



Where do the employees belong?



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Our current economy is highly dynamic and the needs for more flexibility, adaptability and continuous change are continuously increasing. Yet, not all parties have equal strenghts and rights in this game.

Today's organisations are networked. They rely upon a vast network of outsourcing partners, interim work, subcontracting and various other forms of partnerships to run their business. Some time ago, in [The new market reality](#), we already discussed the potential evolution of organisations, moving towards a more virtual structure whereby "project companies" are "assembled" and again, "disassembled" according to the specific needs.

To some extent, this vision is already reality. We ourselves are participants of this virtual reality. We often operate as subcontractor for larger consulting companies that leverage their market reputation to attract new business while relying upon more specialised, but smaller and less-known contributors, such as we, to do the job. A win-win situation?

Well, reality is of course a bit more complex. In theory, such virtual organisation should not be hierarchical. All participating entities should act as peers. For various reasons, and also in our case, this is not always the case. Still, the participating parties have their specific and unique strengths and often, there is also an element of scarcity involved. Therefore, all parties can stand their ground, even when there is no perfect peer-to-peer relationship.

However, what about the regular employees? Most often, there are no specific skills or elements of scarcity involved that will help them defend their rights. As a result, they are a very vulnerable group in today's dynamic economy.

To some extent, legal mechanisms have been implemented such as labour unions that defend the rights of the regular employees. But is this enough?

Shouldn't we go one step further and have these unions being replaced by "worker companies". Worker companies that are the employers of the people who deliver the basic, yet very essential skill of "regular employee" and who negotiate contracts with a continuously varying group of temporary company constructs who need this skill?


Is this a way to go?

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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