CHAPTER 5
'OUTSIDE-IN': PERSONALIZING THE MARKET

Overview

During the period of this study, TechSoft was undergoing a series of transformational efforts designed to make the U.S. subsidiary (and by extension all employees) more responsive to the local market. The company as a whole was also seeking to respond to industry trends that focused both technology development and the provision of services more intently on the customer. Changes at a global level were focused on improving communication to and support of customers on new product releases, while at the same time attempting to change perceptions of the company as stodgy and slow to change. In other words, the company's challenge in responding to economic and industry trends was largely perceived as a marketing problem.

As mentioned in the Introduction, this focus on the market emerged after World War II in response to changing patterns of business ownership (Knights & Morgan 1991). Since that time, experts from all disciplines have problematized 'the market' and 'consumers,' defining both new areas of risk and new arenas for expert intervention. Many of these technologies are quantitative, measurable, or financial, and are intended to mitigate risks both outwards with the market, and also inwards with the corporate practices. For example, for publicly-held companies, success (even survival) now requires demonstrating 'shareholder value.' The imperative has become increasingly strong since the mid-1980s when companies in mature industries did not adequately invest their excess cash flow:

> In each of these cases, the stock market predictably penalized the companies' shares. This led to the infamous "value gap," i.e., the difference between the value of the company if it were operated to maximize shareholder value and its current market value. A positive "value gap" was an invitation to well-financed corporate raiders to bid for the company and replace incumbent management. (Rappaport 1998:1-2)

Appadurai (1988:4) reminds us that psychological and cultural factors "interact to create economic value in specific social situations." In the case of TechSoft, a focus on 'shareholder value' is partly a response from a formally structured organization which is disconnected from the market (Du Gay & Salaman 1992:620). Sustaining profit margin projections and raising awareness about the stability and long-term health of the company relative to its competition also positions the company attractively to financial and industry analysts. Coupled together, these factors have rallied corporate management teams to attend to maximizing the stock and market value of the company, while at the same time contributing to a growing crescendo of market discourse that permeates every aspect of life within and beyond the corporation.

During the 1980s, a new form of marketing emerged, a field of expertise called branding, in which establishing a distinctive corporate identity – rather than product identity – is the objective. The branding concept hit full stride at the point when marketing companies had begun to recognize the saturation of their targeted audiences, and thus the downturn in advertising spending (Klein 2000).

But this is not just an exercise to increase revenues in marketing companies; it is part of a growing set of technologies focused on meeting perceived risks in both the market and customer perceptions. BusinessWeek now has an annual survey of brands, and during the 2002 report they claim that the economic downturn makes a strong brand an even greater imperative for success:

> Now, more than ever, companies see the power of a strong brand. At a time when battered investors, customers, and employees are questioning whom they can trust, the ability of a familiar brand to deliver proven value flows straight to the bottom line. If, shaken by the plummeting stock market and concerned about the security of their jobs, consumers start cutting back on spending, they're more likely to stick with names they know they can rely on. (2002)

It is thus not surprising that TechSoft's Global Marketing organization was established during this period of perceived risk, and that it has developed an increasingly prominent role with the company in recent years. During this period of economic downturn and problems with market perception, TechSoft has used these technologies and undertaken a massive effort to raise brand awareness. This has served in part to give the company the appearance of stability from the outside while the massive, repetitive restructurings (which will be described in Chapter 6) were underway. Activities have included *brand identity* activities, intended to create an emotional consumer response, and *corporate identity* efforts which are more internally-focused (Cheston 2001:64). This chapter focuses on TechSoft's internal corporate identity efforts, and describes how the U.S. management team has taken the priorities of the global organization and personalized them, making U.S. employees complicit in both TechSoft's ongoing focus on market-related goals like the reorganizations, as well as more explicit goals of revenue, profitability, and market share.

The social sciences have long-standing and varied understandings of what drives both people and society; for example, Marx gave primacy to economics and Durkheim to psycho-social factors. Similarly, Beyer (1990) argues that both *calculative* and *affective* technologies are used to elicit the desired level of commitment in high tech employees. Calculative approaches are financial, and are measured at both the individual and organizational level, and affective approaches are emotional or psychological. Beyer goes on to say that it is rare for an analysis of both approaches to be included in the same study as they are in this dissertation (1990:22-24). I would argue that it is critical for this project to consider how both approaches are at play in corporations today, including how the two may work in tandem as the junctures deemed most critical by management.

Marketing

There are a number of different marketing organizations at TechSoft. With the exception of Global Marketing, all the marketing groups that reside in the United States have region-specific responsibilities: a 'field marketing' team responsible for event execution, a group that provides sales support through competitive intelligence and customer references, a corporate communications and analyst relations group, and other teams like telemarketing services. For the purposes of this discussion, I will only be discussing the activities of the Global Marketing organization. Analysis of the other organizations would provide additional visibility into the ways these teams have attempted to make sense and act on TechSoft's growing market focus in the context of their own responsibilities and work practices. In addition to the marketing efforts targeted externally, corporate identity efforts have included regular communications to TechSoft employees about the purpose and importance of the branding efforts. This section will focus why and how employees were targeted, and for what purpose. An analysis of the outward-facing messages would present a rich area for further research, but one that is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Branding

During the Industrial Revolution, new manufacturing technologies enabled mass production of consumer goods[1] that were previously handmade and locally distributed (Klein 2000, Olsen 1995:249), and resulted in early trademarks (Olsen 1995:249). In the same period, packaging concepts from boxes to cans to tubes allowed much broader distribution of products (Olsen 1995:259). These factors resulted in greater competition, and in a greater focus on how to get the right message to the prospective buyer, the consumer. Manufacturers began to distinguish their companies and their products with logos and other advertising elements like consumer guidance. The messages in advertising mirror the social concerns of the era; the earliest themes cajoled consumers to "use the best so as not to be left behind" (Olsen 1995:250). Urban living meant that many families no longer had homemade vegetable and fruit preserves, so later messages expounded on the convenience of store-bought products over homemade, to address the stigma of buying canned goods. By the early 1900s, personal hygiene products were being mass-produced and marketed to consumers, and advertising of soap, toothpaste, and toilet paper explicitly focused on "situational contexts that emphasized social stigma for impression management" (Olsen 1995:265).

While there was clearly a consumer focus during the Industrial Revolution, advertising occurred primarily at the product level. One hundred years later, Klein (2000) argues that there has been a substantive shift, triggered in part by the ideas of management theorists. The shift has been from the manufacturing of goods to production of the brands themselves. She says:

> What these companies produced primarily were not things, [management theorists] said, but images of their brands. Their real work lay not in manufacturing but marketing. This formula, needless to say, has proved enormously profitable, and its success has companies competing in a race towards weightlessness: whoever owns the least, has the fewest employees on the payroll and produces the most powerful images, as opposed to products, wins the race. (2000:4)

In the past twenty to thirty years, the branding element of marketing activities has emerged in force as a new form of expertise, drawing from the fields of design,

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[1] Early arrivals into this market space are now known as heritage brands.

marketing, and from the social sciences to help companies optimally position themselves and their products in the eyes of the consumer.

'Culture jamming' is a form of protest in which activists alter the appearance of large public advertising. They retain the visual integrity of the billboard or the sign, but at the same time alter the message. This results in a familiarity of the image or look of the advertising (and thus an association with the brand), but at the same time, a jarring of the senses because of the altered message. Nome says that using "Saussure's framework, this can be explained as adding negative messages to the sign's signifier, and the goal is that consumers will include these messages when they go through their sensemaking cycles" (Nome:6). In her book tracing these changes, Klein's objective is not to incite resistance to the brands, but rather to document a process that she believes is already underway. While culture jamming was originally targeted at specific companies, now it is the brands themselves that are under attack. Klein (2000:5) believes this is because this form of branding has become an invasion of everything from the most enormous to the most minute of public and private spaces, and that the young radicals undertaking these activities have the power to change the country, and maybe even the world, as the activist of the 1960s did. Klein's stance on the danger of brands is considered misplaced by some. Hilton says:

> Keep the skepticism on hold for a moment: brands perform some important and positive social functions. They hold companies to the promises they make about the quality and usefulness of their

> products and services. … The very prominence of brands, the fact that they present a tasty target for critics, means that they are held to public account in a way that businesses without famous brands are not. (2002)

Hilton goes on to say that this could be leveraged to public advantage if we encouraged “big business as a partner for social progress.” However, in his writing he does nothing to suggest how such a goal might be accomplished, especially in light of the enormous momentum and capital which is behind companies’ current branding initiatives.

I am skeptical of Hilton’s argument in part because of the magnitude of branding efforts, and how tightly they are interwoven with economic changes and understandings of the consumer. One author concludes that while recognition of companies and products was previously established through repetition, the economic context for the focus on branding is nothing less than a “profound shift in the unit of optimization” (Keeley 2001:16). Rather than focusing on efficiencies in manufacturing and distribution, he claims that “the new imperative is to assess what customers need, especially the subtle and deep needs customers cannot themselves articulate” (2001:16). Marketing provides tools to maximize market opportunities for companies; it is not surprising that advertising evolves into branding at the historical juncture when a corporate focus on the customer has reached a new level of concern.

Anthropologists have positioned themselves to take advantage of this growing focus on the customer; the increased number of articles on anthropology in the popular press is a testament to anthropologists’ involvement in marketing and consumer research, as well as the media fascination with social scientists doing this work (see for example Boss 2001, Hafner 1999, Henricks 2002, Jones 1999, Kaplan 1998, Konrad 2000, Kupfer 2000, Le Beau 2000, Walsch 2001, Wellner 2002). In a very interesting essay about developments in anthropology, Suchman (2000c) talks about the ways in which anthropologists have leveraged this consumer focus to their advantage. She says that the volume of popular press articles demonstrates “the emergence of anthropology itself as commercially consumable during this period.” A growing number of practicing anthropologists have recognized the perceived need to understand the consumer, and have positioned themselves as the experts to meet those needs; in fact, many of the articles on anthropologists in the popular press have talked about anthropologists’ role in consumer research. Suchman says the message of anthropology-as-brand is that anthropologists offer “uniquely intimate access to relevant Others,” and are at the same time perceived as an “exotic” in the corporate context. The concern of Suchman and others (Miller 1998, Sherry 1995) is that without some self-awareness, through our research insights social scientists may contribute to the greedy growth of transnational corporations, because “in taking up the analysis of consumable things we find ourselves contributing to, rather than refiguring, dominant forms of commodity fetishism” (Miller 1998:9). However, Suchman (2000c) further asserts that if we remain aware of these items as “an expression of contemporary social relationships,” we can retain our integrity as anthropologists by locating and analyzing the power dynamics in which these objects and their production are embedded.

TechSoft Corporate Identity

Because many employees are touch-points with the customer, brand value and meaning must be internalized in all employees in order for a (re)branding initiative to succeed. Leonhardt and Faust (2001:11) say "great brands are built from the inside out. A brand needs to inspire and motivate the people within the organization – before it can be successful in the marketplace." And later, "when employees identify with the brand values, they are able to internalize the brand promise." At the same time, negative experiences of the company impact consumer understanding of the brand (Dutton *et al* 1994). In the high-tech sector change is a constant; as companies re-organize and re-invent themselves, employee understanding of the company's latest message becomes a critical success factor. Thus, in the first three months of TechSoft internal brand awareness campaign, the message from senior management was that reaching the customer is about a coherent presentation of the company, and to communicate in plain language about issues that mattered most to customers. Giving a consistent, smooth, connected appearance to the company was imperative during this tumultuous period.

At the end of the third quarter in 2000, TechSoft's new messaging and positioning campaign began. The first internal event was a kickoff mail issued by the Chairman of the Board to all TechSoft employees worldwide. It introduced the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) and communicated the importance of the branding initiative to all employees:

> It is important that all employees understand the rationale behind the decision to create a new brand focus for TechSoft. In the late 1990s, the global acceptance of the Internet required TechSoft to quickly position itself as an Internet solution provider. The fastest way to accomplish this was to focus all business identity around [TechSoft's Internet solutions]. By doing this, TechSoft was able to articulate a change in our corporate culture while re-inventing itself as being a major player in the e-business revolution.

He then went on to say:

> The combination of the equity garnered from [TechSoft's Internet product focus] and the market shift back to profitability and efficiency makes this a perfect time to reinstate TechSoft as the master brand. This allows us to take advantage of our heritage and history of value creation in the prevailing environment of profitable e-business. The evolution of the TechSoft logo brings a more contemporary feel to the brand …

The following day, U.S. employees received an email from the regional corporate communications group, with details and links about programs targeted outwards at the U.S. market. Two weeks later, employees in the United States received an email directly from the Chief Marketing Officer, providing an update on advertising and branding activities. These communications were reinforced by several more worldwide mails before the end of the year. One of these communications provided detailed information about the Global Marketing organizations' alignment to support the strategic priorities for the coming year.

Rollout activities at the end of 2000 included a Unison initiative; the ongoing objective of this program is to ensure that all communications on the company’s products and services communicate the same message, and thus reinforces the power of the brand. An email from the Board to employees worldwide stated “we must communicate in a clear, concise, and consistent manner about all elements of the TechSoft ecosystem – in essence in ‘Unison.’” During the same period, a Unison reference handbook was issued to all TechSoft employees, explaining the ways the brand should be used, and providing positioning statements for each TechSoft product. Employees who brought their laptops to the Information Technology team for maintenance received it back with the company’s branded advertisements on the system desktop. If the computer was at rest and the screensaver activated, a progression of TechSoft advertisements were displayed in a slideshow. Employees who were enthusiastic about the campaign or particular advertisements could also acquire glossy, poster-sized reproductions of advertisements for their cubicles during this period.

In the first quarter of 2001, the Chief Marketing Officer presented a keynote speech at the sales kick-off meeting. Attendees were Sales, Pre-Sales, and management teams for all of the Americas. He spoke of market perception of TechSoft, the need to revitalize the brand. He then outlined his plans for the TechSoft branding activities in the coming year, and TechSoft employees’ responsibilities in that effort. By 2001, Global Marketing was the fastest growing organization worldwide, and the Chief Marketing Officer had been appointed to the extended global Board of Directors. In conjunction with other communications at targeted events, these efforts to educate employees about the significance of the brand and their role as stewards have continued on a regular basis through the period of my study.

Corporate Communications

As with many corporations, the U.S. offices of TechSoft are dispersed across North American time zones and cities. This makes intra-company communication a challenge. Most critical announcements from senior management are provided by email or conference call; these are often the primary vehicle for communication at a workgroup level as well. There are no in-person all-company meetings, though the regional sales teams come together face-to-face several times a year for training and rallying purposes. Smaller workgroups may also choose to fly to a common location and meet face-to-face for training, business planning and budgeting, or other shared activities. TechSoft's customer-facing employees are usually the ones generating revenue. They may work side by side with other TechSoft employees on sales cycles or consulting engagements, but for the most part these employees spend more time at customer locations or in airports than at an TechSoft office.[2]

[2] Both groups travel frequently as an expected part of their work week, but the travel is of very different qualities. Sales and Presales may travel to two or more cities in a week to speak with different customers. Because of the nature of their work, Sales and Presales may be well networked with one another, but somewhat disengaged from activities at TechSoft's corporate headquarters. Consultants may spend weeks or months at the same customer location, flying out on Sunday night or Monday morning, and returning home on Friday afternoon. Consultants substantially more time engaged with the customer, which results in a strong awareness of business practices and politics at the customer location, and an even greater disengagement (than in the sales organization) with the ongoing internal changes at TechSoft.

In the United States, we are more conscious today of the impact of asynchronous communication as voicemail becomes ubiquitous in office environments everywhere. What currently exists as a source of frustration in phone communication is commonly accepted part of email exchanges – so interestingly, people have different expectations for computer-mediated communication (CMC) than for the telephone. This is another example of communication and expectations which is very much context-dependent. Because TechSoft employees are dispersed all over the world, asynchronous communication is an everyday reality; employees at TechSoft must learn to execute their work tasks under these conditions. For situations that require complex, shared decision-making, conference calls, networked meetings where files can be jointly viewed, or videoconferences are held to supplement communications in the case where asynchronous, written exchange is insufficient. Employees appear to accept this type of communication and team dynamics as a matter of fact, though many express that this is easier done when some rapport has been established in face-to-face interactions first.

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is one of many forms of communication in the daily life of TechSoft employees. In a work context where transnational collaboration is daily practice, CMC is used to conduct business and sustain relationships over distance, and so it becomes an integral part of day-to-day reality. Employees may have friends or colleagues with whom they only have electronic contact, engage in behaviors[3] that they would not engage in except online, and use a vocabulary that is not used elsewhere in their lives. Thus it becomes important to understand that computer-mediated communication is both situated in the larger socio-cultural context in which its participants and the technology they use reside, while at the same time it takes place within a self-contained subculture (with its own lexicon, space, sense of time). Some theorists like Sherry Turkle (1995) and Bill Nichols (1996) have already addressed this dichotomy, but many social scientists considering the implications of computer technology and electronic communication fail to consider and describe both aspects.

In an article entitled "The economies of online cooperation: Gifts and public goods in cyberspace", Peter Kollock (1999) theorizes about sharing information online, and ties these ideas to anthropological notions about gift-giving. He says that any piece of information posted to a public forum becomes a public good, thus through an act of communication one person can have as great an impact as a large organized group. Motivations for such an act might be to get something in return, to improve one's reputation, to improve the context, or because someone might need it. In other words, knowledge exchange is a way to develop social capital in a virtual community. With little to no cost of distribution, the likelihood of sharing information increases. Thus,

[3] I am thinking here of activities like gender-swapping, which is not an atypical behavior in online forums, though not applicable to exchanges in the corporate context.

sharing information in online contexts becomes a new way of producing and reproducing power relations.

At TechSoft there are some forums for exchange like the ones described by Kollock; the Information Technology (IT) group has set up a few newsgroups for global exchange within their organization, and the consulting group has also established knowledge-sharing forums. However, the use of these are restricted within a job type or organization, and thus most of the sharing and exchange of this nature occurs within workgroups and/or project teams. In addition, the use of regional and company-wide distribution lists is controlled by a central authority in the intranet maintenance team, and thus large scale communications are addressed top down to the entire organization; rarely is an opportunity for equal dialogue and exchange available through the corporate email system across the breadth of the organization. The vehicles for corporate communications thus reproduce existing power relations.

In addition to Global Marketing efforts to re-invigorate the company's brand identity, in the past two years, there has been a growing body of communication regarding the customer-centric approach to employees worldwide, from both global and local senior management, including messaging about a new 'Outside-In' approach and the growing visibility and discussion about the quarterly Customer Satisfaction survey. In general, this portion of the chapter focuses on company rhetoric and practices around mobilizing the organization towards a customer-centered approach, and meeting (or giving the appearance of meeting) customer needs. This has not been a smooth, predictable trajectory, for as Townley (1993:539) says “meanings and discursive practices are constant sites of struggle … the seemingly insatiable drive toward greater clarification … rather than replacing texts, adds to them.” This has proven true at TechSoft, where management efforts to focus on the market have been an iterative, evolving process. While new ways of describing market focus have emerged, there are also attempts to give old practices new urgency.

Getting Focused on ‘Outside-In’

At the beginning of the fourth quarter of 2000, the CEO held the usual quarterly results ‘town hall’ meeting with employees of the Americas region. Many employees that were in the headquarters office sat in the auditorium, in other offices they sat grouped together in conference rooms. Employees could also choose to continue working during the meeting and watch a video rendition of the broadcast on the intranet, or listen in via teleconference. After the meeting, both the video version and the teleconference were available on the intranet in a digitally recorded format, for those who had obligations that prevented them from attending the meeting at the scheduled time.

In addition to reviewing the third quarter results and establishing the sales focus through the end of the year, the CEO spent some time talking about TechSoft’s vision and mission. He described a business plan whose objective was to enable TechSoft to become an ‘Outside-In’ software company and thus meet the demands of the market. Following the meeting, an email with several attachments was forwarded by the Senior Vice President of Corporate Communications to all employees. The text document was three pages single-spaced, and the presentation was three slides. The materials provided a little bit of detail about TechSoft's complex product offerings in relationship to market opportunities, and outlined some of the organizational alignment efforts that would accompany the Outside-In initiative.

I did not read the material closely at the time, and I suspect that many other employees didn't read it at all, since email saturation of employees has been an ongoing topic of concern at TechSoft. In retrospect, the documentation made clear that Outside-In was primarily a software development initiative. The CEO explained that the Development organization had been working hard to provide the kind of business-to-business and Internet-capable products our customers were looking for. He communicated that the first step in the new strategy was to provide a greater focus on customized development projects for customers. Customer Development Projects (CDPs) are used by TechSoft to provide functionality that a customer wants, but that may not be planned for the core product. The customer pays for the project, and TechSoft supplies developers to execute it. CDPs provide a way to meet the demands of customers with deep pockets, and the approach comes at relatively little expense to TechSoft. Most importantly, the process does not require any major changes to TechSoft's overall software development strategy.

Outside-In was a new company chant that was oft-repeated in corporate communications, for example, after the quarterly results call where Outside-In was introduced, the following message was included in a follow up email:

> This alignment will re-define the roles and responsibilities of the organizations that will execute our vision. For the first time in the history of TechSoft, Marketing will drive the organization and be in charge of the brand, messaging/communications and delivery media. This is a critical step in ensuring a true 'outside-in' focus and delivering on market expectations.

However, with the exception of the Global Marketing team, the role of other organizations in the Outside-In initiative was only articulated with a broad brush. Besides a greater focus on Customer Development Projects, it was unclear to some how these pronouncements represented real change, and what it would mean for us in our daily work; it was not actionable. However, the goal was clearly to change market perception, because in the same email that was issued to employees after the call, the CEO said:

> This alignment is not about cost cutting or massive reorganization. It is about meeting market needs, sustaining market leadership and driving for accelerated growth – growth for our company, our shareholders, our partners and our employees.

Successes and next steps to the Outside-In plan were not communicated in subsequent meetings with the employee base, and it does not appear that the Outside-In approach significantly shaped business plans in the year that followed. As mentioned earlier, the end of 2000 and 2001 were not especially successful for TechSoft, and so, despite an effort to communicate a shared corporate vision, the Outside-In approach drifted out of employee consciousness on the winds of re-organization that year.

The Customer Satisfaction Survey

Every year since 1987, TechSoft has conducted a globally coordinated survey of its customers, and the data has been logged in a system driven by TechSoft software.[4] Customer Satisfaction is considered a critical success factor for corporations like TechSoft because satisfaction can be directly correlated with customer retention, which in turn impacts license revenue, fiscal health, positive press and analyst perceptions, and shareholder value. Thus the survey is a technology aligned with the market-relations discourse. At the same time, raising awareness about the survey's purpose and measures serves to keep employees subject to the discourse as well (Du Gay 1996:52, Manley 2001).

The high level plan (including purpose, objectives, deliverables) for the survey is available on the company intranet, but only the earliest posted results are available for review. Results are considered company-confidential and access is highly restricted. Beginning in 2002, quarterly results have included information about customer satisfaction, as a way to educate employees about the current state of TechSoft-customer relations. While survey results are not publicly available, the process is public knowledge for interested parties.[5] One

[4] The survey may have been conducted prior to 1987, but no information regarding prior processes was available.

[5] In this case the distinction between process and practice is an important one. Here I am intending to explain the standard process. The practice may vary somewhat or substantially.

survey is designed for worldwide use. It is adjusted annually, and is approved by the Board before it is administered locally. Each subsidiary at TechSoft is responsible for assigning an individual or an organization to drive the customer satisfaction process each year. In the case of the United States, the Competitive Intelligence team (part of the regional marketing organization) works with a third-party vendor to collect feedback from customers and analyze the results. TechSoft does have both local customer support and telemarketing organizations, so it is interesting that marketing has been selected to drive the survey. It may be that they were selected as a relatively neutral party, since their services are not being measured in this process.

Twenty-five percent of the customer base is surveyed each quarter. The survey is conducted over the Internet or by phone, depending on the customer's preference. Responses are numeric on a scale of one to ten, and there are a few longer questions targeted at specific organizations within TechSoft. In general, the focus of the questions is on customer's experience of TechSoft [outward-facing] teams. If a customer survey results in a rating of less than six or other serious problems are uncovered at a customer during the survey, the sales representative and sales management are engaged to address the problem within forty-eight hours, as they have primary responsibility for the customer relationship. Staff in other organizations may be engaged to address issues, and escalations may also involve senior management. Once the survey is complete,

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For the purposes of this discussion, however, the variations between process and practice is of consolidated results are provided to all the relevant organizations, including Customer Support and Training.

As discussed in Chapter 2, contribution from the subsidiary to the parent organization has long been a standard metric for determining bonus payouts. More recently, customer satisfaction had been added as an additional metric on which all employees' bonuses are based to some degree. However, as I mentioned earlier, for employees that are non-revenue generating, this may have a disproportionate impact on bonus payout, especially because many of these employees have no interaction with the customer whatsoever.

Since 2002, senior management has been communicating more actively on the metrics from the survey. During the quarterly results call, current and target measures of customer satisfaction are now also reported, and employees are attentive in part because of the impact the metrics may have on their variable compensation. This is reinforced with email messages like the following one from the Executive Vice President (EVP) of Sales to the Sales organization:

> … the rating applies to all of us in customer facing positions. The effort to lift our customers' opinion of TechSoft in this area will require all of us to be more customer centric and focused on delivering value at every opportunity. As you know, many efforts are already underway to help us achieve our goals, things like sales effectiveness programs to help us better define the value our solutions can deliver and a renewed industry focus to help us better understand the customer's business needs. But it will take more than just these continuous improvement programs to raise the bar -- it will take each and every one of us to rededicate ourselves to the

less concern; the focus is the rhetoric supporting these activities.

> customer and making TechSoft their partner for services and solutions.
>
> I urge each of you to review the list above and ask yourself how you personally could improve the customer's experience in any or all of these areas. Remember, next to our employees, our customers are our most important asset. We need to make sure we protect and grow those assets to guarantee a bright future for them and for us.

While the rhetoric implies a substantial concern for these areas, financial incentives are still much more heavily weighted towards revenue achievement than these other factors. In addition, while many TechSoft America employees are in customer-facing positions, there are also many who provide services to internal customers – that is, other employees. These employees are not managed to the same performance standards as their customer-facing counterparts; their work activities and performance are rarely surveyed. While their work may be equally critical to the company's success, it is not subject to the same mechanisms of control because these roles are not constituted within the current market-relations discourse at TechSoft.

Personalizing Measures

In all cases, internalization of financial and more abstract measures like customer satisfaction is reinforced by a direct financial impact on the employee. For example, while revenue is a primary focus for the corporation at large, there is also recognition that not all employees can impact revenue, so messages to the entire employee base also emphasize contribution and profitability. While these measures are well understood at the senior management level, in the past several years they have been more actively communicated to the employee base as well, with the burden of responsibility placed on employees and line managers. Through these communications, awareness has grown across the Americas that employees will be personally impacted if profitability is not good (i.e. the region is not cost-effective in making revenue), and contribution levels are not also achieved. The penalty for failing to achieve these objectives is reduced (or no) bonus payouts, and for vested employees a negative impact on long term incentives and profit-sharing. Take for example this message from a new Chief Financial Officer regarding the logging of vacation time in the centralized time-tracking database:

> Please remember, vacation days taken and not recorded, appear as a liability on TechSoft's financial statements. Failure to record vacation days causes the vacation liability to be overstated, thereby reducing TechSoft's overall contribution and the contribution to each cost center. It is the responsibility of every employee and manager to input and approve vacation time …

The same message is now issued to all employees on a regular basis by the head of Payroll, using the same careful vocabulary and phrasing. The expectation is that the clear personal impact of these financial measures will heighten the awareness and compliance of all employees in meeting these objectives.

Regardless of function in the organization, both revenue generation and frugal spending by employees are encouraged. Before the regional sales model was put in place, this was a difficult balance to strike for U.S. employees who travelled the breadth of the U.S. (and even the Americas) on a weekly basis for sales and consulting opportunities. Some employees see their daily expenditures as part of the cost the company should pay for reduced quality of personal life at home. In contrast, European sales and consulting staff have reportedly different, more conservative spending habits. Perhaps this as a result of their proximity to the core; their travel requirements lead them through only one or two countries in Europe, and they are thus close to the home office to be reminded of organizational priorities.

In addition to raising awareness about organizational financial measures, these are personalized at an individual level; each employee is managed towards achievement of revenue or performance objectives in part through their compensation plan. These plans are consciously designed to encourage the desired behavior in employees. For compensation purposes, there are two distinct categories of employees: revenue-generating and non-revenue generating. These two distinct categories almost completely overlap with the market-centric versus techno-centric communities described in earlier chapters. However, “it is through language that governmental fields are composed, rendered thinkable and manageable” (Miller & Rose 1990:7), thus, these categories that focus on revenue do have particular meaning and use. For revenue-generating roles like Sales, Consulting, and Training, compensation is primarily tied to the amount of revenue the individual generates for the company.

Non-revenue generating staff (e.g. employees in the Information Technology group) are paid a flat bonus that is a fixed percentage of their base salary. In an article on management strategies targeted at Big Six accounting firm employees, the authors distinguish how mechanisms of control vary based on employees' to the firm's goals (Covaleski *et al* 1998). In a similar fashion, with the remainder of this chapter I will document the practices in use with different TechSoft employee populations and the behaviors they are intended to elicit. These practices reaffirm the power of the core – in this case U.S. senior management – by imposing corporate values and objectives on the employee base.

Revenue-generating employees

Employees that work in revenue-generating positions are frequently on the road, and are thus rarely physically proximate to the core – an TechSoft office. But because their work involves daily interaction with customers and prospects, there is little need for formal bureaucracy to keep these workers focused on the market. Compensation for these employees is determined in large part by the revenue they generate, which means that they are naturally focused on the most critical of corporate objectives. The compensation plans for these groups are among the most intricate in the company, and are modified during the annual budgeting process to ensure that these employees focus on the strategic objectives for that year. The following three sections describe how several of the revenue-generating roles – Account Executives, Consultants, and Instructors – are managed to the corporate metrics of revenue, contribution, and customer satisfaction. In the Introduction, I briefly addressed the work of Kunda (1992) and it's relevance for this dissertation. I argued that while the concept of normative control is quite useful, psycho-social mechanisms of control cannot be uniformly applied across populations with disparate work activities, different relationships to the global organization and market, and so on. Each of these roles can be grouped in the category of customer-facing and revenue-generating employees, but these following brief descriptions further highlight the unique ways each group is managed to corporate objectives. Exploring any one of these roles (and how individuals respond or resist the measures defined for their job) could be a dissertation in it's own right. The purpose of the sections below is to highlight the complex factors that impact the choices of these employees, and to contrast these (in a subsequent section) with the measures used to manage non-revenue-generating employees.

<u>Account Executives</u>

As mentioned previously, the primary responsibility of the regions is to sell software. In the world of sales, a Lead is a prospective customer or an existing customer who is evaluating the purchase of additional software. Success in sales revolves around the ability to get leads and cultivate them into deals – signed software contracts. The Pipeline is the list of leads, the size of the potential deal, when it would be expected to close, where it is in the sales cycle, and the weighting, which is the likelihood of the deal being actualized. Each sales organization is expected to have a pipeline large enough to meet its revenue target. The pipeline is the single most important internal measure of the company's projected revenue; the sales staff, their managers, and the executives to whom they report are all held accountable for 'pipeline health' and ultimately sales execution. At TechSoft, the responsibility to monitor, evaluate, analyze, and grow the pipeline rests in the hands of the U.S. sales management team and their direct reports. Sales staff meets and reports weekly, monthly, and quarterly to review the status of their pipeline.

Each employee in Sales and Presales is assigned a revenue target (called 'the quota') for the year. This number is based in part on job grade, seniority, and also on previous years' performance. These employees are responsible for representing TechSoft to customers and prospects, and for selling software and services. They receive a percentage of the revenue on the deals they help to close, and they may also benefit from accelerators[6] attached to strategic objectives. The bonus for hitting these objectives may be paid out quarter over quarter, but for the most part, Sales and Presales staff receive their bonuses at the end of February for the previous fiscal year. It is thus not uncommon to see some voluntary resignations from this group in the first quarter once the bonuses are paid out.

TechSoft uses the time management system on a worldwide basis to track vacation and sick time, which then gets automatically deducted from annual

[6] These multipliers are applied to the revenue for meeting targets early or achieving strategic objectives. The company sets the objectives during the annual budgeting and planning process.

quotas in the Human Resource system and reported electronically to the immediate supervisor. But as discussed in Chapter 3, it is used in varying degrees by different groups. The Account Executives are only responsible for tracking their time and travel activities only insofar as it impacts the cost of sales. The time management system is not a primary mechanism for controlling work-related behavior.

Consultants

The most well-reputed companies are able to command higher prices, and have greater success at either the top or bottom of the price scale, rather than in the middle (Keeley 2001). TechSoft ensures the elite status of its consulting services by offering consultants to customers at some of the highest rates in the industry. The rationale is that consulting services from the software vendor are more desirable than those of a third party. However, this puts the services of TechSoft consultants out of reach for some customers, as implementation costs represent a significant portion of the investment in a project. Some customers pay for one or two TechSoft consultants and bring the rest from a preferred service provider, others opt not to use TechSoft at all.

The consulting organization uses the time management system to track how much time should be billed and to which customers. Once Statement of Work paperwork is completed at the customer and at TechSoft, consultants are assigned to the project and a Sales Order is created to which they bill their time. Through a separate transaction in the same system, consultants also track all of their expenses, which, along with the charges for their time, are billed back to customers on a monthly basis. Expense reimbursement limits are well known, but they are also reinforced by the system; employees receive a system warning when dollar amount exceed the established thresholds. Reimbursements require the signature of the Consulting Manager, and in addition to this checkpoint, managers also receive monthly reports documenting the details of any exceptions. These reports are also provided in a summary format up through the ranks of consulting management.

The services of consulting staff are billed to customers at a daily rate. In order to be 'bonusable,' a consultant has to work a certain number of days per year. There are 227 'billable days' in the year (minus holidays and average number of vacation days). Consultants are also encouraged to stay abreast of new technologies with fourteen paid training days per year. Based on seniority, grade level, and other factors, a minimum threshold of billable days is established, after which point consultants begin to accrue bonus, which is paid out twice annually. In this way, consultants are encouraged to keep their *utilization* high; they move quickly from one project to the next, and try to avoid 'sitting on the bench' for more than a few days at a time.[7] Consultants may not bill every customer at the same rate, but a broader skillset allows the consultant to be billed out at a higher rate and assigned to a greater number of projects.

[7] These practices also discourage consultants from working on internal projects, as the billing rate is restricted and the work does not generate revenue. This in turn reduces the shared bonus pool, which impacts all consultants in the group. Thus, working internal projects carries a stigma at both an individual and workgroup level.

Consultants are thus also motivated to improve their skills to increase their billable rates and ultimately their bonus potential.

Instructors

Instructors in TechSoft's Training organization teach classes in TechSoft offices all over the U.S., and also occasionally on location at the customer. Instructors usually come to TechSoft with deep knowledge in their industry, and if they are not familiar with the software, they are trained on the products they will teach. This means that the company makes a heavy investment in training new instructors who have the right skills and experience. This approach is especially critical in the classroom context, where instructors must be able to speak the language of the industry (and the customer) with ease. As with consultants, instructors specialize in a certain area of the product, and gradually develop the skills to teach a greater and greater number of classes in their curriculum area. More senior instructors get first pick of the courses in their home office, so the broader the range of courses they are able teach, the less they are required to travel to achieve the minimum required days.

Registration for classes is handled via phone through a central registration center, and more recently over the Internet. There is a fixed rate for the courses; classes are no larger than twenty-four students, and they are not held for less than six participants. Because they have no control over classroom attendance, instructors receive a bonus based in part on the number of days spent teaching, and not the number of attendees in or amount of revenue generated by their classes. Similar to the utilization metrics used to manage consultants, this approach motivates instructors to agree to teach classes on days that they were not originally scheduled to work, and to learn other areas of the curriculum so that they can be as productive as possible. Bonus payout for instructors is contigent on minimum customer satisfaction scores; these employees thus see a direct correlation between their activities and their compensation.

The training group takes full advantage of TechSoft's software to manage the annual training calendar, customer course attendance, instructor and system allocation, and ultimately, the bonus payout for instructors. Bonuses for instructors are paid out twice a year, but the turnover rate for instructors is low and is not as clearly correlated to the bonus cycle as in sales. This may be because there are less options (than sales and consulting) to teach outside of TechSoft, and the benefits of seniority in this group are very clear.

Non-revenue-generating Employees

As mentioned earlier, non-revenue generating employees are usually bonused on a percentage of their base salary. These bonuses are largely MBO (Management by Objective) based. Payout is dependent on achievement of the overall revenue targets of the region, and so for these employees there is not the dynamic, role-based variety of measures that are applied to revenue-generating staff. There have been extensive studies of MBO practices in the management literature, but a summary of those studies suggests that the ability of MBO practices to effectively regulate behavior is still unclear (Kondrasuk 1981).

However, for the purposes of this study, it is less interesting whether these technologies are effective or not, rather, the question is “how and why, and with what effects, boundaries become imposed” (Townley 1993:529).

At TechSoft, as customer satisfaction and contribution have become a greater part of management focus, bonus plans have been adjusted in the re-engineering tradition to ensure that all employees are directly impacted by the successes and failures of the organization as a whole. Achievement of customer satisfaction and contribution goals now has a substantial impact on the bonus payout for non-revenue-generating employees. In conjunction with corporate metrics, bonus is determined by their manager based on a series of performance measures which, unlike revenue-generating staff, are not paid out soley by that individual’s performance. It is not uncommon for the bonuses of Sales and Presales staff to be larger than the base salary of most non-revenue-generating employees. Thus, in an ironic twist, the employees that are least able to directly impact customer satisfaction numbers are the most affected by them when bonuses are paid out.

For non-revenue generating employees, displaying a commitment to corporate and department objectives is a part of ensuring payout on the MBO portion of the bonus. For these employees, the performance review process takes on a ritualistic quality that serves to enforce the market-relations discourse in a highly bureaucratic way. The next section addresses the ways in which performance reviews and the larger activities of career management have evolved for all employees at TechSoft.

Performance Review as a Form of Discipline

Foucault (1988:152) argued that the State exists to perpetuate itself, and it is only concerned with individuals insofar as they impact the strength of the State. So, while the performance review process appears to demonstrate corporate concern for the well-being, emotional satisfaction, and career growth of employees, in reality, the process is intended to ensure that employees remain aligned with corporate objectives. The review process plays a critical role in the constitution of worker-as-subject by using techniques of avowal and by rating employees in relation to their peers.

During performance reviews, managers meet with each direct report to set goals and to assess work performance relative to those goals. Through the confessional style of the exchange, the employee constitutes himself as subject by making private hopes public and thereby governable. Weedon suggests that "it is the imaginary quality of the individual's identification with a subject position which gives it so much psychological and emotional force." Giddens (1990:124) says that this 'opening out' reflects the changing nature of intimacy and self-fulfillment that is a distinctive characteristic of modernity.

In addition to ensuring alignment with the goals of the corporation writ large, the performance review also enables the manager to measure employee performance relative to peers. Increased complexity of work in corporations has resulted in varied skills and compensation (Zahrly 1990). This in turn creates a high degree of stratification in the workforce (Townley 1993) that requires an understanding of individuals in a quantifiable way in relation to each other, and to the employee base at large. Townley argues that the gap between both individuals and groups is what becomes governable, and that Human Resources activities thus “render organizations and their participants calculable” (1993:526). Comparative measurement or normalization by managers through the performance review process is a form of discipline (Burrell 1988:231, Foucault 1975:184). However, these mechanisms of control are more complex than their rational, numerically-focused language would suggest. A purely positivist, economic view of the employee-employer relationship obscures its complexity. The performance review governs the space between the employment contract and changing market conditions; it is a way of codifying expectations that are not in the employee contract, job description, or compensation plan (Townley 1993:524). Thus, the performance review provides a flexible mechanism for the manager to mitigate risks that were not accounted for in the job description or other standard documents.

From Performance Evaluation to Performance Management at TechSoft

The performance review process at TechSoft does not appear to be substantially different from the process described in academic literature, nor that different from what I’ve experienced at other companies. However, as TechSoft searches to become more market-focused, both the review process and tools reflect the subtle changes in corporate strategy, as well as my move to a more market-focused position. That evolution is the subject of this section.

When I worked in the IT Support Center at TechSoft in the late 1990s, our manager guided us through the details of the Performance Evaluation & Planning process. Its name at the time reflected the approach; though I was an active participant in the process, I was subject to evaluation by my manager. The three major sections of the form included Performance Objectives, Behavioral / Technical Competencies, and a Professional Development Plan. Each section allowed a 'Self-Assessment of Actual Results' and a 'Manager's Assessment of Results.' The latter also included space for a rating of each attribute on a scale of one to five. The forms were emailed to us with the Objectives pulled right from the job description, for example:

- Properly documents the problem or service request in the call-tracking tool and then records steps taken towards resolution.
- Properly escalates tickets to assigned support organization when no resolution has been made.
- Assist in training new hires at Support Center

And for Competencies:

- Fact-finding ability
- Customer service orientation

As mentioned earlier, the form required a 'Self-Assessment of Actual Results' in each category. So for example, next to the second Objective above I wrote:

> Both in everyday answering of calls and during my on-call shifts, I have demonstrated my ability to escalate tickets to the appropriate

group in Americas IT, and determine when logging a ticket in CSN is appropriate.

After completing the self assessment, I sent the completed form back to our manager, who updated the form with comments and ratings, and then scheduled a time to meet with me. After a brief meeting and discussion, my manager and I signed the form, and it was then reviewed and signed by the group Director. After all signatures had been obtained and the form sent to Human Resources, I received a final copy for my personal files.

Since I did not anticipate any big surprises during my performance evaluation, I was more interested in what the financial implications of my review would be. A rating of three was ‘Meets Expectations,’ and would ensure a bonus payout based on achievement of my objectives (MBOs). I had been told that a five ‘Consistently Exceeds Expectations’ was very unlikely, and a four ‘Exceeds Expectations’ was also fairly unlikely because the ratings for the entire department had to be on a bell curve; a four for me would require that one of my co-workers get rated a two. The stated objective for this approach was to prevent inflation of ratings. So, I anticipated that I would receive a three but I wished for a four, since anything above a three might result in a small merit increase if the company did well. The purpose of this digression is not to reflect on my focus with variable compensation, but rather to demonstrate that a focus on ratings with a clear tie to financial measures inevitably obscured the intended focus on employee performance.

Several years later, I found myself working in a group that had direct contact with the salesforce and occasional contact with customers. My role had changed, and the company's performance review process had changed, too. The Employee Guide to the Performance Management Process (PMP) is now Unison compliant, and it even has a marketing tag line of its own - "its all about people working together for customer success." The opening pages of the Guide assert the critical role that employees have in the company's success:

> The continued success of [TechSoft] depends on its people; their capabilities, their belief in the company's potential, and their willingness to engage talent, knowledge, energy, effort, and enthusiasm toward reaching TechSoft's goals.

Twice a year, the Employee Guide to the PMP is emailed along with a link to the online performance management system. The Guide also makes clear that performance is the employee's responsibility:

> Managing performance is a joint effort between an employee and a manager. While managing employee performance and development is one of a manager's most important responsibilities, it is the individual who is most concerned with, and responsible for, his or her performance.

It is critical to recognize these 'empowerment' messages as a form of control (Sturdy 2001:7), however subtle

> In corporations a kind of sovereign power exists and can be described as parallel in character to that of the state. But attention to this can be misleading and often conceals more pervasive and subtle procedures of power and the sites of its deployment. (Deetz 2003:29)

In TechSoft's new performance management process, the employee is required to initiate the process with their manager, asking for guidance as needed. At the beginning of the year when the employee receives the link, all of the fields are blank; in part because of my new job, or perhaps the new PMP process itself, the form does not require adherence to the job description as it did in the past. So in order to set objectives to be measured against for the year, I was encouraged by my boss to look at my job description, but also to review the corporate direction that had been communicated by the executive team in the sales kick-off meeting, and to frame my objectives in reference to that direction. We later reviewed and made adjustments to these together. In other words, I was asked to use the PMP as a way to demonstrate my alignment with and commitment to furthering corporate strategy.

In addition to these changes in process, the categories on the form have changed. For example, the new PMP form no longer has an area for management to document their numerical rating of the employee. However, that is not to suggest that such rankings have vanished; the process is simply no longer visible to employees. 'Calibration' has replaced ranking, and the calibration process is now undertaken with managers in conjunction with their management. In addition to making employee performance visible to a greater portion of the management team, this new process also ensures senior management involvement on the PMP processes which most impact the company's fiscal health: variable compensation and salary increases. It also decouples the review and variable compensation, which in turn keeps the employee's focus on the performance aspect of the PMP rather than the financial implications.

The new format also allows for more narrative. There is a section called Self Assessment Questions in which the employee is asked to reflect the review period, and on their work context:

- What have been your key accomplishments over the past review period?
- What obstacles have you faced that have hindered you from accomplishing your objectives?
- What are the three most valuable things your manager does for/with you now?
- How could your Manager create more value for you?

These sorts of questions represent a substantial departure from the earlier form. The employee, as a free agent in charge of their own success, now evaluates the work environment and the relationship with their manager as market conditions that allow or inhibit them from being successful. This appears to create a space for critical reflection on, for example, disruptive organizational change or a difficult peer situation. However, if an employee expresses dissatisfaction with the circumstances surrounding their employment conditions, they render their attitude towards those conditions governable by their manager, their manager's manager, and even Human Resources personnel. Thus, regardless of how personalized the language of the PMP becomes, it is still a form of discipline, a way of minimizing risk to the corporation by ensuring employee compliance, and ensuring the best possible fit between employees and the corporation.

While Taylor was exploring the potential of scientific management, Human Relations theorists built on Durkheim's legacy and proposed that workplace malaise could be addressed by fitting 'the job to the man and the man to the job.' While this may appear to be an outdated sentiment, present-day management tools like the Gallup Strengthfinders™ perpetuate the same approach, and are heavily utilized in corporate America today. Rather than focusing on gaps in employee skills, Strengthfinders™ uses an approach that assesses what the employee does best. In this way, employees can be successful at work, content in doing their job, with the goal of eliciting their optimal performance. During the tenure of one SVP of Human Resources, Strengthfinders was administered to all the company's top performers. Certain sections of the PMP reflect the Gallup approach by asking:

- What are your greatest strengths (talents and abilities)? How can use further utilize them in your current role?
- What would you change about your current responsibilities to allow you to focus more on using them?

Similar to the old review form, there is an area where the employee can document development needs, anticipated results, and resource requirements to help them achieve their desired development objectives. As I have moved more and more towards customer-facing knowledge work, I have found that these development objectives are less relevant; most of the soft skills and network of relationships that permit career growth cannot be found in a classroom setting. However, if the employee identifies abilities and career goals that are not aligned with their current role, they are again rendered governable; they may be asked to re-evaluate whether they want to retain their position or, alternatively, seek employment elsewhere.

Through the PMP, then, the burden of success and achievement is placed squarely on the backs of employees. Resistance to company norms may be tolerated to a degree, but may result in reduced recognition and reward (Perlow 1998:353) on the part of the management team and the corporation. Ultimately, successful navigation of the review process is part of the performance of commitment that the corporation requires of self-managing employees. Survivors navigate the unspoken, governable space in the performance review process.

In a critique of labor process theorists, Austrin appears to agree that employees work independently of one another, and that the effort to control their workload and perceptions of their work

> intensifies workers' problems with self-worth and meaning. More significantly, in this new context of isolation, these existential troubles find release, not through resistance to work, but rather through effective performance on the job. (1994:202-3)

Austrin goes on to argue that there are multiple discourses at play in this context, and that it is important to not only focus on the one that is legitimized by the institution. He uses the example of a unionization effort in the finance sector in New Zealand, in which women developed alternative, more equitable constructions of themselves and their roles and, using the power of the union, impacted the dominant discourse. As discussed in the Introduction, unionization in the high tech sector seems unlikely for the time being. But while the swell of an alternate discourse may not be available within the corporation, individuals may find the support they need in the industry itself, and thereby maintain a sense of self associated with the profession or occupational sub-group, rather than with the corporation itself.

The Brand Called You

With their blockbuster book *In Search of Excellence*, Peters and Waterman (1982) brought many of the principles of Human Relations back to contemporary management thought; they argued that by fostering a culture of excellence in the workplace, management helps to make employees more engaged in their work and more committed to furthering corporate objectives. The authors were credited with starting the genre of popular management literature and making these ideas accessible to a wide audience. Millions of copies of the book that were sold, but critical theorists vilify Peters in spite of – or perhaps because of – his success. These theorists argue that the tenets of Excellence simply enable management to constitute employees as subjects in new but familiar ways (Du Gay 1996:60-64, Rose 1989:114-17). Part of what has made Peters' work so successful is that he makes explicit trends that are already present in corporate America. So while his messages are not always new, he enables the proliferation of these ideas and practices through his books. For example, in a relatively recent essay entitled "The Brand Called You," Peters

(1997) personalizes the concept of branding that was discussed earlier in this chapter:

> Start right now: as of this moment you're going to think of yourself differently! … You don't 'belong to' any company for life, and your chief affiliation isn't to any particular 'function.' You're not defined by your job title and you're not confined by your job description. Starting today you are a brand. (1997:86)

Peters goes on to say that employee loyalty is alive and well, but that it is a very different type of loyalty than what he describes as the 'indentured servitude' of years past:

> As long as you're learning, growing, building relationships, and delivering great results, it's good for you and it's great for the company. That win-win logic holds for as long as you happen to be at that particular company. Which is precisely where the age of free agency comes into play. If you're treating your résumé as if it's a marketing brochure, you're learning the first lesson of free agency. (1997:94)

Succeeding in the job market today, Peters goes on to say, is about differentiating yourself as the brand called You, though whether that is achieved through extra work or extracurricular work is irrelevant. It's not what you do, but how you do it, and whom you get to know as you're doing it. The goal is to establish yourself as a successful, well-known node in a complex, interdependent network that extends beyond the walls of the corporation, and permeates into every part of your life. In other words, the job market today is part of the free market system, and each individual consumes work, opportunities, and connections. The objective of this consumer relationship is to produce yourself - and there is no alternative - but the risk is being both consumer and consumed.

Grey (1994:481) argues that it is precisely this project of the self and the discourse of career which institutionalizes us beyond the bounds of any particular institution. The study of networks and work is not new to the social sciences - see for example Granovetter (1983, 1995), and the compilation of earlier essays on *Networks in the Knowledge Economy* by Cross *et al* (2003). As communities around the globe become dispersed and anthropologists understanding of 'the field' evolves accordingly, it will be increasingly important for anthropologists to extend our understanding of networks from inter- to intra- to extra-institutional. At a personal level, these connections help to defray the distrust that is inherent in our dis-embedded world. Covaleski and Dirsmith (1988:562) have argued that extra-organizational support systems are especially important in periods of economic downturn. These concepts and others will be explored in Chapter 6, as the reality of organizational change is explored with an insider's view.

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