



Matching the pieces | The Xpragmatic View



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To manage a system effectively, you might focus on the interactions of the parts rather than on their behaviour taken separately - Russell Ackoff

In the ["future of work"](#) discussion on the [Unstructure](#) platform, started by Julian Birkinshaw, a new post was added by Venessa Miemis, titled "Thoughts on the Future of Work".

The main proposition in this post is that *"People want to perform work that matters to them"*. Therefore, having a better understanding of the matching between an employee's personality, skills and desires versus the needs of the enterprise will be a better basis for a successful collaboration. Recent developments in the quantification of skills, such as tests developed by Gallup, can assist us in making such assessments.

Matching the pieces

To some extent, we agree. Having a better mutual understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, needs and expectations of the parties involved is indeed likely to increase chances for a more successful employer-employee relationship.

However, is this thinking radical enough?

Indeed, this way of addressing some of today's HR issues still is largely based upon the assumption of a traditional enterprise model and the associated employer/employee relationship. Is this model still viable?

For a consulting organisation, having the perfect understanding of the capabilities of its employees is indeed a great asset. Their business is largely driven by external demand and therefore, largely unpredictable. Being able to assemble the right team for the right project is a major advantage.

To some extent, the same is true for a regular enterprise. However, in this context, having the "perfect" matching between the needs of the organisation and the capabilities/wants of its employees only gives you the best solution for the present status quo.

What will make the organisation successful in five years time is essentially unknown and therefore, the characteristics of the "dream team" that you need today are also largely unknown. The more you assemble a team that perfectly addresses today's challenges, the more you are likely to have the wrong team in place.

This is similar to what we see in other business practices such as business process management. The more an organisation optimizes and removes waste from its business processes, the more it becomes rigid, with less ability to change. In every system that exists in our world and likely in the universe, we see the same duality.

Relationships and interactions

Therefore, having this better understanding of mutual needs and expectations only gives us a marginal advantage. The real thing that determines long-term success is the "relationship" that guides the interactions between the parties.

As for the correct understanding of this "relationship" concept, just think about marriage. If you are married, is it because you have the perfect understanding of each other's character? You might have such understanding today, but did you at the start? Certainly not! You were just guessing and hoping for the best.

So, when you are still together today, is it because, by miracle, there was that perfect match or is it because you were both able to live with the differences?

In a world that is guided by Gallup tests, nobody gets married.

About the author



Marc Buyens is analyst, management consultant and owner of Xpragma. Marc started Xpragma in 1999 after a 20+ years career in the IT sector. Today, he provides advice, training and mentoring services focusing on the intersection of technological evolution, organisational change and business strategy: a messy world of unfulfilled promises.



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