

What is meant by the term “Organizational Excellence”? Its meaning can be as ambiguous as the term itself. To “organize” means to improve individual and group efficiency while “excellence” is a judgment of performance, or effectiveness. Striking a balance between efficiency and effectiveness is therefore essential. Time is also important since performance is often measured by it. For this paper, I define “Organizational Excellence” as an established system of procedures, protocols, and structures which achieves goals perpetuated over time.

Efficiency comes through procedures, protocols, and structures which determine the mechanics of how an organization operates. Procedures establish how complex activities are accomplished. Circumstances ranging from the laws of physics to geo-political/socio-economic conditions inform their creation. They can also be taught to successive members and provide a predictable set of outcomes. Protocols define the interaction between groups of people and organizations which establishes authority. This is true both internally, in the establishment of leadership; and externally, by how organizations give, and are given, authority through charters and policy. Structure facilitates it all through the division of duties across an organization to assign accountability and reduce redundancies.

All organizations strive to be effective in what they do. No matter what sector, they exist in order to achieve some desired steady-state or end-state. If they are ineffective in that goal, then some form of change to the previously discussed procedures, protocols, and structure is necessary in order for that organization to be successful. It is essential for an organization to be effective in its mission, or make progress toward it, to be relevant. Doing so repetitively over time demonstrates reliability and thereby justifies its existence. It also establishes that organization’s authority through reputation, perhaps one of the greatest forms of endorsement.

Recognizing organizational excellence can also be problematic unless you have an idea of what to look for. I think its identification can be done by examining an organization's performance during times of uncertainty and change. These instances highlight abilities to prepare, adapt, and refocus within a period of time. Therefore, transitions are the litmus of excellence. Organizational excellence is present when an effective organization can successfully transition its leadership and/or its procedural methods with minimal disruption.

Transitions in leadership have historically been times of uncertainty and speculation. Will circumstances or outputs improve? Will they get worse? Can I (an external organization) still depend on them to do what I need them to? Questions like these can easily result in instability and/or a loss in confidence. The greater the instability, the greater an organization's efforts must be to resolve them. Therefore, any change in decision authority should be definitive, and as seamless and swift as possible. Definitive change eliminates any doubt about who is in charge. Seamlessness limits disruption of service and speed limits its exposure.

Procedural methods should always be adapting to changes. Over time, an organization will be subject to forces outside of its control, whether they be political or environmental. That entity must prove itself able to adapt to change since organizational excellence is only achieved and maintained over time. Watching how an organization adapts can highlight areas of inefficiency as weaknesses are exposed and then addressed, or not addressed. Excellence is demonstrated when change can be managed with minimal effort, which limits the amount of disruption in routines, and still produce desired results within the new circumstances.

Lastly, organizations are nothing without the people who operate it. An organization that invests in its members encourages loyalty and limits turn-over. This can be done in numerous ways such as providing opportunities for training and advancement and considering workplace

policies that encourage innovation. Membership should also include people who can personally identify with the mission. This ensures that the organization does not lose sight of its purpose and thereby promotes effectiveness. All these contribute to an organizational culture. Culture must be promoted, and monitored, to ensure a healthy climate that strengthens members' connection to the organization and each other.

As described, "organizational excellence" is a complex achievement. It requires method in a recorded system of procedures, protocols, and structures. It also requires a reliable attainment of organizational goals over time to demonstrate that the team can accomplish its mission. Meeting these goals requires functional internal and external relationships as well as an appropriate degree of adaptability. Workforce must be developed and enabled. Successfully achieving only one of these does not make an organization "excellent", however. This can only be claimed by organizations who possess all of these qualities, and who demonstrate them simultaneously time and again.

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