
The World at Work: Men and Women Managers Tell Us What's Changed and What Still Needs to Change in Organisations

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2005

Summary:

In the 1970s, social observer Studs Terkel wrote, "Working: What People do All Day and How They Feel About It," a landmark use of interviews to understand work experiences. Futurist Alvin Toffler predicted "The Coming Ad-hocracy," in which individuals would be liberated strangers in a world of fast-paced, kinetic organisations.

Patricia and co-researcher Dr. Barbara Trautlein used Terkel's and Toffler's work as background to investigate manager experiences in the 21st century, noting: 1) organisations are more multinational; 2) more women are managers; and 3) "change management" has been employed in organisations for two decades. The research integrated literature, a proprietary interview protocol, and interviews with multinational managers and consultants across three industries and five continents. Patricia and Barbara compared perceptions of leadership, change, gender, and "the ideal organisation of the future," and tested their findings in Action Inquiry dialogues and strategic planning with multinational clients.

Recommendations:

The research resulted in a number of breakthrough findings - a few are below. They serve as recommendations for organisations, especially multinationals:

Think "E-vergence": Many people assume vast geographic, industry, gender and cultural divides in organisations. But on questions of "what's changed and still needs to change in organisations," there is an emerging convergence of experiences and aspirations around the world.

Technology is yesterday's news; people are tomorrow's: Asked about what's changed, "technology" ranked high on manager lists. Yet, for the "ideal organisation of the future," managers find technology much less important. The "lever" will be "people" – exciting, engaging, and getting the best from human resources.

True global leaders are hybrids: Managers see both strengths and weaknesses in American, European and Asian views of management, as well as "masculine" vs. "feminine" leadership. Effective leaders exhibit a hybrid style that works well globally. Notably, American managers are perceived as "underdeveloped" in this area.

Effective change involves 'Being' as much as 'Doing': Managers' most vivid experiences with change involve structure and process – "doing" mergers, internal integrations and new technology rollouts. But common factors in the most successful change initiatives reflect ways of "being" – change led by people with highly-developed skills of communication, collaboration, cooperation and inclusion.

Evolution of consulting: In the 1990s, managers were inundated with change, becoming very experienced with "checklists" of change. The question is, "Why hire consultants?" The answer: consultants remain more capable of envisioning transformation. The consultants who can add value now are those who skilfully lead organisations through provocative, reflective dialogues; envision new structures and forms of teamwork; and coach/mentor 21st century leadership skills (see above).