

Introduction

Out of all this has come the first clear recognition of an inescapable fact: we cannot successfully force people to work for management's objectives. The ancient conception that people do the work of the world only if they are forced to do so by threats or intimidation, or by the camouflaged authoritarian methods of paternalism, has been suffering from a lingering fatal illness for a quarter of a century. I venture to guess that it will be dead in another decade.

DOUGLAS MCGREGOR

More than a decade has come and gone, and rumors of the demise of authoritarian, paternalistic management appear to have been greatly exaggerated. Yet the fault lies not with Douglas McGregor, whose analysis is clear and sound, but with our failure to recognize the extent of the illness or imagine in detail what organizations might look like after it is gone.

This book seeks to fill these gaps. It chronicles the principal reasons for putting an end to management and the key elements that are needed to create collaborative, democratic, self-managing organizations. Its premise is that today's corporations, government agencies, schools, and nonprofits can dramatically improve by empowering those who work inside them to manage themselves and take responsibility for their own development and performance.

Through a combination of collaboration, self-management, and organizational democracy, far-reaching changes can take place. Organizations can consistently operate out of a committed context of values, ethics, and integrity. Rigid boundaries can be broken down to form organic, evolving webs of association. Linking leaders can be identified throughout the organization and selected by the people they are expected to lead, as well as by peers, customers, and shareholders. Employees can learn to manage themselves in small,

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collaborative teams in which responsibility and trust are commensurate with empowerment, and every employee is responsible not to their managers but to themselves, their peers, and their customers. Organizations can implement streamlined, open, collaborative processes that reduce bureaucracy and increase trust, create complex self-correcting systems that foster organizational learning, strategically integrate functions across organizational lines, and change the way they change.

Many organizations are already moving in this direction. Ostentatious titles and multilayered hierarchical positions with military-like status are being replaced with playful, freewheeling roles and self-selected titles such as “Chief Poobah,” “International Woman of Mystery,” and “Make It Happen Master.” “Chief Learning Officers” are modeling life-long learning, encouraging creativity, and supporting authentic learning relationships among staff. “Customer Partners” are assisting internal and external customers in developing strategies and solving problems, nurturing collaborative relationships, increasing the quality of services and products, and developing informal, integrated strategic alliances across organizational lines. Peer coaches, process facilitators, and peer mediators are assisting employees in developing skills, building consensus, designing work processes, guiding strategic planning, and resolving conflicts.

Collaboration, self-management, and organizational democracy fundamentally alter not only the way we work but the nature of work itself. Imagine organizations that behave like organisms, policies that are flexible and value driven, procedures that are instantly customizable and responsive to customer needs, goals that are challenges and contests, feedback that is received as a gift and a compliment, and conflicts that create opportunities for growth and learning. Imagine organizations that treat employees as artists and scientists, see complaints as suggestions for improvement, explore problems as objects of curiosity, and base motivation on love and self-actualization. Imagine work as play, communications as stories and metaphors, differences as welcomed, routines as rituals, and change as exploration and adventure.

These are not wild-eyed utopias or dreams. Each exists in part in some successful organizations today. The details and specifics vary from organization to organization, because the end of man-

agement is also the end of uniformity—of prescriptions, blueprints, and one-size-fits-all approaches to organizational operations and design.

About This Book

In Part One, we analyze the increasingly antiquated system of management and reveal the organizational dynamics that perpetuate hierarchy, bureaucracy, and autocracy. In Part Two, we identify the practical mechanisms of organizational transformation and the values, structures, systems, processes, and leadership required to transform existing organizations.

We wrote this book as a tool to help build more collaborative, democratic, self-managing organizations. As a result, Part One critiques the most important systemic failures of management and identifies the root systems and structures that engender them. It ends with a transitional chapter summarizing and analyzing these problems. Our purpose in these chapters is to describe the difficulties, not with poor managers or defective managerial practices, but with the system of management itself, so as to reveal its inescapable destructive tendencies. Part Two then offers a broad range of practical proposals for creating the managerial relationship and designing the values, structures, systems, processes, and skills needed for self-management. These chapters provide a vision of what is possible and a wide range of practical methods to realize it.

We have drawn on over thirty years of practical experience with hundreds of organizations, from Fortune 100 companies to government agencies, schools, and nonprofits, as well as international work in over a dozen countries. Our experiences implementing these ideas and supporting employees in successfully managing themselves, together with years of research into the principles of personal and organizational effectiveness, fill these pages.

Our partnership in writing this book reflects the values we espouse. Each of us took risks drafting sections and revising each other's work in an iterative, recursive process. We had to learn self-management, teamwork, how to give and receive feedback, self-reflect, self-correct, and change. We discussed the ideas with each other before each draft and engaged in lengthy collaborative dialogue and conflict resolution when we got stuck. This book is a

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result of the processes we advocate and is stronger as a result, as are we.

We believe that the strategies we offer will help create a more collaborative organizational future, more viable social relationships, and more sustainable work environments and that they will broaden the range of human potential. It is our intention that you, the reader, understand your power as the *inventor* of your workplace environment, and therefore of yourself, neither of which is set in stone but can be transformed by understanding, teamwork, and creativity.

We invite you to invent forms of organizational life that are not ceaselessly competitive and destructive of human values. We encourage you to design organizations that are shaped by a context of values, ethics, and integrity and to structure them as living, evolving webs of association, operated by self-managing teams and led by linking leaders located ubiquitously throughout the organization. We invite you to create streamlined collaborated processes, grow through complex self-correcting systems, integrate strategically, and improve the way you grow and change.

What Is at Stake

The implications of self-management, collaboration, and organizational democracy extend far beyond enhanced productivity and employee job satisfaction, although these are important arguments in its favor. Political democracy is not simply a technique for making better decisions; it is also a statement of social values, a method of creating community, a recognition of our essential equality, a promise of fairness, an acknowledgment of the value of dissent, and a freedom to be ourselves. Most important, it is a form of ownership and responsibility for solving problems. So it is with self-management and organizational democracy, whose revolutionary implications extend far beyond efficiency to include human satisfaction, self-actualization, and ecological survival.

The world is facing unprecedented global challenges that are simultaneously ecological, economic, social, political, and organizational. There are growing conflicts within corporations between seizing short-term advantage to maximize shareholder profits and building long-term, sustainable growth—not only for employees within these businesses but society and future generations as well.

It is increasingly apparent that ecological, economic, social, and political collaboration is required to make economic activity sustainable over the long term. Without dramatic organizational changes, our economic system may well turn cancerous, destroying even the planet that fuels its seemingly ceaseless demand for growth and competitive advantage.

We invite you to join us in facing this challenge, exploring why organizations are structured so ineffectively and destructively and considering how we can design collaborative, democratic, self-managing alternatives.

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