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CREATING EXTRAORDINARY ORGANIZATIONS

Volume Two, Letter 11

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I am writing this letter for those innovators, explorers, and pioneers who want to move beyond the ordinary to the Extraordinary in creating business organizations.

CORE ORGANIZATION PROCESS – Fulfilling member needs and aspirations

Welcome to letter 2-11. In the last letter, I discussed the four core processes that any organization must continuously perform successfully. In this letter and the three that will follow, I will examine each one and how the five core beliefs affect the way one would design it.

Process Definition

The first process is, “Fulfill the needs and aspirations of organization members.”

As explained in letter 9, this process must answer questions like these in three areas of personal needs:

Existence

- Am I getting enough pay?
- Do I have enough benefits?
- Am I physically safe on the job?

Relatedness

- How do I become a valued member of the organization?
- How do I build individual and group relationships with others?
- How do I know where I stand with others?

Growth

- How can I develop myself as I would like?
- How can I be my unique person rather than fit into a mold?
- How do I get interesting and challenging work?

Design Objectives

The design for enabling members to fulfill their individual-needs must include processes that allow members to reach these objectives.

1. Self-knowledge—Since personal responsibility is so important, the design must enable the individual to gain self-knowledge about her needs, aspirations, and potential ways of meeting them.
2. Fair return on work—Each individual has to receive a fair return on his invested work. This is generally in the form of money, benefits of various kinds, and stock.
3. Connection with others—If we are to meet relationship needs, there must be ways for individuals to have connection with each other in various ways.

4. Personal development—There must be ways for the individual to grow and develop in ways that will fulfill her growth needs.
5. Feedback—In order to build self-esteem and to receive esteem from others an individual has to be able to know how he is doing.
6. Access to information—If the person is to take full responsibility for meeting his needs, he must have access to complete information about just about everything. This includes the state of the organization and the business as well as what is happening in both.
7. Balance between work and personal life—One of the greatest causes of stress is lack of balance between one's personal and work lives. The design must allow ways to have a balanced life.
8. Positive work conditions—The design must allow members to assure that work conditions such as safety, job difficulty, time, space, and so on are as ideal as possible.

Affect of Beliefs on Design

If I were an architect designing a building, I would consider the design objectives just stated as the specifications for my design. The five core beliefs then would be the codes or other parameters within which I must design. Here are some of the ways each of the beliefs affect the design of the process to meet the objectives.

Purpose—The purpose for creating a business is to fulfill the needs and aspirations of its members.

- It must start from the individual rather than the business as current designs do. However, it does this in a way that members create an exceptional business since they know that without it they cannot fulfill their own needs.
- It must enable the individual to define and understand her needs and aspirations as well as what reaching them will look like.
- It must provide ways for an individual to get help to do this.

Authority — An organization has no authority hierarchy.

- It must assure that authority comes only from the one(s) who will be subject to it. The design must consider it a contract that the one giving the authority can withdraw if the other does not meet her commitments.
- It must assure that the individual fully understands that he is completely responsible for meeting his own needs. There is no one “up there” to take care of him.
- It must provide ways for her to meet her needs.
- It does not have to provide an authority hierarchy.

Equality — All members of the organization have equal rights and status.

- It must create equal say in anything affecting the individual.
- It must create equal opportunities to fulfill needs and aspirations.
- In the case of scarce opportunities or resources it must provide a fair and equitable way of allocating them in which all involved have an equal say.

Freedom — All members of the organization are free to do what they want unless it infringes on the freedom of another.

- It has to allow individuals to live according to the belief.
- It must set up ways to protect the individual's freedom from the whole.
- It must provide ways to know when freedoms overlap.
- It must provide ways involving all members to set boundaries for those situations where they believe they must constrict freedom for the good of all.

Ownership — Members of the organization are the de facto owners of the business.

- It has to provide ways for the individual to have an equal say in the distribution of the benefits arising from the combined effort of the organization members.
- It must provide ways for each individual to fulfill the obligations of an owner to those outside the business. This includes customers, suppliers, shareholders, government, community, and so on.
- It must consider return to members as sharing the wealth they create rather than as compensation.

Conclusion

The core beliefs affect the design of this process in many ways. Designing according to these parameters would create an organization very different from any we commonly see today. However, there are a few organizations such as Sudbury Valley School, Semco, and W.L. Gore Associates who incorporate some or all of the aspects of an EO design. Their experience shows that such a design is not only possible but also very effective for both members and the enterprise.

Until Next Time

In this letter I began an examination of the effect of the five core beliefs on each of the four core processes. In the next letter I will examine the second of these, "Create and maintain an effective social system".

Be Well, and
Be Extraordinary!

Don Yates
Extraordinary Organizations

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