

## Treat All Those Around You as Customers

A job is a well-defined box of activity located in a specific slot in an organization. For example, your activity might be sales, your box would be located in the sales department, and any function outside the box (improving productivity, for instance) would not be your concern.

Once a job was a secure place in which to box yourself. Today, jobs are no longer guaranteed for life. And work is increasingly likely to be organized around teams than around job positions.

If you want to succeed in the changing workplace, forget about your job box. Think of your workplace as a market, not an organization.

A market frame of mind shatters the rules of the traditional organization. In a market, there are no bosses, no specific functions, no job titles, and no detailed hierarchies.

There is only one rule, one function: the exchange of goods.

It may seem far-fetched at first to think of an organization as a market. For example, you may point out that

in every organization there are specific jobs and there's not much you can do about it.

Brian Hulsey, a maintenance technician, would disagree.

Hulsey was hired by Destec Operating Company, which sets up and operates cogeneration plants, to do maintenance on gas turbines. Neither Hulsey's company nor his job position would seem to lend itself to marketplace rules. He had a specific technical function in a highly organized technical company.

Yet, while continuing to do his job, Hulsey began to roam around the organization asking people, "How can I help?" "Is there anything I can participate in?"

Gradually, people started to include Hulsey in brainstorming sessions and project meetings. They began asking his help on complicated problems. And on his own initiative, he began an internal project on a function that had been farmed out to an outside vendor.

Today, Hulsey has outgrown his original job, and no current job

description fits what he is doing for the company. He works on different, and constantly changing, projects. He no longer has one boss, but instead reports to different project heads.

Hulsey transformed his workplace into a marketplace. He broke out of his job mindset and went looking for work. He treated co-workers and managers as potential customers who could use his services.

Eventually, those customers saw the value that Hulsey could bring to their projects — and "hired" him. ☆

### The New Rules of Work

- **Everyone is a contingent worker.** There is no such thing as life-long employment. Anyone can go, at any time.

- **Manage your career as an outside vendor.** In light of your contingency, think of yourself as an outside vendor who has been outsourced, not as an inside employee. Your employer is a customer who has hired you for a task — or a project.

- **You are a business.** As an outside vendor, you must become a solo business owner. Even if you're employed, you have to do market research in your company. You must find products and services to sell in-house to ensure your employment.

- **Projects, not job positions, will be the new basis of work.** Job positions are being replaced by projects. Instead of being tied to one function, you will go from project to project, working with different people, on different tasks, with different deadlines.

- **Fluidity, not stability, is the new dynamic of employment.** Be prepared to move from project to project, from task to task, and even — although hopefully to a lesser extent — from organization to organization.

## Find Your Customers' Unmet Needs

To serve potential customers in your marketplace, you must find their unmet needs. The constant change in today's world creates unmet needs by:

- 1. Opening gaps between resources.** Change opens gaps between areas that used to be covered by existing services or products. For example, families began having less time to spend cooking food. The resulting gap, between grocery stores and restaurants, was filled by take-out food services.

- 2. Creating new encounters.** Global interdependence is creating cultural encounters between people from different countries. The growing presence of computers is creating technological encounters

between computers and new users. New encounters cause gaps of miscommunication and create a need for workers who can bridge such gaps (in these examples, translators and computer teachers).

- 3. Introducing new technological or economic possibilities.** Advances in computer networking helped IKEA fulfill a world-wide need for low-cost furniture.

- 4. Rendering obsolete existing technical, economic, or organizational arrangements.** If executives in your office are replacing business travel with video-conference calls, former arrangements with travel agents are obsolete. But there is an unmet need for assistance and support in telecommunications. ☆