



Getting started for future agility:

The power of self-organization

BERATEN – BEGLEITEN - BEGEISTERN

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## Get started for future agility: the power of self-organization.

Speech and subsequent workshop held on 22. June 2016 at a SME leading international manufacturer of electrical insulating materials, Germany.



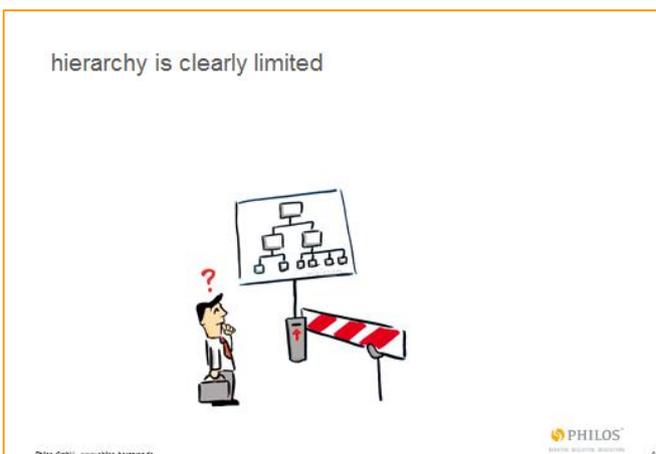
Agility – what for??

What we notice in the past years in our work is that in order to fulfill future customer/market requirements -

especially in times of growing disruptive technologies and market pressure -

today's organisations need to be agile and adaptable.

Hierarchical organisations are more and more limited in speed of decision making and market driven innovation.



Only: as complexity grows this paradigm needs to be overthought.

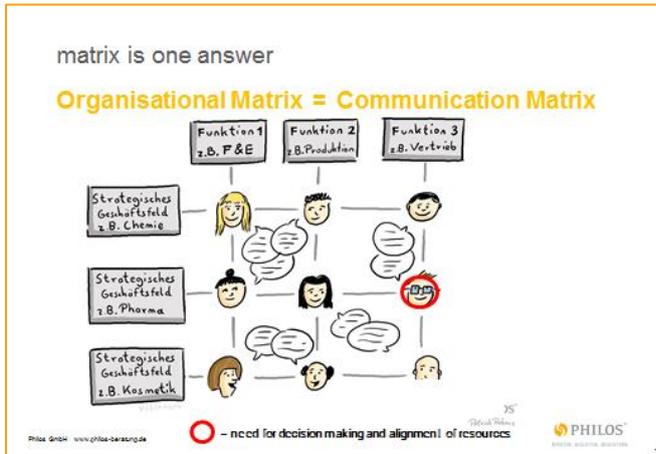
The process of decision making and distributing information needs to be spread across the whole organization.

Just to the very fringes of the organization.

One answer to it, is the matrix organization.

## The Matrix Organization

The matrix organization is combining classical hierarchy with project management.



Thus it is a multiline organization, in which a member is reporting and subject to two executives at a time e.g. – the business unit manager/project manager and the head of function department.

It is causing multi-sided decision processes, overlapping responsibilities and competencies etc. and definitely more need for communication and agreements.

The advantages of a matrix certainly are more flexibility and innovative solution making, though.

For example, in order to find problem solving you may have to

- Take into consideration different perspectives in your organization
- Rely on a quick and common use of resources i.e. product engineering, sales, budgeting etc.
- Bring together different specialists and decision makers



There is no hierarchy of „Function vs. Business Unit“ or vice versa  
It rather is a competition of concurrent goals.

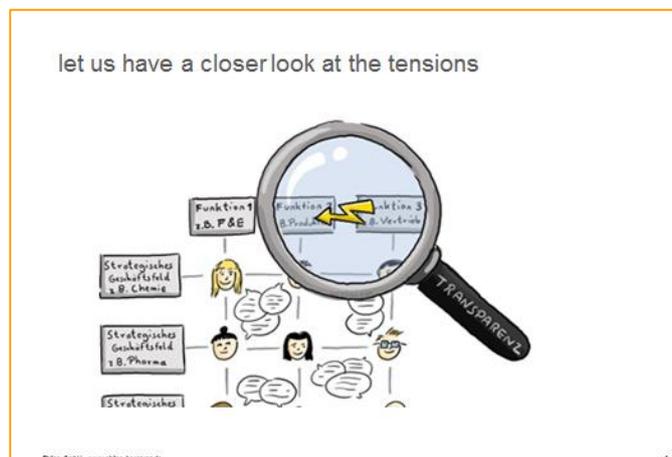
Tension even conflicts are likely to occur which increases need for communication and consensus building.

Tensions actually force people to find a problem solution and stretch the flexibility of their organization

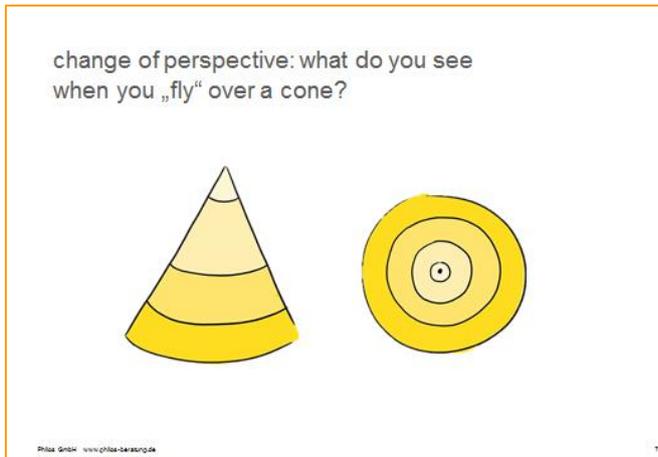
Tensions are detectable by:

- Mistrust/frustration
- „overlooking“ tasks
- Meetings with long discussions till consensus is gained
- E-mails with many people in cc. - unclear why
- Discussions about a „we“d have to...“

Just: who is „we“???



A Change of perspective is necessary



Classically an organization is considered as a hierarchy of top → down. The top is in the „know“, while the down waits for order and information and trusts in the decisions of the management.

But when you look at it differently you recognize that actually the down is at the fringes of an organization, in direct touch with the environment, the customers, the outside.

From there all information flows into the centre of the organization. Meaning the down is actually informed much earlier.

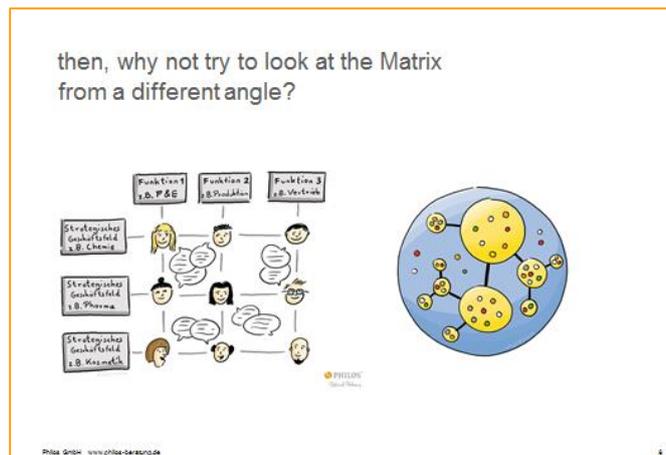
So in the end the whole organization is „one“, there is no hierarchy, everyone is part of a bigger piece of the whole. Like holons, where each circle represents parts of the other circles.

Something that on the first glimpse looks like a very clear structure becomes organic. That's how we should look at a matrix.

A matrix – when looked at from a different angle – is a gathering of roles and tasks.

Everyone plays a part in a bigger frame.

One „position“ can have different roles, maybe plays in different teams and has to decide over different things. It moves around within the organization and serves others in order to fulfill the whole companies' goals.



So a matrix isn't a structure of clear decision making along pre-defined lines – there is always a „behind the scenes/behind the stage“ of knowledge points, of decision making... This is the real organization – and should be encouraged and „capitalized“

It's not about size, branch or region - It's about people!!

If we look at companies that put themselves on the way to more agility we realize, that they do not only work „in“ organizations but constantly have to work „on“ the organization.

**They practice:**

- a Leadership of distributed authority
- non or different incentivation (or: also based on soft facts)
- no „waiting“ for decisions – but seeking the right person within the whole organization and DoING / Deciding
- an open communicative culture – taking tensions as a chance for development
- strict meeting culture



This makes it necessary to have companywide a clear description of processes of how to handle tensions – accessible for everyone.

They keep the organisation in an iterative and constant progress to make the system „rock“

So, allow tensions even conflicts to surface – consider them as potential to grow a learning culture.

Make transparent / put on the table what is existant now: Which next acitivites do we have to take into closer account?

Concentrate on the points where you need decisions to HAPPEN? Whom do you need? Where can you find them?

Stay as concrete as possible.

what do they have in common?

- work **on** their organization
- distribute authority
- no „waiting for permission“

→ open culture for handling tensions through

→ **transparent processes**

**Keeping it in an iterative process**

In traditional organisations changes on organisations happen cyclical maybe every 3-5 years. When re-organized the new org is almost always out-of-date.

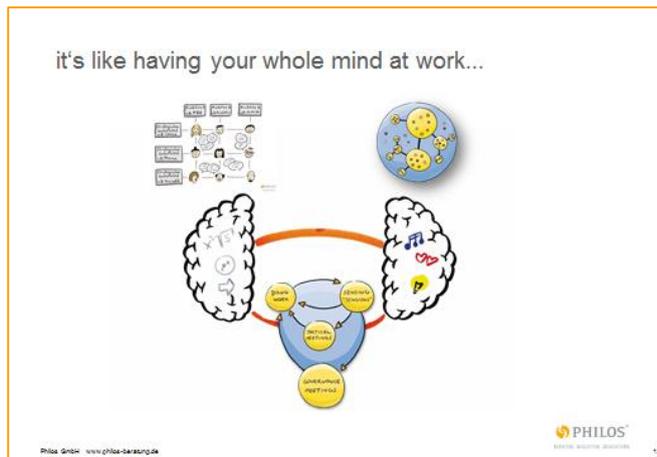
how to handle tensions?

- **Allow**
- **Make transparent**
- **Solve**

Better keep it iterative. „Reorg“ as often as necessary to capitalize on a learning opportunity.

Address a critical problem in frequent governance meetings where roles and processes are revised – given what's actually happening in the team.

## Working on your organization takes the whole of you!



The whole mind at the first place. That means structured, reliable processes on the one side and creativity on the other.

And then you need a process that keeps the energy in flow – like a heart that keeps the blood with oxygen and nutrients flowing. That is the process that keeps your organisation connected and alive.

There is not many rules: Just one major one: the rule of individual action!!

You don't have to depend on office politics to get things done. Just: get started, with mind, heart and hand.



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