

The Information-Based Organization

Griffith Feeney

Based on Chapter 14 of *The New
Realities*, by Peter F. Drucker,
Harper & Row, New York, 1989

Information is ...

- *data endowed with relevance and purpose*
- Converting data into information requires *knowledge*
- Knowledge is inherently specialized
- The information-based organization requires *specialists* of many kinds to carry out its mission

Appropriate Organization

- Existing organizational structures are mostly *not* appropriate; the appropriate organization is uncertain but ...
- We do have useful models: the *hospital*, the *symphony orchestra*, and the *university*
- What do lessons do these teach? The irrelevancy of ‘command and control’ model and ...

Some Requirements

- Information-based organizations require **clear, simple, common objectives** *that translate into specific actions*
- **Knowledge-workers cannot be told how to do their work**; they know better than anyone else *because they are specialists*
- Consequently, **knowledge workers must take responsibility for their own work**

Making the Organization Work

- Every knowledge-worker must ask:
- *Who* in this organization depends on me *for what information?*
- *What information do I need* to do my job, to make my contribution, and *who can provide it?*
- Information relationships are often *lateral*, cross-cutting the *hierarchical* organization

Getting Specific

- What information is necessary to plan the *content* of a population census (*forget operations!*)
- Where does it exist? What is inside the national statistical organization, and where? What is outside, and where?
- How to get this information to the census planners who need it?

The Presumption

- *We do not know* all we need to know to decide the content of the census
- The first task is to *assess our ignorance*, to sketch the boundaries of what we need to learn
- Once we *know* what we don't know, we can try to create the necessary knowledge

Review of Key Ideas

- Information-based organizations depend fundamentally on *knowledge workers*
- Knowledge workers cannot be told what to do, they must be *self-controlled*
- Self-control cannot be achieved without a clear *mission* and *feedback* on performance
- Knowledge workers need to think through *what information they need* and *what others need from them*

Questions?
Comments?
Discussion?