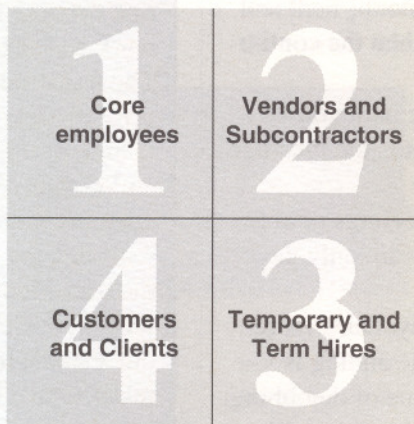


Restructure Employee Responsibilities

Employees are losing the security and stability of the job-based workplace. They are being asked to break out of their specific job boxes and enter into new, often flexible, work arrangements.

In project-based organizations, for example, employees travel from project to project, changing functions, colleagues, and even bosses, depending on the needs of the project.

If workers are required to become more flexible, the structure of their organizations must reflect that flexibility. Employees can't work on fluctuating assignments while still plugged into tradi-



tional job-description boxes.

How can your organization better represent the constantly changing responsibilities of your employees?

An updated version of the shamrock organization designed by management scholar Charles Handy is one suggestion.

Handy grouped together a different type of worker in each of the shamrock's three leaves.

In one, he put the permanent core of professionals, technicians, and managers who possess the skills that make up the company's core competence.

Another leaf grouped together the external contractors who are fulfilling functions once provided by support staff. In the third leaf, he placed temporary and part-time workers.

A fourth leaf can be added for customers. Customers are no longer simply receiving goods. Instead, they are often involved in the production or distribution of the products or services. (Think of automatic teller machines, self-service gas stations, or IKEA's self-delivery and self-assembly furniture.)

Author William Bridges recommends replacing the four leaves with boxes having permeable (i.e. breachable) borders (see diagram).

In today's organizations, individuals move from one box to another. The professional core, for example, isn't necessarily permanent. Key managers frequently travel from company to company. And temporaries aren't just clerical workers anymore, but include software designers, financial professionals, engineers, and even executives.

The key today is flexibility. Any new organizational structure must avoid the rigid borders of the past. ☆

Old Policies Are No Longer Needed

As more and more former employees become workers independent of organizations, old policies and conditions tied to the old organizational structures become outdated.

For example, formal alternative work arrangements with employers, such as telecommuting, flex-time, and job sharing, are irrelevant to independent workers. These workers will organize their work according to the needs of the assignment.

On the flip side, with increased freedom comes increased responsibilities. Compensation is now often tied to assignments, and it's structured to reflect the results of those assignments. And retirement benefits are being broken off from jobs and put into the hands of the workers — who must manage their own retirement.

What Society Needs To Do

Organizations and individuals must adapt to a new world in which jobs are no longer the basis of employment. Social institutions and government must undergo a similar adaptation.

Public Policy for the Future

Politicians and governmental policy are still mired in the traditional idea of economic prosperity through jobs. They continue to expound on the need to "create" more jobs, or try to bring the remaining jobs to their constituency. These simplistic, short-sighted — but popular — efforts don't offer solutions to the overriding problem of dejobbing.

Politicians and government can make a real contribution by updating regulations that fit the old rules of employment and hamper initiatives for the future. For example, as more people work out of their homes, zoning and tax-deductibility regulations must be eased.

Helping Recycle the Worker

Government must take the lead in helping workers recycle themselves for a future without jobs.

Retraining programs, for example, should not focus on specific skills for specific fields. Those specific jobs are often gone by the end of the training. Workers should instead be trained in general work skills such as computer literacy.

Teaching basic business-management skills such as time-management, project-management, and goal-setting skills is also necessary. Dejobbed organizations want employees who can organize themselves as independent businesses.

Career centers and business-development centers should be combined. The business-development center half can help you manage your career as a business. The career center half will help you review and use your desires and abilities. ☆