RESEARCH ARTICLE

Types of Jobs

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Abstract

There are three parts of every company: sales and production with administration in between. Each has its own style requiring skills to suit those styles. This article examines the jobs according to people’s personalities and abilities.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Production creates what the company sells. Products or services may be made at the company or bought in. Sales is everything that the customer sees. Administration handles the money and orders that flow between customers and all involved in production. These three parts of the company require different frames of mind. The chief executive has to get the best out of the three and always finds their attitudes are different.

2 | ALL IN ONE

The easiest way to comprehend the different styles is to look at a one-person business; for example, a lady baking cakes in her own kitchen to sell to passers-by. Her day will start mixing the ingredients and putting them in tins to load into the oven. This is production. She has bought the ingredients. There may be a situation where it is the farmer’s wife who has collected eggs from her own hens, milk from her own cows and ground flour from her grain grown on her own fields. Otherwise she has gone around the shops buying the ingredients or had them delivered to her. All this is the production process. It includes the designing of cakes and varieties for certain occasions and celebrations.

When she is paid for the cakes, the money goes in her purse and maybe into the bank. She will calculate how much money she has and make sure it is more than she will spend on the ingredients and fuel for the oven. She can work out the sums in her head. The flour is supplied in large sacks so she may only take deliveries of flour once in two weeks. Milk is supplied daily because it has to be fresh. Butter kept in the fridge can be stored. Sugar, like flour, has to be kept dry and has a shelf life of a few weeks. All these variables, the lady knows without writing it down and a quick glance in the larder will confirm stock levels.

When customers call, she will be pleased to see them and almost certainly know them all as regular customers and friends. She will have time to talk as she puts the cakes in bags for the customer. All comments will register in her mind telling her about any changes she should make. Maybe more icing is needed. Could the cakes be cut into the shapes of numbers for birthdays? Her sales mind is passing

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ideas to her design mind.

3 | SPECIALISATION

When only one person is involved, everything is done by one brain and two hands. In a bigger company, specialisation separates out each task. One person would do nothing all day but tip the ingredients into a huge mixing bowl. When mixed, that bowl is dragged on wheels into a different department to be poured into moulds that the mixer never sees. They have no idea of the cost of ingredients, do not know who are the customers and may not care. Each person is but a cog in a machine.

It is the specialisation that creates the different jobs. By specialising, efficiency improves. As it does so, each person finds themselves more detached from the purpose of the company. The bigger the company, the more difficult it is for the work force to see themselves as members of a group with a common objective. The lady baker knows her role in life and her neighbours appreciate her for her skills. Customers buy from her as much out of loyalty as for the quality of her cakes. If there was a time when she needed a break, they would return to her when she comes back from holiday and continue as before. There was a personal bond between the lady and her customers.

4 | SALES

The sales side of a company is all about persuasion. It is to be found not just in the staff who visit customers; at the telephone switchboard where incoming calls are received, on the website where the company’s culture is described and in all marketing services displaying the company’s products and services. Persuading is a state of mind. To work, the customer has to like the person. A smile is essential. Some people have a serious countenance. They may be happy internally but if it does not show, the wrong message is conveyed. It is generalised that sales staff are extroverts. This is too broad because selling can be more listening than talking. It is necessary to learn what the customer wants before launching into a eulogy of the company’s products. If they want a sports car, it makes no sense to talk about the wonderful range of vans and trucks.

The essential ability in selling is closing. This is the art of getting a customer to commit to buy. Many a salesperson has explained everything and gone no further leaving the prospect wondering whether the competitors are better. To close the deal, the salesperson has to ask for the order. Those who cannot do this will never succeed. It can be subtle and the art of closing is ardently discussed in sales circles with the experts recounting stories of how they led the prospect along until payment was thrust onto them.

Online sales are impersonal. The opportunity to establish friendship and trust is difficult. There are tricks, the main one being lower prices. They are possible due to lower costs from not having a shop, only a warehouse in a low-cost area. By flagging up a message saying how many items are in stock, a customer can be pushed into buying lest the item is not available if they hesitate. Hotel bookings show how many other people are also looking at the accommodation. This may be fiction but it seems to work. It is more pressure than persuasion and has its limitations. Some items are well suited to online sales but others, food for example, may never go beyond 15% of sales with the majority of customers preferring to visit the shop and pick for themselves. When self-service, later to become supermarkets, replaced over the counter sales, it was said this would de-personalise sales to the detriment of the service and in many ways that is what has happened. A friendly, knowledgeable face is always welcoming in a store and the more upmarket it is, the more personal will be the service.

5 | PRODUCTION

Production in a manufacturing company is the factory where the products are made. A sales company that buys it products, probably as importers bringing in goods from low cost parts of the world, regards its purchasing department as production. Companies with intangibles such as banks and insurers create
products, and they call them products, which are financial arrangements for customers. The theme starts with divergent thinking and becomes convergent thinking. The divergent process is creative. The designers will have listened to the sales staff and learned what pleases or annoys customers. Sometimes the designers play a hunch of their own and suggest an innovation to sales. When the new idea is agreed, the process becomes convergent. The multitude of ideas and variables have to become a product, to converge into something with which a customer can identify. Any persuasion is used to get colleagues to collaborate. Usually this results in orders from management. It is all about producing more at a lower cost.

Pressure is applied to suppliers. It used to be that a dominant company would treat its suppliers as part of the team. They had to be profitable to stay in business and continue to supply. When purchasing shifted to the far east, that loyalty evaporated and gave way to squeezing to the death. It became a race to the bottom chasing lower prices with quality defined only in accordance with a written specification. Food producers supplying large supermarkets complain bitterly about being squeezed on price. Some try replacing the big orders with local market sales at higher prices and lower volumes. The purchasing side of a company relies on stress. It is almost culturally the opposite of sales.

6 | ADMINISTRATION

The bigger the company, the more bureaucratic its procedures. Money has to be received, recorded and paid to staff and suppliers. Regulations apply to almost everything and compliance is a vital part of modern existence. Checks are made to ensure that working conditions are safe. The quality of the product has to be checked and recorded. The exuberance of sales and the muscular effort of production meets under the umbrella of administration where counting will show whether the company is profitable or not.

7 | MANAGEMENT AND DIRECTORS

Guiding the forces of a company requires skill to handle the various personalities involved. Whether the person at the top is the founder and owner or has risen up through the ranks, they must be able to deal with everyone in the company with friendly confidence. The forward thrust of any company requires the chief to be attentive to customers. Cash flows through the business like water flowing into a bath with an open plug hole; more has to flow in than flows out. Money is spent on production and quality has to be maintained for on that the company’s reputation depends. Cutting back is a risk. Knowing what is going on is essential for decision making and it is to administration that the chief turns for information. Often, it is knowing the right question that is more difficult than understanding the answer.

Directors are answerable to shareholders. This creates a short-term vision. It may not suit a slower shift in the market calling for greater investment that would take longer to convert into profit. What a successful company is doing today is seldom the business formula to sustain them for years to come. Somewhere, out there, is an unknown company doing something new which could catch the incumbent unawares. It is a fear that keeps directors awake at night. Should more be spent on trialling new ideas to see if they have a potential? Perhaps the easiest way forward to is to buy potential competitors and either cultivate them or smother them. Change is a constant.

8 | GOVERNMENT AND SERVICES

Profit orientated companies are the main employers. Most of the rest of the jobs are with government and utility companies including military and emergency services. To understand the attitude amongst the staff it is easiest to compare them to administrators. The theme is obedience. This is especially so in the military. Nowhere is there a concept of customer. Persuasion is absent. Innovation hardly ever happens and when it does it very likely came from a consultant brought in from the private sector. Change is disliked and resisted. Incumbents are said to be there
TYPES OF JOBS

for the duration and a good pension; maximising pay is not their aim and they prefer to be away from the competitive stress they believe pervades profit seeking companies.

I remember in the 1950s in England letters from government officials were always signed, “Your humble servant”. Now they are not signed at all and across the letter in bold will be a threat of imprisonment if the letter is not answered within a few days. And that is in a democracy!

9 | CONCLUSION

From the above descriptions of jobs, it can be seen that there is a role for all personality types. It is not a matter of intelligence tests but more of finding the style of working to which a person is best suited. People move within a company and between companies. Often, they want more money but not always. It can be job satisfaction which drives them. Everyone wants to be appreciated and wanted. If they can do what they enjoy doing, they will do it better than if they are working only for the money and to escape at the end of the day.

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