

Ways of Working and Organization in Exploration

By

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During the last three decades the world has seen significant changes in organizational structures, which have had their impact on petroleum exploration units. Command and control structures with strong hierarchies and vertical functional structures have been replaced by flatter organizations. Informal networks critical to the functioning of the organization were often lost in the process of change. Consequently, organizational structures have developed that formalize critical networks and that emphasize organizational and individual learning, and sharing and development of knowledge in an explicit manner as a prerequisite of meeting goals.

Effectively, there is no two-dimensional way of describing such an organization. A single (published) diagram of an organization can be confining. It encourages behaviors and a culture specific to the relationships exhibited by it and can discourage other desirable behaviors and cultures. An organization can be viewed as a kaleidoscope of networks and frequently some or all people wear more than one hat according to their knowledge and skills. A snapshot at any moment may reveal people working together, adding value and knowledge on prospects and leads, at another fostering and improving their skills, at another developing and facilitating processes, or improving ways of working in self-managed teams.

While there is no specific formula or shape for such an entity the concept can be described as a “Transformer Organization,” with the capability for its people to realign themselves into patterns to meet any challenge by the external business environment. In an exploration organization the ability to reorder, renew, and disband teams in anticipation of new and changed priorities would reflect such an organization. This requires an awareness of the total skill complement of all individuals including critical gaps in relation to goals of the exploration unit. A learning culture is vital, including the ability to absorb critical lessons for guiding future activity. In small- or medium-sized exploration entities, where the people resource is constrained, such ways of working maximize effectiveness.