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AN UNEASY SYMBIOSIS
A Grounded Theory of Virtual Organisation

by

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Abstract

In the organisation of work, significant change is afoot. Due to recent advances in Communication and Information Technology (CT/IT), new forms of organisation are now possible, and increasingly advantageous. These new forms of organisation are 'enabled' by advanced CT/IT, most notably the Internet and its associated software. The use of advanced CT/IT extends the possibilities for the way in which activities may be organised over time, geographic space and across organisational boundaries. For this reason the new organisations are often called Virtual Organisations (VO).

From an Organisational Psychology perspective the VO is relatively unique. It potentially presents social psychological issues significantly different to those experienced in conventional forms of organisation. Using a case-study approach, the present thesis develops a theoretical conceptualisation of some of the basic social processes involved in a VO. The Grounded Theory method is used as the primary methodology. This inductive approach is supplemented and enriched by a quantitative assessment of organisational culture within the participating VO.

The central concepts yielded by the analysis are "Maintaining Independence", "Collaboration", "Formalising the Informal", "Self Management", "Regression

towards the Conventional”, and “Independence Overload”. The ensuing theory centers around the process of “Achieving Symbiosis” which emerged as the core category of the Grounded Theory. This refers to the process whereby those involved in VO must accomplish a balance between two competing motivations intrinsic to the virtual mode of organisation: The “Maintenance of Independence”, and “Collaboration”.

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For
Ross Jamieson Young

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