



Work Organization Design – How to manage remote and in-person teams after the recovery

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Work organization

Work organization design functions on a continuum



The pandemic has disrupted that continuum

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Organisations are responding in different ways or not responding at all. For example:

The pandemic has simultaneously disrupted both the supply chain/logistics and the orientation and functionality of work and workers

- The disruption of supply chains has forced the supply chain management to move outside the organization's normative processes.
- Manufacturing sector example: a manufacturing line is down but available parts are in a bidding war. The organization must be creative and agile; their standardized methodical RFQ (request for quote) and RFP (request for proposal) processes may lead to a permanent shutdown (if parts become unavailable in meantime).

The status quo – pre-pandemic

- Working on predictability
- *Just In Time* supply chain



- Rigid organizational strategies
- Lack of flexibility/redundancy

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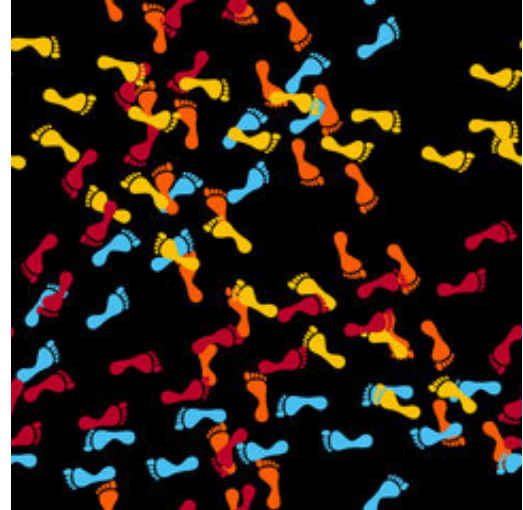
During the past 20 years, many organizational strategies had crystallized around a model of global JIT (just in time).

Work organization design supported these strategies, which were geared toward optimizing the globally dispersed resources and building an efficient infrastructure around them to minimize cost while enhancing productivity.

However, the pandemic has revealed how such an *optimized infrastructure* did **not** consider any kind of redundancy to avert unforeseen disruptions in the products and work flows.

The status quo – NOW

- All priorities change (individual and organizational)
- Re-thinking processes and objectives
- What do WE do that is essential for our stakeholders?



Alternate text:

- All priorities change
- Re-thinking processes
- Our *raison d'être*

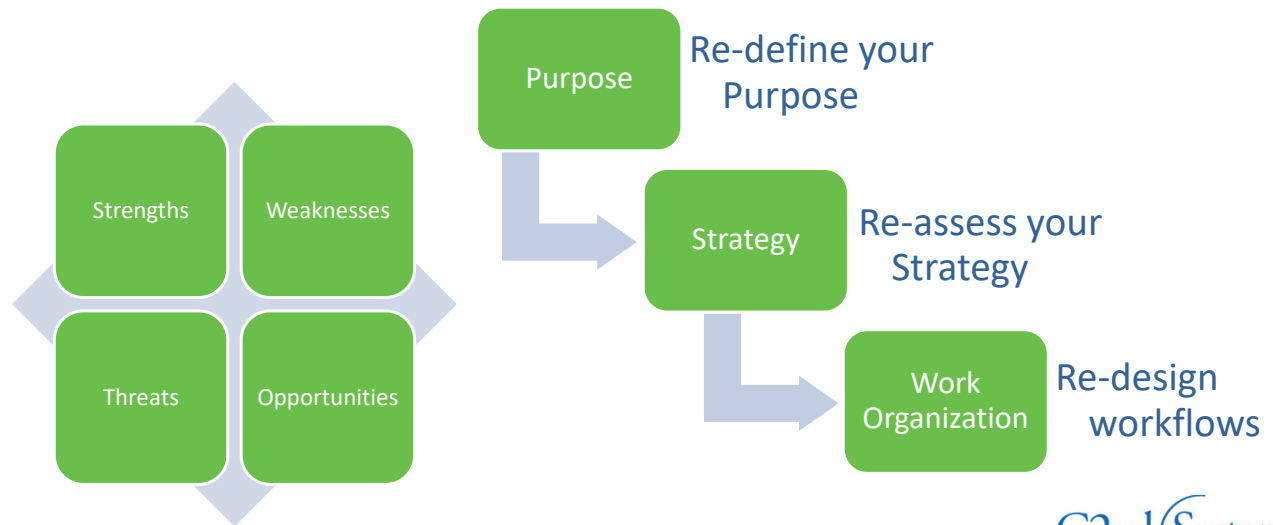
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Why does this matter?

When there is a major disruption, such as the pandemic, all priorities change---both at individual and organizational levels.

- Every organization needs to rethink about their *raison d'être* or what makes its existence valuable to their markets (customers, clients, constituents, stakeholders, etc.).
- They need to focus on *what they do that is essential to their customers/stakeholders*;
- Then, rethink how to achieve meeting those essential needs— the **work organization design** has to shift accordingly

How to re-build: from designing for efficiency to designing for resilience



Drive “purpose” in employees’ mindsets, not just processes. In a stable work environment (e.g., pre-pandemic), processes develop and become norms that integrate into the organization’s culture. Therefore, processes become “**routine**” (unquestioned). Disruption (e.g. pandemic) → think about “purpose” (the organization’s, and all elements of an employee’s job design/processes) → Redesign the processes WHILE TAKING INTO ACCOUNT NEW CONSTRAINTS, including those fostered by the pandemic. Process MUST BE kept more flexible because there haven’t been opportunities to test them against real experiences and potential consequences that would have occurred in a **routine** environment.

Even after the pandemic, in recovery and beyond, it is unlikely that organization’s will return to the previous routine (emerged out of past stability) because of how the pandemic changed how organizations should operate—for two reasons: (1) Some new constraints have emerged, which must be considered but were not believed to be relevant previously; and (2) we learned that we can be more efficient by breaking some of the existing NORMS and at the same time—enable different tradeoffs between work-life and personal-life.

Example: before, everyone assumed a process or method had to be done a certain way. Pandemic forced organizations to experiment outside the NORMS and learn that those pre-conceived ideas were not necessarily absolutely necessary.

Certain pre-pandemic managerial control structures were created based on assumption of human behaviour.

The new workplace environment



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There is a new category of critical roles — roles that are critical to the success of essential workflows.

How to manage remote and in-person teams after the recovery considerations:

- How should the organization redesign (or update its current design) in a way that can effectively tackle change and uncertainty?
 - How do you structure teams in terms of organizational charts, reporting structures and more when managing employees remotely? A participative, engaged approach.
 - After the recovery, will some still work remotely with others working in offices, airports, or other physical work locations?
 - When managing employees and teams, how do these changes affect employee engagement, performance management, and measuring organizational results?
 - Organizations may obtain evidence of their worker's activities and to propose, using a participative approach, improvements in working situations to improve productivity and goal-achievement.
1. Different types of work: ways people will go back to work? All remote, mix remote/in-person, all in-person?
 2. After the recovery, different organizations respond differently. On one side of the spectrum, most Google employees may work remotely while industrial sector workers must work onsite due to their job roles.
 3. How should workers come back to in-person environments (contact tracing, cleaning, vaccines, masks, other processes)?

Communication, Interaction, Work Organization



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4. Managing workers remotely vs. in-person – what priorities should be considered (employee engagement, accountabilities and responsibilities, job description redesign)?
5. When considering internal team/departmental workflows, a different relationship is required, one which focuses on trust and engagement rather than established *line-of-sight* control mechanisms.
6. Both managers and employees need to learn a new approach where more flexibility and initiative is allowed and encouraged from the employee (e.g., their morale will not be sustained by sending them a chocolate box).
7. Develop methodologies to assess employee morale, engagement, understanding of job tasks when in-person relationships are not possible.
8. Managers need to develop *a new flexibility in the workflow* and at the same time find new ways to monitor productivity and engagement without appearing as too intrusive on the employee (e.g., balancing job accountability and responsibility with employee engagement and participation).

Manual processing?



The spread of personnel no longer working in the same building or complex leads to the need for more data to be available electronically, thus easily shareable no matter where you are.

You can ask personnel to help create basic procedures and tracking mechanisms that facilitate automation and elimination of manual tasks.

Look for existing tools: What is between managing Excel spreadsheets/workbooks and Oracle Big Data Analytics? Evaluate the needs of the organization and find a database structure that meets current needs and can be extended while maintaining security.

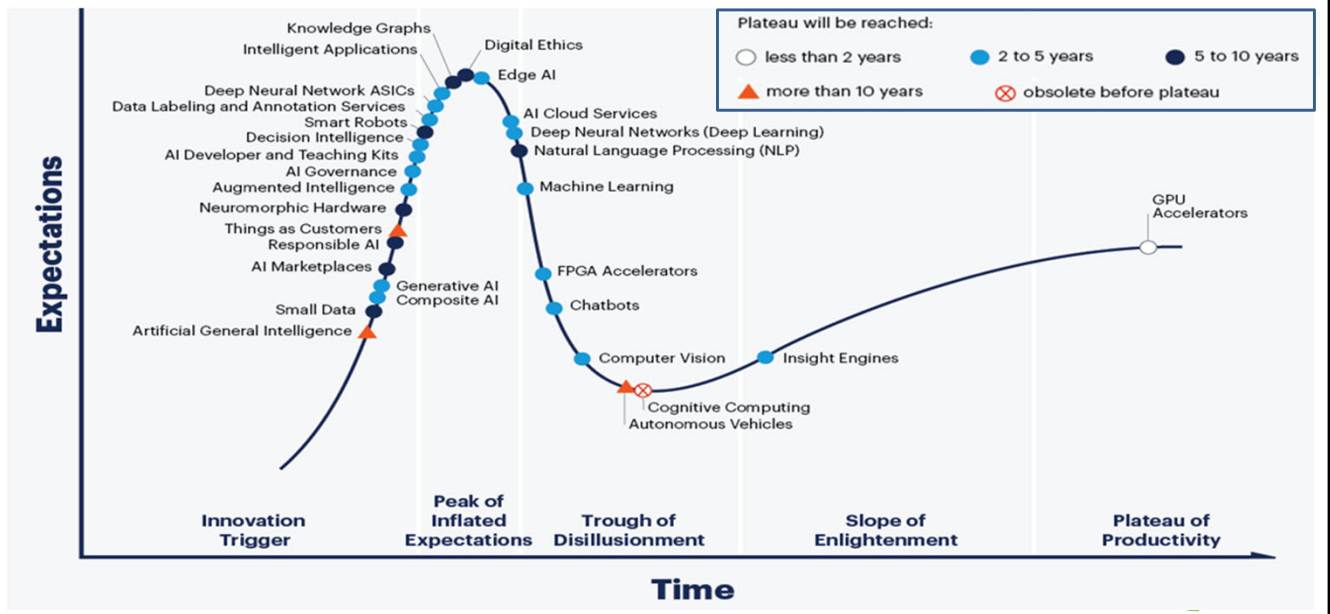
Implementations of SQL or MySQL, etc.

Is the main issue responding to situations that are non-standard at the border(s)? What creates more time/spend? Hierarchy can be reduced through education and empowerment. What are the procedural goals? **Can we both educate the lower-level staff to be sensitive to potentially critical outcomes and provide them with a decision flowchart based on situational complexity?**

Be suspicious of fancy solutions where you cannot understand how they function:

oftentimes, we select a solution without assessing its value, simply because we are trying to get a nasty problem off our back. Sometimes, we simply do not have the information or the expertise to assess the value proposition.

There is a lot of work ahead! (Gartner Hype Cycle for Artificial Intelligence 2020)



Example: Artificial Intelligence

Can you truly "measure" performance or are you simply dumping your responsibility into an algorithm?

For a long time, Gartner every year has published the "Hype Cycle" for new technologies.

****CUT**** [[[This curve is based on the well known dynamic of all new technologies:

- First, the new idea gets hyped and it reaches the Peak of Inflated Expectations, after which there is the realization that current implementations are far from satisfying the promises (this is the Trough of Disillusionment.
- Slowly, engineering fixes the bugs, improves performance and finally the product reaches the point that we see light at the end of the tunnel – this is the Slope of Enlightenment, which is followed by continuous improvement in technology until it reaches adoption.]]] ****END****

As you can see, most of the fancy AI applications are still in the Hype part of the curve. This does not mean that you cannot sell them, if buyers have no way to quantify the benefits.

Don't try to stop evolution, but...



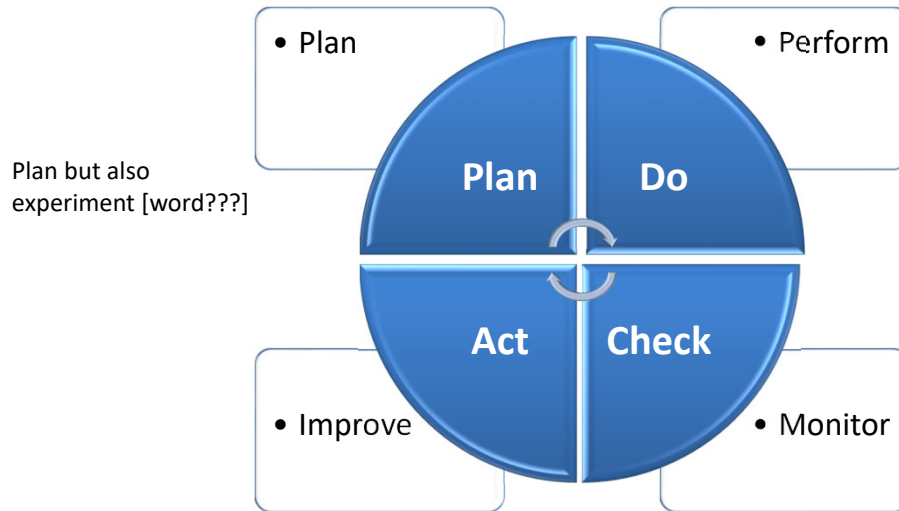
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Make sure technology serves your needs!



1. Artificial Intelligence technology is still in its infancy: look under the hood and have it translated in plain English
2. Have the objectives of the algorithms evaluated by the people who should be responsible for the values embedded in them
3. Verify, verify, verify: don't trust the label; find a way to check if the algorithm delivers what it promises

Enforcing Quality on Work Organization: the PDCA cycle

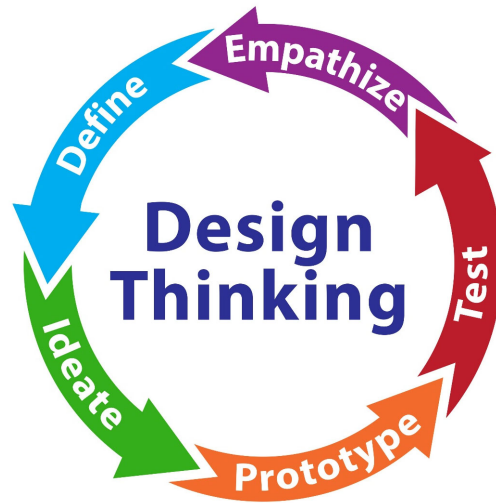


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Nothing we ever do comes out right the first time. That is why we invented the quality processes: you cannot improve what you cannot measure!

Quality control is always based on a feedback cycle: the PDCA cycle.

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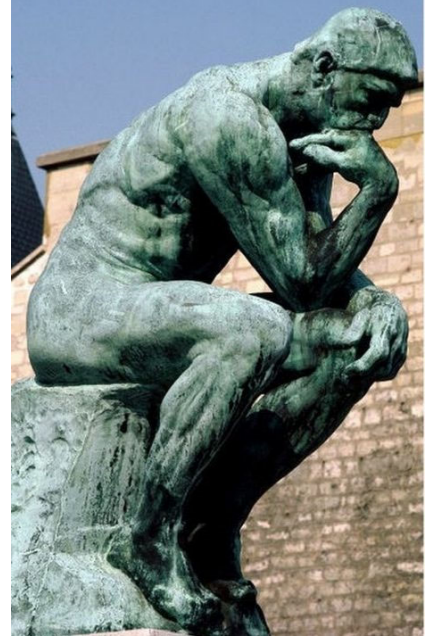
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QUESTIONS?



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Thank you!

THE END