. Simon Blackmoore)
- Nikolaus Maak
- Stephen Cronin

And, subject to further investigation:

- Adren of Life
- Arkine (a.k.a. Dev)
- Deadsoybean (a.k.a. Nada Awad)
- Simon Moon (a.k.a. Kybalion)

(Simon Moon and Adren of Life are host and moderator respectively of the 'Neuroboard', and Adren submitted a strong if slightly implausible application for CEO - it has been determined that both should be courted for the first reason alone. Moon is also considered mature and discreet. He possesses a saved copy of the notorious "Another Operative" "expose" but has pointedly refused to show it to anyone, and has enquired regarding an official line on the material. His desire for promotion is uncertain, however, and this should be investigated.)

Inductees should be required to sign two hard copies of The Contract, but this will - unusually - be effected with as little ceremony as possible to save time. These individuals will then be briefed and installed as Enquiries and Induction officers - relieving the Inducted Operatives who will be filling these positions - and in other, mostly relatively junior roles.

Inducted Operatives (and perhaps in a very few cases very experienced and trusted Operatives shortly to be inducted) will then be placed in senior managerial positions. Some of these may be temporary, subject to wider advertisement, if desired.

The Server

In the medium term, and probably before routine assignments can be widely issued, it is essential that Neurocam's Inducted Operatives and staff have access to a well-organized and well-maintained central file repository - to be filled out progressively with information about Operatives, assignments, thorough email logs, archives and other resources - with a reasonable level of security, and the capacity for a range of access levels to be granted to different files and directories.

The files and resources to be made available via the server currently exist, but are in a disorganized state which will need many, many hours of work.

The experience of the Actualization, Logistics & Support Unit indicates that a messageboard and chat facilities would also be enormously beneficial for use by Inducted Operatives and staff for the purpose of developing new ideas and working collaboratively in general.

Attempts have been made in the past to incorporate all of these things into an access-only version of the website, and this may be a possibility in the future.

However, a server-client system incorporating all of these facilities offers the possibility of making them available now, without skilled and labor-intensive development. It also suggests a kind of free-floating virtual nerve-centre for Neurocam, which is an appealing idea.

To this end tests are currently being conducted with a system called Hotline. Other possibilities are being investigated and suggestions for systems which meet these needs may be mailed to myself or Charles Hastings.

The transition of data to this server will be a long-term ongoing task, hopefully to be completed by the end of the year, depending on the amount of assistance which can be commandeered.

Note on Correspondence Logging (& Circulation)

A key application of the server will be ensuring that fairly extensive correspondence logs are accessible to most or all Inducted Operatives, ideally organized both categorically and temporally to at least some degree. This will be an enormously useful resource for Inducted Operatives, especially those who have significant email contact with entry-levels and the public.

Neurocam generates a very large quantity of correspondence, and ideally, some way will be found for all correspondence emanating from @neurocam.com addresses to be logged automatically on the server. In the meantime, a protocol must be developed for manual central logging of correspondence by Inducted Operatives.

It is considered essential that everyone who sends correspondence to external addresses from neurocam.com is 'on the same page' generally in terms of ongoing & current issues and past issues, and especially in regard to commonly raised and/or important issues.

To this end, it is proposed that protocol be developed to ensure that regular bulletins (possibly fortnightly or weekly, as well as dynamically as needed) regarding 'official lines' on popular subjects are issued and archived on the server, along with any other snippets of useful correspondence that may be generated.

Inducted Operatives should be advised and reminded that if they generate correspondence suitable for use as a template, or otherwise recyclable, they should direct this to the Operative(s) responsible for correspondence.

The responsibility for all of this should lie with the Human Resources & Security Division, but the work could be largely or entirely 'farmed out' to the Support Unit, and elsewhere.

Part 2: New Organisational Protocols & Arrangements

The Purpose Of The Organization

At the most fundamental level, Neurocam should be considered a form of living entity, whose motivations cannot not be firmly nailed down - these will be subject to change in response to circumstances - and which, like any other living creature, ultimately requires no justification for its existence.

Neurocam itself "knows" better than any single person what Neurocam "is about". Those who rise to its front ranks do so naturally by virtue of their ability to understand this, and by virtue of their intuitive ability to relate successfully to the evolving desires of the organization.

If a relatively firm description of Neurocam's nature and/or purpose is required, one of two lines may be taken. The preferred of these is: "Neurocam is a process of unveiling. Understanding is achieved through experience." An unveiling of what? "That depends on the person." If a more solid description is *absolutely* required: "Neurocam is an organization dedicated to altering the perceptions of its participants." Either of these descriptions may be followed with a description of the routine assignment procedure.

It is subtly important to recognise, although this should never be discussed, that Neurocam is the name of an entity, and Neurocam International is the name of its personnel.

Note On Distribution Of Responsibilities & Circumventing Burnout

It is evident that 'Neurocam burnout' has presented a very significant obstacle to the smooth running of the organization on numerous occasions in the past. This can be largely attributed to the fact that, due to fear of security breaches, crucial operations of Neurocam International have tended to be confined to a relatively small and very closed circle. The members of this inner circle invest very large amounts of effort which, whilst not unrewarding, is mostly or entirely anonymous and thankless except amongst other members of the inner circle.

In order to counteract this unhealthy tendency and lessen the burden of it on the organization, it is proposed that any future managerial arrangement distribute effort over a wider human area.

My proposed arrangements call for more Inducted Operatives, on three substantively different levels of involvement & responsibility - all of whom will have useful places within the new management structure - and also the capacity for special assignments to be issued to uninducted Level 2 and 3 Operatives, creating the possibility that quite substantial amounts of routine work could potentially be 'farmed out' to appropriately trusted Operatives who have not been inducted by the organization.

Neurocam's profile has reached a level of maturity whereby there are many individuals who would potentially be willing - and who can be trusted - to make quite substantial efforts for the organization, in exchange for advancement or an increased likelihood of advancement.

Moreover, I urge that a strong culture of mutual support and assistance be encouraged amongst Inducted Operatives.

New Ranking System

Neurocam currently has a range of levels of involvement, which might be divided into:

- Applicants & interested parties
- Entry-level Operatives
- Inducted Operatives
- Senior executive

Within any organization such as Neurocam there will be a range of roles, with varying levels of importance and responsibility, and it is natural for there to be provisions by which members can be promoted to roles of greater prestige, exclusivity, importance and access on the basis of the quality of their performance and their length of service.

Advancement protocols ensure the continued growth and vibrancy of the organization as well as providing a powerful rewards & incentives structure to motivate Operatives.

It is suggested that the current hierarchy system be made more stratified, and more formalised.

This will mean more opportunities to promote Operatives, as well as greater understanding and appreciation of the possibilities for advancement within Neurocam, and will also prove beneficial from security and logistical points of view. It will mean greater rigour in the processes by which ambitious Operatives rise through the ranks to senior positions, and result in a generally greater understanding of Operatives' roles, levels of responsibility, levels of authority and levels of access to privileged and sensitive information.

I propose that a system of ranks be instituted, as follows, from lowest to highest:

- Applicants: Who have applied to become Operatives.
- Preoperatives: Whose applications have been approved, and who are being processed by the Inductions Officer through their initial perception assessment and (if applicable) identifier retrieval.
- Level 1 Operatives: Who complete entry level induction successfully. Essentially Operatives on probation, although they should not be overtly made to feel this way. They should be encouraged to feel as though they are part of the organization.

Except in exceptional circumstances, no Operative should be considered for promotion to Level 2 prior to completing two routine assignments. Operatives who have completed six or seven assignments should conversely be considered for promotion as a matter of course unless they have severe blots on their record.

- Level 2 Operatives: These will enjoy a higher degree of courtesy and transparency in their dealings with the organization; will tend to be given more substantial and interesting assignments; and are eligible to receive minor special assignments. They may be invited to perform administrative or skilled tasks for the organization; they may be consulted on issues of importance to NCI.

Having completed, except in very exceptional circumstances, no less than two assignments successfully at Level 2, Operatives who are considered potentially suitable for induction will be promoted to Level 3.

- Level 3 ("Preinitiate") Operatives: These will be Operatives who have demonstrated suitability for induction, and Level 3 would ideally consist of a major assignment or series of assignments which are especially challenging, or testing of the Operative's trustworthiness and capacity to assume responsibility, or which involve the employment of special skills. Level 3 Ops may be given temporary access to proprietary Neurocam systems and invited to help facilitate assignments.

- Inducted Level 1 Operatives aka Level 4 Operatives: The basic practical difference between a L3 Operative and an IL1 is that Inducted Operatives possess an email address, are aware of and have some access to the server, and have signed The Contract.

However, there is a fundamentally different level of trust placed in the Inducted Operative, who is expected to have at least the beginnings of an instinctive understanding of Neurocam's underlying philosophies.

The transition to Inducted Operative is considered an extremely significant one within the organization and should be handled accordingly.

Promotion to an IL1 (Inducted Level 1) will always involve signing two copies of The Contract. If at all possible, this should be done in a memorable live setting.

Like Level 1 Operatives, Inducted Level 1s are effectively Inducteds on probation. Having received their lavish induction ceremony they will, under normal circumstances - please note that we are not currently experiencing normal circumstances - be given their email address, provided with extremely limited access to the server, and assigned to a team position in, for example, the Actualization Unit in the Actualization & Support Division.

- Inducted Level 2 Operatives aka Level 5 Operatives: These will comprise the bulk of Inducted Operatives. They will have more extensive access to the server, and be placed in positions of real trust and responsibility. The exact nature of their role in Neurocam will be almost entirely ambiguous to non-inductees and outsiders - although cover stories may be arranged if desired and approved by higher authority.

- Senior Inducted Operatives aka Level 6 Operatives: These will, in practice, be senior management figures, with extensive or full access to proprietary systems.

- The Nautonier (Supervisory Executive)

I also recommend that a colour-coded system of Neurocam Identifiers, reflecting rank, be developed, manufactured, and distributed.

(Side note on identifiers: it is proposed that all Operatives - not merely those who live in an area where these can be issued via dead-drop - be given an identifier. The identifier is a potent symbol, and also a wonderful excuse to harvest peoples' addresses.)

Brief Note On Manipulative Tactics & 'Cult' Status

Although it has some similarities to one - including a tendency to employ socially manipulative tactics at times, like almost any large organized group of people - Neurocam is not a cult organization. It has no particular ideology. It is not concerned with the ideological convictions of its Operatives. Whilst it may develop something akin to a personal relationship with particularly gifted Operatives, it is not especially interested in controlling, and certainly not interested in restricting, the lives, attitudes, or behaviour of its members in any substantial or significant way.

It is true that Operatives may be dismissed for behaving in a fashion which seriously embarrasses the organization, but they are still entirely free to behave this way if they wish.

Moreover, it should be noted that Neurocam emphatically does not seek to materially hurt or damage anyone.

Neurocam may hurt people's feelings on occasion, but as the corporate line has always gone, "these feelings are property of the person experiencing them, not Neurocam International, and as such the organization can take no responsibility for them."

New Management Structure

The proposed new management structure, from the top down, consists in summary of the following:

- The Nautonier
- The CEO
- The Operations Division, comprising:
 - The Director of Operations
 - The Co-ordinator of Operations
 - The Head of Assignments
 - possibly an assistant
 - eventually further staff
- The Human Resources & Security Division, comprising:
 - The Director of Human Resources & Security
 - The Deputy Director of Human Resources & Security
 - Induction Officers (several)
 - eventually further staff
- The Public Affairs Division, comprising
 - The Director of Public Affairs
 - Enquiries Officers (several)
- The Actualization & Support Division, comprising
 - The Actualization Unit, led by the Head of Actualization
 - The Support Unit, led by the Head of Support
- The Technical Division (mooted), comprising
 - The Technical Director

These roles and their relationships are expanded upon below.

The Nautonier

The Nautonier will continue to function in an overseeing role and as the final authority on all matters of importance to Neurocam International.

The CEO

As discussed above.

The Operations Division

The Operations Division is concerned with the issuing, processing, and development of Neurocam assignments.

Neurocam International has a commitment - which it must take seriously, as it has done in the past - to issue new assignments to every active field Operative below induction level within 28 day intervals.

It is evident from considerable correspondence received during the current downtime that many Operatives look forward to receiving their assignments and become distressed when they are not forthcoming, and we are not in the business of disappointing Operatives with regard to stated commitments if this can possibly be avoided.

Moreover, ensuring that routine assignments are issued and reports acknowledged on a regular and reliable basis helps to protect Neurocam International from potential allegations that it is a cult, that it is some kind of a con, that it is a fictional entity, or that it "doesn't do anything".

Three primary staff roles are proposed for the Operations Division. In descending order of importance:

The Director of Operations

The Director of Operations, as previously explained, is effectively the day-to-day head of Neurocam International. They have full access to proprietary systems, and final authority on all decisions. They answer only to the Nautonier, and liase with their deputies, the CEO, and the other Directors to oversee and ensure the smooth and effective operation of Neurocam International.

It must be noted that this will not be known to the public, to whom the Director of Operations will appear as the head of the Operations Division, and unofficial 'deputy sheriff' to the CEO.

The Co-ordinator of Operations

The Co-ordinator of Operations will be responsible in the first instance for the practical business of issuing assignments, and processing & acknowledging assignment reports - heavily assisted by the Director, and the Head of Assignments.

The Head of Assignments

In addition to assisting the Director and the Co-ordinator of Operations, the Head of Assignments is the 'keeper of the assignments', and is expected to be an expert on these. They will also be responsible for co-ordinating, overseeing, and *ensuring* the development, implementation & testing of new assignments, as well as resolving inherent problems which arise or become evident in relation to existing ones.

They will work closely with the Actualization Unit, which it is envisaged will be in the primary instance an assignment think-tank.

It is stressed that this is an extremely important and responsible position, especially in light of the urgency of Neurocam's current assignment situation. It is likely to be a lot of work, and may not necessarily be a very enviable job - but it is an essential and potentially highly rewarding one.

The Human Resources & Security Division

The Human Resources & Security Division is concerned with overseeing and managing Neurocam's security arrangements and personnel.

Director of Human Resources & Security

The role of Director of Human Resources & Security will be a fairly intensive and demanding one, effectively ranked third beneath the CEO and the Director of Operations. They will be 'keeper of the database', and an expert on the personnel of Neurocam International.

It is envisaged that they (or staff posing as them) will handle significant amounts of correspondence. They will also be expected to read significant amounts of correspondence, and to take an interest in public online affairs.

They will be consulted frequently on matters related to the proclivities, skills, corporate history and, crucially, level of trust affordable to specific Neurocam personnel, most significantly by the Operations Division with regards to choosing assignments for Operatives.

The Director of Human Resources Security will also, in consultation with the Director of Operations and the Director of Public Affairs (if applicable), be responsible for devising and overseeing the enactment of strategies in the event of a significant security or personnel related problem arising.

It is proposed that, in collaboration with their deputy and, eventually, the leader of the Personnel Security Unit, the Director of HR&S should be charged with the issuing of regular (at least fortnightly) bulletins updating staff and Inductees on ongoing personnel and security concerns and issues, and advising of 'official lines' (these being provided, in most cases, by the DO and the CEO).

Deputy Director of Human Resources & Security

Assisting the Director.

The Personnel Security Unit

It is envisaged that in the future, personnel providing, the Director of HR&S will have a fairly substantial staff, whose job is to become familiar with Operatives and gather information about them.

These would certainly be led by an Inducted Operative, but the bulk of this group could be comprised of appropriate Level 2s and 3s.

Induction Officers

These would be responsible for processing applications for Operative status received via email and the website, selecting suitable candidates from these, and guiding them through their initial perception assessment and (if the Preoperative resides in an applicable location) identifier retrieval.

At least one part-time Induction Officer, Audrey Jackson, has already been appointed by Mr. Hastings from the Inducted ranks and has begun processing a very limited number of queued and unsolicited applications, in preparation for the reopening of general applications. This will occur in coincidence with the relaunch of the website. Several more Induction Officers must be appointed between now and then.

(A simple protocol must also be drawn up, based on existing briefs, for the entire Preoperative procedure. It is suggested that the DO undertake this, possibly in consultation with Ms Jackson.)

The Public Affairs Division

The role of the Public Affairs Division will be threefold.

Firstly, it will be responsible for forming and developing Neurocam promotional strategies and initiatives.

Secondly, the Director of Public Affairs will likely consult quite often on a range of issues with the Human Resources & Security Division - and very intensively in the event of a breach or other problematic situation with significant public relations implications.

Thirdly, it will be the centre from which routine enquiries both from the public and Operatives - these comprising a substantial proportion of Neurocam's voluminous correspondence - will be processed.

The Director of Public Affairs

The Director of Public Affairs will, in the first instance, be in charge of shaping and promoting Neurocam's public profile.

This is a peculiarly difficult job, and calls for someone with an extremely sound understanding of Neurocam's underlying philosophies.

They will be responsible for devising (and potentially implementing) strategies, devices and assignments aimed attracting applicants and raising the organization's level of recognition amongst the general public.

In the event of a crisis or other significant event involving Neurocam's public profile, they would work closely with the Directors of Operations and Human Resources & Security to respond effectively to it.

Another envisaged task for the DPA would be the development of a detailed written protocol regarding the presentation of the organization, especially with regards to correspondence - an extremely significant aspect of Neurocam's public relations apparatus at present.

They would also have significant input on any initiatives involving the website.

Further discussion of Neurocam and publicity is contained in the relevant section, below.

Enquiries Officers

Enquiries Officers would be responsible for fielding public enquiries and simple Operative queries received by the enquiries@neurocam.com account. They will forward more detailed enquiries from Operatives to relevant areas.

Although in practice it seems likely that most day-to-day traffic dealt with by the Enquiries Officers will be internal (ie from Operatives), having Enquiries Officers located within the Public Affairs Division places an accessible and professional-looking front end on the organization, which is to be desired.

The Actualization & Support Division

The Actualization & Support Division is a proposed expansion of the Operations Division's Actualization, Logistics & Support Unit, now disbanded.

It is envisaged that many Operatives who graduate to Inducted status will do so full of ideas and keen to contribute in a meaningful and creative way to the organization. This tendency should be utilized to the very fullest, by placing new Inducted Operatives who show the slightest inclination this way into the Actualization Unit, where they can make their contribution shielded from harsh deadlines (although performance indicators should eventually be employed) and the need to correspond dynamically with entry-level Operatives and the public.

Conversely, new Inductees who are more inclined towards practical matters may be placed in the Support Unit, where they will be called upon to perform a wide range of practical tasks according to need.

Insofar as the Actualization Unit especially will be - certainly at least initially - very largely tasked with developing new assignments, the Head of Actualization and the Director of the Division will both have significant interaction with the Operations Division, particularly the Head of Assignments.

The Technical Division?

It is envisaged that, given sufficient personnel - or an especial desire on the part of a skilled member of existing personnel - a Technical Director might be appointed. This would most likely be a person with extremely strong computer skills. Neurocam relies heavily on information technology and experts in this field should be favoured by the organization.

The appointment of a Technical Director also opens the way for a Technical Division, which would be responsible not only for computer technology and systems (website, email accounts, server etc) but also surveillance equipment, and other physical materials.

There exist two substantial tasks requiring a technically skilled individual, with staff or assistance in both cases, which would ideally be fully completed well before the end of the year:

1. The Database

Neurocam's personnel database is in a serviceable condition, as a simple register of Operatives and ex-Operatives. But it is lacking in detail, and the way in which Operatives' assignment history is recorded is idiosyncratic and confusing (perhaps deliberately so).

During the correspondence rush that will likely follow our anticipated mailout to all Operatives, it is likely to be needed often by those servicing correspondence, both for access and updating.

If a server or other such filesharing arrangement is not available by this time, a central copy of the database must be kept and updated by a senior Inducted Operative - possibly the Director of Human Resources & Security - to whom others will email any changes.

Once that period is over, work must begin on converting it, in reasonably raw form, from an Excel spreadsheet into an Access (or other standard database) document.

In the medium-long term it will need to be fairly substantially redesigned.

2. The Server

See earlier section on this subject.

Note also in reference to the database, discussed above - all Operatives will have a directory the server, which will contain their reports, any notes staff may care to leave, and ideally a full correspondence log. These will have to be set up based on materials in the database and elsewhere.

Part 3: Thoughts On Assignments, Funding & Publicity

Thoughts On Assignments

Neurocam could be said to be facing something of an assignments crisis. Although all retainable in some form, most of the standard roster of assignments has been around for the best part of a year, and many are starting to look fairly tired. Many Operatives who have not received them have heard about them. There are a number of Operatives who are reaching a point where we have no more assignments to give them.

NCI badly needs to create a much larger roster of assignments relatively quickly if it is to survive.

Suggestions on how to achieve this are in part contained in the section on the Operations Division under 'New Management Structure', above.

In general, the message should go out, and be consistently reinforced, that Neurocam welcomes ideas and suggestions. All Inducted Operatives, meanwhile, should be made aware that they are both invited and encouraged to submit ideas for assignments and, much preferred, complete assignment proposals to the Director of Operations or the Head of Assignments.

Neurocam assignments under present arrangements can be crudely broken down into:

Routine assignments: Neurocam has a somewhat weakened roster of ten or so standard entry-level assignments of various kinds, which can effectively be offered to any Operative at any time. Most do not require interaction with other Operatives or staff (other than the filing of a report), and those that do require this do so largely on a virtual basis. Some of these are coded "NTE", standing for "Neurocam Training Exercise", the rest simply "NCI".

'Event assignments': One-off assignments involving live participation of several parties. Neurocam has experimented with a wide range of these in the past.

Special assignments: Tasks issued usually with a specific functional purpose and on a one-off basis, in a relatively informal fashion to trusted Operatives. Many of these involve information gathering, or the application of special skills.

Development and implementation of new assignments needs to be streamlined, and to this end it may perhaps be helpful to break them down further into the following unofficial categories:

Creative Assignments - Assignments in which the Operative is essentially assigned to create a work of art in some medium - whether it be written, dramatic, visual, aural, new media, a combination, or none of these - according to some proscribed criteria.

An example of these is Assignment NCI-8063 ("Something To Do With Entrances") - basically a creative writing assignment, and one which has resulted in the generation of many quite haunting and accomplished pieces of work.

'Get Out Of Your Mind' Assignments - By which it is meant: assignments which are intended to alter the perceptions and awareness of Operatives, in ways which provide powerful experiences and are thought-provoking. For an organization utilizing such a slogan, NCI has disappointingly few of these. Of course much of Neurocam's perception-altering activities are done using social manipulations and experimentation, of the kinds depicted in (for example) "The Magus" by John Fowles - but there is also considerable scope for solo assignments in this area.

Operatives should obviously not be encouraged to take illicit drugs or engage in other illegal or potentially highly risky activities, which could expose the organization to unwanted legal attention. But pretty much anything else should be considered. Former ALSU Team Leader Herbert Finch has produced some excellent and extensive suggestions for assignments along these lines, and these ideas should be developed as a matter of priority.

Training Assignments: Assignments which are - or at least create the impression of being - intended to train Operatives in useful skills to be deployed during future Neurocam assignments. These should involve some genuine upskilling, but also be fun and intriguing. Examples of these include NCI-2561 (Dead Drop Reconnaissance), NTE-9001 (Covert Surveillance), NTC-6111 (Code Development), NTE-9004 (Alternate Identity Creation).

Promotional Assignments: Assignments which are significantly or wholly concerned with raising the profile of Neurocam. Examples of these include Assignment NCI-2332 (the "Magus/Crying Of Lot 49" assignment) and Assignment NIO-3001/01 (printing and distributing Neurocam stickers). Development of these would be primarily the job of the Public Affairs Division.

Diversions Assignments: Although they may have some use in assessing the inclinations and commitment of Operatives, diversionary assignments are those in which the Operative is assigned to perform some task which serves no real purpose, except to keep them busy. The notorious Assignment NCI-5555 ("Bridget's Mirror") was an example of this. It is whispered that this assignment's ostensive purpose - to create a diversion for CEO Bridget Fischer - may have been an inside joke; and this is, perhaps, not far from the truth.

Additionally:

Interactive Assignments: Any of the preceding assignment types may fall into this category, but interactive assignments are marked by having some component which requires interacting with other people.

These will usually be other Operatives, although not necessarily. Examples of these include some versions of Assignment NTE-9004 (Alternate Identity Creation), the various briefcase exchanges, and the forthcoming Disc Transfer Assignment.

Group or 'Event' Assignments - One-off assignments which occur at a specified time and place and involve multiple Operatives in a live, interactive situation. These will tend to fall into four rough groups:

1. Heavily structured assignments involving a large group of Operatives (20-40 people), intended for the purposes of "training" (for example Assignment NCI-7061 aka "Bolte Bridge") or assessment (for example Assignment NTC-5781 aka "The Chess Assignment")
2. Heavily structured assignments involving very a very small number of Operatives (or one Operative) interacting with Neurocam personnel, usually for specific operational purposes. In these cases there is some crossover with Special Assignments. Examples of these include induction ceremonies, the 'kidnapping' of two Operatives by representatives of YellowOne from a public park, or the occasion when an Operative was sent to a particular bookshop at a particular time to secure a replacement Neurocam Identifier.
3. More chaotic and unpredictable scenarios. The most straightforward of these will basically consist of preparing some kind of situation, giving Operatives distinct, and calculated, information about the nature of situation they will be going into and the other parties involved, and then standing back and observing what happens - ideally with surveillance equipment and a few planted Inducted Operatives.
4. Absolutely anything else good that anyone can think of.

Assignment creation should be done on the basis of reasonably formal - but eminently negotiable - guidelines, possibly based on the categories outlined above, which should be developed as a priority, and issued to all Inducted Operatives upon completion.

There is any amount of quality creative thought out there. It is simply a question of figuring out how to tap it as effectively as possible.

One of the key lessons of the ALSU is that whilst coming up with interesting ideas is relatively easy, converting these into complete, workable assignment proposals can be quite difficult. Appropriate focus must be placed on the absolute necessity of the latter, to compensate for this.

It should also be noted and repeatedly reinforced to all Inducted Operatives that the Nautonier has expressed a strong preference for assignments which require Operatives to do things in 'the real world' as opposed to in front of a computer.

Thoughts On Funding

If Neurocam is to survive in the long term, it should begin to develop plans aimed at securing some level of independent funding.

It is not envisaged that Neurocam will become a paying prospect for anyone in the foreseeable future - certainly not next year, if ever.

Funding is considered desirable because it increases the standard of experience we are able to offer Operatives, providing as it can for tools, facilities and services - for example, venue and equipment hire and professional media production and design. It provides the opportunity to engage in promotional activities on a far more significant scale than is possible with no money.

In the past, funds have been used to employ graphic and multimedia designers to develop promotional and operational materials, to purchase major billboard advertisements, to hire limousines for induction ceremonies, to manufacture identifiers, to cover international postage and telephone calls, and on one occasion to pay for the internet access of a crucial Inducted Operative, amongst many other things.

Funding Options

Neurocam is not a commercial enterprise and has no intention of becoming one in the foreseeable future, so its potential sources of revenue are limited.

In the past, the bulk of Neurocam's financing has come from government arts grants. These have some drawbacks - not least the fact that such grants, being made from public money, are sometimes subject to disclosure clauses. But Neurocam's ability to secure funding from such sources without serious breaches in the past makes this a leading option.

Commercial sponsorship is another possibility, although potentially an even more compromising tradeoff than the previous one. It is not at all inconceivable, however, that if Neurocam continues to expand successfully this may be a viable proposition in the future and should not be entirely dismissed.

An affiliates or benefactor's program which enables Inducted Operatives - and potentially other interested parties - to voluntarily contribute to the organization is also worth considering.

It should be noted that Neurocam must never, under any circumstances, attempt to solicit money or appear to be attempting to solicit money from entry-level Operatives. Upon joining the organization, entry-level Operatives are informed that their engagement will only ever incur trivial expenses such as the purchase of a pen. This must remain true in perpetuity.

Thoughts On Publicity

The issue of publicity and promotion is a uniquely difficult one for Neurocam International.

On the one hand, Neurocam is extraordinarily viral in nature and seems inclined to expand. To this end, it would appear desirable to make whatever efforts are feasible to raise its profile and attract attention. But things are not that simple, of course: since a large proportion of Neurocam's power and appeal rests upon its perceived status as a shadowy, highly secretive organization, it is in the main undesirable for it to be seen to be advertising itself too much.

It is also the case that Neurocam International *is* a secret society, and drawing too much attention - specifically, the wrong kinds of attention - could be genuinely extremely harmful to the organization.

On the occasions in the past when Neurocam has sought large-scale publicity by traditional means (taking out major billboard advertisements, and making itself available for a colourful news story in a major Australian newspaper), it has done so sporadically and in a way which is recognisable as a very robotic, calculated response to a needed influx of new Operatives. This is an illusion which should be perpetuated.

To date, other Neurocam publicity efforts have exploited viral principles, which is considered much more appropriate for a secretive underground organisation. The talking-point website, the (largely accidental) 'neuroblogging' phenomenon, the deployment of Operatives to place Neurocam cards in copies of "The Magus" by John Fowles and "The Crying of Lot 49" by Thomas Pynchon, and to distribute homemade Neurocam stickers, are all examples of this.

It seems to be in areas like this where Neurocam's best publicity-related options lie.

That said, there is surely no harm in attempting to attract some degree of publicity via conventional means, provided this is done in a manner which is tasteful and consistent with Neurocam International's 'corporate' image.

For example, it is proposed that press releases could be issued to major outlets to coincide with significant announcements in the future.

Finally, it seems extraordinary, given the extent to which Neurocam's appeal for many people rests upon its status as a club or identity-enhancer, that Neurocam has not made available such digital trinkets as branded desktop wallpaper, website banners and buddy icons. Even Fiat NOX has beaten us to the punch on that one. Such things would be relatively trivial to create, and would, it is envisaged, be greeted with no little enthusiasm by a certain class of Operative.

Conclusion: The Future

The future is potentially very bright for Neurocam International - if it can establish a smoothly running day-to-day operational routine, and can overcome its current limitations.

This is eminently possible.

In the medium term (ie until the end of 2005), the organization's primary goals and areas of focus should be:

1. Ensuring the establishment of a smoothly running operational routine, in which all correspondence is answered satisfactorily and reasonably promptly, and assignments are issued to all qualified Operatives at 28 day intervals (nb staggered).

2. Ensuring the development, drafting, testing, implementation and deployment of a fairly substantial number of new and revamped routine assignments fairly quickly.

(The first, and most significant of these for the moment, is the Disc Transfer Assignment produced by the former Actualization, Logistics & Support Unit. Former members of the unit will be invited to participate in the testing of this assignment, which will otherwise be carried out by members of the Support Unit and the Operations Division. It would be a major win to get this assignment tested and implemented on a wide scale relatively soon after recommencing normal operations.)

3. A number of special assignments are currently underway and these will continue.

4. Ensuring the establishment of a Server-Client system meeting the specifications outlined in the relevant section of this report, stocked with all available data.

5. Upgrading and consolidating the database.