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Pillars of Success: How are your business ambitions supported?

Having looked at the foundations and the floors of the building, we now need to turn our attention to the pillars that will hold the floors in place. These 'pillars' are the organisational structures, processes and systems. They are the sole means of supporting your objectives and of ensuring they will be delivered, and they need to be properly designed for the job.

Have you ever wondered how your current organisational structure arose?

Do you know its advantages over alternative methods of organising your business?

Does your structure have its roots in traditions, or was it originally designed by someone who derived the structure from logical taxonomies and relationships? And has the structure adapted as objectives and relationships have evolved, or has it remained largely static, with individual roles accommodating (or perhaps avoiding) change?

Are there other combinations of activities that would better support your objectives; particularly in the current climate of change? Could changing the way activities are grouped together provide new insights and opportunities for creative challenge?

Is it worth having a look to see?

And how might you take that look?

In this chapter we will explore how you might reconsider your organisational structure to better attune it to the needs of your objectives. The approach we will outline on the next few pages will enable you to develop and evaluate alternative models for how your organisation can work; it will enable you to play with alternative concepts and ideas, and then choose to:

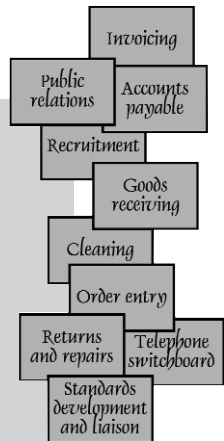
- adopt a radically different approach, or
- keep things exactly as they are, but in the confident knowledge that it is your preferred option, or

- augment your current structure with some new ideas that provide obvious benefits.

The following steps can be undertaken by an individual, but they work a lot better when undertaken by the management team of an organisation. This ensures that a greater wealth of experience and ideas are available in the design and its evaluation, and it builds ownership of any eventual conclusions and a commitment to make them work.

The steps are:

1. Generate a list of all of the separate activities that your organisation undertakes. Try to get sufficient resolution so that it will be easy to reconsider how the activities may be grouped together, but not so detailed that the list becomes overwhelming. As a rule of thumb, aim for about 50-100 activities in total. Ensure each activity is given a name which clearly defines it and differentiates it from other activities that it might otherwise be confused with.



If your struggle with this, try keeping a log of your activities over a period of a week or so.

2. Consider any additional activities which you do not currently undertake, but may be necessary to

support any new objectives, or to enable your organisation to develop and better fulfil its current or future role. These activities should be broken down to the same level of detail as the activities in step 1, and should be added to the list.

This step helps to ensure that your model is not bound by current practise.

3. Transfer the list onto sticky-notes, one activity per sticky-note. Create four complete sets of sticky notes (or more if you want to develop additional models - and adjust the number of groups correspondingly in step 4). Ensure that the writing on each sticky note is clear and unambiguous, and can be read easily at a distance of 3m.
4. Split your team into three groups, and give each a complete set of sticky-notes. Ask each group to propose how the activities may best be organised to facilitate better performance (against the new objectives), more efficient operation and clearer management focus. Provide each team with an area of wall covered with brown



paper or flipchart paper, and encourage them to lay out the sticky notes and move them around to create a new model. (Sometimes it is good to start this part of the exercise in silence, so that you get more movement and less debate during the initial stages. Allow debate to return as the picture begins to settle down.)

5. While the groups are developing their models, take the fourth set of sticky-notes, and a separate section of paper covered wall, and lay out the activities in the way that they are currently organised.
6. When all of the groups have developed their models, and refined them to something they believe will work, draw everybody back together, and go round the models as a team. Encourage the whole team to understand each model by asking questions of clarification, but to avoid debate at this stage.
7. After each model has been understood, go back round the models

Including the current model ensures that you retain the option of making slight modifications to current practise if that transpires to be the most sustainable way forward.

again. This time put up a sheet of flipchart paper at each model, and split it into two columns: one headed 'strengths' and the other headed 'concerns'. Start with the strengths, encouraging everybody to contribute a positive perspective until the column is filled. Then ask people to state their concerns and fill these into the second column. Do this for each model, including the model of the current organisational structure. Ensure the 'strengths' and 'concerns' are in the context of both the new objectives for the organisation, and the agreed values (Chapter 1).

8. Select the model that you want to use as a basis for further development. This need not be the best model, or even the model with most potential. It is either your current model (because you believe that the ideal solution is the current model with a few of the ideas incorporated from the other models) or it is the model that will prove easiest to adapt with the

Strengths	Concerns
Links customer service to delivery	Big change over what we do today
All end to end processes	Some activities seem to be duplicated
Provides clarity over who is accountable	Delivery process is too big
...	...

This step enables you to bias the organisation change either toward a radical rethink or toward stepwise improvements - depending on what is most practised.

strengths of the other models to become the best model.

9. Work through the 'concerns' on the selected model, one-by-one. For each concern, consider how the other models have addressed this issue, and 'borrow' ideas from them to adapt sections of the selected model so that the concern is removed. Continue until all concerns have been addressed, and the team is satisfied that the result now represents the optimum balance of all the possible options.

10. Check whether you actually want to proceed with this model, or whether you want to retain the status quo. If you decide to proceed with the new model, assign responsibility to members of the team for different areas of the model, and have them develop a clear definition for the scope/boundaries, responsibilities and links (inputs/outputs) for each area. Give each area a meaningful name.

Refining the weaknesses of one model with the strengths of others, both ensure the best design, and builds commitment to make that design work.

In our experience, the best models in practice prove to be those that are based around the concept of business processes, where each area of the model is responsible for the end-to-end delivery of some aspect of service or support.

It is quite common for process-based models to emerge naturally out of this exercise, but if you are concerned to ensure that it does, you can always make the focus on processes part of the instruction in step 4.

The exercise of remodelling the structures of your business provides an effective mechanism for breaking down any silos (a term commonly used for areas of the business that have developed a parochial focus) that may exist in your organisation; both physically in terms of the resulting structure, and culturally in terms of the discussions that will have taken place.