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## The Answer is Communication and Leadership. But What Was the Question?

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Over the years, I've been frustrated by sundry retreats and problem solving sessions concluding all paths lead to communication and leadership. Using various TQM tools and group processing techniques, we would isolate these as the "root cause" of all our ails. Based on our "scientific" analysis, the classic interventions were prescribed: more newsletters, team meetings, more training in communication and leadership for all! One year later, the process would repeat itself.

I believe this circular, misguided phenomenon can be explained by Dr. Elliott Jaques' total systems model for managerial leadership, Requisite Organization, featured in an article series by David Creelman during August and September, 2000.

The question is context. We all exist within it. We all want to have it – *in a way that is meaningful to us, personally*, not too broad or too obvious. Without *appropriate* context, we cry for more leadership, more communication. Implementing requisite organizational practices creates the organizational context, which provides each employee with context (leadership and communication) at a precise and satiating level.

Jaques says hierarchies are natural, and, hence, there are scientific, nonnegotiable, laws surrounding them. This explains why that even with the bad press hierarchies receive, humans continue to intuitively structure their organizations this way. Unfortunately, we fail to reap the

authentic benefits hierarchies can convey by violating the laws surrounding them.

Simply put, there is one right number of layers (strata) for an organization. There are distinct levels of task complexity found within these strata.

Next, people's capacity to deal with complexity varies, and it also occurs in distinct and measurable levels. Matching people's ability with jobs is paramount.

Within a reporting chain, only one job should appear in each stratum. Both your manager's **role complexity** and his **ability** to deal with complexity must fall in the next higher stratum.

When this is the case, BINGO, you've got appropriate context -- something we like to call leadership and communication. Even organizations with the best of intentions unwittingly create dysfunction by improperly placing roles and people within these strata.

Get the organizational structure right. Match people's ability to their roles. Dysfunction plummets. Satisfaction soars.

It's not magic; it's science. Because of that, requisite organizational theory applies to all hierarchal organizations - even yours. The theories have been validated, and the results can be duplicated.

What are you waiting for? Your next retreat?

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