Chapter 11
Creating Values–Based Accountability Systems for the Turbulence of Post–Bureaucratic Organizations

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ABSTRACT

This chapter argues that most organizations should develop a set of shared values that drive and unite all facets of their work, creating an inclusive and transparent accountability system. This enables an overall connection while allowing for groups (such as divisions or departments) to avoid being overly interdependent (Carroll & Burton, 2000). This is a more nuanced and adaptable accountability system, enabling individuals and sections within the overall organization to be dynamic, rather than trying to develop a range of rules and procedures that will cover all circumstances across the organization over time. In this scenario, changes in context, whether internally or externally to an organization, would not require a whole new set of rules and procedures. The chapter focuses on analyzing how an organization can develop and utilize a shared set of values to connect processes and interactions into a coherent and flexible accountability system (Gehman et al., 2013).

INTRODUCTION

There is a need for all organizations, if they are to stay relevant, to continually adapt and evolve. This can be reactionary or, perhaps most ideally, proactive in nature to keep up with emerging trends or establish the cutting edge themselves. Heavily bureaucratized organizations move too slowly and rigidly to keep up with such thinking; this lack of alacrity, however, also grants a small measure of stability in the shorter term, even if it does damage to longer term opportunities. A blend of both ends of the stability-chaos spectrum is obviously ideal, but achieving that balance has been a conundrum (Hodgson, 2004; McSweeney, 2006; Carroll & Burton, 2000; Courpasson, 2000; Sewell, 1998).

What is necessary is a mechanism that provides a clear but "soft" set of parameters for the multiple levels and types of work in an organization. Such a framework would allow flexibility in various areas of the organization as needed (Sewell, 1998), while ensuring that the most radical of departures have at least some measure of checks and balances. There is a strong tendency to rely almost exclusively on formal policies and rules to create accountability; these can stem from:

- Both internal (company policies, structures, etc.) and
- External (regulators, legal constraints, etc.) sources (Finegan, 2000; Gehman et al., 2013).

Each step of control, however, further limits the opportunities for innovation, moving the organization further towards a bureaucratic model (Sewell, 1998), despite any intentions to create something more modern and agile. An effective "binder" for the necessary turbulence in a post-bureaucratic organization can be a shared set of values (Hodgson, 2004; Paarlberg & Perry, 2007). This minimizes (but by no means eliminates) rules and structures, creates a clear sense of vision and purpose for activities, and enables different parts of the organization to flex with innovation as and when necessary (Finegan, 2000; Gehman et al., 2013; Paarlberg & Perry, 2007). In short, it provides a strong accountability system without overburdening the organization and its people with a plethora of cumbersome procedures and rigid rule following.

Developing a shared set of values is incredibly complex and difficult work (Paarlberg & Perry, 2007; Gehman et al., 2013). Crucially, this work is not located solely at the C-level of organizations, but rather must be embodied by all people at all levels if it is to work effectively to create a unified organization (Finegan, 2000). Beyond people, it must also be clearly evident in the processes and structures across the organization, with anyone able to easily see how each one directly speaks to the shared set of values (Paarlberg & Perry, 2007). This clarity of shared purpose is essential to maintaining a true accountability system across an entire organization. Slippage in one department or at a single level can be sufficient for this binding factor to be broken for an organization, so this is a delicate, yet potentially powerful, environment to create for organizations. This raises the dual questions of whether such a move to reduce control (accountability through bureaucratic rule following) and build consent (accountability through adherence to a shared set of values to be used as drivers) is the best practice and, if it is, how to create such a system?

This chapter argues that most organizations should develop a holistic set of shared values that drive and unite all facets of their work; this creates an inclusive and transparent accountability system. While these values will be shared throughout the organization, the impact of these on different people and internal groups will be varied. This creates an overall connection while allowing for groups (such as divisions or departments) to avoid being overly interdependent (Carroll & Burton, 2000). This is a more nuanced and adaptable accountability system, enabling certain individuals and sections within the overall organization to be dynamic in their own ways, rather than trying to develop a range of rules and procedures that will somehow cover all circumstances across different areas of the organization over time. In this scenario, changes in context, whether internally or externally to an organization, would not require a whole new set of rules and procedures to be drafted.

The bulk of the chapter focuses on analyzing how an organization can develop and utilize a shared set of values to connect processes and interactions into a coherent and flexible accountability system (Gehman et al., 2013). This is not about simply mandating changes to the organization's espoused values, nor can it solely be the result of edicts from those in positions of authority in the organization. While

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