

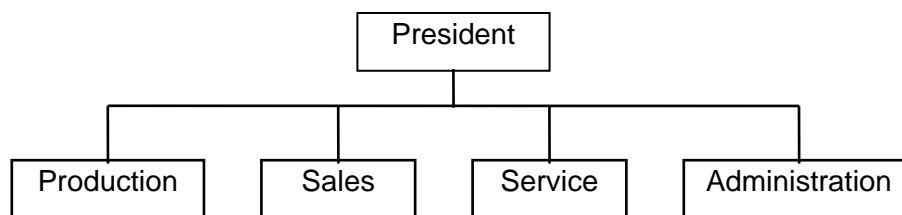
STRUCTURE FOLLOWS VISION

Eliminating Organizational Drift

As we reflect on the corporate landscape, a perplexing question keeps recurring: “*Why is it that so many organizations unintentionally seem to be strangling themselves?*”.

We can profile the very sick organizations: weak leadership, fuzzy focus, competing divisions, divisive internal politics, debilitating lack of trust, and rampant personal agendas. But even relatively healthy and well-managed organizations have a tendency to drift apart. What causes this *organizational drift* and how can it be remedied? The answer originates in structure and concludes with leadership.

Traditional organizations are structured hierarchically. Much like a military model, the President presides over the organization: deploying, directing and controlling activities, resources and personnel. Managers are responsible for the activities within their divisions and regulate the flow of information to their subordinates, colleagues and the President. Roles are rigidly defined and decision-making is centralized. In smaller organizations, the functionality of this arrangement often works perfectly well, because the activity is focused narrowly and management has a tightly held common agenda.

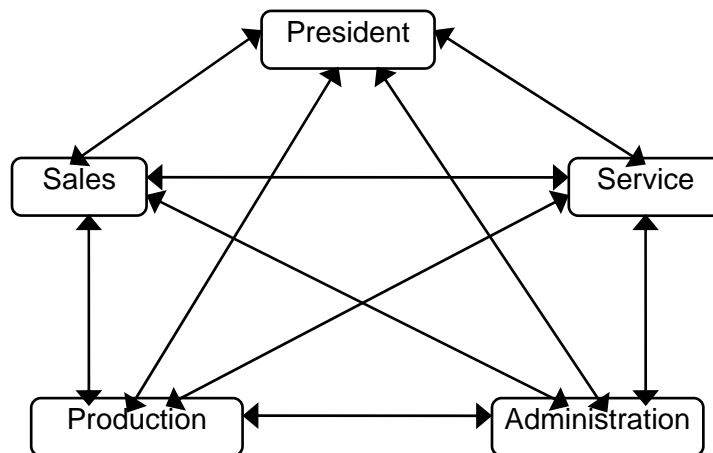


In larger organizations, however, a *disconnection* occurs, because the divisions tend to lose sight of their common purpose and fail to recognize the vital inter-dependencies within the organization. Managers, generally, are technical experts, who intimately understand the operations in their divisions, but lack a deep appreciation for the operations of the other divisions. Thus, a *silos mentality* is manifested. Staff become isolated and feel frustrated, in turn, nurturing a jaundiced view of management.

As a result, divisions operate at cross-purposes. Management continually struggles to correct this *organizational drift* and bring things back into alignment and harmony. Just keeping the organization functioning drains away significant resources and energy, and distracts the organization from its primary goals.



In **transitional organizations**, the President has articulated a *vision* which begins to drive the organization forward. This *vision* clarifies where the organization is headed, how it will get there, and how divisions and employees will contribute to that odyssey. The President commits considerable time, on an ongoing basis, to ensuring that the management group continually interacts and that it maintains an unrelenting focus on the common purpose. Management matures into a competent team, anchored by the set of shared goals. The former *silos mentality* is replaced by an invigorating, *integrated corporate awareness*. A new, dynamic organizational structure is created.

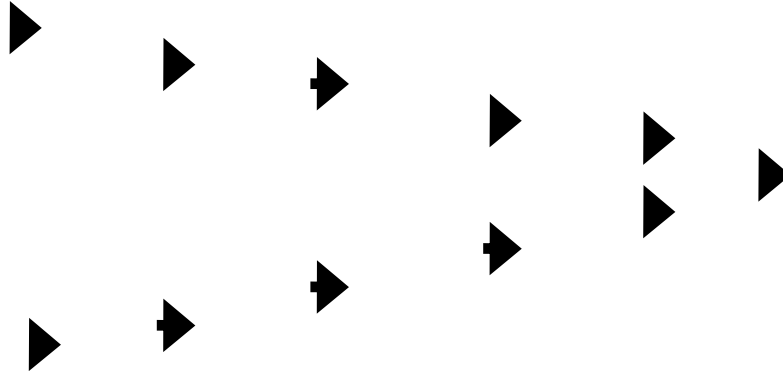


Because there is a deliberate free flow of cross-divisional information, managers understand and reinforce the inter-related dependencies within the organization. There is more open trust, co-operation, collaboration, and joint problem solving. This participative behaviour cascades down, leading to engaging staff in seeking out performance improvements and often establishing cross-functional teams. The organization sustains a *dynamic balance*, because the divisions exist in a state of controlled, harmonized tension.

Managers have grown beyond being technical experts. Instead, they spend significant time communicating with and coaching their staff. They continually educate employees about the organization, thereby ensuring consistency and alignment. Their primary function is to facilitate and support personal development and problem solving. They ensure that the appropriate information, resources and training are made available to enable their staff to succeed. Responsibility and decision-making get pushed down through the organization.



In **evolutionary organizations**, the President's *vision* has become all-pervasive. The President leads by example: talking, coaching, teaching, and learning. The focus is on the future, by means of quality and service improvements today. There is a solidarity of intent and action throughout the organization. In this state of alignment and harmony, *organizational drift* has been eliminated. The organization now embodies a *holistic corporate consciousness*. To support this culture, a totally new structure needs to be invented: it is the image of a flock of geese flying in a tight, vee-shaped formation.



A flock of geese will rotate the lead position. In an **evolutionary organization**, there is an ongoing grooming of future leaders. This becomes a learning organization, where everyone is striving for personal and professional improvement. Roles become less precisely defined. Employees are encouraged and supported to take risks and make decisions. Responsibility becomes fully distributed throughout the organization.

This is a *high energy, high performance* organization. Employees become motivated contributors. The brain-power and enthusiasm of the entire organization are utilized to achieve the organizational goals. And *the caring* is not limited to just organizational goals and quarterly profits, but more importantly relates to the entire wellbeing of the workforce. The organization personifies a *community of interests* that cannot be separated by title, job function, salary, or time.

Transforming a dysfunctional, traditional organization into a high performing, evolutionary organization is an act of leadership. A *leader* is someone who has a *vision*, communicates it with clarity, is unwavering in its execution, and excites participation. This is how *organizational drift* is eliminated. It is the art of the possible.

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