HIGH-PERFORMANCE WORK ORGANIZATIONS

Definitions, Practices, and An Annotated Bibliography
HIGH-PERFORMANCE WORK ORGANIZATIONS
DEFINITIONS, PRACTICES, AND AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Greensboro, North Carolina
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Preface

This report was originally written for the staff of the Center for Creative Leadership in response to a request to obtain the latest thinking on what has been written about high-performance work organizations (HIPOs). We further developed this report to benefit a much wider audience.

When we first contemplated taking on a review of the HIPO literature, we believed that our search would turn up a small number of articles and books on the subject. Contrary to this view, our colleague Barry Macy, at the Center for Productivity and Quality of Work Life at Texas Tech University, informed us that his center’s library contained over 300,000 pages of books, articles, and cases that have been written on HIPOs over the years. Professor Macy also stated that over eighty percent of what has been written and documented about HIPOs has not been published.

Upon proceeding with the review, we discovered patterns emerging around the components of HIPOs that helped us formulate ideas about a definition for the overall concept. So this report has two parts: the first contains the various definitions of the high-performance work organization found in the literature, a description of the dimensions that make up the definitions, a new definition that synthesizes the existing literature, and a word about the future of HIPOs; the second part of the report is the annotated bibliography.

We are grateful to several individuals both inside and outside CCL who made this report possible. We thank Elizabeth Janak (Xerox Corporation), Fred Luthans (University of Nebraska), Barry Macy (Center for Productivity and Quality of Work Life, Texas Tech University), Susan Mohrman (Center for Effective Organizations, University of Southern California), and William Pasmore (Case Western Reserve University) for their helpful comments and assistance. We also thank our CCL colleagues Robert Ginnett, Gina Hernez-Broome, Richard Hughes, and Patricia O’Connor Wilson for their input. In addition, we thank Marcia Horowitz and Martin Wilcox for invaluable editorial guidance.
Introduction

High-performance work organizations (HIPOs) are many things to many people. Because of this, rigorous research has been hampered by the lack of a comprehensive understanding of the construct. Further, in practice, managers cannot begin to identify whether their organizations are truly HIPOs when there is no generally accepted definition.

Written in response to a growing call for a common definition, this report contributes to the literature on HIPOs in three ways: (1) It aggregates existing research and organizes it into five component groups; (2) it provides a definition that integrates the diverse literature; and (3) it presents annotations of the 168 most current and important works. The first part of this book contains the current definitions of HIPOs, our integrated definition, a review of the components of HIPOs, and a word about the future. The second part contains the annotated bibliography, organized by the five components.

The five components—self-managing work teams; employee involvement, participation, and empowerment; total quality management; integrated production technologies; and the learning organization—mentioned above were identified in the course of our research. Thus, the annotated bibliography not only reflects the available literature on the HIPO as an aggregation of techniques but also covers work that focuses more narrowly on all five of these component areas. As a consequence, the review of the components makes up a large part of this report. We discovered that the literature devoted exclusively to the overall concept of the HIPO is much less developed.

This book is intended for those who want to identify and track the components of high performance. Practicing managers, scholars and researchers, and human resources professionals should find it useful, as will senior-level executives who are in charge of strategic planning and decision making.
High-performance Work Organizations

Defining and Considering HIPOs

In the pages that follow, we provide several existing definitions of the HIPO. From these definitions we identify and briefly review five components that we feel form the building blocks of such an organization. Finally, we suggest a comprehensive, dynamic definition.

Existing Definitions of the HIPO

Recently, a feature article in *Training and Development* stated that “there is no single, agreed-upon definition of a high-performance work system, nor consensus about the components it should have” (Gephardt & Van Buren, 1996, p. 22 [see annotation on page 15]). Further, in an annotated bibliography on the human resource aspects of HIPO, Beatty, Schneer, and Ulrich [Beatty, R. W., Schneer, C. E., & Ulrich, D. O. *High Performance Work Systems: An Annotated Bibliography*. Unpublished manuscript. Rutgers University, 1995] reported that out of sixty-five articles and books reviewed, only six articles (11%) actually included a definition. Gephardt and Van Buren (1996) state that existing definitions and approaches do share some common ideas. Companies organize workflow around key business processes and often create teams to carry out those processes. HIPO systems also include a number of human resource policies such as hiring, training, performance management, and compensation intended to enhance employee skills, knowledge, motivation, and flexibility. HIPOs involve fewer levels of management and new roles for managers such as coaching, integrating, and facilitating. Gephardt and Van Buren also argue that no two HIPOs are exactly alike. The specific form depends upon the context and the needs of the organization.

Because there is no generally accepted definition, we decided to investigate definitions of leading scholars and researchers who study HIPOs. We found the following definitions in our search that summarize and synthesize all of the definitions that we discovered:

1. “Creating flexible, high-performing, learning organizations is the secret to gaining competitive advantage in a world that won’t stand still” (William Pasmore, *Creating Strategic Change: Designing the Flexible, High-performing Work Organization*, 1994, p. ix [see annotation on page 21])

2. “Flexible or lean manufacturing methods and associated employment-relation practices” (Jeffrey Pfeffer, “When it comes to ‘best practices’—Why do smart organizations occasionally do dumb things?” *Organizational Dynamics*, Summer 1996, p. 35 [see annotation on page 95])
(3) “self-managed teams and decentralization of decision making as the basic principles of organizational design” (Jeffrey Pfeffer, “Seven practices of successful organizations,” California Management Review, 1998, p. 96 [see annotation on page 22])

(4) “Employee involvement, participative management, democratic management, and total quality management . . .” (Edward Lawler, Susan Mohrman, and Gerald Ledford, Jr., Creating High Performance Organizations: Practices and Results of Employee Involvement and Total Quality Management in Fortune 1000 Companies, 1995, p. 1 [see annotation on page 20])

(5) “extraordinary capable people, working in teams, equipped with proper technology, focused on satisfying the customer and improving work processes” (Joseph White, “Developing leaders for the high-performance workplace,” Human Resource Management, 33:1, 1994, p. 162 [see annotation on page 25])

From these definitions and our reading of the HIPO literature, we identified five dimensions or components of the HIPO: (1) self-managing work teams; (2) employee involvement, participation, empowerment; (3) total quality management; (4) integrated production technologies; and (5) the learning organization.

Overall, the existing evidence on the impact of the HIPO elements and practices on the financial and nonfinancial performance of organizations has been positive. Companies such as Corning, Xerox, Eastman Chemical Company (Kodak), and New United Motor Manufacturing (NUMMI, a joint venture between General Motors and Toyota) have all implemented the HIPO with powerful results. Over thirteen percent of companies in the United States are now considered HIPOs (White, 1994). Next, we discuss each of the five HIPO components in more detail.

A Review of the Components of the HIPO

The literature strongly reflects the following five components of HIPOs.

Self-managing work teams/sociotechnical systems. The focus and interest on self-managing work teams (SMWTs) has grown considerably since the original Tavistock studies of post WWII and the work of Fred Emery [Emery, F. E. Characteristics of Socio-Technical Systems. London: Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, 1959] and Eric Trist [Trist, E. L., & Barnforth, K. W. Some social and psychological consequences of the Longwall method of coal getting. Human Relations, 30, 1950, pp. 201-236]. Organizations have adopted SMWTs in greater numbers in a variety of manufacturing and service settings over the last ten years. Researchers have
conducted quality field experiments in studying the impact of SMWTs on various aspects of organizational performance. The empirical evidence now available suggests strong effects on employee attitudes (for example, job satisfaction, organizational commitment), more modest effects for performance outcomes (for example, productivity, quality, costs), and mixed results for employee behavior (for example, turnover, absenteeism).

The literature is fairly mature regarding what support systems are needed for successful SMWTs, including leader behaviors, human resources policies, and organization-level structures and systems. The moderate failure rate of SMWTs in industry has been attributed to: launching teams without proper structural or system support, ignoring the fairness concerns of those involved in teams, failing to overcome the value of individualism in American workplaces, and implementing SMWTs in highly certain organizational environments or in non-interdependent work settings.

**Employee involvement/participation/empowerment.** We combined these three literatures into one area because, depending on the level of each one, they can sometimes be viewed interchangeably. For example, employee involvement (EI) can be viewed at three levels—(1) parallel suggestion involvement, (2) job involvement, and (3) high involvement—depending on the exact level of involvement of employees. Participation could be placed between parallel suggestion involvement and job involvement. For example, employees might be asked to participate in a number of job-related decisions and processes. Empowerment, however, would be synonymous with high involvement (number 3 above). For example, employees are given a high degree of decision-making responsibility beyond simple participation in decision making. The emphasis on all of these levels is that employees are urged to individually play a larger role in their work environments.

Regarding research, participation has the longest history, followed by employee involvement and then by the rather recent surge of interest in empowerment. Regarding empirical research on participation, many of the studies conducted have found effects for satisfaction and performance while others have found no effect. Researchers have identified different types of participation and have argued that different types affect different outcomes, and that this finer-grain analysis may be responsible for the mixed effects. Empirical results for EI have generally been positive although outcomes are usually higher for employees who voluntarily enter such programs. Due to the consistent line of research by a small number of scholars, a generally accepted definition of empowerment has emerged, and empirical tests have validated a four-dimension model and its effects on important outcomes.
**Total quality management.** In the United States, total quality management (TQM) blossomed in the 1980s and has continued to be a widespread organizational process into the 1990s. However, TQM has not enjoyed an equivalent prevalence in the scholarly press. In a special issue of the *Academy of Management Review*, a set of articles reviews TQM and explores some of the reasons why the concept has not been studied more frequently. Those reasons include: (1) there has been a lack of theoretical development of TQM and thus few propositions exist to test; (2) a comprehensive TQM construct does not exist due to the multitude of quality programs and principles developed by quality gurus (for example, Juran, Deming, Ishikawa); (3) organizations are implementing a vastly distorted view of TQM leading to the lack of construct coherence; and (4) many other interventions are subsumed under the TQM banner.

Because more attention has not been paid to TQM in the management literature, empirical studies validating the effects of TQM on important organizational outcomes are lacking. Several case studies and more practitioner-oriented articles that have reported empirical tests of the effects of TQM have been contradictory. The mixed findings have been attributed, in part, to the different definitions of quality and the lack of measurement of the existence of actual TQM processes. For example, of the ninety-nine studies published in academic and practitioner journals between 1989 and 1993 on TQM, only four percent assessed the degree to which TQM interventions actually were in place.

**Integrated production technologies.** Integrated production technologies (IPT) is used here as an umbrella term for a host of manufacturing and service tools that seek to enhance flexibility, increase efficiency, or do both. These include but are not limited to advanced manufacturing technology (AMT), computer-aided design/engineering/manufacturing (CAD/CAE/CAM), flexible manufacturing systems (FMS), just-in-time (JIT) inventory management, and, for some authors, total quality management (TQM). TQM is not discussed further in this section as it received treatment elsewhere in the report.

A set of clear findings emerge from both empirical studies and case studies on the use of integrated manufacturing technology (IMT) techniques: (1) Success (capabilities and profitability) depends much more on the people involved than the sophistication level of the technology implemented. (2) Organizations seem to fail to redesign the organization in a way that leverages the potential synergies from implementing one or multiple IPT techniques. (3) An incremental approach rather than a plunge approach to IPT
investments is preferable with the return from investments in IMT following the familiar inverted-U curve with respect to performance. (4) There is a clear focus on competitiveness goals rather than short-term efficiency gains that includes a thoughtful consideration of how the technologies implemented relate to the desired organizational capabilities/advantages.

IPTs must be adopted consistent with strategic intent. To determine that an organization needs to be more flexible fails to address what type of flexibility is required for competitiveness. Defining flexibility as product mix or changeover cost or product modification capability or production volume variability or types of materials used in the production process requires different types of technologies and different people skills/interfaces. In short, successful AMT implementation has a process and logic that requires more attention to management than technology. Until equal attention is given to structure, planning, conflict resolution, team functioning, and champion skill development, as critical to successful IPT introduction, success will continue to be elusive.

**The learning organization.** The notion of what constitutes a learning organization and why an organization should want to become one varies considerably. Some authors suggest that organizations need to learn in an effort to adapt to their environment (internally focused first-order learning) while other authors suggest it is to gather information to anticipate environmental change (externally focused second-order learning). Some acknowledge both first- and second-order learning needs but are careful to delineate that the organization must develop appropriate and explicit mechanisms for each rather than one mechanism for both. Others seek to differentiate “learning in organizations,” which can be done by individuals as learning agents, from “learning organizations,” which require a collective discourse and can only be done by the organization as learning agent.

Despite these apparent differences, several characteristics of a learning organization are common to almost all of these definitions. Common characteristics in most definitions of the learning organization are: (1) these organizations tend to learn what they value (for example, quality, efficiency, bureaucracy, customers); (2) a systemic rather than a functional approach to learning is preferred (that is, learning with strategic intent); (3) a structured methodology or forum for cross-functional dialogue that does not crumble to operational/financial pressures to reallocate human capital; (4) focusing on understanding parameters and scenarios rather than solution optimization; (5) viewing learning as a process (journey) rather than an outcome (destination); (6) creating learning forums with explicit goals in mind (for example,
what is the EC, its implications, and evolutionary cycles); (7) developing systems for the fast and efficient transfer of information; and (8) embedding reasons for organizational successes/failures in the collective organizational memory.

In general, organizations appear to be much more proficient at knowledge acquisition (development of insights) and knowledge sharing (dissemination of what has been learned) than knowledge utilization (integrating information into organizational memory for broad availability and generalizability to new situations). Challenges to building the learning organization are likely to include: (1) coaching employees to be systems thinkers; (2) increasing information conduits and reducing information buffers to encourage systems thinking; (3) developing problem-solving techniques to incorporate multiple perspectives and multiple avenues for accessing information; (4) motivating employees to value learning as much as technical competence; (5) developing explicit organizational learning mechanisms (OLMs) to capture insights in a way that facilitates dissemination; and (6) educating employees on the use and relevance of OLMs to organizational effectiveness.

Toward Common Ground: A Process Definition of the HIPO

From our review of the literature, one may form the impression that a HIPO simply consists of five components. That is, the HIPO is some combination of self-managing work teams, employee involvement, total quality management, flexible production practices, and a learning orientation. Thus, in attempting to identify a HIPO, one need only look for the existence of the five dimensions within an organization. There are at least two problems with such an approach. First, several studies comparing the introduction of high-performance work systems in U.S. firms have found that when the component parts were introduced in an integrated fashion (that is, hybrids), performance was higher than when the same practices were introduced as distinct practices (that is, hodgepodes). Second, merely identifying component existence ignores the most important factor that determines whether an organization is a HIPO or not—high organizational performance.

We define organizational performance as the achievement of organizational goals in pursuit of business strategies that lead to sustainable competitive advantages (Gephardt & Van Buren, 1996). To measure organizational performance more completely, one might use an approach similar to the balanced scorecard, which elevates nonfinancial measures to a level consistent with a traditional focus on financial measures.
Elevating nonfinancial measures may be increasingly important because financial measures focus on what has happened. This control-focused feedback is very useful in a relatively stable environment where continuous improvement of repetitive operations enhances performance. However, in an era of discontinuous change, shifting consumer demands, and global competition, measures that focus on what is changing (for example, percentage of total revenues from products introduced in the prior three years) or what will change (for example, number of new patents awarded or product markets entered/exited) may be more relevant to maintaining competitive advantage.

Thus, another way to identify HIPOs would be to obtain measures on the various financial and nonfinancial aspects contained within the scorecard. The organizations with the highest scores on these indicators could then be classified as HIPOs. However, this method ignores the fact that performance does not have the same meaning for every organization. Within the scorecard approach, certain organizations will value certain indicators more than others, a perspective advanced by the creators of the scorecard. Thus, it would be inaccurate to compare organizations across the same performance indicators. An alternative approach might be to compare organizations on the extent to which they met the goals they set forth in the scorecard. However, this still fails to take into account differences in goal difficulty across organizations.

So, if HIPOs cannot be adequately defined by examining organizational practices or the outcomes of a balanced scorecard, then how would you know a HIPO if you actually found one? We believe that the answer lies in the notion that a HIPO may not be a tangible “thing” that one can identify using dimensions or balanced scorecard measures. Based on our review of the HIPO literature, we believe that the HIPO is probably best defined as an organizational system that continually aligns its strategy, goals, objectives, and internal operations with the demands of its external environment to maximize organizational performance. Thus, it is not so much what a HIPO is but what a HIPO does—continually and dynamically adjusting to its environment.

Our definition also implies that the HIPO does not consist of the five components but that it utilizes the five components to various degrees to dynamically adjust to its environment. For example, a learning orientation could serve to increase the amount of information flow across organizational boundaries to ensure that an organization stays abreast of changing supplier capabilities and customer requirements. Flexible production systems might be used to quickly reconfigure internal operations to meet frequently changing customer needs and tastes. Employee involvement and self-managing work
teams could be used to better tap the human resources of an organization with the intent of remaining flexible and adaptable enough to survive in turbulent organizational environments. Finally, total quality management could be used to better define supplier requirements and to meet exacting customer standards demanded by most buyers in today’s marketplace.

The discussion above assumes that not all organizations will use each of the components to the same degree. The choice of components, and the right mix of components, depends on an organization’s environment. Self-managing work teams or employee involvement would be more appropriate in environments that constantly demand innovation (Lawler, 1994 [see annotation on page 62; see also Mohrman, S. A., Cohen, S. G., & Mohrman, A. M., Jr. Designing Team-Based Organizations: New Forms for Knowledge Work. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995]. For example, IBM and Microsoft both make extensive use of teams and employee involvement to meet the demands of the rapidly changing environment for computers.

Conversely, TQM may not be as suited for complex and dynamic environments that rely on breakthroughs in innovation and speed. The research on TQM has found that quality programs work best in high-volume, production-oriented environments (Lawler, 1994). Microsoft, for example, may find a good fit between self-managing work teams or employee involvement and their research and development areas but a poor fit between these and their production facilities. TQM may be more appropriate in the production area. In keeping with our definition of the HIPO as a dynamic process of adjustment to an organization’s environment, different parts of organizations will likely face different environments. Thus, not only does the choice of HIPO components differ across various organizations but within organizations as well.

The Future of the HIPO

Our definition of the HIPO suggests that the various practices we have identified as components of the HIPO may not be utilized to achieve high performance in the distant (or even near) future. Indeed, as organizational environments continue to change so will the need to develop new organizational practices to meet these unforeseen changes. For example, self-managing work teams may go the way of quality circles, an important but no longer widely utilized organizational practice. Thus, the components of the HIPO are likely to change over time.

While the components may change, one thing will likely remain the same. An organization’s classification as a HIPO will depend upon its ability
to dynamically adapt to changing environmental conditions. Such an ability will likely be reflected in many of the measures we have described as being contained within the balanced scorecard approach. High-performance work organizations will continue to thrive only if they consistently meet or exceed the performance goals set by each organization and by the environment of the organization.
Annotated Bibliography

The 168 annotations are organized into six sections. The first contains works on HIPOs as an overall concept. The following five contain works that consider HIPOs according to their respective component parts. These are: self-managing work teams/sociotechnical systems; employee involvement/participation/empowerment; total quality management; integrated production technologies; and the learning organization.

Each work is identified as one of the following: refereed empirical journal article, refereed theoretical journal article, refereed practitioner journal article, practitioner journal article, or book.

We have discovered that there is a body of literature that exists for HIPOs and that it is fairly recent. References were derived from a search of both academic- and practitioner-oriented sources. We used both Psych-Lit and ABI-Inform databases as well as a table-of-contents search of selected journals. Like all reviews, our efforts were constrained by a number of biases. We did not intend to provide an exhaustive review of the high performance literature, which would certainly fill many volumes this size. What we did do was limit our search by using three criteria: (1) refereed, (2) rigorous, and (3) recent.

Regarding the refereed criterion, we primarily examined literatures that had been subjected to quality review processes. Because refereed work is of higher quality, efforts were focused here where possible. One exception would be the literature on HIPOs, primarily because the overall concept (that is, more than each component independently) is in its infancy and has not had sufficient time to be thoroughly examined by scholarly researchers. Other exceptions might include key book chapters or books that truly capture the essence of one of the five components (or the HIPO altogether), or works that, while not refereed, have received a high number of citations in refereed publications.

Second, regarding rigor, we included studies that were rigorous in research design and analysis. Generally speaking, by the very nature of the publishing process, most of the rigorous articles were also refereed. However, several pieces are included that, while not refereed, did utilize rigorous methodologies or were authored by seasoned researchers in the field.

Finally, regarding recency, we chose research that has been published in the 1990s (up to January 1999). This time frame was chosen for two reasons: (1) most of the components of the HIPO had the majority of research conducted during this time, and (2) much work that was published before 1990
has been updated and modified either by the same authors or by other researchers building on previous work. Exceptions might include key works published just prior to 1990 or several in-press pieces that we found in our search.

We also kept our search within the management and psychology disciplines. For example, while a large volume of literature on total quality management exists in engineering journals, we preferred to remain true to the topic of the HIPO from a managerial perspective rather than a technical one. Using these three criteria and a managerial focus, our search generated 168 articles, books, and book chapters related to the HIPO or one of its five components.

**High-performance Work Organizations**

*Refereed empirical journal article*


The author tests the prediction that human resource systems based on commitment approaches, rather than control approaches, will result in better manufacturing performance and lower turnover using data collected from thirty U.S. steel mini-mills. Commitment-based human resource systems were defined as those policies that shape desired employee behaviors and attitudes by forging psychological links between organizational and employee goals. Control-based human resource systems were defined as those policies aimed at reducing direct labor costs and improving efficiency by enforcing employee compliance with specified rules and procedures and basing employee rewards on some measurable output criteria. The results indicated that commitment-based human resource systems resulted in higher productivity, lower scrap rates, and lower employee turnover. In addition, human resource systems moderated the relationship between turnover and manufacturing performance. The author concludes that the study provided an effective test of the effects of a bundling of human resource policies (i.e., human resource strategy) on organizational performance.

+++
Refereed theoretical journal article

The relationship between U.S. and Japanese employment and pay systems in the automobile, electronics, and communications industries is examined here. The authors note that “hybrid” organizations that adopt pieces of employment systems from other countries (e.g., total quality management) are likely to fall short of high performance because important system complementarities are missing. The study provides examples of how a nation’s macroeconomic structure constrains and shapes a firm’s human resource systems. The authors conclude that high performance is not completely determined by either the firm’s employment systems or the nation’s macroeconomic policy but by the fit between the two.

Refereed practitioner journal article

Little work has been done linking organizational development (OD) and human resource development functions to high-performing companies. To address this void, the authors interviewed the individuals most responsible for OD efforts at the Microsoft Corporation, the leading supplier of personal computer software. The interview was conducted using the Burke-Litwin model of organizational performance and change. They conclude that one of the strengths of Microsoft is the extent to which flexibility permeates the organization’s structure, systems, and practices. The authors also note the ability to manage three apparently paradoxical values as a key strength. These paradoxes are: (1) look ahead, but focus on delivering results now; (2) individuals make unique contributions, but teamwork and coordination are critical; and (3) customers are important, but they can’t drive everything you do.
Refereed empirical journal article
Doeringer, P. B., Evans-Klock, C., & Terkla, D. G. Hybrids or hodgepodes?

The authors conducted a study of the adoption of high-performance workplace practices in both domestic start-ups and Japanese plants in the United States. They found that Japanese firms were more likely to establish “hybrids” or a blending of Japanese management practices with the U.S. industrial labor relations system. Though some variation exists, this typically takes the form of blending intensive employee participation, teamwork, and total quality management with U.S. systems of organizing work into departments and the absence of lifetime employment. In contrast, domestic start-ups were more likely to establish “hodgepodes,” or the adding on of Japanese management practices to a U.S. industrial labor-relations-driven system. Domestic start-ups also paid less attention to how individual practices fit into an overall system of practices than did their Japanese counterparts.

+++ Refereed practitioner journal article 

With eight years of consulting experience and discussions with over 200 managers in high-performance, high-commitment organizations, the author has identified managerial roles in a high-performance organization. The managerial roles included: (1) manage by values and vision (i.e., have a clear sense of purpose and direction); (2) focus on customers (i.e., have a sense of urgency about customer needs); (3) institutionalize continuous improvement (i.e., value learning through the creation of open systems); (4) treat everyone like a business partner (i.e., use teamwork, not necessarily teams, to leverage the rich variety of perspectives of all employees); (5) show that work is life (i.e., be the same person at work that you are at home); (6) develop people (i.e., stimulate and encourage growth among employees); and (7) eliminate barriers to success (i.e., remove things that get in the way of employee or team success). Implications for managers include: (1) studying what managers care about in addition to what managers do is important; (2) discussions about the core beliefs of an individual manager—the innermost convictions relating to people and the workplace—must become a routine event; (3) participative management is not to be construed as passive or permissive management; and (4) the most skilled managers are probably
the ones who are the most authentic, not necessarily the ones who have mastered the “right” style of management.

Practitioner journal article

The authors have written a feature story on the various aspects of high-performance work systems based on two years of research and two conferences held in January 1996, one with researchers and the other with practitioners and consultants. They include lessons from leading companies and experts in the area and argue that there is no single, agreed-upon definition of a high-performance work system or consensus about the components of such a system. A high-performance work system achieves synergy when it produces two outcomes simultaneously: (1) all of the organizational parts are aligned and fit together and (2) people in the company are deeply committed, energized, and impassioned about their work. Also, a high-performance work system should not be equated with its components, such as self-managing work teams, employee involvement, or total quality management. A true high-performance work system aligns a complex set of organizational elements including: strategy, vision, mission, and goals; beliefs and values; management practices; organizational structure; work practices and processes; human resource systems; and other systems such as technology. Several self-reported company examples of the positive impact of high-performance work systems are cited. In transitioning to high-performance work systems, the authors argue that there are eight critical steps: (1) build the case for change; (2) define vision, mission, and strategy; (3) develop a communications and involvement strategy; (4) design/redesign the organization; (5) plan for implementation; (6) implement the system; (7) monitor and evaluate the progress; and (8) renew the organization.

Book

The author provides a number of behaviors/approaches found to engender high performance and provides an instrument, the High Performance Management Inventory, that leaders/followers can use for feedback/develop-
ment. To transform the industrial mind-set to the high-performance mind-set, this “unique transformational leader” needs to lead by example and encourage learning. To accomplish this the leader should: (1) foster more open communication and information distribution; (2) increase follower input through autonomy and participation; (3) enhance the quality of work life to make work more meaningful and fulfilling (e.g., sabbatical leaves); (4) cultivate work attitudes with an ethic of professionalism to be the best rather than perform a set of prescribed duties; (5) increase informal cross-functional interaction to reinforce cooperation and trust in the workforce; and (6) provide more technical training outside the functional area so that greater appreciation for cross-system processes can be developed.

In another section, related activities are listed, including: (1) encouraging joint goal setting by managers/workers; (2) giving constructive feedback to redirect behavior to productive activities; (3) fostering synergy by replacing individual competition with teamwork; (4) making work fun by cultivating informality/work meaningfulness; and (5) more closely aligning both formal and informal reward systems with desired behaviors. The High Performance Management Inventory is a 105-item measure made up of twelve dimensions that when performed very well contribute to a high-performing leader and work environment.

ampions theoretical journal article

The leadership of roughly thirty high-capability organizations is examined here in an effort to determine commonality in their leadership. The authors found that each of the managers had extremely high levels of self-confidence that far outweighed their egos. They identified several recurring themes: (1) leader as keeper of the values; (2) leaders constantly living and communicating values; (3) setting very high performance requirements; (4) ensuring wide latitude for front-line employees; (5) demonstrating by constant example; (6) walking the fine line between desirable pride in their organization and undesirable arrogance toward other organizations; (7) becoming personally involved in hiring decisions and designing selection systems that, though distasteful to some, help self-select the right employees; and (8) believing that the customer is not always right, at least when it results in employee abuse.
Refereed practitioner journal article

As the title suggests, the authors see an evolution from total quality to learning to world-class organizations as increasing the scope of organizational capabilities, each subsuming and building on the strengths of the former. Total quality (TQ) focuses relentlessly on the customer and delivering products/services with the attributes desired; ten core values for TQ are provided. Learning organizations extend the adaptive aspects of TQ to anticipating rather than responding to environmental changes. Management techniques such as empowerment are differentiated: in a total-quality-management environment, empowerment is serving the customer better; in a learning-organization environment, empowerment is stimulating learning and creativity. Learning organizations (1) are committed to scanning the environment for clues regarding the direction of change; and (2) develop in members values that emphasize shared values and systems thinking, which encourages attention to cause-and-effect processes rather than symptom treating. The authors state that three techniques that are associated with learning organizations are: dialogue, scenario analysis, and process reengineering. World-class organizations incorporate TQ and learning models and add to them the ability to develop synergies between world-class processes such as manufacturing, quality, information systems, and purchasing. The pillars of world-class organizations are: (1) customer-based focus, (2) continuous improvement, (3) flexible/fluid/virtual organizations, (4) creative human resource management, (5) egalitarian climate, and (6) technological support. The authors also note that constant training emerged as one of the characteristics of the world-class organization.

Refereed empirical journal article

The relationship is examined between high-performance work practices and firm performance using a national sample of 968 large and medium-sized firms. The author defined high-performance work practices as those practices
that improve employees’ knowledge, skills, and abilities and those that address employee motivation. An analysis of previous studies defining high-performance work practices yielded thirteen items representing the domain of high performance. The results indicate that high-performance practices positively affect employee turnover and productivity. More specifically, the findings showed that for every one standard deviation increase in the deployment of high-performance work practices, there was a seven percent decrease in employee turnover, a $27,000 increase in sales per employee per year, and $18,500 and $3,800 more in market value and profits, respectively. The author concludes that this study provides substantial evidence that high-performance work systems lead to better firm performance.

Refereed practitioner journal article

There is growing consensus that success does not hinge on any one system but a careful integration of many programs that are aligned with the organization’s culture. Culture is what separates high-performing organizations from the pack by defining, supporting, and setting the boundaries of an organization’s ability to function. Though some see the holistic management of organizational systems and culture as vague and unmanageable, the authors argue that high performance requires undertaking the difficult task of understanding their interaction. They propose five conditions for a high-performance culture: (1) establishment of a relevant focus—be able to tie each organizational program to an accessible objective; (2) change driven from the top but fueled throughout—top management must live the change for others to get on board; (3) leader commitment—leaders must commit to explaining how the totality of organization systems interact to achieve business results; (4) comprehensive involvement—employees at all levels must be engaged to own the change, which requires giving them a voice and making choices; and (5) use of external coaches—internal coaches are too much like fishes in a bowl; they do not notice the water because they have never been out of it; bring in someone with the ability to bring perspective to culture change processes.

Refereed practitioner journal article

There is growing consensus that success does not hinge on any one system but a careful integration of many programs that are aligned with the organization’s culture. Culture is what separates high-performing organizations from the pack by defining, supporting, and setting the boundaries of an organization’s ability to function. Though some see the holistic management of organizational systems and culture as vague and unmanageable, the authors argue that high performance requires undertaking the difficult task of understanding their interaction. They propose five conditions for a high-performance culture: (1) establishment of a relevant focus—be able to tie each organizational program to an accessible objective; (2) change driven from the top but fueled throughout—top management must live the change for others to get on board; (3) leader commitment—leaders must commit to explaining how the totality of organization systems interact to achieve business results; (4) comprehensive involvement—employees at all levels must be engaged to own the change, which requires giving them a voice and making choices; and (5) use of external coaches—internal coaches are too much like fishes in a bowl; they do not notice the water because they have never been out of it; bring in someone with the ability to bring perspective to culture change processes.
Refereed practitioner journal article

The author discusses how General Electric develops leaders for high performance. The CEO takes a personal interest in manager job rotation to ensure that the proper developmental opportunities are provided. Rewards are carefully tied to organizational objectives over which the employee has some control. Employees are empowered but with the understanding that empowerment means the right to be heard. Empowerment does not dissolve the notion of rank as suggested by the philosophy that if your suggestion is overruled, “You outrank me, yet you have chosen to listen to my views, I am honored.” Conflict is expected and valued but must be managed properly by: (1) acknowledging its importance, (2) eliminating personal attacks, and (3) providing support staff trained in facilitating meetings. A culture of change is built by realizing that people don’t resist change, they resist being changed, and that measuring change is important to achieving change goals.

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Refereed empirical journal article

Changes in competitive conditions require increased reliance on creativity, ingenuity, and problem-solving workers. These workers must have the information, skills, incentives, and responsibility to make decisions that are innovative, quality focused, and swift enough to address the change. To better understand this relationship, a literature review on the impact of various work practices on performance was conducted. The high-performance categories that emerged were labeled skills training, compensation policy, workplace participation, and work systems (multiple practices). Usage of high-performance practices was fairly widespread, with one study of 700 firms reporting that thirty-seven percent of firms had adopted two or more of the work practices. However, these practices were adopted unevenly within and across companies. The author concluded that the use of high-performance work practices is most frequently piecemeal, but that higher performance is achieved when these practices are integrated in a systematic manner.

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Book

This book reports the results of a longitudinal study of the Fortune 1000 largest companies on two elements of the high-performance work organization: employee involvement (EI) and total quality management (TQM). The General Accounting Office conducted the initial research in both 1987 and 1990 while the Center for Effective Organizations added the third wave in 1993. Part I of the book addresses the adoption rate of employee involvement practices, specifically those practices dealing with information-sharing, knowledge-increasing, reward systems, and power-sharing. Part II focuses on TQM and finds, in addition to the widespread adoption of TQM, that EI is an important part of TQM. Part III reports on the results of EI programs with generally favorable results after adoption. Part IV examines what type of organizations adopt EI and TQM; considers unionization and the adoption of EI; and concludes that both EI and TQM adoption is usually a direct response to market pressures, particularly those that involve global competition. Part V explores the future of EI and TQM.

Refereed empirical journal article

This article describes a study that examined the relationship between lean production techniques and high-performance manufacturing (defined as plant productivity) in seventy-one “first-tier” automotive plants in the United States, Europe, and Japan. Lean production techniques represented three generic bundles: (1) factory practices (lower buffers, reduced inventory, space utilization); (2) work systems (teamwork, skill levels, knowledge development/application); and (3) human resource management (HRM; commitment, motivation). Support was found for a relationship between factory practices and high performance. However, little support was found for the relationship between work systems or HRM practices with performance outcomes. An interesting finding that emerged was that many high-performing plants had high-performing suppliers. The authors suggest that better understanding high
performance will require more focus on external factors such as supplier input quality.

Book

The authors merge their thoughts on continuous improvement (CI) programs and teamwork to address how each can be successful. The key contribution of the book is that many individual concepts are integrated into a more powerful conceptualization of continuous improvement. In carving out this more comprehensive role for continuous improvement, the authors suggest that the purpose of CI is “successful adaptation to environmental factors.” Achieving this goal requires the integration of five linked functions: (1) self-managed teams to improve the functioning of work units; (2) process mapping and improvement of cross-functional teams; (3) acquisition of best practice via benchmarking; (4) co-aligning internal and external linkages strategically; and (5) creative breakthroughs for “frame-breaking renewal.”

Book

Many aspects of designing the high-performance work organization are covered here. This book is intended to help managers understand how to manage in turbulent times, how to create learning organizations, and how to change everything that needs to be changed to survive in the current business climate. Topics covered include: (1) designing flexible organizations; (2) increasing individual flexibility by helping employees take responsibility for change; (3) increasing the flexibility of technology by designing the organization to take advantage of new technology; (4) making work more flexible by getting things done through teamwork and collaboration; (5) increasing the flexibility of thinking through the creation of the learning organization; (6) increasing the flexibility of leaders and managers in the organization; and (7) replacing the traditional organizational chart with a fractal organization design. The author concludes by stating the importance of managing change as if change itself mattered by making organizations more flexible.
The author states that too many firms spend time worrying about strategy making, gaining a technology edge, or financial decisions such as mergers or restructuring. He notes that neither firm size nor industry are related to firm growth rates and suggests that effective people management is the most reliable source of high performance. Toward this end he offers three principles: (1) Build trust by sharing information with employees and treating people with dignity and respect. (2) Encourage change by exposing employees to alternative models and breaking old forms of organizing. (3) Measure what matters, including less focus on financial information that tells what has happened and more on indicators about what will happen. He identifies the balanced scorecard approach of Kaplan and Norton [Kaplan, R. S., & Norton, D. P. Using the balanced scorecard as a strategic management system. *Harvard Business Review*, 74:1, 1996, pp. 75-85] as one such valuable measurement process. Every business has a few key drivers of success and understanding, and measuring those is likely to have a beneficial impact on business performance. The new role for leaders in these organizations is as system architects—systems that build distinct competence and capability, that are robust because of their coherence, and that develop people who have the necessary talent to develop an evolving strategy and execute it.

“High commitment,” “high performance,” and “high involvement” are used interchangeably here because they all focus on similar ideas about how to obtain profits through people. Based on his own research and personal observations, the author identifies seven practices that characterize most of the systems producing profits through people. They are: (1) employment security; (2) selective hiring of personnel—assessing fit; (3) self-managed teams and decentralized decision making as organizing principles; (4) relatively high compensation tied to organizational performance; (5) extensive training; (6) reductions in status distinctions and barriers; and (7) extensive sharing of financial and performance information. Acknowledging that
integrating these practices is complex, the author notes that introducing these practices piecemeal is unlikely to be productive and may even be counterproductive.

Refereed practitioner journal article

The author proposes eight discontinuities whose collective impacts are greater than the sum of their parts. He then suggests five distinct tasks for managing competencies in this more complex environment. These discontinuities are: (1) global markets and customers; (2) deregulation and privatization; (3) volatility (demand and cycle time); (4) convergence of multiple technologies (e.g., plant science and biotechnology); (5) indeterminate industry boundaries that require more flexibility in response capabilities than focus; (6) increased importance of industry standards competition and the resulting coalition competitions; (7) disintermediation that changes the distance between producer and user (e.g., World Wide Web); and (8) movement from compliance to business opportunity viewpoint with respect to the environment. The resulting needed tasks are: (1) gaining access to and absorbing new knowledge; (2) integrating multiple streams of knowledge; (3) sharing knowledge across cultures and distance; (4) learning to forget—unlearning what used to work in the past but is no longer relevant may be the most difficult task; and (5) deploying competencies across business unit boundaries.

Practitioner journal article

Leaders of change strive to create organizations that are flexible, adaptive, and highly productive. To respond to competitive conditions, leaders are redesigning workplaces and work practices and seek to enhance worker productivity through skill enhancement, autonomy, and increased responsibility. To achieve such changes, they must: (1) develop a long-term perspective; (2) increase information sharing; (3) develop a common vision; (4) integrate workplace practices with broad business strategies; and (5) organize work in self-managed and cross-functional groups.
Book

This text is one in a series of volumes whose aim is to bring together the best articles on a particular theme in strategic management (herein strategic change) that have been published in the periodical *Long Range Planning*. Despite the title, the articles are only loosely tied to the high-performance work organization. Three articles (Javidian, Campbell and Yeung, and Coulson-Thomas) do focus on the role of leadership in the high-performance work organization, delineating several key roles played by the leader in strategic change—including visionary, symbolizer, innovator, mobilizer, auditor, and ambassador—and creating a sense of mission.

Refereed empirical journal article

This study reports the results of an employment centered management practice intervention in one Canadian dairy firm. The intervention resulted in a sixty-six percent increase in operating income compared to a flat industry percentage over the five-year intervention period. No environmental factors other than the intervention were deemed to be likely candidates for the improved results observed.

Refereed theoretical journal article

The author provides a theoretical framework for understanding how systematic agreement (alignment) among organizational processes interact to produce high-performance work systems. Well-aligned organizations utilize leadership and human resource development to create systematic agreement among strategic goals, tactical behaviors, performance and reward systems, and the organizational culture. A process model and a dynamic relationship model of alignment are provided.
Refereed practitioner journal article  
A high-performance work system is defined here as “extraordinary capable people, working in teams, equipped with proper technology, focused on satisfying the customer and improving work processes” (p. 162). Characteristics of high-performance workplaces include: (1) self-managed teams, where (2) they design their own work methods, (3) train people in a variety of skills, and (4) share in financial results—overwhelmingly horizontal and focused on customer and process. Its development is fueled by performance and cost requirements, growing confidence in self-managing work groups, and rapidly evolving information and communication technology. The emerging process combines the rigor and discipline of total quality management with the American values of innovation, entrepreneurship, individualism, teamwork, and diversity. Only thirteen percent of American companies (employing two percent of the labor force) have actually created high-performance workplaces. Companies should be focusing on developing leaders who have the capabilities to lead in a high-performance work organization. The author concludes that in order to develop the high-performance workplace, managers should envision their company as a three-level structure that should virtually force development of the high-performance workplace.  

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Refereed theoretical journal article  
The authors state that in pursuit of high performance increased attention is being paid to how employment is organized. Specific areas of attention include: (1) increased flexibility in how labor is secured and deployed; (2) the solicitation of commitment in the workforce; (3) the importance of internal consistency in employment practices and structures; and (4) consistency of practices/structures with the overall strategies of the firm. High-performance work systems focus on production systems (how work is organized) and employment structures (the environment in which they operate). These new production systems have three main elements (worker assignment flexibility, team working, and dispersed decision making), while the new employment systems have four main elements (enhanced employment security, improved information flow/sharing, group-based pay systems, and structures for in-
creasing skill levels). The authors note that the new systems move beyond an expansion of Tayloristic practices such as Quality of Work Life to a more strategic human resource management orientation. They also suggest that national policy (labor legislation in Europe) may dramatically alter or constrain the design of the high-performance work system.

**Self-managing Work Teams/Sociotechnical Systems**

*Refereed empirical journal article*

Using sixty self-managing teams with a total of 540 employees, the authors conducted a field survey study to test a three-stage model in which team interactions (i.e., constructive controversy and confidence in team) moderate the relationships between goal interdependence (i.e., cooperation, competition, and interdependence) and team outcomes (i.e., effectiveness as judged by the team and by managers). Using path analysis (i.e., LISREL), the authors found support for their three-stage model. Specifically, teams whose members believed that their goals were positively related (i.e., cooperative) were more able to discuss their opposing viewpoints openly and constructively, which, in turn, helped team members feel more confident. This confidence then led to effective teams in the eyes of both team members and team managers. Conversely, competitive goals interfered with open-minded discussion, which had deleterious effects on team confidence and effectiveness. The authors conclude that the relationships and interactions within teams can very much impact the overall success of self-managing teams.

*Refereed empirical journal article*

The authors conducted a longitudinal field study to examine the effects of the implementation of high-performance work teams (i.e., semiautonomous work teams) in an electromechanical assembly plant. The dependent variables were quality (manufacturing defect rate) and labor productivity (ratio of the
number of units produced to total production hours), and the control variables included workforce policies (e.g., overtime, headcount additions, headcount deletions) and policies affecting confusion in the factory (product diversity, product complexity, capacity utilization, engineering change orders). The findings indicate that the implementation of high-performance work teams significantly affected both quality and labor productivity over time after controlling for all of the study’s other variables.

Refereed empirical journal article

The author provides a detailed, ethnographic account of the effects of the implementation of self-managing work teams on employee attitudes and behavior in a small circuit board manufacturing company. The employees transitioned through three phases of development: (1) consolidation and value consensus—teams got their vision statement and negotiated their core values; (2) emergence of normative rules—teams formed normative rules and sanctioned members who broke the rules; and (3) stabilization and formalization of the rules—normative rules of phase 2 became more formal, the old system of rational authority returned, and the locus of that rationality rested with the team members, not management. The author concludes that, rather than freeing workers from Weber’s so-called “iron cage,” the implementation of self-managing work teams “tightened” the iron cage by instilling a repressive form of concertive control. As the author states, “The team members had become their own masters and their own slaves” (p. 433).

Refereed empirical journal article

Using sixty-one teams with a total of 289 graduate students, the authors conducted a laboratory experiment to assess the impact of extraversion and conscientiousness on group processes and outcomes at both the individual and group levels of analysis. At the individual level, extraversion (but not conscientiousness) predicted the level of subjects’ socioemotional inputs (i.e., effort related to building interpersonal relationships) and task inputs (i.e., efforts directly related to getting the job done), which were both related, in
turn, to perceived performance. At the group level, extraversion (but not conscientiousness) was negatively related to the group’s ability to remain focused on task accomplishment (most appropriately modeled as a curvilinear relationship); teams with a moderate proportion of high-extraversion members achieved higher levels of performance than teams with greater or lesser proportions of such members. Because the authors found no support for the role of conscientiousness on team performance (found repeatedly in studies of individual job performance), they conclude that personality determinants in group settings may depart in important ways from those that apply to individual job effectiveness.

Refereed empirical journal article

Five themes or groups of characteristics predicted to influence team effectiveness are identified here. They are: (1) job design (e.g., self-management, participation, skill variety, task significance, task identity); (2) interdependence (e.g., task interdependence, goal interdependence, and interdependent feedback and rewards); (3) composition (e.g., heterogeneity, flexibility, relative size, preference for group work); (4) context (e.g., training, managerial support, communication/cooperation between groups); and (5) process (e.g., potency, social support, workload sharing, and communication/cooperation within groups). The study was conducted in five geographical units of a large financial services company. All theme variables were measured using aggregated team member ratings. Team effectiveness variables included productivity, satisfaction, and manager judgments. Except for task identity, all of the work group characteristic variables showed positive relationships with most team effectiveness variables. The authors conclude that the usefulness of the study lies in the ability of managers to influence the work group characteristics to enhance the success of work teams.
Refereed empirical journal article

In this study the Campion, Medsker, and Higgs (1993; see annotation above) study is replicated, but this time with professional knowledge workers in a financial services organization. The authors report that the findings were similar to their earlier study. Relationships between work group characteristics and team effectiveness were strongest for process characteristics, followed by job design, context, and interdependence. Further, work units higher on single-team identity (i.e., belonging to only one team for an unlimited amount of time) were higher on many team characteristics and effectiveness measures.

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Refereed empirical journal article

This study used a quasi-experimental design to assess the effectiveness of self-managing work teams in a telecommunications company. Self-managing work teams were compared to more traditionally managed groups on three effectiveness criteria: quality of work life (e.g., job satisfaction), group performance (e.g., quality), and group member behaviors (e.g., accidents and absenteeism). Self-managing work teams were significantly higher on all three measures of team effectiveness than were traditionally managed groups. However, for both objective quality of service and survey data for customer services there were no differences. The authors conclude that while self-managing work teams do appear to result in greater employee effectiveness, they are not applicable to all work situations, and local design of the teams was critical to their success.

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Refereed empirical journal article

The authors test a model of self-managing work team effectiveness by comparing and contrasting a set of self-managing work teams and traditionally managed work teams in a single U.S. telephone company. The predictor
variables included: group task design (e.g., task variety, task identity, task significance, task autonomy, task feedback), encouraging supervisory behaviors, group characteristics (e.g., composition, beliefs, process), and employee involvement context (e.g., power, information, rewards/recognition, training, resources). Effectiveness outcomes included: employee ratings of performance, managerial ratings of performance, quality of work life, and short-term absenteeism. The general pattern for both sets of teams is that there is a significant direct path between each of the independent variables and one or more of the dependent variables. Employee involvement context was a strong predictor of team effectiveness while, surprisingly, encouraging supervisory behaviors was only related to manager ratings of performance.

Refereed empirical journal article

This study used a post-test, longitudinal quasi-experimental design to compare employee behaviors and attitudes in autonomous work teams and in traditionally managed work teams. The study was conducted at a new and established minerals processing plant. Findings indicated that employees in autonomous work teams were more intrinsically satisfied, more extrinsically satisfied, and had higher organizational commitment. However, there were no differences in trust in management between the two types of teams. Surprisingly, employees in the autonomous work teams had higher absenteeism and turnover than their more traditionally managed counterparts.

Refereed empirical journal article

Using 43 teams with a total of 48 part-time graduate students and 115 government employees, the authors conducted a laboratory experiment to assess the effects of locus of control and performance-contingent incentives on team productivity and job satisfaction. Four types of groups were constructed: external locus of control teams with, and without, performance-contingent incentives and internal locus of control teams with, and without, performance-contingent incentives. Regarding productivity, the only signifi-
cant differences were found with externals with incentives outperforming externals without incentives. Regarding job satisfaction, those teams with high internal locus of control had more satisfied members than the external locus of control teams. Due to the great inconsistency with existing research on locus of control and individual job performance, the authors conclude that researchers’ recommendations for application of the locus of control in the workplace may have to be reconsidered if they are based on research with individuals rather than with teams in settings more comparable with real work environments.

Book chapter

The authors review and synthesize the literature to date (i.e., until 1987) on the impact of self-managing work teams on a variety of effectiveness outcomes. They review individual firm studies of self-managing work teams (e.g., Topeka plant, Rushton quality of work experiment) and recent meta-analyses that include self-managing work teams. It is concluded that: (1) self-managing work teams have a modest impact on productivity; (2) attitude changes due to self-managing work teams are specific to the interventions; (3) there are no clear trends in the effects of self-managing work teams on absenteeism or turnover; (4) self-managing work teams can improve productivity; and (5) there is too little information to draw conclusions about cost-benefit analyses of self-managing work teams.

Refereed empirical journal article

Using teams of maintenance and support workers, the authors, drawing heavily from Campion and colleagues’ (Campion, Medsker, & Higgs, 1993; Campion, Papper, & Medsker, 1996 [see annotations on pages 28-29]) earlier studies, use an interview (i.e., roundtable discussion) methodology to inductively determine important work group characteristics and to confirm and to
supplement those previously identified in the literature. The authors generated items from the discussions and reduced the number of items with validity checks by team members and leaders not involved in the original discussions. Correlations between work group characteristics (provided by team members) and performance outcomes (measured using organizational performance data and manager ratings) were calculated using 592 job incumbents representing 100 work groups in a single organization. Results indicated that most of the work group characteristics were related to the performance outcomes. Analyses were also conducted using a reduced number of scales (generated by factor analysis) due to occasionally high intercorrelations between the original scales. Results showed that the work group characteristics were only related to three of the six performance outcomes. The authors conclude that the organizational context must be considered when implementing work groups and that systems must be put in place to support them.

Refereed theoretical journal article

The authors theoretically argue that certain cultural values may enhance employee resistance to either self-management or teams when working in self-managing work teams (SMWTs) in various countries. Employees who are high in power distance (i.e., those who accept power inequalities in organizations), being orientation (i.e., those who stress non-work activities over work-related ones), or determinism (i.e., those who believe that their work outcomes are determined by external forces) will be more likely to resist the self-management aspect of SMWTs. Employees who are high in individualism will be more likely to resist the team aspect of SMWTs. The authors also argue that resistance to either self-management or teams will result in lower team effectiveness (i.e., productivity, quality, costs, safety, and customer satisfaction), but that team size, task interdependence, team diversity, and the status of resistors will moderate this relationship. They conclude that managers in charge of implementing SMWTs in foreign affiliates should adapt both the form of SMWTs and the implementation strategies used to transition to SMWTs.
Refereed empirical journal article

Employee concerns about the implementation of self-managing work teams are examined in two Fortune 500 organizations: a white-collar computer consultancy and a blue-collar hosiery manufacturer. Employee concerns were thematically sorted using four categories: distributive justice concerns, procedural justice concerns, interactional justice concerns, and other concerns. The authors found that over one-third of employee concerns could be classified as organizational justice concerns (e.g., distributive, procedural, and interactional). They conclude that in order to avoid employee resistance to self-managing work teams, managers must assess justice concerns and act in ways that employees perceive as distributively, procedurally, and interactionally fair.

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Refereed empirical journal article

Observation, research, interviews, and a literature search are used here to identify a set of key behaviors of leaders of successful self-managing work teams in a medium-sized manufacturer. The leaders’ behavior variables included: encourages self-reinforcement, encourages self-criticism, encourages self-goal setting, encourages self-observation/self-evaluation, encourages high self-expectation, and encourages rehearsal. Each of the behaviors was highly correlated with positive evaluations of team coordinators by team leaders and team members. Thus, self-management leader behaviors were significantly related to overall leadership effectiveness even when the effects of more traditional leader behavior variables were removed. The authors conclude that the paradox inherent in the self-managing leader is that his or her role is to lead others to lead themselves. This research helps extend earlier viewpoints on participative leadership by providing more specific behavioral descriptions based on direct observations of self-managing team leaders.

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Book

A variety of authors offer their perspectives in this book as several critical areas of implementing and running self-managing work teams are addressed. Chapter topics include: overcoming middle-management resistance to teams; roles, behaviors, and performance of mature self-managing teams; an examination of team successes and failures; the early implementation phase of teams; using teams to disempower; viewing the organization as a team; an international case example using teams for total quality management; and using teams for strategy implementation at the top.

 avalia

Book

This book informs readers on what must be done to effectively implement self-directed work teams. Chapter topics include: the major challenges facing managers who attempt to implement teams; special work-team issues; and tools and techniques for implementing teams.

 avalia

Refereed theoretical journal article

The author reviews the second volume of the Tavistock Anthology on *The Social Engagement of Social Science*. The Tavistock studies of British coal mines are generally considered to be the origins of the sociotechnical perspective and, thus, self-managing work teams. The author concludes that sociotechnical systems theory remains a valid model on which to base organizational design. Warnings about sociotechnical systems include: (1) sociotechnical innovations have sometimes been implemented in isolation without a focus on the organization as a system; (2) the implementation of sociotechnical systems has often been too lengthy and costly; and (3) methods of social analysis have never been fully adequate. The author concludes with the notion that nonroutine work will become ever more the norm and that
sociotechnical thinking must keep up with the innovations occurring in organizations.

Refereed empirical journal article
This study compares employee behavior and attitudes between those working in autonomous groups and those working in more traditional work groups in a large, unionized heavy engineering workshop. Employees in autonomous work groups indicated that they had greater decision-making discretion, larger job scope, more role clarity, greater job satisfaction, higher productivity, better attendance, and a safer working climate than employees did in more traditional work designs. The author concludes four things: (1) there is a need to continue research into innovative work practices at industrial sites to improve their competitiveness; (2) organizations must continually invest in better staff-development programs; (3) workplace reform in traditional fields requires active union support; and (4) personnel policies must be adjusted to demonstrate a concern for employee welfare in addition to simply allowing more employee decision making.

Refereed practitioner journal article
This article discusses why self-managing work teams have met with mixed results for performance in organizations. Forty-three team leaders (first-line supervisors) were asked where they think resources should be concentrated to help guide teams toward effective, proactive self-management: (1) how the team is set up and supported, or (2) how the team’s leader behaves in his or her day-to-day interactions with the team? In contrast to most of the responses provided by actual team leaders, the author reports that, based on research with the Xerox Corporation, the quality of the team’s design had the most impact on the level of self-management by a wide margin. Important design features include: clear, engaging direction; task interdependence; rewards for team excellence; basic material resources; authority to manage the work, team performance goals; and team norms that promote strategic thinking. The author concludes that senior managers will be critical in putting the key success factors in place as they will require
organization-wide changes such as reward systems, work design, and resource availability.

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**Refereed empirical journal article**


The authors use a quasi-experimental design to assess the long-term effects of the implementation of autonomous work groups. The study compared employees in autonomous work groups to those in more conventional job designs in a large, non-unionized confectionery manufacturer. The study also measured several dependent variables as employees transitioned from a traditional work setting to autonomous work groups. A convergence of these results indicates that employees in autonomous work groups had greater job satisfaction and more extrinsic satisfaction than employees in traditional work units. There was no effect, however, on intrinsic work motivation, organizational commitment, or mental health. Contrary to prediction, turnover increased. The authors conclude that previous research, using less rigorous research designs, may have overestimated the effects for autonomous work group implementation and that the tenet that the implementation should have effects on motivation may be invalid.

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**Technical report**


This report details the findings of a large-scale survey administered by Development Dimensions International in conjunction with the Association for Quality and Participation and *Industry Week*. The study includes responses from over 800 executives. The overall findings suggest that, at least according to the responding organizations, self-directed work teams are achieving the stated goals of both management and team members. Self-directed work teams result in improved quality, productivity, and morale and lower labor costs. Major barriers to team implementation include: insufficient training, incompatible organizational systems, resistance from first-line supervisors, lack of planning, and lack of management support. Team implementation generated unrealistic expectations as executives reported that they
expected to see substantial results within a year of implementation. The authors conclude that with implementation comes the need for experimenting, learning, and adapting to change.

Book

Using three data sources (i.e., ten case studies of self-managing work teams [SMWTs], a field survey study of 600 SMWT members including in-depth interviews with 40 members, and quarterly meetings of the Network of Self-Managed Work Teams originated by the authors), a very comprehensive, prescriptive guide to implementing and supporting SMWTs is presented. Topics include: theoretical frameworks for understanding the performance of SMWTs; the work process (i.e., effort, talent, procedures, resources); the interpersonal process (i.e., communication, coordination, cooperation, collaboration, conflict, cohesion, trust); the environment surrounding the SMWT within and outside the organization (i.e., the organization’s philosophy, culture and mission; performance measurement; reward system; types of rewards; education and training systems; information systems; management support, encouragement, roles; union, customer, supplier, and ancillary support with the organization; the outside environment); team member characteristics (i.e., talents, values, needs, interests, prejudices; personality and demographic characteristics); and team design characteristics (i.e., team goals and job design, team size and composition, roles of self-managed teams, decision-making methods and processes, team leaders’ roles and responsibilities).

Employee Involvement/Participation/Empowerment

Refereed practitioner journal article

“Despite all the talk about change programs, empowerment is still mostly an illusion” (p. 98). The author uses this quote to introduce his view that there has been little growth in empowerment over the last thirty years. He points out that it is unrealistic to expect management to allow thousands of
employees to participate fully in self-governance. Empowerment is short-circuited, he argues, by several forces, including: (1) change programs fraught with inner contradictions such as defining employee behavior in the change process almost exclusively from the outside while expecting the resulting behavior to be somehow empowering and liberating; (2) CEOs who undermine empowerment by expecting empowerment to liberate but only when an employee’s job requirements are predetermined and the processes are controlled; (3) employees who remain comfortable with externally motivated commitment (i.e., money, benefits) but are expected to be internally committed even though this type of commitment (i.e., empowerment) must be learned, developed, and honed; and (4) change professionals who ignore the possibility that command and control may be suitable in certain situations only because it goes against the theory of empowerment.

The author recommends several solutions that include: (1) the inconsistencies between top-down controls and empowerment are inevitable and must be managed; (2) do not undertake blatantly contradictory change programs; (3) understand that empowerment has its limits; (4) distinguish between jobs that require internal commitment (i.e., empowerment) and those that do not before implementing empowerment; (5) establish working conditions to increase empowerment; (6) do not make morale, satisfaction, and commitment the ultimate criteria—that should always be performance; and (7) help employees understand the choices they make about their own level of commitment.

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Refereed practitioner journal article

The authors’ rationale for writing this article is that although many articles have addressed the positive aspects of employee participation, few have examined the potential problems associated with the process. The three major problems include: (1) peer-group pressure might be exerted when participation is perceived as collaboration with management; (2) managerial coercion and retribution may occur when the results of the participation displease management; and (3) participators may have difficulty moving back into narrow, rigidly traditional tasks after experiencing a highly motivating participation program. The authors use three case studies as examples of the three potential pitfalls. They conclude that a careful, explicit assessment of the probability that these problems will occur should be included in any
decision that involves employee participation. This assessment includes a
cost-benefit analysis as well as an evaluation of the trade-offs inherent in any
participation program.

Refereed empirical journal article
Black, J. S., & Gregersen, H. B. Participative decision-making: An integra-

Using 55 employee involvement (EI) groups with a total of 370 em-
ployees in a multinational manufacturing firm, the authors conducted a field
survey study to determine which aspects of participative decision making
(PDM) were related to employee satisfaction and performance. Only three of
the five aspects of PDM (i.e., generating alternatives, planning implementa-
tion, and evaluating results but not identifying problems nor selecting solu-
tions) were related to both satisfaction and performance. The sample was split
into two groups—those with a high level of involvement on all five aspects of
PDM and those with a low level—and the means for both satisfaction and
performance were significantly different between the groups. The authors
conclude that greater involvement in all five aspects of PDM have a
cumulative effect on satisfaction and performance, but that the results are
stronger for satisfaction (which is consistent with much of the previous
research on PDM).

Refereed empirical journal article
Campbell, C. R., & Martinko, M. J. An integrative attributional perspective of
empowerment and learned helplessness: A multimethod field study.

Using employees in a regulatory agency, the authors used question-
naires (N = 155), interviews (N = 40), and observational data (N = 40) to
conduct a multi-method field investigation of the differences between those
individuals identified as empowered and those identified as high on learned
helplessness (LH). Regarding the survey data, empowered, as opposed to LH,
subjects expressed less tedium, more persistence, more positive expectations,
and less depression. These results were generally supported by the interview
data (although not all differences were significant as with the survey data). In
contrast to what was expected, the observational data revealed more expres-
sions of anger from empowered subjects than from LH subjects. The authors
conclude that an integrative attributional perspective of empowerment and
LH is warranted, and that empowerment and LH may be viewed as phenomena that are influenced by both individual and organizational factors.

Refereed theoretical journal article

The authors attempt to integrate previous diverse approaches to empowerment found in both the management and psychology literatures. They construct a model of the empowerment process that includes five sequential stages: (1) conditions leading to a psychological state of powerlessness (i.e., organizational factors, supervision, reward system, nature of job); (2) the use of managerial strategies and techniques (i.e., participative management, goal setting, feedback system, modeling, rewards, job enrichment); (3) providing self-efficacy information to subordinates (i.e., enactive attainment, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, emotional arousal); (4) results in empowering experience of subordinate (i.e., strengthening of effort-performance expectancies); (5) leading to behavioral effects (i.e., initiation/persistence of behavior to accomplish task objectives).

Refereed theoretical journal article

In this article the authors attempt to reconcile the mixed findings from previous empirical studies, some of which found effects for participation on satisfaction and performance and others that found no effect. Based on an extensive literature review, they identify six types of participation: (1) participation in work decisions—a focus on the work itself, allowing for decisions such as how the work is organized, what is done, and who does what; (2) consultative participation—like (1) above except that employees give their opinions but do not have veto or complete decision-making power; (3) short-term participation—like (1) above except that the temporal duration of the program is short term; (4) informal participation—any participation that occurs informally through the interpersonal relationships between managers and subordinates; (5) employee ownership—participation that is directed through election of a board of directors and stockholder meetings, but managers still make both daily and strategic decisions; and (6) representa-
tive participation—employees do not participate directly but go through representatives such as a governing council or board of directors. The literature review revealed that informal participation and employee ownership have positive effects on both productivity and satisfaction while short-term participation affects neither outcome. Participation in work decisions affects productivity consistently but affects satisfaction more inconsistently. Conversely, representative participation does not increase productivity but does increase satisfaction. The authors conclude that participation is multifaceted, and any attempt to evaluate the effects of participation must take into account the type of participation and the criterion for effectiveness.

Refereed practitioner journal article

Empowerment is defined here on two dimensions: (1) the extent to which employees have the power to determine job content, or the tasks and procedures necessary for carrying out a particular job; and (2) job context, or the extent to which employees have the power to determine organization structure, reward systems, mission, goals, and objectives. In a matrix, the authors exhibit five levels of employee empowerment: (1) no discretion (low content, low context); (2) task setting (high content, low context); (3) participatory empowerment (moderate content, moderate context); (4) mission defining (low content, high context); and (5) self-management (high content, high context). The authors argue that empowerment programs should begin with job content and gradually increase in scope to include factors of job context. They also stress that a proper fit between the tasks and empowerment programs is crucial (i.e., jobs with low customer contact, routine technology, and a predictable business environment may not be suitable for empowerment).

Refereed theoretical journal article

This article proposes a new framework for participation in organizations and moves beyond the examination of the effects of participation on organizational outcomes. The authors define participation as “a conscious and
intended effort by individuals at a higher level in an organization to provide visible extra-role or role-expanding opportunities for individuals or groups at a lower level in the organization to have a greater voice in one or more areas of organizational performance” (p. 402). Their framework asserts that organizational and managerial motives to increase participation lead to the intended participation program, which, in turn, leads to the actual participation program and then to individual- and organizational-level outcomes. The relationship between the intended and actual program is moderated by both individual factors (e.g., personality differences, ability and demographic differences, differences in willingness to participate, and differences in managers’ tendencies to incorporate participation) and organizational factors (e.g., context factors such as size of organization and company culture, structure factors such as type of task or task interdependence, labor force factors such as union status, and national cultural factors such as power distance). The authors warn that substantive research has preceded the validation of the participation construct, and that their definition and framework should provide a base for more coherent research.

Refereed empirical journal article


This is a report of an empirical study of the variables that influence employee receptivity and liking for employee participation programs in a Fortune 100 high-technology engineering products manufacturer. The results indicate that employees are more receptive to participation when they are more personally involved in the program and as their tenure in the participation program grows. The positive relationship between receptivity and tenure was moderated, however, by organizational citizenship behavior (the higher the score, the weaker the relationship) and the size of the perceived gap between desired and actual participation in decision making (the larger the gap, the stronger the relationship). Implications include: the need to diffuse participation programs rapidly throughout the organization; the need to inform all employees about the program, not just the ones that are currently being involved; and the need to collaborate with unions to launch employee participation programs. The authors conclude that participation initiatives must be perceived as genuine, or cynicism and anger are likely to result.
Refereed theoretical journal article

After noting that much of the literature on empowerment in the business press omits the discussion of power, the authors provide a four-dimension model of power in an attempt to explain why empowerment programs often fail to meet the expectations of both managers and employees. The four dimensions include: control over resources (I), processes (II), meaning (III), and the embeddedness of individuals with power networks or systems (IV). The authors conclude that the disappointing results of business empowerment may be due in part to the reluctance of mainstream management research to tackle the link between power and empowerment. That is, while mainstream management views power as legitimate and functional, others (critical theorists) view power as domination and as a zero-sum game. The key to resolving these conflicts, the authors argue, is to avoid making employees vulnerable to abuse of power under the rhetoric of empowerment. A critical approach makes the political dynamics of empowerment visible by putting power back into the empowerment equation.

Refereed theoretical journal article

The authors introduce the concept of dysempowerment and propose several propositions relating to its occurrence. They draw on literature from organizational trust, procedural justice, and stress to outline a process of dysempowerment. The process of dysempowerment occurs when: (1) an individual determines that a work event is an affront to his or her dignity; (2) an emotional response is triggered that likely interferes with his or her ability to achieve the task motivation associated with empowerment; and (3) negative feedback from bosses or peers perpetuates the dysempowerment process. The authors argue that dysempowerment and empowerment processes may be at work simultaneously for each individual, and that the existence of dysempowerment may explain the lack of evidence supporting the impact of empowerment in organizations.
Book chapter

In response to a lack of theoretical models of empowerment at the team level of analysis, the authors present a model of work-team empowerment. Based on an extensive review of the literature, they propose that team empowerment includes four dimensions: (1) potency, or the collective belief of a team that it can be effective; (2) meaningfulness, or the extent of intrinsic caring a team has for its tasks; (3) autonomy, or the extent to which a team believes it has the freedom to decide how to carry out its work; and (4) consequences, or the extent to which the team believes that its work has a significant impact on the organization and its customers. The team empowerment model also theoretically identifies antecedents to team empowerment in four thematic areas that include: external leader behaviors, production/service environment factors, human resource policies, and organizational structure factors. Outcomes theorized to be affected by team empowerment include: productivity, satisfaction, commitment, proactivity, and quality/customer satisfaction. The authors conclude that the model should be rigorously tested in the hopes that the underdeveloped and fragmented team empowerment literature can be synthesized into a comprehensive stream of research similar to what has occurred with empowerment at the individual level.

Refereed empirical journal article

Using 111 work teams and a total of 1,075 respondents in four organizations, the authors conducted a field survey study to assess the role of team empowerment in work team effectiveness. Team empowerment was defined as employee experiences of potency, meaningfulness, autonomy, and impact. They found that teams with higher levels of empowerment were more productive and proactive and had higher customer service, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and team commitment than teams with lower levels of empowerment. Antecedents of team empowerment included: external team leader behaviors, actions taken in the production/service environment, human resources policies, and the social structure of teams. Support was also found for team empowerment as a mediator between the four antecedents and the
six outcomes. Team empowerment explained more unique variance in team effectiveness than self-management, leading the authors to conclude that managers should attempt to empower their teams in addition to making them more autonomous.

Refereed practitioner journal article

The author presents three types of involvement strategies, each with varying degrees of employee participation, and indicates when each of the strategies is appropriate in organizations. The lowest form of employee involvement, parallel suggestion involvement (i.e., setting up a reward system for employee ideas that are used by the company), is most appropriate in a functional organization with traditional jobs, human resource policies, reward structures, and a top-down decision-making structure. The middle form of employee involvement, job involvement (i.e., enriching jobs to motivate employees to achieve better job performance), is most appropriate in a functional organization with enriched or team-based jobs, skill-based or team-based pay, and high decision-making discretion among employees. The highest form of employee involvement, high involvement (i.e., when employees have a sense of involvement in how the total organization performs), is most appropriate in a business- or customer-focused organization with work teams, participatively developed human resource policies, employee ownership or gainsharing, and very high decision-making discretion among employees. Three major factors need to be considered in deciding which approach to choose: (1) the nature of the work and technology, (2) the values of the key participants, and (3) the organization’s current management approach. The author concludes that involvement is not right for all organizations, and that it is important to take a differentiated view of employee involvement.

Refereed empirical journal article

In this article, the differences in attitudes were examined among three employee groups in a medium-sized steel manufacturer regarding their work,
their union, and preferences for decision-making structures. The groups included: (1) participants in an employee involvement program, (2) nonparticipants in the program, and (3) program volunteers who had not yet had the opportunity to participate. Results indicated that volunteers generally had the most positive attitudes toward their work and their union; participants showed the greatest disparity between their perceived and desired levels of participation; participants viewed employee involvement as the best decision-making structure for many issues; and nonparticipants favored collective bargaining. The authors did not find any outcome effects attributable to employee involvement, a finding that is contrary to previous studies. The non-finding was attributed to the large gap between perceived and desired levels of participation, which most likely led to a frustration effect. The authors argue that the high level of positive attitudes held by volunteers (not yet participating) indicates a selection effect regarding attitudes and beliefs about employee involvement.

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Refereed empirical journal article

The authors present a case study of the implementation of high-involvement, high-performance work systems in a twelve-plant consumer foods division of a multibillion-dollar firm. Employee surveys were administered twice during the intervention, once in 1987 and again in 1990-91, with over 2,000 employees responding each time. After reviewing a total of twenty measures of involvement, work design, teamwork, supervisory behaviors, and other attitudes (aggregated to the plant level) on the surveys at Time 1 and Time 2, the authors report increases on eighteen of the twenty variables. They compared the same variables between high involvement plants and traditionally managed plants and found similar results. Available data for performance differences for high-involvement practices were encouraging but were somewhat mixed overall. The authors go on to qualitatively discuss the learning system in place at the high involvement plants, the self-design model that was used to transition the plants to high involvement, and their own role as action researchers in the transition. They conclude that large-scale organizational change differs substantively from change in single units like departments and plants and call for more research on change that occurs in multilevel, multi-location organizations.
Refereed empirical journal article

In this study, a two-stage empirical design is used to examine what design and administrative variables are crucial to participant and supervisory assessments of employee involvement program (EIP) effectiveness. In stage one, sixty-eight EIP administrators were used to identify the design and administrative variables thought to be associated with employee involvement program effectiveness. Data were then collected in two organizations: a large, Fortune 500 electronics manufacturer and a smaller, privately owned manufacturer of hand-held tools. Significant predictors of team effectiveness were the degree of openness of a team’s information access structure, the degree of heterogeneity in the job functions performed by team members, and the team’s size. The authors conclude that managers who change design and administrative variables can directly influence team effectiveness (and thus the effectiveness of the employee involvement program).

Refereed practitioner journal article

Using case studies (e.g., Wal-Mart and Visa International) and historical perspectives, the author argues that as communication costs decrease, companies can correspondingly decentralize their decision-making structures. Three stages of decision making include: (1) independent, decentralized (i.e., “cowboys,” used when communication costs are high and decisions are made in physically separate locations); (2) centralized (i.e., “commanders,” used when communication costs begin to fall and when it is desirable to bring remote information together); and (3) connected, decentralized (i.e., “cyber-cowboys,” used when communication costs continue to fall to combine the best information from anywhere in the world). Several factors determine the economic desirability of making decisions in different places: (1) decision information (i.e., availability, cost, complexity); (2) trust (i.e., how comfortable people are in delegating decision making); and (3) motivation (i.e., workers in more complex jobs typically are more motivated by autonomy while routine jobs may be suited to a more centralized approach). The report
contains useful matrices to help determine the optimal level of decentralization based on the three factors, the costs of various decision-making structures, and desirable decision-making structures for different kinds of decisions. The author concludes that empowerment is not a fad but a logical response to decreasing communication costs made possible by information technology.

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**Refereed empirical journal article**

In a field study of six organizations in Great Britain, the authors identify the factors that affect employee attitudes toward employee involvement programs. They define employee involvement programs as those activities designed to increase the amount of information that employees receive about their organization, provide them with the opportunity to contribute to decisions made at the workplace level, and ultimately enhance their commitment to their employer. Employee involvement does not imply a sharing of authority or power with employees. Employees’ attitudes toward employee involvement were affected by: (1) their prior experiences with employee involvement; (2) prior experiences with their work and management; (3) management’s approaches to employee relations (i.e., loose versus tight control); and (4) recent corporate performance and competitive prospects (i.e., how well the company was doing and how favorably the employees viewed the future of the company). The authors conclude that any attempt to understand employee reactions to employee involvement programs must include an understanding and assessment of the context and cultural factors existing in each organization. Rather than viewing employee involvement as a catalyst for cultural change, it may be more appropriate to view corporate culture as a more direct influence on the success or failure of employee involvement.

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**Refereed theoretical journal article**

The authors theoretically argue for more attention to the social, economic, and political structures that constrain the successful implementation of participative management systems. They draw on the literature of cooperation
and collaboration to analyze the experiences with participative systems in management and regulatory policy. Attempts at participative system implementation are likely to meet with four major barriers: (1) dispositions against cooperating with prior adversaries, or the difficulty in encouraging former enemies to cooperate; (2) the costs of collaboration in complex social and political systems, or the difficulty inherent in collaborating when unequal power differences exist and the number of parties is large; (3) the difficulties of engaging deep conflicts, or when competing purposes exist or deeply held values are involved; and (4) leadership incentive favoring control, or the systems that promote tight control versus loose control by leaders. The authors conclude by stating the need for an international comparative study of these issues in addition to a theoretically comparative study to build tighter connections between researchers studying cooperation, collaboration, and participation.

Refereed theoretical journal article

This article synthesizes three literatures: participation, individual development, and organizational change. The authors highlight factors that enhance an individual’s participation in organizational development in order to help explain why popular OD interventions such as self-directed work teams and quality programs continue to fall short of their full potential. Four variables are presented: (1) organizational receptivity to participation (i.e., the readiness of an organization to implement authentic participative programs); (2) individual development (i.e., the ego-preparation of the individual for participation, ranging from a reticence to involve oneself in the decisions affecting one’s future to the readiness to give one’s life to help transform an important system); (3) knowledge availability (i.e., knowledge pertinent to the decision under consideration); and (4) preparation of people to participate in change (i.e., creating an organizational context in which: people can experience, reflect, experiment, and learn; opportunities for participation are genuine and related to important matters; and individuals are permitted to achieve distinction and personal excellence through courageous action). The authors conclude that interventions should create processes that allow individual and organizational development to occur simultaneously and continuously.
Refereed empirical journal article

Theory from evolutionary economics and work innovation is used here to hypothesize that high-involvement work practices are adopted more rapidly by some organizations than others. This is due to: (1) the level of complementary human-resource practices and technology; (2) performance achieved with previous practices; (3) experience with existing practices; (4) the extent of layoffs or other trust-reducing events; and (5) the presence of other changes in the current way of doing things. The study uses a longitudinal data set of forty-three automobile assembly plants worldwide to test the hypotheses. Results indicated that: the adoption of involvement practices is related to the plants having complementary human-resource policies but not complementary technology; low-performing plants were more likely to adopt; higher tenure levels were related to higher adoption levels; there was no relationship involving layoffs and low trust and adoption; and other changes were associated with adoption. The authors conclude that a “systems” perspective that examines complementarities among variables related to work organization, human resource policies, and flexible technologies is crucial to understanding the determinants of the adoption of high-involvement work practices.

Refereed practitioner journal article

Based on over ten years of research and organizational experience, the authors attempt to explain why companies encounter problems implementing empowerment. Their research has led to seven questions managers must confront for successful employee empowerment programs. These are: (1) What do we mean when we say we want to empower people? (2) What are the characteristics of an empowered person? (3) Do we really need empowered people? (4) Do we really want empowered people? (5) How do people develop a sense of empowerment? (6) What organizational characteristics facilitate employee empowerment? and (7) What can leaders do to facilitate employee empowerment? Empowerment is examined from both the mechanistic and organic lenses of organizational structure, and it is argued
that most of the popular business press treats empowerment mechanistically, as a set of managerial practices for transferring power. The authors conclude by advocating a combination of mechanistic and organic (i.e., personal risk, trust, and initiative) perspectives to fully understand the journey of empowerment.

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Refereed practitioner journal article

Using case studies and consulting experiences within ten organizations, the author argues that empowerment is not a fad, rather that it is a legitimate means of dealing with the problems facing organizations in the 1990s. Empowerment is defined as recognizing and releasing into the organization the power that people already have in their wealth of useful knowledge and internal motivation. Keys to unleashing empowerment in organizations include: (1) sharing information (i.e., creating a high level of trust, dealing proactively with mistakes, ensuring a fit between organizational goals and empowerment, and making sure information sharing does not get bogged down in the organization); (2) creating structure to get to autonomy (i.e., managers must create an empowering structure in order to free up employees); and (3) teams become the hierarchy (i.e., through continuous training, strong team leadership, and leaders exercising control over their fear of losing power). The author concludes that it may take several years for organizations to experience meaningful levels of empowerment once it is implemented.

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Refereed practitioner journal article

The authors use W.L. Gore & Associates, the inventor and manufacturer of GORE-TEX®, as a case study to illustrate the possibility of implementing an individualized self-management process, which conceptualizes the entire work operation as one large empowered team. They identify six themes that summarize their findings from the study: (1) culture and norms supporting employee empowerment and norms; (2) a lattice organizational structure instead of formally designated teams; (3) no bosses and managers but a great number of leaders; (4) successful associates can work without
structure and management; (5) unstructured research and development create increased creativity and innovation; and (6) the lattice structure and “unmanagement” have limitations. They conclude that: (1) the role of management and leadership needs to be redefined to include self-management; (2) the organizational structure has to be changed to reflect self-management (i.e., the lattice); (3) culture and norms should be used to fill the void that is left by the absence of structure and management; (4) teamwork is still needed even though formal teams are not; (5) realistic job previews should be used to help with the selection of suitable employees for this work environment; (6) research and development should be unstructured and everyone should be allowed to get involved in the process; (7) multiple opportunities should be provided for everyone to participate in the organization and multiple ways should be offered for them to be rewarded; and (8) the lattice-type system should be used with caution, most likely with start-up companies led by dynamic entrepreneurs.

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*Refereed empirical journal article*


In this article, the author attempts to empirically validate the four-dimension model of empowerment at the individual level of analysis developed by Thomas and Velthouse (1990; see annotation on page 54) in two separate studies in two organizations: a Fortune 50 industrial company and an insurance company. Using confirmatory factor analysis, it is demonstrated that empowerment consists of four dimensions: competence, meaning, self-determination, and impact. Using structural equations modeling, it is also shown that antecedents to empowerment include self-esteem and access to information about an organization’s mission. Consequences of empowerment include innovative behavior and managerial effectiveness. The author concludes that a more fine-grained analysis should be attempted to both determine which dimension of empowerment relates more strongly to which of the antecedents and consequences and to expand the rather limited nomological net tested in this model.

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Refereed empirical journal article

The model of empowerment already empirically validated (Spreitzer, 1995; see annotation on page 52) is used here to empirically test structural antecedents of empowerment based on the theory of high-involvement systems in a Fortune 50 organization. The results indicated that more empowered employees also reported less role ambiguity, a higher span of control, more sociopolitical support, greater access to information, and a more participative work unit climate. Results showed that findings contribute to the literature by articulating the importance of perceptions in the interpretation of the work environment as empowering or disempowering. The author concludes that high-involvement social structures do create the conditions necessary for empowerment in the workplace.

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Refereed empirical journal article

Using 393 mid-level supervisors from four different units of a Fortune 500 organization, the authors conducted a field survey to assess the extent to which supervisory empowerment (as measured by the supervisors) was related to a variety of leadership outcomes (as measured by the supervisors’ subordinates). The results indicated that subordinates who viewed their supervisors as empowering also saw them as more innovative, upward influencing, and inspirational. There was no relationship between supervisory empowerment and monitoring behaviors (i.e., watching for deviations from rules and standards). The authors conclude that their research is an important step in uncovering potential antecedents to change-oriented leadership managing in turbulent environments.

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Refereed empirical journal article

Using the validated measures of empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995; see annotation on page 52), the authors test relationships between each of the four
dimensions of empowerment (separately) and the three outcomes (e.g., effectiveness, work satisfaction, and job-related strain). Two separate studies were conducted in two organizations: a Fortune 500 industrial organization and an insurance company. Overall, the findings indicated: competence (one dimension of empowerment) was related to effectiveness, satisfaction, and strain; meaning (a second dimension) was related to satisfaction and strain but not to effectiveness; self-determination (a third dimension) was related only to satisfaction; and impact (a fourth dimension) was related only to effectiveness. The authors conclude that it is important to discern which of the four dimensions relate to which of the desired outcomes in order for managers to more fine-tune their intervention efforts. Further, it is necessary for all dimensions of empowerment to be experienced before all of the outcomes can be fully realized.

Refereed theoretical journal article

Based on an extensive literature review, the authors develop a four-dimension model of empowerment at the individual level of analysis. The four dimensions, or task assessments, include: (1) competence, or a person’s assessment of the degree to which he or she can perform task activities skillfully when he or she tries; (2) meaningfulness, or a person’s assessment of the intrinsic caring he or she has about a given task; (3) choice, or a person’s assessment of whether his or her behavior is self-determined; and (4) impact, or a person’s assessment of whether his or her behavior makes a difference in the organization. The full model includes the effects of interpretive styles (e.g., attributions, evaluations, envisioning), individual behavior (e.g., activity, concentration, initiative, resiliency, flexibility), and environmental events.

Refereed empirical journal article

The authors use a quasi-experimental design to test the effects of the introduction of empowerment in a Canadian individual and group life insur-
ance company. Two groups of employees (one of which was officially participating in an empowerment program) were compared on a variety of outcome measures including motivation/job satisfaction, work group cohesiveness, and management style. Baseline scores on the variables revealed no significant differences between the groups before empowerment was implemented. Comparisons of the means revealed no significant differences between the two groups on any of the variables. The authors attribute these non-findings (which are contrary to previous research) to the top-down implementation of empowerment that occurred in this organization and the downsizing that occurred during the experiment.
work of Deming and using the Delphi method with a panel of experts to generate a preliminary set of concepts, the authors provide a theoretical statement of quality management underlying the Deming management method: “The effectiveness of the Deming management method arises of leadership efforts toward the simultaneous creation of a cooperative and learning organization to facilitate the implementation of process-management practices which, when implemented, support customer satisfaction and organizational survival through sustained employee fulfillment and continuous improvement of processes, products, and services” (p. 479). The authors go on to define each of the concepts featured in the theoretical statement, provide a visual model of the relationships between the concepts, and identify propositions that relate the concepts together. They conclude that the model should lead to more efficient and more effective efforts at achieving the Deming management method’s purpose of transforming and improving management.

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*Refereed practitioner journal article*


By conducting interviews and examining written materials in eight Baldridge Award-winning companies, the authors developed a human resource profile of best practices for TQM. They developed a fourteen-point checklist of best practices, which can be used as benchmarks for other companies. The list includes: (1) top management is responsible for initiating and supporting a vision of a total quality culture; (2) the vision is communicated in a variety of ways; (3) systems that allow upward and lateral communications are developed, implemented, and reinforced; (4) TQM training is provided for all employees and is supported by top management; (5) employee involvement or participation programs are in place; (6) processes that bring multiple perspectives to bear on quality issues are imperative (and are not necessarily in the form of teams); (7) employees are empowered to make quality-based decisions at their discretion; (8) performance reviews are both past- and future-oriented; (9) compensation systems reflect team-related quality contributions; (10) nonfinancial recognition is given for small wins and big victories; (11) systems are in place that allow employees a chance to voice their concerns and issues; (12) safety and health issues are addressed proactively; (13) recruitment, selection, promotion, and career development
programs are altered to meet the demands of working in a TQM environment; and (14) the human resources function is managed using TQM. The authors conclude that the transition to TQM is a paradigm shift for human resource professionals.

Arguing that human resources is a logical, and yet often resistant, organizational arena in which to implement TQM, the authors suggest that the following five TQM tenets should be integrated into human resource departments: (1) do it right the first time; (2) focus on the customer; (3) create a strategic, holistic approach to improvement; (4) make continuous improvement a way of life; and (5) engender mutual respect and use teamwork. The following areas of human resources management should be changed to reflect a quality perspective: selection systems (i.e., identify candidates with strong analytical and teamwork abilities); development-and-training programs (i.e., train employees beyond their specific job skills to other skills such as group process and decision making); career development (i.e., a stronger emphasis on cross-functional career moves instead of the traditional vertical career ladder); performance appraisal systems (i.e., use peer evaluations and align performance evaluations more closely with the principle of shared responsibility for quality); pay systems (i.e., use skill-based pay and group, plant, or organization-wide incentives); perquisites (i.e., be more egalitarian in the use of these benefits); labor relations (i.e., attempt to partner with unions in the process); and communication (i.e., encourage an open flow of information related to quality and business results throughout the organization). The authors conclude that five themes emerge across the different quality-oriented human-resources practices: (1) a focus on the organization, rather than the job; (2) support for group performance, rather than individual performance; (3) egalitarianism, rather than hierarchy; (4) change, rather than stability; and (5) participation, rather than command and control.
Refereed theoretical journal article

Using a case-study approach of six U.S. suppliers of automobile components, the authors examined the attitudes of top managers as a key reason why TQM has not been very successful in American business. They argue that there are three attitudinal orientations of top management: (1) developmental (i.e., recognizing that TQM is a tool for growing their firm’s business and that different TQM activities are interrelated); (2) tactical (i.e., considering customers as strong and demanding and doing exactly what the customer requires); and (3) defensive (i.e., protecting the firm from unreasonable demands by customers who are kept at arm’s length). Each of these orientations is discussed by highlighting main concerns, time focus, and view of customers. Findings showed that the most TQM practices were in place at firms that had developmental top managers followed by tactical and then by defensive. The authors conclude that researchers who have examined reasons such as botched implementation or managers with overly high expectations should look to top-manager orientation as a more accurate reason why TQM programs have frequently failed.

Refereed theoretical journal article

This article is the introductory piece of a special issue of the *Academy of Management Review* on TQM. The authors review the components of TQM, compare TQM to management theory at the global level, and compare TQM to management theory at the topic-specific level by using the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award criteria (i.e., leadership, human resource management, strategic quality planning, information and analysis, management of process quality, and customer focus and satisfaction). Three conclusions are presented: (1) there are a number of areas where TQM is consistent with management theory, (2) there are a number of areas where TQM can be informed by management theory, and (3) there are a number of areas of management theory that can be informed by TQM. The article concludes with an overview of the rest of the articles in the special issue (all of which are abstracted in this document).
Refereed empirical journal article

Using a case study of IBM Rochester (a 1990 Malcolm Baldridge Quality Award winner), the authors examine the impact of TQM implementation in a finance department. A four-stage model of TQM application to the firm’s financial operations is described in detail. The stages include: (1) inputs (i.e., customer identification, quality characteristics, existing characteristics of policy or process); (2) process (i.e., assemble data, analyze, evaluate, recommend); (3) output (i.e., status quo, integrate, modify, radical change); and (4) measurement of customer satisfaction (i.e., quantifiable measures, multiple measures, dollar-based measures). After carefully reviewing the impact of implementation (of what is called here “Total Quality Finance”), the authors conclude with several lessons that include: (1) managers should focus on the firm’s service and operational processes rather than share price (i.e., profitability will inevitably follow a focus on services and operations); (2) managers should lengthen their measurement horizons (i.e., long term versus short term); and (3) finance managers must evolve their role from inspector and auditor to facilitator-coach and cross-functional team member.

Refereed practitioner journal article

This article traces the history of the various quality movements, each led by American or Japanese quality gurus, in an attempt to synthesize the various viewpoints and terms used in TQM. The review of different quality perspectives includes: (1) Taylor’s inspected quality; (2) Deming’s process-control integrated quality; (3) Juran’s company-wide integrated quality; (4) Feigenbaum’s total quality control; (5) Ishikawa’s prevention integrated quality; (6) Taguchi’s design integrated quality; (7) Crosby’s cost integrated quality; and (8) Kearns’ market competition integrated quality. The purpose of an integrated framework is to help managers make sense of the multiple philosophies regarding quality management. Managers can then choose different individual philosophies of quality depending on the needs and
composition of their organization (which depends on a strategic assessment of the organization and its external environment). The author concludes that there is no such thing as a generic model for quality in all organizations.

Refereed theoretical journal article

Based on the confusion surrounding TQM in the management literature (i.e., the great number of unreported failures; the questioning of TQM’s conceptual soundness, its applicability, and its ideological basis), the authors provide a literature review and a classification of the different TQM schools of thought showing the relationships between the various TQM ideologies. Two major schools of TQM thought are differentiated: (1) the rational school (i.e., an almost exclusive focus on the systems and processes level of analysis to explain TQM success or failure); and (2) the normative school (i.e., an almost exclusive focus on individual responsibility of employees as a determinant of TQM success or failure). The authors then divide their critique into three streams: (1) the pragmatic critique (i.e., those who question the ability of TQM to generate promised results); (2) the theoretical critique (i.e., those who examine TQM from a conceptual perspective and offer a critique of content); and (3) the ideological critique (i.e., those who contest the social and political premises underlying TQM and raise questions about its relevance). In conclusion, the authors’ framework can be used to resolve some of the underlying contradictions in the TQM literature and as a basis for designing and carrying out future research on TQM.

Refereed theoretical journal article

The authors review the works of TQM founders—Deming, Juran, and Ishikawa—to assess the coherence, distinctiveness, and likely perseverance of TQM. They identify a number of gaps in what is known about TQM processes and outcomes and explore the congruence between TQM practices and behavioral science knowledge about motivation, learning, and change in social systems. One of the findings is that of ninety-nine papers published in academic and practitioner journals between 1989 and 1993, only four percent
assessed the degree to which TQM interventions actually were in place. Thus, these findings may reflect the effects of programs that are not full-fledged implementations of TQM. Another finding is that TQM implementation can go wrong because the changes may be so ambitious that the organization cannot accommodate them or the changes may be more window-dressing than real (i.e., organizational systems and structures remain untouched). The authors conclude that TQM is likely to lose prominence and popularity rather than revolutionize organizational practice. Three reasons are offered for this: (1) the rhetoric of TQM is winning out over substance (i.e., organizations are implementing a highly distorted version of what the quality gurus intended); (2) a high number of other interventions are increasingly being herded under the TQM banner (i.e., group-level performance-contingent rewards, work redesign, and empowerment programs); and (3) research is not providing the corrective function for TQM that it could (i.e., there is plenty of room for additional learning on how TQM theory and practice could be improved). The authors state that only if the continuous improvement idea comes to apply to TQM itself will the philosophy have a chance of sustaining itself over time.

Refereed practitioner journal article

Through an in-depth analysis of quality management programs at a large telecommunications company and a review of case studies of other companies in the literature in an attempt to identify factors that hinder the success of TQM programs in practice, the authors identify three major barriers. They are: (1) confusion over the role of corporate restructuring and quality initiative programs (i.e., reconciling the conflicting goals of each); (2) having many different quality improvement programs simultaneously in place, resulting in a variety of conflicting quality goals, with very little tangible progress at the end; and (3) having programs that seek sweeping cultural changes, large-scale training programs, and massive process innovations. Organizations that successfully implemented TQM programs have built upon successive programs seeking concrete results at each stage. The authors conclude that: (1) TQM is most appropriate for companies in fairly stable strategic positions; (2) the organization must be clear about what it wants to achieve with TQM (i.e., concrete quality goals); and (3) targets must be attainable within specified time periods and be objectively measurable.

The author provides brief reviews of both TQM and employee involvement (EI), differentiates the two concepts on several dimensions, and debates whether the two systems are compatible or not and when each might be appropriate. In differentiating the two concepts, several key themes are highlighted, each related to TQM and EI, respectively: (1) quality improvement versus organizational effectiveness; (2) management control versus self-management; (3) process improvement versus organizational design; (4) work simplification versus enrichment/work teams; (5) work process codification versus employee discretion; (6) quality circles versus work teams; (7) internal customers versus feedback; and (8) recognition rewards versus financial rewards. The author argues that not only are TQM and EI not interchangeable, they are not even compatible on a number of dimensions. In a discussion about which concept is superior, the choice depends on the task. TQM may work better in high-volume production situations. EI may be more appropriate when the work is primarily creative and where the organization faces an extremely rapidly changing environment, when the work unit is small, and when the business strategy calls for quick responses to customers with cost-effective performance and quality. The author concludes that it may be possible to combine elements of both concepts to increase organizational effectiveness.


This article provides a broad classification and critique of the theoretical and empirical approaches to quality initiatives. The authors argue that there are three schools of thought: (1) technical managerialists (i.e., those who assume that TQM prescriptions can readily be translated into practice without regard for localized circumstances); (2) social managerialists (i.e., those who focus on intraorganizational politics and hierarchical tensions and realize that outcomes are always a negotiated compromise); and (3) critical
nonmanagerialists (i.e., those who believe that TQM is a sophisticated form of managerial control). An alternative research program is presented based on the authors’ review that would attempt to: (1) understand the context of change (specifically within financial services) and understand the role of TQM as a source of competitor differentiation; (2) identify the use and form of the quality initiatives and their relevance with financial services; (3) consider the processes of intraorganizational implementation and how internal power relations and conflicts shape and constitute quality initiatives over time; and (4) examine the constitution of organizational stakeholders and how this affects the production of new producer and consumer identities.

Refereed theoretical journal article

The authors take a comprehensive look at the essential elements of a TQM program (i.e., visible effective leadership, data-driven processes, prevention rather than inspection, employee empowerment, vertical deployment of quality initiatives, emphasis on processes and cross-functional coordination, and continuous improvement philosophy). Next, they examine the organizational processes that support TQM (i.e., communicating a quality vision; establishing quality goals; training for quality; team building to enable quality; recognizing and rewarding quality; recruiting, selecting, and socializing quality-oriented employees). Outcome measures are then highlighted (i.e., measuring customer reactions, operation measures, financial measures, and employee contributions). Sources of stakeholder (i.e., top management, middle management, professional staff, and line employees) support and opposition are highlighted. Company examples are given throughout to add context to the discussion. The authors conclude that getting to TQM is dependent upon fundamental changes in organizational processes and measurement strategies, which will drive and reinforce changes in the behaviors of key stakeholders. In addition, TQM must reflect a system-wide commitment to the goal of serving the strategic needs of the organization’s customer bases, through internal and external measurement systems, information and authority sharing, and committed leadership.
Refereed theoretical journal article

Arguing that previous research on TQM has been much more concerned with process than content, this article considers TQM in relation to firm orientation and identifies market advantage, product design efficiency, process efficiency, and product reliability as key features of TQM’s content. Firms can be oriented toward their customers and markets or toward their internal operations. Regarding a focus on customers, organizations with a market advantage are attracting more customers than their competitors, and thus the needs of the customers becomes a key input to TQM. In addition, in order to determine whether every component and part of a product or service provides value to the customer, product design efficiency becomes a crucial input to the TQM process. Regarding a focus on internal operations, continuous improvements efforts are a focal point of the organization as process efficiency becomes a key input to TQM. In addition, an inward focus also creates the need for product reliability as an important input to TQM. The authors’ overall model posits that creating the proper fit between firm orientation and the level of environmental uncertainty will yield the most optimal outcomes measured in terms of firm performance. There are three conclusions: (1) maintaining a focus on the content of TQM is as important as becoming immersed in its process; (2) the match between uncertainty in the environment and firm orientation and TQM must be addressed; and (3) some aspects of TQM will require patience and persistence for the payoff to be realized.

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Refereed theoretical journal article

The authors argue that a search for a universal definition of quality has yielded inconsistent results, and that systematic and scientific inquiry into the meaning of quality is in its infancy. Further, the definitional differences account for many of the inconsistent and often contradictory empirical results found in the extant literature. Because a global definition does not exist, they point out that different definitions of quality are appropriate under different circumstances. Several different definitions of quality are presented in the article (e.g., quality is excellence, quality is value, quality is conformance to...
specifications, and quality is meeting and/or exceeding customers’ expectations) and their strengths and weaknesses are outlined. Although practitioners and academics alike have argued that customer preferences are paramount, the expense of identifying these preferences frequently leads management to fall back on its own perceptions of customer desires. The authors conclude that, rather than pursue a single definition, multiple definitions are required to capture the complexity and richness of the construct. The challenge, they suggest, is to develop models and definitions that are comparable, even cumulative, and that account for many of the components neglected up to now.

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Refereed theoretical journal article

This article presents a cognitive theory that explains why employees might choose to resist a large-scale organizational change such as TQM. The theory suggests that employees resist TQM because their beliefs about the organization’s identity (i.e., the set of constructs individuals use to describe what is central, distinctive, and enduring about their organization) constrain understanding and create cognitive opposition to radical change. In order to enhance employee receptivity to TQM and change in general, management should reframe the changes over time while implementing a series of middle-range changes that are large enough to overcome cognitive inertia but not so large that members believe the proposed change is unobtainable or undesirable. The authors conclude that the same reasons employees might choose to resist TQM (the failure to comprehend new theoretical perspectives and cognitive opposition to new theories) may help to explain why management researchers have neglected the customer-focused organization and TQM in general.

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Refereed practitioner journal article

There are four objectives in this article: (1) it shows how the quality concept has rapidly evolved and expanded to the point where, in some organi-
zations, it is central in the work lives of front-line employees; (2) it traces the roots of TQM from its origins in manufacturing, its arrival in office support areas, to its diffusion in service organizations; (3) it looks at how concepts such as just-in-time (JIT) and activity-based-costing (ABC) fit into TQM as mutually reinforcing elements; and (4) it probes the proposition that TQM is modifying the view of what good management is and the view that TQM’s elements constitute a common, universal strategic agenda rather than management alternatives or options. The author concludes that to the extent that TQM dictates strategy, incorporates policy, and guides employee activities, executives and managers are free to get out, be seen, be involved, be supportive, and play the role of true leaders.

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Refereed theoretical journal article

The authors argue that TQM approaches have been narrowly defined as emphasizing control only. They also argue that this narrow definition of TQM restricts quality programs from application to work environments featuring high task uncertainty, which implies not only a need for control but for learning as well. Total quality learning (TQL) is identified as a second type of total quality program that is distinct from total quality control (TQC). The authors propose that implementing TQL when task, product/process, or organizational uncertainty is high will increase outcome effectiveness. Similarly, implementing TQC when task, product/process, or organizational uncertainty is low will increase outcome effectiveness. Thus, the authors take a contingency approach and identify situations where TQL and TQC are optimally utilized. They conclude that the implementation of TQM in general in nonroutine situations may be responsible for the TQM failures reported in the popular press. The propositions may allow managers to “unbundle” prepackaged TQM programs so that the most applicable parts of these approaches are used reflectively in each situation.

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Refereed theoretical journal article

Using three models of organizations—mechanistic, organismic, and cultural—the author tries to bridge the gap between TQM practice and management theory. Seven themes are used to examine each of the models of organizations from a TQM perspective: goals, definition of quality, role/nature of the environment, role of management, role of employees, structural rationality, and philosophy toward change. One conclusion is that TQM researchers have retained what was valuable from a mechanistic approach while discarding some of its dysfunctional aspects. Another conclusion is that many of TQM’s revolutionary “new” ideas are derived from systems theory and the organismic model of organizations. Thus, TQM contains elements from both the mechanistic and organismic models. Regarding the cultural model, when TQM is viewed as a philosophy or cultural change, the cultural model provides insights on how TQM is accepted or rejected by organizational members (i.e., the cultural model implies that an organization’s culture and its social environment are enacted or socially constructed by organization members). The author concludes that TQM helps identify the positive aspects of the mechanistic structure (generally viewed as wholly negative by management scholars) and can serve as a vehicle to explore the concepts of the open systems perspective as well as cross-level relationships in organizations.

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Refereed practitioner journal article

This article presents a principle from a collection known as “Taguchi Methods,” which essentially states: “Quality is a virtue of design. The ‘robustness’ of products is more a function of good design than of on-line control, however stringent, of manufacturing processes” (p. 65). The authors argue that an inherent lack of robustness in product design is the primary driver of extra manufacturing expenses. They also present Taguchi’s nine quality imperatives that are necessary to achieve robust quality. Examples are provided from various companies to illustrate the points made throughout the article. Concluding that employee involvement is key, the authors also state that the involvement must come from employees who are committed to
“hitting the bull’s eye” consistently through the engagement of their ingenuity and cost-consciousness.

Refereed practitioner journal article

Seven paradoxes inherent in TQM and ways to manage them are discussed here. The paradoxes are: (1) seek diversity, but build a shared vision; (2) encourage creativity, but be consistent in everything; (3) focus on continuous process improvement, but make break-through change an important part of the job; (4) use autonomous work groups to enhance performance, but ensure careful and uniform control of product and service quality; (5) build a cohesive work team, but welcome conflict when critically analyzing ideas; (6) set realistic, yet challenging goals for maximizing performance, but use stretch targets to dramatically improve performance; and (7) reward team effort, but create a high-performance climate for individuals. The author argues that by recognizing and resolving the paradoxes, leaders gain a sharper focus on the dynamics of a total quality environment. The seven paradoxes can be grouped into three focal points: (1) creating the culture of the work environment (paradoxes 1, 2, and 3); (2) building a responsive team environment (paradoxes 4, 5, and 6); and reinforcing a performance-centered environment (paradox 7). The purpose of the paradoxes is to provide the kind of culture, responsive teamwork, and performance-centered environment that is essential for any successful TQM initiative.

Refereed theoretical journal article

This article incorporates TQM concepts and proposals into a system-focused approach toward modeling work performance. A model is proposed that demonstrates that the system affects performance by indirectly enhancing aspects of the person, interacting with the person in terms of person/system fit, and constraining performance at lower hierarchical levels and in jobs lacking autonomy. The author argues that person and system factors must be considered simultaneously when modeling determinants of performance.
Refereed empirical journal article
Westphal, J. D., Gulati, R., & Shortell, S. M. Customization or conformity?

Using a sample of over 2,700 hospitals and survey and archival data, the authors develop and test a theoretical framework using institutional and network perspectives to determine the content and outcomes of the implementation of TQM. The results suggest that early adopters of TQM customize it for gains in efficiency while later adopters gain legitimacy from utilizing the normative form of TQM. The authors found support for the role of institutional factors as a moderator of the relationship between network membership and the form of TQM adoption. More broadly, they argue that institutional factors are of extreme importance for determining how innovations are defined and implemented in organizations.

Refereed empirical journal article

Using case studies of five organizations, the author tests Hackman and Wageman’s (1995; see annotation on page 60) notion that TQM, in practice, has moved from being a well-defined and established technical intervention to a process fraught with ambiguity and unclear organizational implications. As a result, TQM no longer conforms to the original tenets set forth by quality gurus such as Deming and Juran. The author describes the process by which managers adopt their own forms of TQM, carry out TQM programs, and publicize their successes externally while suppressing failures internally. A compelling argument is presented for why organizations may have developed an overoptimistic view of TQM. The case studies provide further evidence for why TQM may have failed to live up to its earlier promise, but the reasons have very little to do with the soundness of the original TQM principles.
Refereed empirical journal article

Using a 113-item survey and 886 employees and employed college students, the authors developed and factor-analyzed measures of TQM content and organizational culture. Through factor analysis, the original number of items was reduced to fifty-six. Their original thirteen dimensions of TQM content and ten dimensions of organizational culture were pared to seven and five dimensions, respectively. An appendix is provided containing the actual items and factor loadings. The authors conclude that their survey allows practitioners to assess organizational readiness for TQM implementation and can provide baseline measures of the amount of TQM implementation that can be used to track progress and achieve continuous improvement. In addition, the survey measures the distinct dimensions of both culture and TQM, allowing for the targeting of only those features that require the most attention.

Integrated Production Technologies

Refereed empirical journal article

The author conducted a three-year longitudinal study with ten organizations implementing computer-aided design/computer-aided manufacturing (CAD/CAM) systems, half of which were successful. Noting that managers often incorrectly believe that the choice or adoption of a new task is most important, she provides an outline of the importance of implementation for improved performance. A consistent pattern found among the successful firms included: (1) clear goals that focus on competitive position rather than short-term financial gains; (2) leadership that can span Leavitt’s roles of pathfinder, problem solver, and implementer; (3) a coherent plan for systems integration so that islands of automation are avoided; and (4) increased organizational integration between design and manufacturing; the team form of organizing is discussed as one such mechanism. In conclusion, successful advanced manufacturing technology (AMT) implementation has a process and logic that is more about management than technology; and until equal
attention is given to structure, planning, conflict resolution, team functioning, and champion skill development, success is likely to continue to be elusive.

Refereed empirical journal article

By collecting data from 202 manufacturing plants in industries regarded as having relatively high investments in technology, the authors investigated whether investments in advanced manufacturing technologies (AMT) such as flexible manufacturing systems, computer-aided design, and computer-aided manufacturing were more likely to lead to improved performance if supported by changes in the manufacturing infrastructure. They defined manufacturing infrastructure as worker empowerment, quality leadership, and soft integration. Findings revealed that firms that invest in both AMT and infrastructure improvements performed at higher levels than firms investing in either AMT or infrastructure alone did. Additional analyses revealed that infrastructure investments have a stronger relationship with performance in high investment firms. The authors conclude by suggesting that infrastructure improvement may be the key to unlocking the potential in advanced manufacturing technologies.

Refereed empirical journal article

The authors investigated the link between changes in job characteristics (Task Uncertainty and Task Interdependence) and the use of integrated manufacturing technology (advanced manufacturing technology, total quality, and just-in-time inventory). In contrast to their expectations that adoption of integrated manufacturing techniques would result in the redesigning of jobs, they found no link between adoption and changes in job characteristics in 160 metal-working firms. They speculate that the inability to find links may be due to organizational inertia blocking job redesign or to environmental munificence providing resources for job redesign irrespective of integrated manufacturing adoption.
Refereed practitioner journal article

Both JIT (just-in-time) and CIM† (computer integrated manufacturing) have been heralded as advantageous for improving the competitiveness and productivity of manufacturing operations. However, empirical results have tended to support only JIT, and these benefits have been of smaller magnitude in Western organizations. They further note that JIT has as its aim to reduce variability while the purpose of CIM is to increase ability to handle variability. The authors suggest that the lack of gains from CIM are likely due to a failure to redesign the organization to leverage the technology. For example, under conditions of reduced throughput time, interdependence among individuals increases, with a subsequent need for consistent structural realignment. The authors extend this argument by noting that while CIM may reduce information transmission time and increase the amount of relevant information available, the bottleneck is usually with those charged to integrate the volume of rapidly transmitted information. Organizational structures that continue to award value to functional fiefdoms and performance management systems that do not evaluate contributions to integrated outcomes will fail to leverage the capabilities of CIM.

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Refereed practitioner journal article

This article provides a strategic framework for the use of flexibility in manufacturing firms. The framework links five variables from the organization theory and strategy literatures: (1) environmental uncertainty, (2) strategy making, (3) required manufacturing flexibility, (4) methods for delivering flexibility, and (5) performance measurement. The author notes that the model’s most significant lesson is that flexibility is required whether the game plan is defensive or proactive. Of the four strategies discussed (adaptation, redefinition, banking, reduction), only the reduction strategy, which relies on reducing uncertainty through long-term contracts, has the

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† CIM—uses computer-based information to link islands of automation, islands of information, and advanced flexible production technologies throughout the manufacturing organizational system.
potential to reduce the need for flexibility. The need to incorporate flexibility measures, separate from financial criteria, as a desired outcome in the performance management system is then given direct attention. The dimensions of flexibility (product mix, changeover cost, modification, volume, material, rerouting) are also discussed in detail. The article concludes with approximately twenty learning points including: (1) flexibility can be built to be either proactive or reactive, (2) AMT (advanced manufacturing technology) is only one method for delivering flexibility, (3) identifying uncertainties faced provides clues for the flexibility needed, (4) too much attention is given to range rather than temporal aspects of flexibility, and (5) excess flexibility is a cost and should be eliminated.

Refereed practitioner journal article

The authors’ objective in this article is to present a decision-making framework that can assist managers in choosing the most appropriate manufacturing technology for their companies. Organizations have overreacted in rushing to add advanced manufacturing technology without thoughtful consideration as to how firm strategic goals, resources, and product-market environment converge to identify an optimal choice. The authors conclude that for most established firms, an incremental rather than plunge approach is most desirable, with the relationship between technology investment increments and performance following an inverted-U shape. They further note that new manufacturing technologies come in various forms such as engineering techniques (group technology, computer-aided design, computer-aided engineering), manufacturing techniques (robotics, computer-aided manufacturing, transfer lines, flexible manufacturing), and management techniques (just-in-time, total quality, autonomous work groups). A key requirement is that top management not only be committed but be technically capable enough to understand how integration of technologies can be leveraged.
Refereed practitioner journal article

The current practice of outsourcing commodity integrated technology (IT) processes and maintaining strategic IT in-house is flawed in that a static environment is assumed. The authors suggest that the strategic/commodity issue should be secondary to maximizing flexibility and control over time. The recommendation is to create a competitive environment where both internal and external providers compete to provide IT services, thereby reducing dependence on one supplier and increasing the capability to bring a service back in-house. The authors also suggest that the strategy (non)critical dichotomy is too simple. For example, components of a strategy critical activity could be out-sourced while some commodity services should not be due to their integration with other company functions. The following questions should be answered: (1) Is this system truly strategic? (2) Are we certain that our IT requirements won’t change? (3) Even if a system is a commodity, can it be broken off from the rest of the organization? (4) Could the internal IT department provide this system more efficiently than an outside provider could?

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Refereed practitioner journal article

The authors try to answer the question: Why does integrated technology (IT) outsourcing frequently fail to produce the expected cost savings or other anticipated benefits? Perhaps it’s because managers don’t carefully select which IT activities to out source. The authors examined sixty-two sourcing decisions at forty organizations through interviews with senior business executives, CIOs, consultants, and vendor account managers. From their data, they developed a set of frameworks to clarify sourcing options and aid managers in deciding which IT functions to contract out and which to retain in-house.

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Refereed theoretical journal article

This article maintains that Japanese and German manufacturers are more successful than British and French manufacturers in achieving organizational flexibility due to a system that institutionalizes labor-management consultation. The essential ingredient that allows for this increased flexibility, and that cannot be codified into third-party contracts, is trust between management and labor. This trust-building process is posited as resulting from joint worker-management consultation and may be more easily achieved where social norms encourage the exercise of power with benevolence. Trust results in workers who are willing to forgo work rules that fix the allocation of work, transfer among jobs, and workloads. The author suggests that a system of joint consultation rather than the unilateral exercise of managerial authority can be cultivated with large gains toward establishing trust. The extent to which social norms facilitate/obfuscate this process will impact the extent to which establishing trust is difficult. The suggestion is made that we study the emergence of trust-building mechanisms in post World War II Japan and Germany for “dos” and Britain and France for “don’ts.”

Refereed empirical journal article

This article reports a study that considers the impact of three dimensions of product variety on total labor productivity and consumer-perceived product quality. Using data from a study conducted at M.I.T. of seventy automotive assembly plants worldwide, the authors conclude that the impact of different forms of product variety on manufacturing performance varies, but less so than conventional manufacturing wisdom would predict. The study also partially supports the hypothesis that management policies in the form of operations and human resources support can facilitate higher levels of product variety with less impact on total labor productivity than traditional mass production plants.
Refereed empirical journal article

The author looked at the rate of flexible manufacturing system† (FMS) diffusion in 175 Japanese, Western Europe, and United States firms, finding that the percentage of firms using FMS was substantially higher in Japan than in the U.S. or Western Europe. Findings also revealed inter-industry differences with higher usage in aerospace and automobiles than in machinery and electrical equipment. It was discovered that it took about five years for one quarter of the firms in an industry to begin using them, a rate of diffusion much slower than many other recent industrial innovations. This may be linked to some extent to the actual rate of return on FMS being only ten percent higher (not ten percentage points) than the minimum required rate of return. The author found that those failing to adopt were generally: (1) smaller, (2) had higher costs of capital, (3) had lower expectations regarding the returns from flexible manufacturing, and (4) tended to compute only efficiency gains rather than including quality increases or inventory reductions as well. This survey of manufacturer future plans suggests that while each of the geographic regions studied will increase their usage of FMS, the Japanese will continue to lead due to higher perceived benefits and lower cost of capital hurdles.

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Refereed theoretical journal article

Environmental characteristics are linked in this article to the appropriateness/necessity for flexible manufacturing systems versus mass production technology organizations. The authors posit that the primary advantage of computer-based technology systems is that it makes automation programmable rather than fixed. Programmability introduces flexibility in

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† Flexible manufacturing system—“a production unit capable of producing a range of discrete products with a minimum of manual intervention. It consists of production equipment work stations (machine tools or other equipment for fabrication, assembly, or treatment) linked by a materials-handling system to move parts from one workstation to another, and it operates as an integrated system under full programmable control” (U.S. Office of Technology Assessment, 1984)
several ways: (1) it allows rapid intraorganizational and interorganizational information transfer, which reduces bureaucracy delays; (2) computer-aided engineering/computer-aided design allows for multiple constituents to contribute to rapid design and analysis of many new parts with subsequent storage of learning for access by the computer-aided manufacturing system; and (3) it allows for rapid and accurate machine set-up to produce only needed parts, thereby reducing inventories. They note that some flexible manufacturing techniques, such as just-in-time, increase interorganizational dependency and conclude that managers of the future will increasingly be required to manage interorganizational conflict and trust. A study by Jackson [Jackson, G. C. Just-in-time production: Implications for logistics managers. *Journal of Business Logistics*, 4:1, 1983, pp. 1-19] is cited that suggests that U.S. organizations are especially inept at establishing trust.

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*Refereed empirical journal article*


The authors conducted a simulation study to examine the link between market structure and investment in advanced manufacturing systems and then empirically supported their findings with cross-sectional industry-level data from the United States and Japan. They found that a higher proportion of flexible manufacturing system firms are associated with markets that are larger and/or more differentiated. Implications are that flexible technologies are more likely to be tested and adopted in competitive arenas characterized by munificence.

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*Refereed empirical journal article*


This article reports a survey conducted with 125 durable goods manufacturers on the adoption and subsequent results of various advanced manufacturing technologies (AMT). The authors sought to answer four basic questions: (1) What types of planning and installation activities have firms utilized to support their AMT adoption? (2) Do differences in the level of effort applied to these activities have any impact on their eventual performance? (3) Are firms that are using integrated technologies applying higher
levels of effort on planning and installation activities? and (4) Are these firms achieving higher levels of success than forms that are not using integrated technologies? Findings revealed that firms adopting these technologies spent more effort on strategic planning and team-based project management. These firms also achieved higher levels of performance across a range of performance factors. The authors also found that those firms exerting higher levels of effort toward developing human factors appeared to receive more of the benefits of the technology than their counterparts. Implications of these results are discussed.

Refereed empirical journal article

The authors investigated the link between various human resource practices (selective staffing, comprehensive training, developmental appraisal, equitable rewards) with different levels and types of integrated manufacturing systems (advanced manufacturing technology [AMT], just-in-time [JIT] inventory, total quality [TQ]). In 160 firms in the metal-working industry, those firms that used integrated manufacturing exerted more effort in developing their employees through human resource management practices. The authors suggest this provides evidence that managers do not treat human and technical systems as separate entities but instead manage them in concert. These results were stronger for AMT and TQ than for JIT. The authors were perplexed by the finding that the interaction terms for the integrated manufacturing techniques were negative. Speculation for the latter finding included that managers may ignore or fail to recognize the potential synergies provided by the integration of multiple techniques.

Refereed practitioner journal article

Manufacturing flexibility has become an issue of critical competitive importance for a growing range of industries. However, it remains an ill-understood concept, and the ambiguity in its use creates formidable barriers to effective management. This article presents a framework to help managers more clearly identify and analyze important forms of flexibility for their
organizations. It also presents a number of case studies showing how the framework may be applied and how it may be used to clarify common sources of confusion. (See Upton, 1995, below.)

Refereed practitioner journal article

In a survey of sixty-one North American paper manufacturers little direct correlation between the degree of computer integration and operational flexibility was found. The author found that the degree of flexibility depended much more on people than on any technical factor and that different employee experience levels were ideally suited to different types of flexibility. Three types of flexibility were discussed: (1) the speed/cost to change products, (2) the ability to ramp production volumes up/down to meet demand, and (3) the ability to produce a wider range of products. Whether plants are really flexible or not will depend on what type of flexibility is valued and the extent to which managers cultivate, measure, and communicate to operators the flexibility valued. In addition, long-tenured workers are best suited to coaxing a wider range of products from a given set of processes, and short-tenured workers are best suited to minimizing costs and downtime in product changeovers.

The Learning Organization

Refereed book chapter case study

In a very long and interesting case study, the author explores differences in Japanese and American management style, specifically with respect to the NUMMI and another GM plant located in Fremont, California. The study develops three key ideas: (1) the implementation of Tayloristic work practices will have very different outcomes depending on whether they are implemented in an autocratic or democratic fashion; (2) the outcomes of highly bureaucratic enterprises will vary depending on whether the system is constructed to enforce compliance or to encourage learning to achieve common goals; and (3) organizational outcomes depend not only on the design of these formal systems but also on the characteristics of the informal system.
With respect to encouraging learning, the development of trust, existence of bureaucratic mechanisms to encourage learning disclosure, and a culture valuing contribution to improvements over hierarchical status were viewed as central.

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*Refereed theoretical journal article*


By extending a model of group memory to the organizational level, the authors suggest that twenty-first-century information needs will require increased levels of information storage outside the traditional integrated-technology boundaries. These nontraditional outlets include increased emphasis on novel socialization tactics, tacit knowledge, reliance on judgment heuristics, and intuitive abilities. The authors advance a model that conceptualizes information management as a multilevel phenomenon and introduce terminology to facilitate conversations around that model.

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*Refereed theoretical journal article*


For organizational learning to occur, social defenses in the organizational learning must be overcome. The author suggests that though Senge’s [Senge, P. M. *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. Sydney: Random House Australia Pty. Ltd., 1992] synthesis of the five disciplines makes the concept of organizational learning plausible, it is for the most part a “fair weather” model. Drawing on the literature in psychoanalytical social systems, a much more difficult task must be undertaken—the maladaptive social defenses embedded within the anxiety around the organization’s primary tasks. Drawing on a series of consulting projects, the author identifies five factors that must be addressed for organizational learning to occur: (1) primary task; (2) project ownership; (3) leadership authority and roles; (4) individual, group, and organizational interdependence; and (5) reflection and learning spaces.
Refereed practitioner journal article

The authors explicate the importance of learning to success in rapidly changing global markets and use Motorola University as an example for a model that depicts three stages of organizational learning. The three stages of learning strategy evolution are employee development, imminent business needs, and unknown business development, appropriate for environments with low, moderate, and high turbulence respectively. The first stage is typically internally focused and conducted by traditional training departments to meet fairly routine skill acquisition. The second phase is appropriate to support well-defined strategic objectives and often results in significant performance improvements. The third stage is intended to push the organization beyond the existing parameters to consider a wide range of informational inputs to enhance organizational response capabilities under a variety of conditions. The nature of the question indicates the level of the inquiry. The authors suggest that turbulent markets such as those faced by Motorola are likely to be won by those who ask the most and best questions. They also note that such a model is more consistent with the traditional academic charter that placed great emphasis on the acquisition of broad knowledge without defined channels for current application.

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Refereed theoretical journal article

This article explores Weick’s [Weick, K. “Managing as improvisation: Lessons from the world of jazz.” Aubrey Fisher Memorial Lecture, University of Utah, October 18, 1990] metaphor of a jazz band as prototype organization to explore the topic of organizational learning. Like members of a jazz band, organizational managers are a group of diverse specialists who make fast, irreversible, interdependent decisions without a prescripted plan under conditions of uncertainty. Seven characteristics that allow jazz bands to improvise and thereby maximize social innovation are discussed. These include: (1) provocative competence—interrupting habit patterns; (2) embracing errors as a source of learning; (3) minimal structures that allow maximum flexibility; (4) distributed task—continual negotiation toward dynamic synchroniza-
tion; (5) relying on retrospective sensemaking as form; (6) hanging out—memberships in communities of practice; and (7) alternating between soloing and supporting. Implications for non-jazz contexts are then discussed as well as suggestions for organizational structure and culture changes.

Refereed empirical journal article

The authors report the results of an intervention in twenty units of Alpha Technologies that attempted to develop an organization capable of implementing strategy and learning. Three principles were incorporated in the intervention: (1) the change process should be systemic, (2) the process should encourage open discussion of barriers, and (3) the process should facilitate partnership among relevant stakeholders. The intervention improved strategy implementation but did not improve organizational learning. The authors attribute the latter finding to day-to-day activities crowding out the dialogue needed to create an open discussion of barriers. They suggest that to increase organizational learning top management must continually provide a voice to discussion about barriers rather than as occasional processes in the strategy process. They note that at GE, “work-out” is not just a program for implementing new social technologies but a structured methodology for continually discussing and removing organizational barriers. Critical skills needed for this process are learning how to receive feedback without loss of self-esteem, how to collaborate without feeling out of control, and how to own up to weaknesses without feeling incompetent.

Refereed theoretical journal article

Stating that the positivist paradigm that provides the foundation for the bureaucratic model is prevalent in organizations today, the author suggests that this paradigm has led to a definition of learning as a set of outcomes. Here emphasis is on obtaining the “right” content and reaching the learning destination through one-way programs that impart knowledge to the recipient. In contrast, the author suggests that in the future learning should be viewed as a process rather than an outcome. Vaill’s metaphor of white-water rapids is used to describe situations that seem chaotic to the inexperienced but that
conform to a pattern over time. Future learning will require experiencing the chaos to emerge with a new understanding of the need to be adaptive, creative, and self-renewing, to “trust the process.” Implications for the field are to quit looking for the right answer but to explore in greater depth multiple answers and outcomes. Dimensions of the new paradigm include learning based on continual improvement, risk taking, collective performance, collaboration/cooperation, coaching/supporting/feedback, informal relationships, possibility discovery, intuition/context/relationships, and focus on process (journey) over outcome (destination).

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Refereed theoretical journal article

The authors seek to make clear the difference between self-directed learning, organizational learning, and the role of self-directed learning in organizational learning. They state that the capacity of individuals to contribute to organizational learning is in large part determined by their ability to be self-directed learners. From their review of the literature they conclude that self-directed learning flourishes in learning organizations and that self-directed learning is an integral part of becoming a learning organization. They find a number of parallels between the research on workplace self-directed learning and the learning organization. These parallels are: (1) tolerance for error, support of risk-taking and experimentation; (2) the use of a participative leadership style and delegation of responsibility to organizational members; (3) support for learning initiatives that are linked to the organization’s goals and values; (4) encouragement of open communication and information systems that provide for collaboration and teamwork; and (5) provision of opportunities for individual learning. The article concludes with implications for practice and research.

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Refereed theoretical journal article

Most of the organization literature considers learning as a process or series of processes through which meaning is constructed to guide action.
author suggests that it is the learning processes themselves that constitute organizational learning rather than the knowledge obtained from the process (the accumulated knowledge is time-sensitive). As a metaphorical example, the conference or office hallway is presented as one such learning mechanism. In the hallway individuals are able to access information that aids meaning construction for decision making. Three types of learning are defined: private meaning (private office), accessible meaning (hallways), and collective meaning (storerooms). Private meaning is not organizational learning because it is not shared. Collective meaning, because it is so widely shared, is resistant to organizational learning. Accessible meaning (hallways) is where the most learning occurs because it is here that information is made accessible, challenged, and new meaning is made. The challenge for organizations is to create processes (e.g., “work-out”) for hallway-like learning around business issues.

Practitioner journal article

The author draws heavily on a phone interview with Hirotaka Takeuchi of the Harvard Business School to discuss how tacit knowledge can be made explicit. Following some examples of what constitutes tacit knowledge, the article is structured around three headings: how to make tacit knowledge explicit, how to make the tacit knowledge last, and information technology aids for capturing tacit knowledge.

Refereed theoretical journal article

The notion of organizational learning is separated here from the newer learning organization. Organizational learning has a considerable tradition that includes relevant literature from six disciplinary perspectives: psychology and organizational development, management science, sociology and organizational theory, strategy, production management, and cultural anthropology. This literature is primarily analytic and concentrates on understanding learning processes without necessarily trying to change them. The author states that it would be naive to expect that there should be any integrated research strategy in this field, as each discipline has its own methodological
traditions. In contrast, research on the learning organization has an action research perspective that is geared toward creating an ideal type, an organization in which learning is maximized. He provides some civilized criticism of the research on the learning organization, suggesting that it is often singular in account and that advocacy may prevent the darker side of the process from emerging. He calls for research that is longitudinal and free of the potential compromises that may exist when fiduciary arrangements exist between the researcher and the research site.

Refereed theoretical journal article

The authors note that organizational learning and organizational change may be two distinct processes that prevent scholars from linking learning to action. Simply put, change may occur without learning and learning may occur without change. They further note that the literature on learning organizations has tended to confuse learning and adaptation, so they define each. Adaptation is the ability to make incremental adjustments as a result of environmental changes, goal structure changes, or other changes. Learning is the development of insights, knowledge, and associations between past actions and future actions. Two dimensions of learning are proposed, the *content* (cognition or behavioral) and the *level* (adjustments to a fixed structure or a redefinition of the environment) of learning. Lower-level learning occurs when behavioral changes are made to make adjustments to a fixed structure and higher-level learning occurs when collective managerial cognition redefines the environment. Optimally, the organization incorporates both aspects of learning to make major shifts when the environment demands it and to refine processes not impacted by large-scale environmental change. The authors conclude that little is known about higher-level learning, which is likely due to difficulties in how to measure these processes and link them to outcomes.
Refereed practitioner journal article

Following a well-written brief discussion of the evolution of thinking about the learning organization, the authors state that second-generation learning tools are available for sustaining competitive advantage. Before presenting the new tools, they report the results of a study conducted on twenty learning tools in 200 businesses. These first-generation learning tools were then classified into four categories: (1) maintenance tools, such as employee suggestion systems and self-directed work teams, which serve as “creating agreement” strategies; (2) anticipatory tools, such as scenario planning and the Delphi method, which serve as “creating the future” strategies; (3) cross-over tools, such as task forces, group software, reengineering, and innovation transfer mechanisms, which are used equally for creating agreement and the future; and (4) utility tools, such as customer surveys and external advisory groups, which can be applied across all groups. The six second-generation tools are then introduced and discussed: (1) dialogue, (2) scenario planning, (3) Merlin exercise, (4) action learning, (5) practice fields, and (6) knowledge management and mapping.

Refereed theoretical journal article

Lamenting the abstract and even mystical components of learning organizations proffered by authors such as Senge and Nonaka that fail to provide a framework for action, the author suggests that the three M’s—meaning, management, and measurement—are not focused for action in these discussions. Meaning—a learning organization is an organization skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights. Management—learning organizations are skilled at: (1) systematic problem solving, experimentation with new approaches; (2) learning from own experience; (3) learning from best practices of others; and (4) transferring knowledge quickly/efficiently. Measurement—“half life curves,” the time it takes to achieve a fifty percent increase in the performance measure specified, are suggested because they can be applied to any performance measure, not just cost or volume. The article concludes with three first steps to establishing the learning organization: (1) foster an envi-
 environment conducive to learning, one that explicitly frees up time for self-
examination; (2) open up boundaries between organizational entities to stimu-
late the exchange of ideas; and (3) create learning forums with explicit
learning goals in mind (e.g., What is the EC and what opportunities does it
create?).

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**Refereed theoretical practitioner article**

Halal, W. E. Organizational intelligence: What is it, and how can managers

The author states that organizations, like individuals, have intelligence
quotients. He defines organizational intelligence as the capacity of an organi-
zation to create knowledge and use it to strategically adapt to its environment
or marketplace. The new emphasis on knowledge is warranted as evidenced
by the rise of knowledge assets from thirty-eight percent of corporate assets
in 1982 to sixty-two percent in 1992 to eighty percent in 1997. The impor-
tance of knowledge is shifting the very conceptualization of the organization
from one made up of tasks, products, employees, profit centers, and processes
to being seen as intelligent systems designed to manage knowledge. The
author also points out that an increased emphasis on knowledge has created a
renewed interest in the multiple stakeholders of the firm, each of which may
have crucial information regarding the operating environment.

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**Refereed theoretical journal article**

Hutchins, E. Organizing work by adaptation. *Organization Science*, 2:1,

In this case study, an incident is used where a large ship’s navigational
system was temporarily disabled to display how organizational learning may
be separated from individual learning. Although some components of the
solution reached required conscious reflection, others were achieved in
response to perceived local task demands. Viewed as a collective, the new
stable work configuration was achieved much earlier by the organization than
its recognition by any of the individual participants.
Refereed theoretical journal article

The authors note the lack of a paradigmatic theory of organizational learning (OL) and suggest that a model needs to be built for the description of organizations as learning systems. Drawing on basic assumptions from theories about organizations and change, and learning and cognition, they seek not to integrate this literature but to develop what they refer to as a “seizable” model of organizational learning. From this model they develop several propositions regarding organizational learning. They also develop two different patterns of organizational learning, one they call structural OL and the other strategic OL. Each of these patterns has different networks, results, and logics to generate different knowledge, address different cultures (e.g., structural addresses production orientation and strategic addresses customer orientation), and different aspects of organizational self-confidence.

Book

This book chronicles the use by the authors of the “Integrative Learning Process” and its impact on training and development processes in their consultant companies. The authors suggest that an organization’s employees are distributed developmentally across the ten steps and that the goal is to aid each of them in becoming systems thinkers. The ten-step process they prescribe for organizations is: (1) assess your learning culture, (2) promote the positive, (3) make the workplace safe for thinking, (4) reward risk-taking, (5) help people become resources for each other, (6) put learning power to work, (7) map out the vision, (8) bring the vision to life, (9) connect the systems, and (10) get the show on the road. The book provides activities, exercises, and philosophy for guiding the organization through each of the ten steps.

Refereed empirical journal article

The authors propose that patterns of stability and change, the punctuated equilibrium model, can be accounted for by using a learning framework
to model the tension between organizational stability and change. They outline the three basic components of the organization as learning model: (1) organizations have a target level of performance, (2) they measure success/failure against these targets, and (3) they engage in a costly search to understand alternatives. Thus the impetus for change/adaptation is triggered by below-goal performance and the outcomes of informational search. Periods of convergence or status quo result from environmental conditions that provide positive feedback relative to goals, and periods of disequilibrium occur when environmental conditions provide negative feedback relative to goals. In the convergent periods, organizations confine information search costs to those that enhance first-order learning (adjustments to the existing system). In divergent periods, organizations increase search costs in an effort to realign the organization (second-order learning) to changed environmental conditions. Using a simulation system of organizations, the authors find support for the punctuated equilibrium model of convergence and reorientation. They conclude rather somberly that “system dynamics limit the frontiers of individual efficacy and the possibilities for managerial efficiency” (p. 65).

Refereed theoretical journal article

The role of organizational learning is revisited within a strategy framework to illuminate how the way organizations learn and what they learn influences strategic reactions and capabilities. A learning framework is used to explore how and why firms diversify and pursue vertical integration. Attention is then turned to how learning influences innovation. Next, learning as a model for the strategy process is advanced. The author concludes with a discussion of the issues and challenges in taking such an approach, including the development of new and dismantling of old institutional structures to support the new approach.

Refereed empirical journal article

In this article, the authors propose that organizational learning mechanisms (OLMs) are institutionalized structural and procedural arrangements
that allow organizations to systematically collect, analyze, store, disseminate, and use information that is relevant to the organization. They suggest that it is OLMs that separate organizational learning from organizational change. The first stage of institutionalizing OLMs and a learning culture into a unit of the Israeli Defense Forces is described. The process consisted of training members on why organizational learning was important to the organization and how OLMs could be integrated into the modus operandi of the unit. After a setback due to lack of attention on the part of the leader, the project reoriented with a now-focused leader, a concrete task, and a subject considered important by all participants. The outcomes were three organizational learning methodologies, two guidebooks, and a seminar on effective task execution that included the insights of all parties to the project. The authors suggest that leader buy-in and a task deemed important by all are critical to rallying initial support for developing OLMs. They also caution that system-wide implementation is likely to be much more difficult than their demonstration project.

Refereed empirical journal article

Using a relatively simple computer simulation, the authors model the extent to which learning in organizations might affect decisions as compared to decisions made under a situation of “perfect information.” They conclude that even under stable operating environments, system dynamics between the individual and organizational level will result in suboptimal decisions. From a practical viewpoint the fact that random components that are indigenous to the firm can confound the causal link between structures and actions implies that decision-makers need to understand the impact of nonlinearities and time delays on their decisions. An understanding of these system dynamics insights might help managers to improve the quality of their decisions.

Refereed book chapter

In this chapter, the authors define the difference between technical literacy and knowledge process in organizations. Using a nested approach,
they suggest that organizations cannot ignore the need to develop basic and technical skills as a means to facilitate the learning organization. A model is presented where basic literacy and technical literacy are seen as prerequisites to individual learning. Individual learning is modeled as a necessary precursor to having knowledge workers who are in turn required for developing a true learning organization. Organizational implications are discussed and recommendations are made for training and development, teams, and interpersonal skill development.

Refereed practitioner journal article

The authors, principals at Booz-Allen & Hamilton, state that the business impact of most knowledge management programs are modest at best. One-sixth of the firms achieve significant results within the first two years, half achieve small but important benefits, and the remaining third achieve little business impact. These less successful programs suffer from four correctable problems: (1) no specific business objectives, just general aspirations like “share best practices”; (2) incomplete architecture that fails to build on the natural dynamics of change and knowledge creation/use; (3) insufficient focus on one or two strategic priorities; and (4) top-management sponsorship without involvement. The article is aimed at CEOs in an effort to provide guidance rather than at Chief Knowledge Officers or others charged with leading the initiative. Several graphs depicting significant quantitative improvements in profitability/productivity due to a knowledge management approach are provided.

Refereed theoretical journal article

Much of the learning that occurs in organizations comes in through informal and unsystematic channels according to the author. The extent to which organizations can formalize the learning process and become the learning organization described by so many other authors is called into question here. The article describes most of the writing on learning organizations as internally focused while a large proportion of the information relevant to the organization lies outside the organization. This information
perspective indicates that organizational change is largely dependent on the information activities of individual employees acting on their own account as much as that which the organization purposefully provides. The author concludes that a critical task for management is recognizing the boundary between learning that can be controlled/captured and learning that should necessarily be brought informally to the organization. One of the implications is that managers must learn to manage without control.

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Refereed practitioner journal article

The author, a Knowledge Services Manager at Hewlett-Packard Consulting, describes the philosophical and operating shifts that were required when HP Consulting moved from sharing knowledge through informal and serendipitous encounters to recognition that managing and leveraging knowledge was a key factor for organizational success. Initiative objectives, organizational readiness assessment, a workshop for communicating the philosophical shift, the launching of learning communities, and moving from pilot to organization-wide initiative are discussed in turn. The knowledge processes have been integrated into the way work gets done on a daily basis and measures have been defined to reinforce the message that knowledge sharing is a part of everyone’s job.

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Refereed theoretical journal article

In an attempt to integrate the many overlapping and competing definitions of organizational learning, the author proposes a typology for discussing learning organizations along two fundamental contrasts: voluntarism versus determinism (few constraints, action constrained, thought and action constrained) and methodical versus emergent. The resulting three modes of methodical learning are analytic (few constraints), experimental (action constrained) and structural (action/thought constrained); and the three modes of emergent learning are synthetic, interactive, and institutional, respectively. The author states that different things can be learned from each of these modes with some outcomes especially typical. These include strategies that are shaped by analytical learning, configurations by synthesis learning,
procedures by structural learning, tactical accommodations by interaction learning, values by indoctrination learning, and innovations by experiment learning (p. 499). Interestingly, though learning always arises from a combination of knowledge and behavior, their temporal order is different for some of these learning processes. In conclusion, typology may be useful in relating learning processes to their appropriate contexts and outcomes.

Refereed theoretical journal article

This is an academic overview of the increasing prominence of organizational learning research and challenges for making that research more vital. The authors suggest that relative to the amount of theoretical research done on the learning organization, empirical work is scarce. They also suggest that more attention needs to be paid to group level, organization level, and population level learning as the bulk of prior learning research is at the individual level. They also suggest that various styles of learning beyond simple trial-and-error learning—including inferential learning, vicarious learning, and generative learning—be given more attention. Finally, they note that though learning is typically cast in a positive light, it can be dysfunctional when organizations learn to do bad things well, learn to do things that are incorrect, or learn superstitiously. The article ends with a call for a balance between interventionist research (where the author is engaged in the politics of the process) and observation research (where the researcher is removed from the consequences of actions and decisions).

Practitioner journal article

This article discusses the difference between knowledge management and knowledge sharing. The lack of knowledge sharing will often result in repeated mistakes, dependence on a few key individuals, duplicated work, lack of good idea sharing, and slower introduction of new products or product solutions. Some attention is given to these points through a question-and-answer session with Arthur Andersen’s Global Best Practices divisions and
the role of knowledge management in reducing time to market at Bucknell Labs International.

Refereed theoretical journal article

Organizational learning is defined here as the systems-level capacity or processes within an organization to maintain or improve performance based on experience. One assumption the authors make is that organizations learn as they produce, with the value chain as an integrated domain of learning. They note that the learning process has three identifiable stages: (1) *knowledge acquisition*—the development or creation of skills, insights, and relationships; (2) *knowledge sharing*—the dissemination of what has been learned; and (3) *knowledge utilization*—the integration of information into organizational memory so that it is broadly available and can be generalized to new situations. The latter stage, knowledge utilization, is the least developed. A model is provided with the three core themes: (1) all organizations are learning systems; (2) learning conforms to culture; you learn what you value (e.g., quality, efficiency); and (3) style varies between learning systems (specific versus broad). The model is further exploded into seven learning orientations and ten facilitating factors. They conclude that no single set of activities is appropriate to the quest by organizations to become learning organizations; rather, support systems for the respective learning orientations should be developed.

Refereed empirical journal article

This article is mostly related to the learning that can be leveraged or obtained through diversification decisions. As such, it is not about the development of processes in the learning organization but rather a much broader notion of market or process technology. In a study of 462 expansions in Dutch firms, the authors found that expansions were more persistent when related to core skills, full rather than partial ownership, and acquisition rather than internal development. Expansions were also likely to last longer if the
firm’s prior diversification activity was high, suggesting that learning by doing occurs.

Refereed practitioner journal article

The author questions why organizations continue to resist certain management practices when there is little disagreement as to the efficacy of the programs for increasing organizational effectiveness. He argues that despite the consistently documented returns to programs such as employee involvement and flexible manufacturing, organizational barriers continue to hinder even smart organizations. These barriers include strategy and financial barriers, social barriers, power and political barriers, and hierarchical barriers. He then suggests some steps for overcoming these barriers. These steps include: (1) visit different organizations, (2) use data to support change initiatives, (3) change the organizational structure, (4) change the physical workplace and the production system, (5) align reward systems, (6) take action to demonstrate results, (7) understand competitive dynamics, (8) watch career paths, and (9) look for long-term owners.

Book

This book is a sequel to the author’s earlier work, Competitive Advantage Through People [Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1994]. In that work he stated that organizations were achieving above-average returns by developing their human capital to achieve advantage through people. In this book he explores why, in the face of this evidence, organizations continue to engage in behavior that is contrary to good business practice. For example, he notes that while employment security has been linked to higher performance, the use of contingent workers continues to increase. Another example is the resurgence of piecework and Tayloristic practices when employee empowerment has been linked to higher performance. In a series of chapters that are consistent with some of his earlier manuscripts, Pfeffer explains why organizations do “dumb” things, the seven practices of successful organizations, and the business case for managing people right. Useful
additions, such as an expanded explanation of how to manage unions for organizational effectiveness and how market failures and public policy serve to create opportunities for profits through people, are included.

Refereed theoretical journal article

A two-faceted approach, structural and cultural, to organizational learning is presented here. The structural facet distinguishes learning in organizations (LIO), which occurs at the individual level, from learning by organizations (LBO), which occurs between individuals with the organization as learning agent. This latter category, LBO, is supported by organizational learning mechanisms (OLMs). OLMs institutionalize structural and procedural arrangements that allow organizations to systematically collect, analyze, store, disseminate, and use information relevant to the performance of the organization and its members. Whereas structural is the “hardware” facet, the cultural facet is a normative system of shared values and beliefs that shape how members feel, think, and behave. The authors propose that OLMs include five hierarchically arranged values that include continuous learning, then valid information and accountability, with valid information requiring transparency and issue orientation.

Refereed practitioner journal article

Using two case studies, one a major automotive company and the other a global petroleum company, the authors discuss how organizational memory can be systematically developed. They suggest a six-stage process of: (1) planning a system to capture organizational memory; (2) conducting reflective interviews; (3) distilling key points; (4) writing to capture the process, context, and key learning points; (5) validation; and (6) dissemination.
Refereed practitioner journal article

The author notes that organizations face an increased need for fast-paced learning and are continuing to move toward knowledge-based, distributed information. Yet these same phenomena result in increasingly micro subunits that are more likely to develop their own subcultures and, as a consequence, diminish organizational learning due to the lack of shared mental models. Considerable discussion is then given to how current cultural rules about interaction and communication make having a consistent forum for dialogue a necessary step for organizational learning. The author issues a challenge to senior management by stating that he does not see how learning can take place until the executive suite acknowledges that it is itself a subculture in need of analysis and channels for dialogue. He sees this as a challenge because these are the people who have the greatest difficulty admitting cognitive bias, are most reluctant to reveal they are not sure of themselves, and do not understand all assumptions on which they base action; and that mistakes in their thinking can be profoundly threatening. Executive-level dialogue is not enough. An intra-hierarchical-level dialogue must be established because it is so easy for the higher levels to overrun any meaningful across-level dialogue at the lower organizational levels.

Refereed empirical journal article

In this study, 151 CEOs were surveyed to determine if they felt they gained collaborative know-how from prior experiences of this type and if this know-how was related to benefits obtained in collaborative processes. Study findings were that collaborative experiences alone were insufficient to gain benefits. To gain collaborative benefits, prior experiences must be internalized first for the greatest benefits. These results held for both tangible and intangible benefits of collaboration. The article provides little information on how collaborative know-how can be internalized.
Refereed practitioner journal article
Slocum, J. W., Jr., McGill, M., & Lei, D. T. The new learning strategy:

The term learning is extended here to suggest that learning can be a strategy. The authors encourage the reader to cast off the former static strategic paradigm that focuses on fitting the firm to the environment, competing in chess-like environments, and pursuing generic strategies to lock in markets. Instead they suggest a three-point plan: (1) develop a strategic intent to learn new capabilities, (2) commit to continuous experimentation, and (3) seek to learn from past experiences—both success and failure. Case studies are presented to bolster these arguments. One organization spent many hours focusing employees on viewing the organization as a set of capabilities rather than products, and communicated to them that evolving these capabilities was a part of their job. Another focused on seeking to find out what the customer wants rather than educating the customer on why it ought to want what the firm sells. A third firm is especially adept at fostering open communication, such that reasons for unit success and failure are widely disseminated across the organization and thus embedded in the collective mind-set. To summarize, the authors feel that adaptive learning processes are crucial to competing in the new marketplace and that the static strategizing applicable to past environments is outdated.

✣ ✣ ✣

Refereed theoretical journal article

The authors suggest that because organizational scholars have not yet been able to identify an ideal organization, it may be more expedient to identify learning problems. The paper addresses deficiencies in the organizational learning (OL) literature, provides a model to explain how OL affects performance, and suggests different OL disorders that may occur at different stages of development. Finally, the authors suggest specific interventions that might ameliorate the organizational learning disorders described. These disorders include blindness and projection in the discovery stage, simple-mindedness and multiple personality disorder in the invention stage, paralysis and alien-hand syndrome in the production stage, and amnesia and superstition in the generalization stage.
Refereed journal review article


In this article, the author integrates his review of four recent books on organizational learning. These books and their authors are: (1) Rethinking the Future, Business, Principles, Competition, Control, Leadership Markets, and the World, edited by Rowan Gibson; (2) The Organizational Learning Cycle: How We Can Learn Collectively, by Nancy Dixon; (3) Scenarios: The Art of Strategic Conversation, by Kees van der Heijden; and (4) Life and Death in the Executive Fast Lane: Essays on Irrational Organizations and Their Leaders, by Manfred F. R. Kets de Vries. The author suggests that the concept of organizational learning is powerful for understanding the nature of strategic tasks and how an organization’s past influences its ability to deal with the present. The essay identifies gaps in the various conceptualizations of the learning organization and concludes that though each of these texts makes a contribution, a psychodynamic perspective is required to present a more complete theory of organizational learning.

Book


The author calls for less emphasis on formal training processes and a move toward knowledge enabling. Employees in a knowledge-enabled organization acquire the knowledge and skill needed from many different sources both inside and outside the company. Giving several examples of the importance of tacit knowledge, the author suggests that the commitment of managers and employees to developing and maintaining an employee learning contract is more productive than the highly formalized training sessions that are currently in vogue. An effective argument is presented for the relevance of learning to a firm’s human resource strategy.
Refereed theoretical journal article

In this article, the dichotomy is pointed out between prescriptive practitioner-directed essays that suggest “how an organization should learn” versus academic descriptive studies that address “how organizations do learn.” The author concludes that the cross-referencing in the organizational learning literature is so scant that the field has yet to advance to addressing either question well. Practitioners are cautioned not to overgeneralize and to seek empirical evidence of their assertions, and academics are cautioned to seek ways to empirically validate evidence of how organizations should learn in specific contexts. Academics are also solicited to recast their findings in a practitioner-friendly manner to make descriptive results more accessible.

Refereed theoretical journal article

The author presents his learning network theory on development of learning systems. In developing this theory he relies on three foundational theories: structure theories, cybernetic systems theory, and actor theory. Each is reviewed and the implications for both work networks and learning networks are highlighted. Though lamenting the rather narrow empirical foundation for the model, he suggests that learning network theory has utility for offering insights into the theories incorporated as well as their interconnections. The model(s) might also be useful as a diagnostic for analysis of organizational learning systems with an eye toward offering actors action perspectives.

Refereed empirical journal article

This article reports a study that tested the adaptive learning process in an ambiguous environment—namely, a biomedical innovation project. The authors found little support for the model in the initial start-up expansion and considerable support in the subsequent contraction phase. They attribute the
model failure during expansion to innovation entrepreneurs being held accountable for overly optimistic outcomes. This scenario triggered a series of impression management and “sugar coated” reviews in an effort to maintain a funding stream. A second cause of failure was part-time participation by team members that resulted in losses in organizational memory. Applicability of the model in the contraction phase was attributed to the intervention of resource controllers to break the cycle of escalating commitment to a failing course of action, and the subsequent resource cutbacks focusing attention on fixing old problems and thereby reducing complexity. Steps prescribed to improve the process of learning included: (1) separate planning from funding or you get overly optimistic plans to get the funding; (2) improve communication flows in a way that reduces the “bull index”; (3) increase the odds of learning by keeping the core team intact; and (4) separate innovation development from business creation, otherwise business development will crowd out innovation development with an outcome of an inferior product for the business.

Refereed practitioner journal article

The authors provide insight into the learning processes at Knight-Ridder, Inc. They found that in that organization, learning processes were implemented consistent with the existing structure and vision of the CEO. They contrast this finding with the literature on learning organizations that often suggests highly experimental activities, radical restructuring, and high usage of information networks. They chronicle two processes: the acquisition of an out-line service and a strategic initiative. Their purposes were to increase baby-boomer usage as evidence that mechanisms to question mental models do exist and to share the notion that interpretations across the organizational hierarchy can be accomplished within an existing business mission and organizational structure. Emphasis on creating a shared vision, episodic experimentation without “betting the business,” balanced self-examination, and having elaborate decision processes within conventional structures were deemed as elements to success. With respect to the latter, the authors note that typically decision processes are streamlined when found to be effective; instead, Knight Ridder maintains elaborate processes to understand the evolution of alternatives outside the current optimal solution.
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Organizations often channel workflow around key business processes in order to enhance their productivity. Those that succeed are referred to as high-performance work organizations (HIPOs). Yet, little is known about the systems that drive high performance or even what defines a HIPO. This book, for both practicing managers and scholars, addresses that knowledge gap. It provides the field’s and the authors’ definitions of HIPOs, and it contains 168 annotations of recent and informative journal articles, books, and book chapters by those who have studied and worked with such organizations.

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