



PALADIN ASSOCIATES, INC.

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What Is Your Ideal Organization?

A View of Two Contrasting Organizational Models

Despite the expanded use of computers and technology; and regardless of size, structure, and purpose organizations are essentially human institutions and as such take on characters or “personalities” that are uniquely their own.

The elements that greatly influence organizational character or “personality” and make the organization act and feel as it does consist of: the personalities of those working within the organization, the type of business or task the organization is involved with, the personality of the founder or subsequent leaders or heroes of the organization, and the history of the organization.

Over time organizational character has a tendency to change as the organization grows and matures. The stage an organization is in relative to its life cycle also contributes greatly to its “personality”. In the early energetic start-up stage of an organization’s life cycle it’s workforce is often composed predominantly of individuals that either have preferences for both Sensing (S) and Perceiving (P) or preferences for both iNtuitive (N) and Feeling (F).

When ask to express their idea of what constitutes the ideal organization individuals with a preference for both Sensing (S) and Preceiving (P) emphasize a workplace that is enjoyable and fun. The tasks they prefer to focus on give emphasis to specifics and detail. A fluid egalitarian “work” setting which is conducive to keeping options open rather than placing a high value on reaching decisions is equally important. The freedom to carry out tasks unhindered, in a non-prescribed, individualized manner is favorable. The establishment of formal authority and hierarchy, which typify traditional organizations, gives way to an organizational structure in which each employee is viewed essentially as an independent agent “doing his or her own thing” while functioning under an organizational umbrella. Within this uncomplicated, straight forward, organizational design theory and abstract pursuits are not regarded highly.... **ACTION** not ideas is what counts. Action for the purpose of pursuing a pragmatic, singular goal ---- “to do some one thing well and to get pleasure out of doing it”.

A preoccupation for excitement lends itself to emphasis on the present. As a result tradition and organizational history are relegated to a role of minor importance.

Resourcefulness, efficiency, and skill competence are highly valued. The organizational heroes and leaders SPs most admire are adventurous individualists. Virtuosos of quick pragmatic analyses of situations, exciting to watch as they “tilt against the odds” to masterfully find ad hoc solutions to high-risk problems.

The legendary Red Adair Company of oil well firefighters is exemplary of an SP organization. While at the same time the colorful Adair is the quintessential persona of the leadership style SPs esteem and strive to emulate. Citicorp, who sets itself apart from its conservative counter-parts in the financial industry by conducting business in a freewheeling, risk-taking aggressive manner is another organization that embodies an SP organizational cultural. Due to the nature of the tasks they perform new products departments and crisis management teams functioning within larger organizations are frequently comprised of individuals with a preference for both Sensing (S) and Perceiving (P) and often adhere to an SP organizational cultural.

Like individuals with a preference for both Sensing (S) and Perceiving (P) individuals with a preference for both iNtuitive (N) and Feeling (F) possess an aversion to prescribed rules and bureaucratic hierarchy. Unlike SPs whose primary concerns revolve around the pragmatic and the precise NFs are romantic idealists ever in quest of complex meanings to theoretical abstractions. It is essential that the organizational environment they create and the goals they focus on be built around core beliefs and personal values. The assumption that the primary function of the organization is to serve the needs of its members is a given. A harmonious decentralized organizational structure in which each employee is at liberty to freely express his or her views and opinions, regardless of position or status is crucial. NF organizational goals are idealistic and value driven. Their leaders and heroes are visionaries who endeavor to make broad significant social reforms and contributions to the betterment of humanity.

In its early days “with its emphasis on empowering the individual and changing the world through computing” Apple Computer was a classic example of an NF organization. Over time it becomes difficult for an NF organization to grow and still maintain its iNtuitive (N) and Feeling (F) persona. Most NF organizations are inclined to be flexible and adaptive and as they mature in order to “to keep alive” they tend to take on Sensing (S) and Judging (J) characters; as Apple has done.

While there are organizations like W.L Gore and Associates, the developer and manufacturer of GOR-TEX fabric, Herman Miller, the well-known furniture maker, and the Nordstrom Department Store Corporation which have managed to develop and prosper while still maintaining an NF “personalities” such organizations are the exception. The majority of NF organizations exist as sub-organizations within larger organizations, most frequently within Human Resource and Public Relations Departments.

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*****References used in this article: Character of Organizations, by William Bridges;
Stakeholders of the Organization, by Ian Mitroff*