



HOW JOBS ARE DIFFERENT IN PROCESS-FOCUSED ORGANIZATIONS

Processes work best when they're simple. You want to keep them lean, elegant, and efficient. How do you go about this streamlining? You get the complexity out of the process and move it into people's jobs.

This means the scope of people's work has to change. They need to assume responsibility for a broader range of activities. Instead of being focused on one or two single tasks, their jobs should be designed around outcomes. Toward overall end results. They must migrate from specialized labor to more general, wide-spectrum duties. This requires an expanded set of competencies. It calls for know-how in multiple disciplines. It may be that the individual needs to understand and be able to perform all the steps in a given process.

As their jobs become bigger and more complex, people need a fuller understanding of their own process and of the organization at large. They need to be able to see the big picture . . . how the system works . . . how all the activities in their process fit together and interconnect with other processes to ultimately serve the customer.

Everybody also needs to demonstrate sharper peripheral vision. More specifically, they have to scan the right and left horizons, taking more ownership of what happens at the boundaries before and after their individual jobs. This is the treacherous territory where disconnects are prone to occur. Where work easily comes uncoupled. Where all too often quality suffers, time slips, costs go up, and customer value gets damaged. It's here at the

fringes where work enters into or emerges from the problematic white space.

In the new way of operating, people need to show the same level of concern for what goes on at these borders that they have for the work that goes on inside. The connection points—the handoffs—deserve as much attention as anything does. But workers naturally tend to “go bifocal,” to near-sightedly concern themselves with their own special tasks.

Management’s job is to help them develop and maintain a broader field of view. As jobs grow in size and complexity, work will become more interesting. More energizing. It’ll get harder, too, but more meaningful. People will end up with “whole jobs,” as one-dimensional work gets eliminated, automated, or folded into a bigger process.

In an organization that’s functionally oriented, jobs have several weaknesses. Employees spend themselves narrowly on work that has been chopped into too many pieces . . . that involves too many people . . . that has too many handoffs which represent potential failure points. A process orientation lets them paint on a larger canvas. They’re free to exercise more creative imagination. They get to engage more of their intellect. The work makes more demands of their personal judgment and problem-solving skills.

And the bottom line is that they get to grow along with their jobs.

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