

Organization as machine



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The organization structures at the Telebank call Center “ Set goals and objectives and go for them. Organize rationally, efficiently, and clearly. Specify every detail so that everyone will be sure of the jobs that they have to perform. Plan, organize, and control, control, control. These and other similar ideas are often ingrained in our way of thinking about organization and in the way we evaluate organizational practice. For many people, it is almost second nature to organize by setting up a structure of clearly defined activities linked by clear lines of communication, coordination, and control.

The major components of the technical system can be considered as the Hardware Mainframes, workstations, peripheral, connecting networks. Software Operating systems, utilities, application programs, specialized code. It is getting increasingly hard to tell the difference between software and hardware, but it is an integral part of any socio-technical system. Software (and by implication, hardware too) often incorporates social rules and organizational procedures as part of its design (e. g. optimize these parameters, ask for these data, store the data in these formats, etc.). Thus, software can serve as a stand-in for some of the factors listed below, and the incorporation of social rules into the technology can make these rules harder to see and harder to change. Of course in the Socio-technical system the People are the major component of social system. Individuals, groups: roles (support, training, management, line personnel, engineer, etc.). It helps to think of organizations as systems.

Simply put, a system is a organized collection of parts that are highly integrated in order to accomplish an overall goal. The system has various inputs which are processed to produce certain outputs, that together,

accomplish the overall goal desired by the organization. There is ongoing feedback among these various parts to ensure they remain aligned to accomplish the overall goal of the organization. There are several classes of systems, ranging from very simple frameworks all the way to social systems, which are the most complex. Organizations are, of course, social systems.

The phrase " socio-technical systems" indicates the view that technology is not used in a deterministic fashion but rather is chosen and combined with specific social and organization strategies in controlling production. Their components are interrelated and interact so that a change in one component often produces changes in the other components and in the system as a whole. Bringing about good changes and preventing bad ones requires adjusting the different elements in relation to one another to maintain or strengthen key values embedded in the system.

They include business projects/processes, physical surroundings, stakeholders, procedures, laws and regulations, financial and market systems, information systems, and environmental systems. At Telebank call Center, technology is used to control the pace and direction of work in much the same way as assembly line production. Pace of work is controlled through automatic call distribution systems, which continually feed calls through to CSR's while software directs individual tasks.

It's also possible to argue that Telebank's (continual) single unit production system overcomes one of the difficulties with continuous flow technical control identified by Edwards. He states that while technical control creates a common pace and pattern of work it links together the plant's workforce

which means that if one worker stops working the whole plant is a threatened. This cannot happen in call centers - if one customer service representative stops working production is only marginally reduced.

Telebank's system is also used for monitoring and evaluating work - there is a second element of control. Technological tools are consciously developed and chosen by call centre managers: You can tell when they go to the toilet, how much time they spend at the toilet, so it's crucially important that you communicate these statistics in the right sort of way. CSR's inhabit a workplace where the weight of statistics and surveillance pressurizes performance and where, when confrontation does take place, the power of a major evaluation tool is recognized and largely, but not always, accepted.

This system of control is strongly embedded in the physical fabric of production and is less obtrusive. The argument that by vesting power in the line itself, power relations are made more invisible, develops themes about the apparent removal of human agency and the objectification of control. Yet management is still highly visible - executive managers influence software design; call centre managers decide how much statistical information is used and team leaders confront workers. Personal conflict between individual worker and managers still exists.

Bureaucratic control works mainly by instilling behavioral patterns, specifying performance standards and developing written skill definitions. While such systems do not result in the fine differentiation between jobs or the development of career ladders, they do institutionalize values and give supervisors (and workers themselves) specific criteria against which to

evaluate workers which have an indirect influence on the pacing and direction of work - you must comply with the speed and demands of the system - and these are combined with performance standards and skills.

Profiles in monitoring performance and rewarding workers: Such standards and profiles are used in appraisal meetings to evaluate work, to reward or discipline workers. Bureaucratic control specifies values, beliefs and standards, with, at one end of the spectrum, 'attitude' shifting from being important in work to being the work itself; with people being recruited and trained in part to produce 'units' of attitude which meet customer service criteria.

Telebanking is an innovative electronic solution to banking that assist the bank to offer more services to the bank customer and meet their demands efficiently through a wider area interaction over the phone and internet. The Telebank call Centers also called the telephone banking center, automate the bank process like funds transfer, loan payments, currency transactions etc. by providing a wide spread support to attend the customer queries and request over phone.

Call centre work is essentially individual, involving an interaction between CSR and customer, yet CSR's are formed into teams of 12. Why is this done? Managerial responses to this question include overcoming feelings of isolation and, crucially, using team competitions to improve productivity. Telebank introduce feelings rules. By combining technical and bureaucratic control it's possible to develop a model of structural control.

Telebank data offer a solid example of the way these systems might merge - performance data produced by the technology is combined with bureaucratic rules and procedures to reward and discipline workers; automatic call recordings are combined with institutional norms to monitor workers and the pace and direction set by the technology is combined with a bureaucratization process which instills conformity.

" The strengths and limitations of the machine as a metaphor for organization are reflected in the strengths and limitations of mechanistic organization in practice. " The strengths can be stated very simply. Mechanistic approaches to organization work well only under conditions where machines work well: (a) when there is a straightforward task to perform; (b) when the environment is stable enough to ensure that the products produced will be appropriate ones; (c) when one wishes to produce exactly the same product time and again; (d) when precision is at a premium; and (e) when the human " machine" parts are compliant and behave as they have been designed to do.

" Mechanistically structured organizations have great difficulty adapting to changing circumstances because they are designed to achieve predetermined goals; they are not designed for innovation. " " Changing circumstances call for different kinds of action and response. Flexibility and capacities for creative action become more important than narrow efficiency. It becomes more important to do the right thing in a way that is timely and " good enough" than to do the wrong thing well or the right thing late. " The hierarchical organization of jobs builds on the idea that control must be exercised over the different parts of the organization" (to ensure that they

are doing what they are designed to do). Mechanistic approach to organization tends to limit rather than mobilize the development of human capacities, molding human beings to fit the requirements of mechanical organizations rather than building the organization around their strengths and potentials.

Both employees and organizations lose from this arrangement. Employees lose opportunities for personal growth, often spending hours a day on work they neither value nor enjoy, and organizations lose the creative and intelligent contributions that most employees are capable of making, given the right opportunities. " Mechanistic approaches to organization have proved incredibly popular, partly because of their efficiency in the performance of tasks that can be successfully routinized partly because they offer managers the promise of tight control over people and their activities. In stable times, the approach worked from a managerial point of view. But with the increasing pace of social and economic change, the limitations have become more and more obvious. "