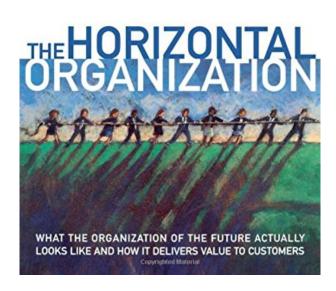
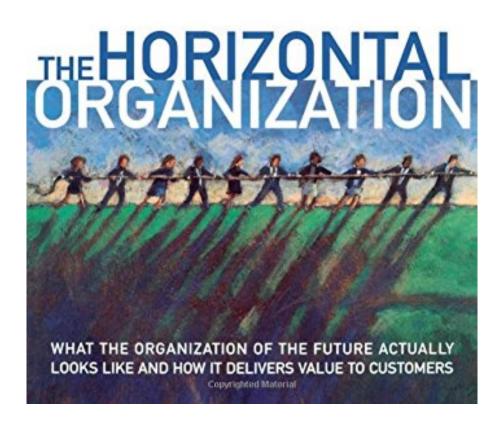
FRANK OSTROFF



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The vertical/functional hierarchy has been the mainstay of business since the industrial revolution. But it has its problems. In fact, the vertical design all but guarantees fragmented tasks, overspecialization, fiefdoms, turf wars, the urge to control from the top--all the negatives that foster organizational paralysis. In The Horizontal Organization, Frank Ostroff provides executives with the first truly viable alternative to the age-old vertical alignment. Indeed, he offers nothing less than the first full view of what the organization of the future looks like and how it works.

The concept of horizontal organization has been hailed in Fortune as "a model corporation for the next fifty years" and in a Business Week cover story as "the real thing." But until now, management books have offered only piecemeal accounts of what the organization of the future might look like. Ostroff, a key developer of the concept of the horizontal organization, offers the first workable road map. He describes what the horizontal organization is, what it looks like, why it is important, how it helps improve performance, where it is appropriate, and how to develop it. The book contains real case examples that show how major international corporations (and one federal agency) have used Ostroff's concepts to meet their competitive goals. For instance, we see how Ford Motor Company's Customer Service Division turned to the horizontal organization to meet a highly ambitious goal--to get the customer's car fixed right, on time, the first time, at a competitive price, in convenient locations. We see how a horizontal design radically improved the performance of OSHA (the federal agency that oversees occupational safety), transforming it from a bureaucratic enforcer of regulations to a proactive problem-solver in a concerted effort to improve working conditions and save lives. And we see how Xerox combined both vertical and horizontal designs successfully, a case that underscores when a firm can best use the horizontal organization to achieve their goals. Ostroff also looks at a General Electric plant in North Carolina, Motorola's Space and Systems Technology Group, and the home finance division of Barclays Bank, highlighting how these major corporations have also used the horizontal organization to radically improve productivity.

Many successful business books, such as Reengineering the Corporation and Beyond Reengineering, have given managers only a piece of the puzzle. Ostroff gives us the complete picture. The Horizontal Organization offers the first usable roadmap to the twenty-first-century firm. It is a book everyone who desires to radically improve the performance of their organization will want to read.

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Most helpful customer reviews

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

Enlightened Speculation

By Robert Morris

The subtitle promises that Ostroff will explain "what the organization of the future actually looks like and how it delivers value to customers." It is more accurate to say that Ostroff suggests what that organization will probably look like...and how it will probably deliver value to customers. Specifically, what he calls the Horizontal Organization "organizes around core process groups. All the people who work on a core process are brought together into a group that can easily coordinate its efforts and maximize the value of of what it delivers to customers." It differs from other models in that it is more comprehensive by incorporating "elements of some of the existing concepts, such as process reengineering, individual empowerment, and teams. But it goes beyond them by providing an overall framework for the organization that integrates and makes use of the best of these ideas in a new structure that has been proved in practice." So, Ostroff's intention is to help his reader understand what the Horizontal Organization is, how it works, how it can be developed, and how to decide where it can be effectively employed in any organization.

I rate this book so highly, not because it provides THE answers but because Ostroff asks what I consider to be the important questions as all of us proceed into an uncertain future. There are so many paradigm shifts occurring simultaneously. Words such as "organization" and "customer" seem to be redefined constantly, as are the concepts of "leader" and "manager" as well as "core business" and "competitive marketplace." Of course, despite what his book's subtitle suggests, Ostroff is well aware of all this. He thinks clearly, writes well, and in his concluding remarks indicates a proper respect for "buy in" throughout any organization., asserting that "the change effort itself and the new organization born from the old must have full top-down, bottom-up, cross-functional commitment. If done right, the integration of the fundamental principles of the horizontal organization will inspire the people in your organization, supercharge their performance, and create a winning value proposition that lifts your organization far above the competition."

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

Nothing New Here

By John E. Roesch

The Horizontal Organization by Frank Ostroff is well written and an easy read. Its main draw back is that the author is claims that he is presenting something new when in fact it is not. The concept outlined in his book and the design principles for the horizontal organization are nothing but a "dumbed" down version of basic industrial engineering principles that has been espoused for years. The concept of organizing around business processes and with cross-functional teams has been discribed in various books by industrial engineers for years, espesially in the area of socio-technical systems design theory. The book is good in that it gives managers, with business major degrees, a good introduction to a sound organizational design theory. Any manager with an industrial or systems engineering degree will already be aware of these principles for organizational design to a far greater extent than the author.

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

A How-to manual for Change Managers

By Amazon Customer

The author sees the tradition vertical structure of business as an outdated structure from the industrial era. This book pushes the horizontal organization. The horizontal organization does not divide the company into

departments. Instead, it groups people and work across core processes. These core processes all work together to create and deliver something of value to the customers.

This new structure is supposed to flatten hierarchies, integrate many tasks into a few processes, and focuses all employees on what the customer needs, not what their department needs. The author demonstrates this through the use of case studies that include companies such as Ford, and government agencies such as US Occupational Safety and Health Administration. These case studies coupled with a discussion of the new structure combine to form a how-to manual for change managers, showing how companies can design and implement the right structure.

The author offers twelve principles to achieve this goal:

- 1. Organize across cross-functional core processes
- 2. Install process owners
- 3. Make teams
- 4. Integrate with customers and suppliers
- 5. Decrease hierarchy by eliminating non value-added-work and by giving team members the authority to make decisions
- 6. Build a culture of openness, cooperation and collaboration.
- 7. Empower employees by giving them tools, skills, motivation, and the authority they need.
- 8. Use information technology to help people reach performance objectives and deliver the value proposition to the customer
- 9. Measure the results
- 10. Redesign as necessary
- 11. Emphasize multiple competencies and train people to handle problems in cross-functional areas
- 12. Promote multiple-skilling, the ability to think creatively and respond flexibly to challenges that arise in the work that teams do.

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