

Unit 3: Interpretation Guide for Structure Self-Assessment

The chapter for this topic discussed the difference between “Mechanistic” and “Organic” organization designs. As the book notes, neither of these designs is best for all organizations; each can be a good match for some. The degree to which an organization’s design is mechanistic or organic is determined by the location of authority, the scope of rules and procedures, the degree to which tasks are specialized, the degree to which communication is formal or informal, the manner in which teams are used, and the range of span of control in the organization.

Although mechanistic and organic designs exist on a continuum, consider the following:

Mechanistic Organizations are characterized by:

- Centralized hierarchy of authority
- Many rules and procedures
- Specialized tasks
- Formalized communication
- Few teams or task forces
- Narrow span of control, taller structures

Organic organizations are characterized by:

- Decentralized hierarchy of authority
- Few rules and procedures
- Shared tasks
- Informal communication
- Many teams or task forces
- Wider span of control, flatter structures

The purpose of this self-assessment is to identify the degree to which you prefer a mechanistic versus organic design. There is no one best type of design for an organization and no one best type of design to prefer. As noted in the book and lecture, successful designs are those that help an organization achieve its strategic objectives. It is important to note, however, that organizational members tend to be most satisfied with and motivated by organization designs that are aligned with their own preferences. Given that, your self-assessment results can help you identify an organization design in which you are most and least likely to be satisfied and motivated.

As you look at your self-assessment results, first determine whether you have scores that indicate a strong liking for a mechanistic or organic design. If so, that is clearly your organizational preference. If you become a member of an organization that has that type of design, you are likely to quickly and strongly appreciate and respect that design. It will feel “right.” On the other hand, if you have a strong preferred design but become a member of an

organization with a very different design, you are likely to quickly and strongly become dissatisfied with that design and may feel alienated.

Some of you will not have a strong design preference. If that is the case for you, it is likely that you can do okay with a wide range of organization designs but unlikely that an organization's design will strongly engage you.

As you look at your scores, consider the following:

Mechanistic Organization

Score of 5--10	=	Low Preference for Mechanistic Organization
Score of 11—20	=	Medium Preference for Mechanistic Organization
Score of 21—25	=	High Preference for Mechanistic Organization

Organic Organization

Score of 5--10	=	Low Preference for Organic Organization
Score of 11—20	=	Medium Preference for Organic Organization
Score of 21—25	=	High Preference for Organic Organization