

DEVELOPING YOUR MAJOR ASSET
'PROFESSIONALS AT WORK'

1. INTRODUCTION

Next decade research organizations will face an unexpected range of challenges and opportunities in the social, economic, political and business environment. Short cyclic, rapid changing uncertainties, surprises and discontinuities will characterize the external environment, influenced by rapid developments in (information) technology.

A number of significant shifts are occurring.

THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT	
Old	New
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facts and theories• Quantity• Uninformed customers• National customers• Individuals• Initial qualifications• Lifetime practice• Single discipline• Introvert• Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Values• Quality and post –quality• Demanding customers• Multinational / international customers• Teams• Continual updating• Mobile careers• Multidisciplinary• Extravert• Competence

(Source : BIM report, "Beyond Quality" 1990)

A survey (Hartman & Kraak ,1991) among CEO's of European Contract Research Organizations about expected shifts indicate:

- more research activities will be funded by international bodies and less by national governments;
- information will be owned by more than one country; exploitation becomes a joint responsibility;
- a reduction of graduates in engineering and science within the European Community.
- a lack of first graduates proceeding to Ph.D. will put pressure on fundamental research;
- differences in remuneration and social charters effecting local recruitment;
- a growing need for multi lingual staff.

These shifts effects the way of organizing, managing and developing professionals.

2. DEVELOPMENTS

Organizations need to be flexible, adaptable and responsive to the changing requirements of both customers and employees. The solution sought is a move from the bureaucratic to a more responsive organization. Processes for continuing learning, adaptation and change are required. These processes need to be open and should tap as many resources of relevant expertise as possible. Experts and specialists should aim to become facilitators, harnessing relevant expertise by all available means in such a way that it can be applied to add value for customers.

Organizations are becoming flatter, leaner and tighter. Staff and support functions are being cut back. Responsibilities are being delegated and devolved throughout the organization. There is a growing requirement for skills that can be accessed flexible on an ad hoc basis.

Networks are to become global, bringing together all those who wish to contribute a proportion of their time to a particular mission. The mission or purpose of a network will become a key source of differentiation. Much effort will be put into articulating a distinct and compelling mission.

Bureaucratic organizations are transitioning into more flexible forms, based upon teams. Working and learning are facilitated by appropriate technology. Processes are replacing procedures. The boundary of the organization is blurring, as it becomes more of a network with electronic links forward into customers, backwards to suppliers, sideways to business partners.

Values could become a significant differentiator of networks. When technology, information and knowledge become a commodity, equally available to all, competition between networks may be on the basis of values, rather than such factors as price. Customers may choose between producers, all of that have access to relevant technology and knowledge according to the underlying values of the producing or converted network. One value network, for example, may be chosen rather than another because it is more environmentally conscious.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- More flexible, adaptable and responsive
- Processes for continuing learning and adaptation
- Slimmer, flatter and tighter
- Delegation and devolution
- Global Network in stead of national stand alone
- Multifunctional and multinational teams
- Values as significant differentiation of networks
- Access to skills more important than ownership
- Technology facilitating groups and teamwork
- Shift of focus from input to output

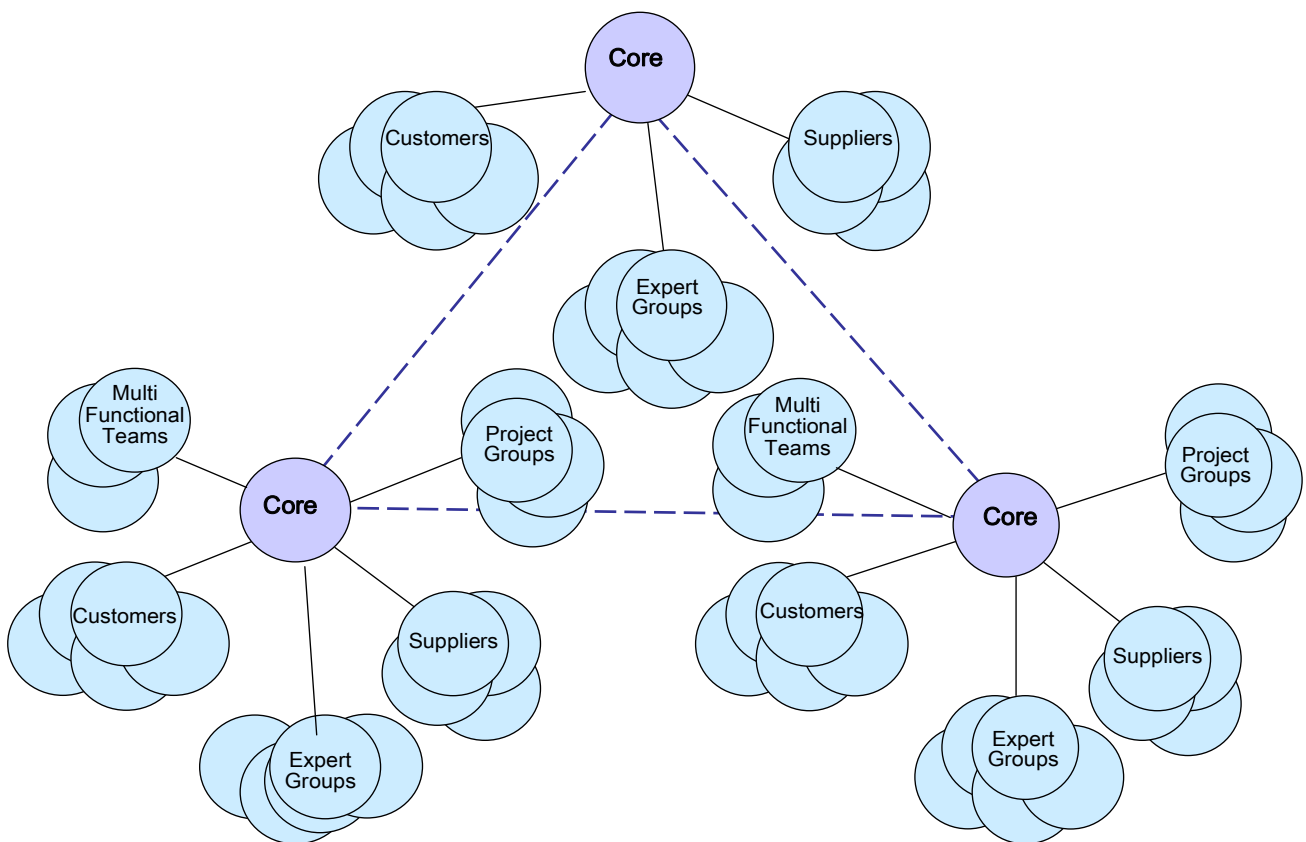
The people of the network organization need to be supported by a communications network that can facilitate its work. This facilitating technology needs itself to be flexible and adaptable in allowing multi-functional, multi-location and multinational teams to work together. The process of working effectively in a team involves more than just sharing data. It must also be possible to share thoughts, insights and concepts. It should facilitate learning and development and itself be capable of learning and development.

At the heart of the flexible organization is a core team co-ordinating the work of task forces and project groups. Project and team management is replacing bureaucratic and hierarchic management. Assessment and remuneration are increasingly based upon output rather than position in the organization.

3. OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

The question at hand is what opportunities from a viewpoint of Human Resource Management can be provided by an network organization of European CRO's against the background of the developments earlier mentioned.

- Within this type of network there is the possibility to establish international, multi-functional projects. This provides the opportunity for managers to gain experience in international project management.
- The exchange of professionals between member organizations of such a network is a strong tool to develop the kind of expertise and experience needed to meet future challenges.
- In such a international network it is possible to share values, thoughts, insights and concepts.
- Since one of the developments is a decrease of graduates in engineering and science such a network organization can provide an recruitment channel across national boundaries or provide an overall pool of qualified professionals.



Network Organization of European Contract Research Organizations

Developing your major asset

On the other hand one may expect some constraints, that prevent that organizations develop into effective and efficient networks to meet future challenges, or that form barriers in meeting the objectives set for such network organizations.

- Cross-cultural differences, the lack of understanding why people of different countries act and react different in similar situations is a barrier in successfully implementing projects and or in effectively negotiating with clients. National prejudices and companies self-interests rather than collective interests reinforce this barrier.

There are generations of attitudes to change, and they will not be changed overnight

- Language is a major problem, not only to international managers and the communication between experts, but also in the communication with customers.
- The need for an international social charter and internationalizing of appraisal and reward systems can increase costs.

4. CONSEQUENCES FOR MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

To overcome these constraints and to benefit most of the opportunities created by the membership of network organizations, a lot has to be done in the development of managers and professionals.

Individual managers will need to become broader and more mobile. An international outlook, a sense of proportion and perspective of cross cultural differences and a willingness to accept responsibility, teamwork and communication skills will be necessary.

Project management is an example of one of the key sets of facilitating skills, which is emerging. Project management skills are likely to become of increasing significance.

Managers and professionals of the future will require broader skills and continual updating and development. They are likely to become less concerned with initial professional "qualification" for a lifetime career and more concerned with securing access to quality, relevant and competitive professional services as and when needed at different stages in their careers.

A distinction is likely to emerge between those employed full time as managers within a single organization (the core) and the "new professional", often self employed, working on a fee basis for multiple clients. Flexible patterns of work and "independent" career development based upon personal skills and competencies are likely to become more attractive to managers seeking to join the ranks of the "new professionals".

Companies must recognize that different group of "managers" and "professionals" will require distinct career paths, methods of assessment and control, and basis and criteria for remuneration.

Information technology has a major impact upon the "knowledge bases" of the professions, patterns of work, the structure of organizations and the nature of management processes.

Professional associations will need to adapt their strategies, people, technology, organizational and management processes in order to become more "customer and goal oriented" in their approach. There may, in the case of certain professional associations, be a "tension" between the imperatives of commercial success in competitive markets and "constraints" deriving from their constitutional status.

CONSEQUENCE FOR MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

- Individual managers mobile and broad oriented
- International outlook
- Project management skills
- Skills to manage 'independent' or 'self employed' professionals on distance.
- Facilitating skills and acting as a heat shield to red tape and admin.
- Differentiation of career paths, methods of assessment and remuneration
- Leadership and Coaching on distance
- Customer and Business orientation in R&D

5. LITERATURE

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