

WhitePaper: The Hard Truth

If you have success, you have a problem



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Reflecting on the Mechanisms of Success and Purpose

In the heart of every organization lies a ticking mechanism, much like the intricate workings of a clock. Each cog, wheel, and spring works in harmony to drive the organization forward. This white-paper embarks on a journey into the core of “Clockwork Organizations,” unraveling the layers to reveal not just how they operate but why they often veer away from their intended path.

Imagine, if you will, a moment of realization—a mirror held up to the face of management, reflecting not the flaws but the truths hidden beneath layers of success and routine. This is not an indictment but an invitation to explore, to understand, and to realign with the original purpose that set the wheels in motion.

A word on truth: normally we seek comfort. Our brain prefers comfort and familiarity over everything else. Which may lead to curious situations where our bias kicks in and we become blind.

It’s so easy to see at other people, but so difficult when we ourselves are involved. And then we build resistance against the truth. Because it’s uncomfortable. And this is the choice we always have: choose what is comfortable and known, or what is good but unfamiliar.

People who care, will tell us the truth, even if we don’t like it. Not to make us angry, but because they care.

And one of the basic ideas behind the OrgIQ Network is to have people around you that care. And tell the truth.

[TODO: Add the stuff from Jeff Bezos on truth tellers.]

Part 1: The Problem of Success and Internal Shift of Purpose

Understanding Our Self-Selected Blindness

Success is a double-edged sword. It grants validation and rewards but, paradoxically, can initiate the decline of the very purpose that fueled the organization's inception.

Initially, organizations are propelled by a mission aimed at making a mark on the world—a purpose beyond profit. However, success breeds a protective instinct. The desire to hold onto this success shifts the focus inward, prioritizing revenue generation and employee retention over impacting the world.

Meetings become echoes of revenue targets, subtly nudging the organization's compass towards a new north, where “Revenue is Our Purpose” becomes the (un)spoken mantra. This shift, whether conscious or not, marks the loss of the original purpose, steering actions towards maintaining success rather than achieving impact.

Success breeds a protective instinct.

The Cycle of Fear and Comfort in Success

Success, ironically, plants the seeds of complacency and fear.

An organization that once hungered for change, driven by a desire to make a difference, finds itself cocooned in the comfort of its achievements. This comfort zone becomes a gilded cage, where the fear of losing success overshadows the drive for innovation.

Management's dialogue with itself shifts from aspirational to protective, focusing more on preserving the status quo than on pursuing growth. It's a transition from being pioneers to guardians of success, where the balance tips from courage to caution.

This comfort zone becomes a gilded cage, where the fear of losing success overshadows the drive for innovation.

From Leadership to Management: The Narrowing Focus

Leadership and management, though often used interchangeably, diverge significantly in their focus and impact on an organization. Leadership thrives on vision, looking outward to determine what is best for the broader system, including the world at large. In contrast, management concentrates on the internal workings, ensuring stability and avoiding change that might risk the success already achieved.

This transition from leadership to management marks a narrowing of focus, where the vast landscape of possibilities gives way to the confines of operational continuity. The opportunity cost of maintaining current success becomes a barrier to exploring new avenues of impact.

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Signs of Disconnection from Purpose

The subtle shifts in focus and priority manifest in various signs within the organization. Companies, much like individuals seeking to impress, might initially present themselves with embellishments—metaphorical makeup, wonderbras, and rented luxury cars—to attract talent.

However, once the commitment is secured, the facade fades, revealing a reality that may not live up to the initial promises. The discrepancy between the shiny exterior presented by human resources and the daily operational reality sets the stage for disillusionment. This disconnection is not just a betrayal of employee expectations but a symptom of a deeper malaise—the drift from purpose.

Part 2: The Mechanics of Clockwork and Neuronal Network Dynamics

The Fear of Autonomous Teams

In the heart of every manager lies a paradox: the pride in witnessing a team's autonomy and the underlying fear that such independence might render their own role obsolete. This fear is magnified in Clockwork Organizations where control and direct oversight are often equated with managerial success.

The Clockwork creates the underlying fear for management that independent teams might render their own role obsolete.

Actually the core role is something different, what will never be obsolete.

When teams operate successfully without constant supervision, it can lead to an existential crisis for managers, questioning their own value and purpose within the organization. Instead of recognizing this autonomy as a sign of a healthy and robust system, managers may respond with micromanagement or by sidelining those who challenge the status quo, even if those challenges are aimed at improving the system. This reaction not only stifles innovation but also creates a culture of compliance over creativity.

Clockwork vs. Neuronal Network: Attributing Success

The traditional Clockwork Organization prides itself on order, predictability, and control, often claiming credit for successes that may have been achieved not because of, but in spite of, its rigid structures.

The irony lies in the fact that ... the real driving force is the passion and dedication of the specialists who remain closer to the organization's original mission.

In contrast, the Neuronal Network represents a dynamic, adaptable approach, more aligned with the original purpose and vision of the organization. This network thrives on the direct engagement of its members with the external environment, such as customer interactions, which often remain true to the organization's purpose.

The irony lies in the fact that while management tends to attribute success to their own interventions, the real driving force is the passion and dedication of the specialists who remain closer to the organization's original mission. Recognizing this misattribution is crucial for realigning with the purpose and leveraging the true source of innovation and success.

The Impact of Misplaced Responsibility

Assuming responsibility for outcomes beyond one's direct control can lead to a sense of unease and insecurity. This feeling is exacerbated in managers within Clockwork Organizations who often feel compelled to oversee and control every aspect of the operation, fearing that any deviation might threaten the success they've worked hard to achieve.

This misplaced responsibility not only increases anxiety but also prevents the organization from tapping into its full potential. It creates an environment where the fear of failure overshadows the pursuit of innovative solutions, leading to stagnation and a culture of risk aversion.

Managers often feel compelled to oversee and control every aspect of the operation, fearing that any deviation might threaten the achieved success.

Emotional and Psychological Effects on Managers

The constant pressure to maintain success and control, combined with the fear of becoming obsolete, takes a toll on managers' emotional and psychological well-being. The isolation stemming from a perceived lack of understanding or appreciation from their teams further exacerbates this issue.

Management is a victim of this broken system. Taken responsibility they can not control and neglecting their own emotional and psychological needs.

This disconnection between management and the rest of the organization can lead to a sense of loneliness and misunderstanding, where managers feel they are battling alone for the organization's stability and security. Such an environment breeds resentment and a breakdown in communication, hindering the potential for collaborative growth and mutual respect.

Part 3: Realigning with Purpose

The Importance of Trusting the System

One of the fundamental steps toward realigning with the original purpose is for management to develop trust in the system's resilience and the capabilities of its people. This trust facilitates a shift from a mindset of control to one of empowerment, where managers feel confident in the organization's ability to navigate challenges even in their absence.

Trusting the system means to acknowledge the robustness of populations.

It acknowledges the robustness of the Neuronal Network—a system where autonomy, creativity, and direct engagement with the mission drive success. Cultivating this trust requires a conscious effort to let go of fear-based management practices and embrace a more visionary leadership style that focuses on nurturing the organization's core purpose and values.

Addressing the Limbic System: The Heart of Purpose

To resonate deeply with every member of the organization, our purpose must engage the limbic system—the part of our brain that processes emotions and feelings. This approach ensures that the message reaches a broader audience, tapping into the universal capability to feel and connect, rather than relying solely on intellectual comprehension. Decisions, often believed to be the product of logical reasoning, actually find their roots in this emotional center.

Our strategies, communication, and leadership must, therefore, craft narratives that speak to both the analytical mind and the emotional heart. By doing so, we ensure that our purpose is clear and rational for the neocortex while being emotionally compelling and resonant for the limbic system.

Decisions, often believed to be the product of logical reasoning, actually find their roots in limbic system.

The Role of Diverse Perspectives in a Healthy Organization

A thriving organization, much like a resilient ecosystem, requires diversity to adapt and grow. This diversity is not just in skills or expertise but in perspectives and approaches to problem-solving.

The interplay between pioneers, guardians, and lifelines within an organization ensures a balance between innovation, stability, and recovery.

Pioneers push the boundaries, seeking new opportunities and challenges; guardians prioritize safety and gradual improvement; and lifelines provide a safety net, ensuring the organization can withstand setbacks. Recognizing and valuing these roles is essential for fostering an environment where each member feels their contribution is vital to the collective purpose.

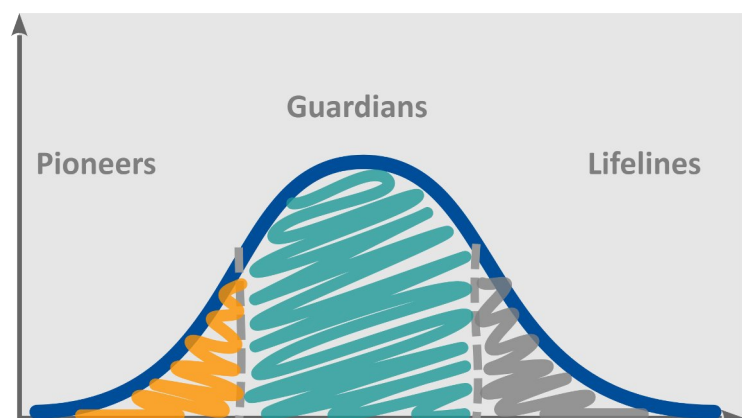


Figure 1: Normal distribution of roles in populations. We can calculate around 20% pioneers, 60% guardians, and 20% lifelines. This distribution allows adaptability, stability, and survival. Good for the system!

The interplay between pioneers, guardians, and lifelines within an organization ensures a balance between innovation, stability, and recovery.

Addressing Core Needs through Purpose

At the heart of every organization is a purpose that resonates on a deeply human level, addressing the core needs of bonding, self-worth, autonomy, and security. This purpose serves as a beacon, guiding the organization's actions and decisions. For managers, realigning with this purpose means moving beyond the superficial metrics of success to focus on the impact their leadership has on the well-being and fulfillment of their teams. It's about creating a culture where people feel connected to a larger mission, where their work is not just a means to an end but a significant contribution to something they believe in.

Trusting the System: The Path to Empowerment

Overcoming the fear of complexity and the unknown requires a foundational trust in the organizational system's resilience and purpose. This trust is crucial for moving beyond the limitations of the Clockwork approach, allowing the natural dynamics of the Neuronal Network to flourish. By embracing the system's inherent energy and directing it towards our collective purpose, we avoid the pitfalls of resistance and instead leverage our diverse strengths towards common goals.

The Evolution of Purpose within the Organizational Ecosystem

Purpose must serve as a guiding star, stable yet adaptable to the changing context in which the organization operates. Recognizing that purpose-driven organizations view others with shared goals as allies rather than competitors marks a significant evolution in how we approach our mission and collaborative efforts. This broader perspective fosters an ecosystem where mutual support and shared success become the new benchmarks, driving a more profound and sustainable impact.

Empowering Change and Action

The journey from recognizing the need for change to taking actionable steps towards realignment requires courage, commitment, and a willingness to embrace uncertainty. For managers, this means stepping out of their comfort zones, challenging the status quo, and encouraging their teams to do the same.

It involves creating spaces for open dialogue, where fears and aspirations can be shared without judgment. Empowering change also means providing the resources and support needed for individuals and teams to pursue initiatives aligned with the organization's purpose. This approach not only revitalizes the organization's mission but also reignites the passion and engagement of its people.

Part 4: Communication and Operational Harmony

The Disconnect in Organizational Communication

In many organizations, the predominant focus of communication revolves around financial metrics and operational efficiencies, often overshadowing the human elements that are the true drivers of success. This narrow focus not only alienates a significant portion of the workforce but also fails to engage them on a meaningful level.

To bridge this gap, communication strategies need to be re-envisioned to include narratives that resonate with every member of the organization, reflecting shared values, achievements, and the collective journey towards fulfilling the purpose. By doing so, we can ensure that internal communication becomes a tool for unity rather than division, inspiring engagement through shared goals and visions.

Re-imagining Success: Purpose Before Profit

Redefining success in terms beyond mere financial gain is pivotal for an organization's long-term vitality and relevance. Success should be measured by how well the organization fulfills its purpose and impacts its community, environment, and stakeholders.

This reimagined definition encourages a culture where intrinsic motivation and passion for the work become the primary drivers, rather than external rewards. It requires a bold shift in perspective from management, one that prioritizes purpose-driven initiatives and celebrates achievements that align with the organization's core mission.

Re-imagining Communication: Beyond Revenue

The prevalent focus on revenue in organizational communication fails to engage the majority of the workforce on a meaningful level. This approach neglects the basic human needs for connection and purpose, turning essential communication into a missed opportunity for engagement.

By shifting our communication to emphasize purpose, collaboration, and shared values, we can bridge the gap between management's objectives and the intrinsic motivations of the workforce. This shift not only enhances engagement but also aligns organizational efforts with a deeper sense of mission.

Integrating Clockwork and Neuronal Network Reporting

For a truly harmonious operation, the traditional Clockwork Organization needs to integrate more closely with the dynamic Neuronal Network approach, fostering a system where both can thrive and contribute to the organization's success.

This involves creating reporting mechanisms that value and highlight the contributions of all parts of the organization, acknowledging the innovative solutions and customer-focused initiatives that often go unnoticed. By doing so, organizations can cultivate a more comprehensive understanding of success, one that encompasses the creativity, adaptability, and direct engagement that drive true progress.

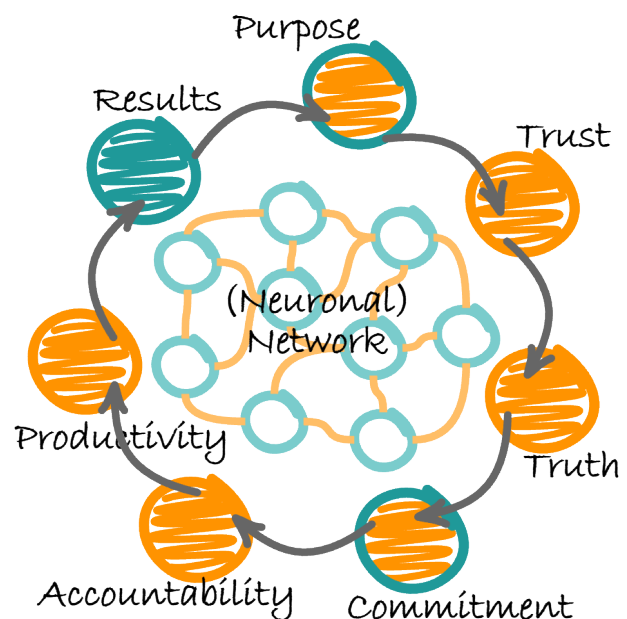


Figure 2: The OrgIQ framework gives hints about the need for communication and reporting. We need reporting on every element.

For the Clockwork Purpose and Results are relevant. But I need for every Result a Purpose, and for every Purpose a Result.

Therefore, revenue as only metric is actually wrong. Or serves only a secondary purpose.

Building a Culture of Mutual Appreciation and Understanding

To overcome the divisions between management and staff, it is essential to foster an environment of mutual appreciation and understanding. We start seeing the value in both, the Clockwork and the Network. Because both serve a mutual purpose. And both work together, and does not disturb or hinder each other.

This is fostered by lived values – especially honesty, transparency, and openness – which will lead to trust. Openness includes clear upfront communication where necessary. And collaboration along the Network.

Recognizing the unique contributions of each individual and team, and understanding the challenges they face, builds empathy and strengthens the organizational fabric. Encouraging direct interaction and collaboration between different milieus (or Solutions) of the organization can demystify the roles and responsibilities, revealing the synergies that exist and highlighting the collective effort required to achieve the organization's goals.

Empowering Agile Teams and Addressing Organizational Paralysis

The question of when employees feel most productive—under the watchful eye of their managers or in their absence—serves as a critical diagnostic tool for assessing organizational health. Agile teams often demonstrate enhanced productivity by leveraging autonomy and purpose-driven motivation.

However, this empowerment faces challenges further up the hierarchy, where fear of losing control leads to paralysis. By embracing the diversity of our workforce, including pioneers who drive change, guardians who ensure stability, and lifelines who guarantee survival, we create a balanced and resilient organization. Each group plays a vital role, and acknowledging this diversity allows us to harness the full potential of our collective capabilities.

Conclusion: The Path Forward

As we draw this exploration to a close, delving into the essence and challenges that define Clockwork Organizations, the path to aligning more closely with our core purpose emerges not only as a necessary journey but a compelling call to action. Transitioning from a culture deeply entrenched in the pursuit of success to one that places purpose, trust, and collaboration at its heart requires a profound shift in mindset across all organizational levels. We think differently, but we already have all the tools. It necessitates a brand of leadership that embraces the strength and inherent resilience of social systems, recognizing that oftentimes, the fabric of our organizations holds strong, propelled by its own momentum, without constant oversight.

This realization, while daunting at first, liberates and provides the space to concentrate on what truly matters: articulating and embedding our purpose and vision across every tier of our structure. Our tendency to prioritize rational thought, overlooking the primal force of our emotional drives, needs reevaluation. Decisions stem from our feelings, subsequently shaped and justified by rational thought. This sequence elevates the importance of acknowledging and addressing the limbic system in our decision-making processes, challenging us to value emotional intelligence alongside analytical reasoning.

By advocating for vulnerability, celebrating diverse viewpoints, and fostering an environment ripe for innovation and creative exploration, this white-paper acts as a reflective surface, showcasing the depth and potential within organizational dynamics. It extends an invitation to all management levels to embark on a transformative journey, one that appreciates the unique contribution of each individual and harnesses the collective strength found in a unified purpose.

Our future endeavors should not seek to abandon the strategies that have delivered success but to reinterpret them through the lens of our foundational mission. Embracing the robustness of our systems, catalyzing change, and valuing the myriad talents and perspectives within our ranks are essential steps towards ensuring the vitality and growth of Clockwork Organizations in a constantly evolving world. A world where purpose binds us, driving forward with a resonance felt by everyone involved.

As you ponder the insights and reflections offered, consider the actionable steps you can undertake to bring your organization into alignment with its true purpose. The journey toward meaningful change commences with a singular, decisive step forward—a step that acknowledges the complexities we face and embraces the vast potential for transformative growth. Allow this white-paper to serve as a springboard for such change, motivating a shift towards a more enriching, purpose-centered organizational life.

Through the exploration of Clockwork Organizations' nuances, we've underscored the immense power of aligning with purpose, embracing diversity, and fostering trust. By integrating both the emotional and logical aspects of decision-making, empowering our teams with trust, and communicating in a manner that touches the very core of our human needs, we redefine the essence of success, elevating it beyond mere financial metrics to something infinitely more valuable.

Standing at this juncture, the way forward is unmistakably clear. We are called to embrace the complexities inherent in our organizations, to place our faith in the collective might of our people, and to lead with a purpose that unifies and inspires. This document is not merely a reflection of our current state but a beacon that lights the way toward a future where every individual is empowered to make meaningful contributions to our shared mission, propelling us with passion, integrity, and a profound sense of community.