

Formal organizations and bureaucracy



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Though bureaucracy has not played an enormous part in my life to it has made a mark on me through one extended experience that I have had with it. I worked for a short period as a customer service representative (CSR) for a cellular phone company, and in this company all CSR's were automatically sales representatives as well. This firm was highly efficient, and expected nothing less from its new employees. One positive aspect of the firm was an apparent absence of "the iron law of oligarchy"-at least in the managerial ranks. It was possible to be rewarded based on one's capabilities, rather than on the basis of whether or not one was around at the founding of the organization. Though some of the managers there were recruited from other firms, the majority of them started out as representatives or sales persons in a lower ranking position. The philosophy of the firm was that it would always seek persons from within the organization to fill the empty slots at higher ranks before looking outside for possible employees. This offered motivation to many of the workers in the organization, and therefore, many CSR's worked very hard at their positions and went the extra mile of attempting to become excellent sales representatives as well, in order that the promised rewards would follow.

One drawback of this bureaucratic institution that had a particular effect on me was the alienation that inevitably attended an organization of such immense size and structure. Every single minute of the day was planned out for me as an employee. Breaks were scheduled, as were lunch times; and electronic systems and constant overhead monitoring made sure that no deviations from the stringent patterns were possible. Although rewards were merely possible, punishment was a certainty. The overhead monitoring consisted of a number of administrators who had access to all that was done

and said by the employees, but apart from a messaging box on the computer screen, these administrators were invisible and inaccessible. This gave me, and many like me, a feeling of distrust for the management. Even though the visible managers might have appeared amiable and unexacting on the surface, the nature of the employees' situation at the firm made distrust the most salient sentiment toward them.

In addition to this general mistrust was another type of alienation that Marx propounded: the alienation of the employee from the product, to which he or she feels very little connection. I must say that while working for that firm, I rarely felt that I was giving anything of value to society. It might have been the nature of the work itself, or the fact that talking to so many people per day made me feel as though I helped no one in particular. This alienation might also have stemmed from the fact that, as Marx argued, my part in the process was so small that I felt it to be worth nothing at all. For all those reasons, I felt very disconnected from the production process and consequently from the firm itself. Meaninglessness so permeated my entire feeling and attitude toward the job that after only two months I was unable to continue.

Bureaucracy in formal organizations is an efficient system that keeps jobs impersonal to the point that almost anyone can fill them. The ability of the job to be performed by anyone at all makes the bureaucratic and formal situation desirable to a firm that would like to endure beyond the life expectancy of the human individual. However, for the true individual it can be a very taxing system under which to work. Such was my experience as a CSR, doing a job that was removed from my talents and gifts. Though I saw the ability of the bureaucracy to reward me for hard work, I was unable to

endure the alienation that is almost inevitable in any such organization.

Work Cited

Pearson Education. Bureaucracy and Formal Organizations. Pearson, 2004.

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