

Case Application 1: Who Needs A Boss?

What is a holacracy?

According to the book, holocracy is an organizational system with no job titles, no managers, and no topdown hierarchy with upper, middle, or lower levels where decisions can get hung up. As I understand it, holocracy may be considered as a non-conventional governance structure which does not go with the typical hierarchical corporate culture model, but rather, characterized by a dissemination of control among self-organizing groups.

"A simple explanation of Robertson's vision of a holacracy is: workers as partners, job descriptions as roles, and partners organized into circles."

What benefits do you see to an organization where there are no job titles, no managers, and no hierarchy?

For one, I think that this system if implemented right would encourage everybody to share ideas and thoughts freely without the hesitation or having to think how "bosses" will react. It could boost the morale, as everybody is given the opportunity to voice-out what they think and to contribute to attain the organization's goal. In addition, I can say that this type of working environment could enhance creativity and could encourage most, if not all employees to enhance their skills and discover the endless possibilities of what they can do to take part in the organization's evolution towards success. Each employee can be efficiently contributing to the company based on his or her strengths and interests. Given these, I think that employees will feel more accountable for their actions and their sense of responsibility will be heightened. This could be good for the company in the long-run.

What challenges does a holacratic approach have?

I think that a holacratic approach will pose more challenges to new companies rather than those companies who are already stable and mature.

Looking at Zappo's experience, I think that the greatest challenge of a holacracy would be finding the best balance on the structure, people and the framework itself. As mentioned in the case, role delineation could sometimes be vague, vague enough that a question emerged that "if no one has a title and there are no bosses, is Tony Hsieh still the CEO?"

I think that in the long-run, unbalanced employee demeanor could pose a serious threat in achieving the goals in a holacratic environment. Performers eventually will get tired of performing while others are just there as "decorations." Tensions related to the clarity of roles and policies are unavoidable.

Lastly, the concept of holacracy in my view is an evolving process. How to get it to actually work could take time especially if the company and its people are not mature enough for it. The notion of "freedom" on employees could also pose a challenge as efficiency could sometimes be compromised and conflicts could be inevitable.

An adage that could clearly impart my thoughts is that "too many cooks could spoil the broth." (Especially if the cooks don't even have the basic knowledge on cooking).

Discuss why you would or would not like to work in an organization like this.

I would like to try to work in a company with a holacratic framework. For one, I am generally shy and with that, is unable to clearly share my ideas, especially when I have to express it verbally. I get easily intimidated by the bosses and become too afraid to say my opinion.

I think that in a holacracy I would be more efficient and more vocal with expressing my ideas.