

## **EJEMPLOS QUE ILUSTRAN LOS PRINCIPIOS DE LAS NUEVAS ORGANIZACIONES<sup>1</sup>**

### **PROCESOS EN LUGAR DE FUNCIONES - CASE EXAMPLE: A Football Team.**

A football team is a good example of a process-centered organization, says Hammer [3]. It has two processes: offense and defense. It has process owners: offense coordinators and defense coordinators who select the players, train them, design plays, and script them; their concern is the performance of the process.

The team also has "position coaches, such as line coaches, who train and develop the athletes for specific tasks, acting as counselors and mentors; their concern is the performance of the players.

Finally, the team has a head coach, the leader, who creates the organization, names the coordinators and coaches (and then manages them), creates the team's culture and values, motivates the players to peak performance, and calls the plays during the game. But once on the field, the team is self-directed. It adapts to the unfolding play.

### **AUTO-ORGANIZACIÓN EN LUGAR DE DISEÑO PREVIO - CASE EXAMPLE: Semco S.A.**

Ricardo Semler, CEO of Semco, describes how his company, a Brazilian manufacturer of industrial equipment, moved from fifty-sixth place to fourth place in its industry. To survive with Brazil's crippling inflation rate, Semler felt he had to "break all the rules" to reduce costs and raise productivity.

As a result, factory workers at times set their own production quotas, help redesign products, formulate marketing plans, and even choose their own bosses. Bosses set their own salaries, yet everyone knows what they are because workers have unlimited access to Semco's one set of books. And they've all been taught how to read balance sheets and cash flow statements. Finally, on the big decisions, such as relocating a factory, everyone decides. In one case, a factory was shut down for one day and buses took the employees to all three possible sites. Then the workers decided on a site that management would not have chosen.

There are no receptionists or secretaries, no perks, and Semler really does not know how many employees he has because some of his employees work part-time for him and part-time for competitors, others are contractors, and still others are vendor employees. When Semler took over the company after the death of his father, he threw out the rules because they discouraged flexibility and condoned complacency. So for travel, for example, there are no travel rules; people are to spend whatever they think they should, as if it were their own money. The rationale: "If we're afraid to let people decide in which section of the plane to sit or how many stars their hotels should have, we shouldn't be sending them abroad to do business in NY, our name, should we?" writes Semler. Employees are considered partners; they are self-managing and self-governing. They even vote on how the profit-sharing pot will be split each year.

Things are rather messy around Semco, writes Semler. Machines are not in neat rows. They are set at odd angles, where the team that assembles a complete product puts them. Most workers do several jobs on a team, not just one, with the backing of the unions. And team members do not have to show up for work at the same time, but they do coordinate their schedules so as not to disrupt production. As the workers assumed more responsibility for their work, the number of supervisors decreased—as did corporate staff. Semco does not even have IS, training, or quality control departments. There are three layers of management (there used to be twelve) and those three are represented by three concentric circles.

Furthermore, departments can buy from whomever they choose. This competition keeps them on their toes. Management even encourages employees to start their own companies, even to the point of leasing Semco machinery to these startups at favorable rates. These companies sell to Semco and competitors. This strategy keeps Semco lean and agile.

The story goes on and on. The changes have been rough and not undertaken in an orderly or coherent fashion, as Semler recounts, but the radical change to a far more democratic workplace allowed

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<sup>1</sup> Tomado de: B. McNurlin, R. Sprague (1997) **Information Systems Management in Practice**. Prentice Hall.

Semco to grow 600 percent at the same time that Brazil's economy was faltering. It's a very dramatic story, and illustrative of the benefits of self-organization.

### **COMUNIDADES EN LUGAR DE GRUPOS - CASE EXAMPLE: National Semiconductor.**

National Semiconductor has gone the furthest in promoting communities of practice, according to John Seely Brawn and Estee Solomon Gray [9]. The company began encouraging such communities in 1991, after its business model-to build low-margin, commodity chips-collapsed. The new CEO restructured and rationalized the company, then put it on a growth path and changed its model to product leadership. Part of the strategy is to build a core competence in mixed signal technology, where chips function as the electronic interface between the "real world" of voice/video and the digital world of computing/communications.

Communities of practice are central to this plan. They energize and mobilize the firm's engineers. They even shape strategy and then enact it. A community of practice on signal processing, for example, grew slowly over 18 months. It includes engineers from numerous product lines and is now influential in strategy decisions.

Another community of practice has grown up around phase lock loops (PLL), a technology critical in some important company products. For 20 years, PLL designers swapped ideas, insights, and solutions to problems, even though they worked in different business units that did not interact. Within this loose community, a group of PLL engineers began reviewing new chip designs. When product groups around National Semiconductor heard about these reviews, they informally brought their designs to the group for advice. The more reviews the group did, the more effective it became, and earned a reputation for excellence.

These engineers cannot publish their design criteria nor teach others how to do design reviews nor create a library of design because their knowledge is embedded within their experience as a community of practice. The only way someone can learn how to critique a design is to become part of that community and interact with it.

In 1994, this PLL community of practice was formally recognized as such and adopted a charter: To make its design know-how accessible, make successes and failures known, and continue to build the firm's PLL competence. This community does not report to anyone; it is "run" by its members. It provides a means of collaboration among National engineers concerning their PLL designs. It even received funding to develop two advanced PLL prototypes outside any National product line. And it has created a "PLL place"-a lab that houses the equipment it buys.

National is extending communities of practice by formally recognizing them, offering funding for their projects, and handing out a toolkit to help people form their own communities of practice. And it encourages them to create home pages on the World Wide Web to communicate.

### **ORGANIZACIÓN VIRTUAL EN LUGAR DE FÍSICA - CASE EXAMPLE: Sun Microsystems**

John Gage, chief scientist of Sun Microsystems, gives an intriguing description of virtual organizations within existing companies [1a]. He says that the network creates the company. "Your e-mail flow determines whether you're really part of the organization; the mailing lists you're on say a lot about the power you have." For example, he had been part of the Java group at Sun for four or five years, when his name mistakenly was taken off. His flow of information stopped; he stopped being part of that organization. He got back on in a hurry, he says.

Gage notes that he used Sun's alias file (the master list of its e-mail lists) to know what was going on at Sun. No one needed to tell him when a new project had started, he would just see a new e-mail list. And when he saw a list balloon from, say, 35 to 200, he knew something was happening.

People even create their own aliases, Gage says. His own alias is his personal view of the company's power structure on projects, such as Java, no matter where the members work. The organization chart does not reflect the same list. These personal aliases have a secondary effect, too, says Gage. They let others know who you are keeping informed. In essence, each alias is a virtual organization. Web technology extends e-mail, says Gage, because it allows people to send "live" messages with embedded hyperlinks. So, rather than try to persuade someone, you can just show them.