Chapter 13

Organisational Architecture and Learning in an Inter-Professional Context:
A Case-Study of an Agile Crowd-Funded Software Project Using Contingent Working

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ABSTRACT

Designing an effective organisational architecture for an undertaking can be considered essential to its success. The way an organisation is designed – or otherwise appears to its workers – will affect the extent to which those workers associated with it can be effective at their jobs. This chapter undertakes a case study into an organisation that is based around contingent working and inter-professionalism. Important things drawn from the study include the importance of the Cloud to distance working, such as teleworking; the identity of the organisation and how workers relate to it; as well as what factors assist on inhibit worker motivation. The study concludes that the organisational structure of the organisation investigated – where different firms perform different tasks, could be seen as best practice in supporting inter-professional environments.

INTRODUCTION

The design of organisations has often followed a hierarchical process, where there is a single leader at the top from whom all other's authority descends. Such a mechanism is lacking in many regards, particularly in inter-professional contexts. Indeed, it has been argued that organisational culture needs to change to accommodate changes like agile development (Berger, 2007). The idea that creativity can be fostered in an environment where each person is under the command of another does not follow. The concepts of composite and contingent working were highly of interest in the second-half of the 20th century and the early years of the 2000s (Cam, Purcell, & Tailby, 2003; Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2002; Herbst, 1962; Krieger, 1984) . This was less in the second half of the first decade of the 21 century, where the UK Government launched an attack on the construction

industry that was almost entirely contingent, even if still hierarchical. In 2007 the UK trade unions showed its grip on the Labour Government by getting them to bring construction workers onto the employee payroll, through using the power of the tax authorities to find instances where proper sub-contractor contracts did not exist, dressing this abuse of power up as dealing with "tax avoidance." By destroying the contingent approach to working in the construction industry the government caused many construction firms to go bust during the 2008 global recession, as they were paying the wages of people whom they had no work for. The UK Government's plaster to fix the mess they caused in the construction industry was a scheme called 'ProAct.' This meant that those construction firms, who kept on workers they otherwise couldn't afford or offer work to, would in exchange for keeping them on for fewer hours, get government funding to retrain during the recession. This chapter aims to show how if the successes of the construction industry when it was contingent are applied to the software development industry than concepts like agile programming, inter-professionalism and crowd-funding can become successful realities.

Organisational Architecture and Organisational Learning

In the same way an architect can describe the entire building using a blueprint or drawing, organisational architecture is a document that outlines the holistic works (largely unseen) the organization (Lee, Venter, & Bates, 2004) . According to most authors writing about organisational architecture, the concept is a metaphor, as traditional architecture determines the form of the institutional space where life will be held. Organisational architecture is often considered the bridge between the strategy of an organisation and its workflow processes, helping to convey a consensus about a unique picture of the organisation (Coelho, 2010).

Organisational architectures are often thought of in terms of hierarchies and management paths,

and the idea of businesses being learning communities with worker-led education is often an alien construct (Plaskoff, 2003).

In France, the expression "theory of organisational 'architecture'" has already begun to progressively replace the expression of "theory of corporate governance" (Bessire, 2005). In developing new organisational architectures, it is considered possible to adopt stakeholder-specific values, which has particular relevance when organisational architecture is complex and the needs of significant other stakeholder groups need to be taken into account (Hudson, 2009). An important aspect of organizational architecture is where the organizational structure has been designed and developed to facilitate the process of knowledge creation (Durbin, 2011). This is probably no more important than in organisations dependent on contingent working, where it is often the case that the workers that undertake tasks for it depend on generating their own knowledge and practices more so than depending on those working for the organisation engaging them (Durbin, 2011).

Contingent Working and Inter-Professionalism

In crowd-funded projects that have unstable revenues, contingent working can be used as a means of hiring employees for tasks only at the points in the project where there is funding available. Whilst it is argued that project management methods need to adapt to the context in which they are used (Berger & Beynon-Davies, 2009), there is no clear definition of contingent working to undertand these contexts. Some authors have argued it is a period of self-employment, full or part-time employment of less than one year for a change of job status (Gorard, 2003), but this does not consider freelancers and those working under other zero-hour contracts. Others define it as a situation where an employee is taken only when needed (Davis, 2000), which is generally how the author conceptualizes practice. Some argue that contingent work is synonymous

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