

# The Boundaryless Organization: Implications for Job Analysis, Recruitment, and Selection

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The boundaryless organization is a paradigm shift that recognizes the limitations inherent in separating people, tasks, processes, and places, and emphasizes the benefits of moving ideas, information, decisions, talent, and actions where they are most needed (Ashkenas, Ulrich, Jick, & Kerr, 1995). This article proposes that some job analysis techniques and recruitment and selection practices are incongruous with the principles of the boundaryless organization. However, existing worker-oriented approaches to job analysis, recruitment based on person-organization value congruence, and selection based on both skills and traits are consistent with the tenets of the boundaryless organization. Limitations of workforce homogeneity are also discussed. Finally, recommendations for researchers and practitioners are offered.

Reengineering, restructuring, even rethinking approaches to organizational design have proliferated in recent management literature (Keidel, 1994). Purported to underlie hundreds of these and other innovative approaches is a fundamental paradigmatic shift called the boundaryless organization. A boundaryless organization is one that focuses on permeating all internal and external boundaries (e.g., those between functions, the organization and its suppliers, even between nations) with free movement of ideas, information, decisions, talent, rewards, and action (Ashkenas et al., 1995).

At the same time, cogent arguments have been made to bury our long-standing conceptualization of the job and, instead, to recognize a post-job society where the norm of payrolled, full-time employees performing narrow duties in particular departments is history (Bridges, 1994). In fact, "work" has been described as undergoing such a fundamental transformation that we must necessarily question and perhaps replace the body of knowledge underlying the psychology of work behavior (Howard, 1995). This literature advocates radical departures from the ways in which we view what are organizations' most important tasks; where, when, and how work is done; and who decides these issues.

While organizational design and strategic management solutions have been proposed for the boundaryless organization (e.g., Ashkenas et al., 1995; Davis, 1995), relatively little has been discussed in terms of the human resource practices and processes to best support it. In other words, how specific human resources practices "fit" or become consonant with boundaryless organizational principles is not clear.

One reason for the lack of clarity surrounding human resources' role in the context of the boundaryless organization is due to the field's traditional dependence on the job as the fundamental unit of the organization. Indeed, job analysis provides the basis for virtually all human resource functions (i.e., recruitment, selection, compensation, training); thus, much of human resource technology is grounded in the notion of individuals holding jobs (Lawler, 1994). However, viewing the job as the fundamental organizational unit has been criticized as outmoded and ineffective (Bridges, 1994; Lawler, 1994). This apparent conflict between the idea of jobs being the central focus of human resources and recent literature proposing that the

job is no longer a useful way to organize and manage work is the motivation behind this research.

The purpose of this paper is to examine implications of the boundaryless paradigm for three areas of human resources: job analysis, recruitment, and selection. Due to its centrality to both recruitment and selection, job analysis will be examined first. Two major approaches to job analysis will be evaluated based on boundaryless principles. Recruitment and selection practices will then be similarly evaluated.

The intended goal of this paper is to challenge human resource practitioners and researchers to view job analysis, recruitment, and selection as boundaryless functions. Specifically, it will be argued that one major job analysis method, as well as some existing recruitment and selection practices, can benefit the boundaryless organization. Because one of human resource management's strategic roles is to find the best potential match between the organization and the individual, the importance of organizational culture, and person-organization value congruence in particular, is discussed. Finally, general propositions for both practitioners and researchers are provided.

## **The Boundaryless Paradigm**

Underlying the rise of various forms of "new organization" to which have been ascribed the terms virtual organization, empowered organization, high-performing work teams, and process reengineered organization is "a single, deeper paradigm shift that we call the emergence of the boundaryless organization," (p. 2; Ashkenas et al., 1995). This shift recognizes the limitations of the following four types of organizational boundaries: vertical (between levels and ranks of people), horizontal (between functions and disciplines), external (between the organization and its suppliers, customers, and regulators), and geographic (between nations, cultures, and markets). In the boundaryless organization, these boundaries are not used to separate people, tasks, processes, and places; rather, the focus is on how to move ideas, information, talent, and decisions where they are most necessary (Ashkenas et al., 1995). Somewhat similarly, Miner and Robinson (1994) define a boundaryless organization as one in which rules regarding membership, departmental identity, and job responsibility are ambiguous. Organization membership rules refer to the blurring of organizational boundaries (e.g., increases in outsourcing of activities, contingent employ-

ment arrangements); department identity rules refer to decentralization, cross-functional coordination, and teams which blur functional boundaries; and job responsibility rules refer to a movement toward more general job descriptions, emphasizing important values instead of specific, predetermined duties (Miner & Robinson, 1994; Souder, 1987). Indeed, other researchers have noted increased organizational fluidity over the past decade, particularly in the area of jobs (Belous, 1989).

Conversely, a boundary mindset assumption is that knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) are found in abundance at the top of the organizational pyramid, whereas lower-level workers have narrow technical skills, mostly used to produce services or products (Ashkenas et al., 1995). Thus, every worker in a boundary mindset hierarchy has a clearly defined role. In the boundaryless organization, competencies reside and are recognized throughout the workplace. When an individual has the skill to do a task, he or she is encouraged to do it, regardless of title or position (Ashkenas et al., 1995). Similarly, Lawler (1994) challenges what he calls the job-based approach to organizing and managing (i.e., jobs are the basic building blocks of complex organizations) and calls for a paradigmatic shift to the competency-based organization, which focuses on the individual's needed skills to accomplish organizational goals.

Although virtually all human resource technology is grounded in the notion of individuals holding jobs, there is evidence to suggest that this notion is no longer the best way to think about organizing and managing individuals (Lawler, 1994). In fact, Bridges (1994) posits that while the amount of work in organizations continues to grow, the "familiar envelopes" we call jobs are becoming extinct. First, an increasing number of jobs is in constant flux and job descriptions cannot be rewritten every week. Further, when organizations reduce head count, the very jobs that are represented by boxes on an organizational chart encourage hiring because managers are bestowed power according to the number of turf areas they oversee. Finally, jobs are rewarded on the basis of doing the jobs, not for accomplishing the necessary work. Thus, personal accountability for the work is discouraged at the expense of accountability for the job (Bridges, 1994; Bowen & Lawler, 1992).

Bridges (1994) further asserts that most organizations lack effective ways to manage in "de-jobbed" environments which consist of significant numbers of temporary workers, part-timers, consultants, and contract workers. His solution, in part, is a project-based organizational structure whereby job descriptions and supervisors' orders are replaced by evolving demands of a project. The reality is that the "post-job" worker will be far more independent and self-directed than was the job-based worker (Bridges, 1994).

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### **Boundaryless Employment Arrangements**

An increase in nontraditional employment contracts between the worker and the organization is cited as an example of blurred organizational boundaries (Miner & Robinson, 1994), as well as evidence of a post-job society (Bridges, 1994). The term contract denotes the different forms employment is taking in the

1990s: temporary, part-time, job-sharing, consulting, contracting, and leasing. Although some employees have little choice but to accept one of these forms of employment, many employees welcome these options for more flexible hours and more control over where they work, how they work, and which projects they would most prefer (Belous, 1989).

The collective contingency of non-traditional U.S. workers numbered over 30 million in 1988 – about one-quarter of the workforce (Belous, 1989). It is now estimated that this contingency represents almost one-half (Halal, 1994) of all employed U.S. workers. Moreover, many companies are not only accepting but encouraging telecommuting among their employees (Charbuck & Young, 1992). Escalating overhead costs coupled with technological advancements such as workflow systems, teleconferencing, videoconferencing, and electronic mail have made working off-site a mutually beneficial option for many workers and organizations.

In sum, boundaryless organization research prescribes permeable structures at all organizational levels. In addition, the growth of diverse employment arrangements provides information about worker mobility and the increasingly flexible nature of employment. Given what we know about the boundaryless organization and the boundaryless worker, what are the important

implications for human resources? What, for instance, constitutes effective employee recruitment and selection in such an environment? Because effective recruitment and selection practices are based on some form of job analysis (Gatewood & Feild, 1994), a discussion of analysis and an examination of its role in the boundaryless organization follows.

### Boundaryless Job Analysis

Given that the job itself may be an increasingly unreliable way to characterize what workers do (Bridges, 1994; Lawler, 1994; Ashkenas et al., 1995), where, if anywhere, does job analysis fit in the boundaryless organization? Job analysis is the measurement of tasks and/or worker attributes for a given job; thus, job analysis techniques can be classified as work-oriented or worker-oriented (Gatewood & Feild, 1994). Work-oriented methods involve specific descriptions of the various tasks performed on a job, whereas worker-oriented methods examine broad human behaviors involved in work activities.

Whether work- or worker-oriented, job analysis methods allow for the inference of worker KSAs and other characteristics (Gatewood & Feild, 1994). KSAs include job-related information and the necessary human abilities to perform certain job activities. The importance of valid KSAs cannot be overstated, as the relationship between them and individual performance in the organization is well-established (Davis, 1995; Gatewood & Feild, 1994).

Although job analysis is considered the virtual cornerstone of human resources practices, it has recently been criticized as inflexible and legalistic (Drucker, 1987); its traditional conception has been called obsolete (Sanchez, 1994). These criticisms parallel other arguments that focus on creating boundaryless conditions between functions, disciplines, and levels of workers (Ashkenas et al., 1995) and those aimed at thriving in a de-jobbed society (Bridges, 1994). In essence, these arguments posit that the job is too myopic, too restrictive, and too inflexible for the success of both the organization and its workers.

The "job" in job analysis, however, need not imply that this systematic process of discovering work-related information is merely useful for a

narrow scope of tasks or easily defined duties. Job analysis is a tool to systematically gather data (i.e., tasks and behaviors leading to KSAs) about virtually any kind of work activity (Gatewood & Feild, 1994). Thus, a plausible argument can be made that job analysis would be more important in the boundaryless organization, where work activities are created and evolve more quickly, than in more traditionally structured organizations, where jobs are static for longer time periods.

Contrary to criticisms of the inadequacies of job analysis, it is proposed here that job analysis is capable of examining both diverse and changing occupations. Not all job analysis approaches are equal, however. In general, the worker-oriented approach is proposed as more appropriate than the work-oriented approach because the former possesses the flexibility needed in the boundaryless organization.

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Consider a work-oriented method such as the Functional Job Analysis, or FJA (Fine & Wiley, 1977). The FJA assesses specific job outputs, identifies job tasks in terms of task statements (e.g., who does the task, what action is performed, immediate result, tools/equipment used, instructions followed), measures worker involvement with people, data, and things (worker functions scales), and also measures numerous other qualifications and specifications. The main problem with the FJA, and the work approach in general (e.g., identifying what a worker does and how each task is performed), is that it provides limited utility due to the changing nature of the job.

The Position Analysis Questionnaire, or PAQ (McCormick, Jeanneret, & Mecham, 1972), on the other hand, focuses on general worker behaviors instead of tasks. This worker-oriented method includes information about worker input, mental processes, work output, and relationships with others. Worker-oriented methods provide a standardized means for collecting quantitative data across a wide spectrum of jobs and yield helpful information in formulating employee specifications (Gatewood & Feild, 1994). Further, the worker-oriented approach has been called one of the most useful methods of work description developed to date, one that allows "meaningful comparisons" to be made between jobs that are highly dissimilar at the task level (Harvey, Friedman, Hakel, & Cornelius, 1988, p. 639).

Whereas some worker-oriented methods have been criticized for their lack of structure and absence of task data (Gatewood & Feild, 1994), these "limitations" may become less important or even prove useful in the boundaryless organization. For instance, worker-oriented methods do not cover actual task activities, a requirement for job description development. Given that job descriptions are becoming less important for boundaryless organizations (Ashkenas et al., 1995; Miner & Robinson, 1994), however, the worker-oriented approach may have few, if any, limitations.

One criticism that has been aimed specifically at the PAQ is its required reading level, estimated at post-college or higher (Ash & Edgell, 1975). However, another worker-oriented job analysis method modeled after the PAQ, the Job Element Inventory, or JEI (Cornelius & Hakel, 1978), requires a 10th-grade reading level. The JEI has been found to possess a factor analytic structure parallel to that of the PAQ (Harvey et al., 1988). Thus, the JEI's use poses few problems for job incumbents and supervisors who may serve as job analysis raters.

While work- and worker-oriented job analysis methods have not been directly compared by incumbent workers, research shows that workers have criticized the use of a point-factor job analysis questionnaire based on widely used job evaluation scales (Taber & Peters, 1991). Taber and Peters (1991) found the most frequent comment made by hundreds of administrative, technical, and clerical workers was that their jobs could not be described by the job analysis questionnaire. The next most frequent comment was that the questionnaire did not assess some personal attributes brought by the employee to the job (e.g., "Personality, attitude are very important," and "Creativity is not mentioned"). Other comments included (in order): "Interpersonal contacts are inadequately assessed;" "The job has been revised or is evolving;" and "Job tasks are too diverse to be captured in questionnaire form."

According to Taber and Peters (1991), it is likely that any existing job evaluation procedure cannot comprehensively evaluate jobs which are highly interdependent, continuously evolving, unpredictable, or that involve a diverse set of important but infrequent tasks. Indeed, these very types of "jobs" describe what workers do in a boundaryless organization. Although job analysis and job evaluation serve different (yet related) functions, the Taber and Peters (1991) study

implies that workers who are only asked work-oriented information such as major tasks, how much time they spend performing each one, the importance of each task, its complexity, equipment used, etc., perceive these data as inadequate measures of what they do.

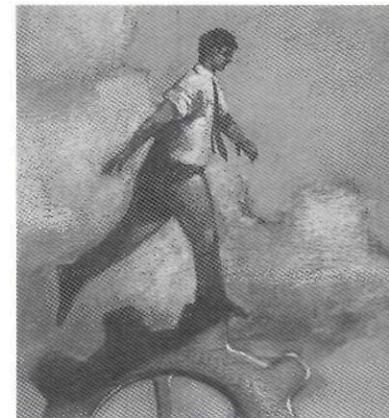
### **Skills Emphasis and Work Analysis**

Given that functional boundaries will continue to blur (Ashkenas, 1995; Miner & Robinson, 1994), boundaryless organizations may eventually collapse "jobs" into more comprehensive skill- or work-related categories. Not only would this type of integration make the administrative task of job analysis less cumbersome; it could contribute to a culture wherein workers are afforded more freedom and opportunity to engage in different work activities.

For example, Woodsworth, Maylone, and Sywak (1992) found a sufficiently strong relationship between some computing and library jobs to warrant the creation of a single information job family in classification systems. The commonality between jobs was attributed to the jobs' reliance on various information technologies. As information technologies become more interconnected between jobs, functions, and departments, it is plausible that the KSAs which relate to these technologies will become more transferable and less job-specific.

However, a big question is which KSAs will be required for future technologies, and thus, future jobs. Arvey, Salas, and Gialluca (1992) have demonstrated that some existing tasks and skills-abilities correlations can help predict future skill requirements for jobs when only a limited number of tasks is known. The authors caution, however, that this technique assumes current tasks and abilities are representative and inclusive of the kinds of skills and abilities that would be forecasted. Moreover, any changes in job structures that would affect existing covariance patterns would diminish the accuracy of skills forecasting results (Arvey et al., 1992).

Recently, work analysis has been advocated to replace the traditional notion of job analysis (Sanchez, 1994). Few guidelines exist as to how to combine tasks into broader units, but Sanchez (1994) proposes that both employees and management examine tasks and KSAs "to group previous job titles into cross-functional, challenging occupational classifications." Although the idea of work analysis may be intuitively appealing, concrete



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procedures for work analysis are missing. Only general propositions and recommendations (e.g., “analyze work activities to identify workflow, so that new occupational classifications can be based on workflow rather than functional area,” Sanchez, 1994) have been stated.

An important question for practitioners and researchers alike is whether existing job analysis methods such as the PAQ and the JEI, or a broader notion such as work analysis, can be used to capture the flexibility, interdependency, and diversity of work in the boundaryless organization. Because the boundaryless organization does not accommodate stable tasks, work-oriented approaches to job analysis may be both cumbersome and ineffective. On the other hand, gathering information about KSAs which ultimately encompass what workers can do, their values, and how these match the organization’s culture and operational needs seems the niche that job (or work) analysis should be filling. Somewhat along these lines, Davis (1995) has called for adequate methods to determine “organizational KSAs,” a term he likens to unique organizational competencies and assumedly different from a compilation of individual worker KSAs. A job or work analysis method that taps organizational KSAs, work-relevant KSAs, and other worker characteristics that can be tied to the organization, the work, or both, would seem to enhance the success of several human resource functions, especially recruitment and selection.

### Boundaryless Recruitment

Gaining competent employees at all levels of the organization is more than a matter of training; it stems from changes in recruitment and selection philosophy (Ashkenas et al., 1995). Specifically, the boundaryless organization emphasizes the development of a shared mindset among all of its employees and the continuous support of this collective culture. Although Ashkenas et al. (1995) don’t describe specific recruiting approaches that aid in achieving this cohesive culture, they state the importance of thoroughly screening applicants, sometimes with the help of customers, based on skills and personality traits that match the technical and cultural needs of the organization.

It makes sense that an organization’s culture would be reflected, to some degree, in its recruitment efforts. However, most research suggests that this is not the case. Bretz, Rynes, and Gerhart (1993) found that despite the recent emphasis on unique organizational values, strategies, or cul-

tures in the person-organization fit literature, recruiters continue to emphasize job-related course work or experience and broad personal characteristics (e.g., articulation, personal appearance, general communication skills). In other words, the immediate job fit dominated the recruiting exchange, whereas the organization’s culture and values were relatively absent. Similarly, Adkins, Russell, and Werbel (1994) found that recruiters’ perceptions of congruence between the applicant and the organization were not related to the recruiters’ judgments of employability.

There may be several reasons why person-organization fit is not assessed or emphasized during recruitment. First, many organizations may be unaware of their cultures (Schein, 1985) despite the recent emphasis on unique organizational values, strategies, or cultures in discussions of fit (Bretz et al., 1993). Second, recruiters may not utilize person-organization fit information for different reasons. For instance, recruiters may lack knowledge about the organization’s culture, or they may not have the ability to process knowledge about organizational culture into questions intended to measure person-organization fit. Furthermore, they may not know how to weigh person-organization fit measures with traditional job-related KSAs.

### Moving toward Realistic Work Cultures

A recruitment technique that is theoretically derived from an individual need-organization culture matching process is the realistic job preview, or RJP (Wanous, 1992). An RJP presents the candidate with negative and positive aspects about a particular job so that the degree of match between the candidate’s wants (derived from individual needs) and the organization’s climate (derived from its culture) can be assessed (Wanous, 1992). The more positive and negative information a candidate receives about the job, the more realistic the individual’s expectations, and the less likely voluntary turnover is to happen within the first stages of socialization (Meglino, DeNisi, Youngblood, & Williams, 1988). Lawler (1994) notes that RJP are likely the best approach to selection in the competency-based organization versus the job-based organization.

Given, however, the boundaryless organization’s de-emphasis on both hierarchical structure and the job itself, an RJP may not provide enough information to determine the most valid individual-organization match. Specifically, it is suggested that recruiters attempt to communi-

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cate, as directly as possible, the culture of their organizations – not just a particular job and its immediate environment – to candidates.

Recruiters should provide candidates with previews of organizational culture for several reasons. First, the traditional job description (i.e., a thorough listing of specific duties and responsibilities) will become less used by organizations due to the blurring of job rules and functional domains. Instead of workers focusing on “who does what,” the values, norms, and beliefs which underlie all of the work in the organization will become increasingly salient to workers. Indeed, many firms have moved to more general job descriptions, emphasizing important values, instead of precise, predetermined duties (Miner & Robinson, 1994; Souder, 1987).

Second, because work is becoming “structured” in a less hierarchical fashion and more according to the requirements of the project (Bridges, 1994; Lawler, 1994), the nature of coworker interactions and communicating different work processes will play more vital roles in the boundaryless organization. Devanna and Tichy (1990) describe creating a culture that allows all levels of the workforce to contribute to business strategy formulation, resulting in a fluid power structure. In fact, it has been proposed that every challenge facing the boundaryless organization deals with people management, “with issues of how things get done, not what gets done” (Devanna & Tichy, 1990).

Third, an inferred temporal distinction exists between organizational culture and organizational climate. Traditional RJP tend to mirror organizational climate. Climate refers to currently shared perceptions of “the way things are around here” (Wanous, 1992), and many times has a specific referent such as a safety climate (Zohar, 1980), a sexual harassment climate (Bill, 1994), or service, cooperation, or rewards/punishments climates (Schneider, 1975).

Culture, on the other hand, refers to subconscious assumptions, shared meanings, and ways of interpreting things that pervade the whole organization (Reichers & Schneider, 1990). Because culture is more fundamental than climate (Wanous, 1992) and less transient than specific work environments (i.e., climates) which are subject to change, it is proposed that applicants

and organizations alike would benefit from the exchange of information about the assumptions and values underlying these particular work environments. Whereas “the way things are around here” will change within the organization over time, the assumptions, values, and beliefs that

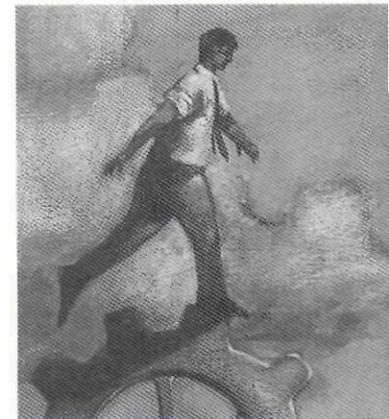
are shared among organizational members are more stable, yet not static (Schein, 1985), organizational attributes. These assumptions, values and beliefs can then be used by the candidate to make a relatively stable assessment regarding how well his or her wants and needs can be matched by those of the organization.

Finally, the use of values to convey cultural information is consonant with the person-organization fit literature. The degree of cultural (i.e. values) fit between workers and their organizations has been shown to significantly affect several impor-

tant work outcomes, including organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and employee turnover (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). The O'Reilly et al. (1991) study demonstrated that the factor analytic structure underlying individual cultural preferences was comparable to the structure underlying organizational culture in several firms. Also, individual variations in preferences for different organizational cultures were associated with interpretable differences in personality characteristics. Thus, the organization may benefit from selecting people who fit a given situation given some combination of task and cultural (values) requirements (O'Reilly et al., 1991; Ashkenas, 1995).

### Sources of Cultural Information

In addition to revealing a deeper layer of organizational information to the candidate, it is proposed that the source of this information will become an increasingly important consideration. Communicating a realistic work culture should include the shared mindsets (Phillips, 1994) of organizational members. As Wanous (1992) advocates, candidates greatly benefit from conversations with incumbent employees. It is further proposed, however, that whenever possible, candidates receive information from employees who share similar group memberships (e.g., race, gender, age, family responsibilities, employment arrangements). This communication exchange should serve to optimize the matching process.



If a candidate volunteers information about his single-father role, for example, conversational opportunities with other single fathers or mothers in the organization should be offered to the candidate. Similarly, those who speak English as a second language or have cultural backgrounds that differ from most coworkers should have commensurate opportunities.

In summary, instead of RJP<sub>s</sub> that focus virtually all of the candidate's attention on the current job and its immediate climate, we need to broaden the RJP, in practice, to encompass realistic work cultures. In addition, the source of this information should ideally include at least one organizational member who shares one or more of the candidate's cultural and/or social group characteristics. Because there are fewer skilled workers (Kessler, 1990) and yet their diversity continues to increase, tomorrow's employees will be able to choose the environments which appear to suit them best (Thomas, 1991).

### **Boundaryless Selection**

As discussed earlier, the importance of job analysis and derived KSAs for the purpose of valid selection practices has been well-established (Gatewood & Feild, 1994). Within the boundaryless organization, however, it is proposed that managers may more effectively attract, select, and retain qualified workers by looking for broad sets of KSAs that may encompass several "jobs," and personality traits reflective of the organization's culture (e.g., O'Reilly et. al, 1991; Devanna & Tichy, 1990).

Generally, cognitive ability tests have the reputation as the best predictors of job performance across virtually all types of jobs (Schmidt & Hunter, 1981). Thus, there is no reason to assume that cognitive ability will not continue to be a valid predictor of performance within a boundaryless context. However, it is proposed that increased emphasis will be placed on traits such as adaptability and flexibility (Ashkenas et al., 1995). Indeed, Devanna and Tichy (1990) state that while the boundaryless organization will continue to select workers with the appropriate technical mix, selection will also depend on facilitation skills to create and maintain social networks, the ability to motivate with influence

versus power, and the ability as well as willingness to teach others what they have learned.

The main idea here is that predicting individual performance in a boundaryless organization will no longer be a matter of studying the same particulars within a job content domain. For most

jobs, the domain will change too quickly (Bridges, 1994). However, as long as the individual's aptitude (e.g., cognitive ability) and/or other validated KSAs exist, increasingly important predictors of performance will include traits such as flexibility, adaptability, or attitude toward training and learning in this changing environment.

A number of studies on personality and job performance have demonstrated personality measures' incremental validity over cognitive ability tests (Gellatly, Paunonen, Meyer, Jackson, & Goffin, 1991; Ferris, Bergin, & Gilmore 1986).

Moreover, Day and Silverman (1989) found that personality variables can account for more job performance variance than that predicted by cognitive ability.

The Big Five personality dimensions, which include emotional stability, extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, are widely used in organizational behavior literature (Wagner & Hollenbeck, 1995), have good psychometric qualities, and are especially attractive due to their demonstrated relationship with job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991). For instance, conscientiousness has been related to both hirability and counterproductivity (Dunn, Mount, Barrick, & Ones, 1995), as well as several job performance criteria for five occupational groups (Barrick & Mount, 1991).

The Big Five could be especially useful in boundaryless selection. Some research indicates that certain personality dimensions are related to worker traits and ways of working that seem characteristic of the boundaryless organization. For instance, extroversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness have been reported as significantly related to self-efficacy for self-managed work group participation (Thoms, Moore, & Scott, 1996). Also, the predictive validity of conscientiousness and extroversion is greater for managers in jobs high in autonomy compared with those in jobs low in autonomy (Barrick & Mount, 1993). Expectations of self-management

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and autonomy are increasing for tomorrow's worker (e.g., Ashkenas et al., 1995; Bridges, 1994).

Another potentially helpful selection tool in the boundary organization is biodata. Biodata is the use of life history data that entails a sophisticated understanding of values, attitudes, motivational forces, and experiential bases (Landy, Shankster-Cawley, & Moran, 1995). Theoretically, people seek opportunities and experiences to maximize long-term adaptation to their environment; and given satisfactory outcomes, people will actively seek out similar situations in the future, resulting in coherent patterns of behavior (Mumford, Stokes, & Owens, 1990). Evidence of construct validity and theory underlying biodata predictors has proliferated in the last decade (Landy et al., 1995).

### Dilemma of Boundaryless Recruitment and Selection: Too Much of a Good Thing

Ashkenas et al. (1995) emphasize the importance of achieving a shared mindset among employees as early as possible or hiring individuals with shared values. A dilemma regarding a high degree of person-organization culture fit surfaces: What about the potentially negative consequences of attracting and selecting too many like-minded individuals? For instance, Schneider (1987) has suggested that organizational dysfunction and eventual demise can be traced to an overabundance of homogeneous worker characteristics. As a corollary, some diversity of worker attributes may be necessary to respond to environmental threats and opportunities, ultimately ensuring the viability of the organization.

Another caveat to consider is the possibility of adverse impact. Any employment test which results in different acceptance/pass rates for individuals belonging to different groups must be validated and its continued use demonstrated as necessary (e.g., no other test possesses its prediction power). If a disproportionate number of females, for instance, are judged to be a good fit for the organization based on the Big Five, male candidates may have cause for grievance or litigation.

Thus, the very homogeneity of employee values proposed as necessary for the success of the boundaryless organization may lead to two serious problems: decreased organizational performance and adverse impact. Approximately how much and what kinds of cultural parity between worker and organization are necessary for a productive mindset? Approximately how much and what

kinds of cultural (i.e., values) similarity between worker and organization lead to litigation and/or poor organizational adaptability?

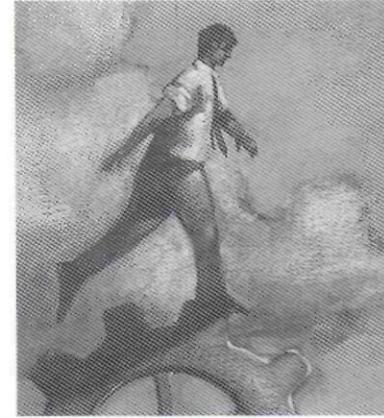
Because the work and how it is accomplished are based on flexibility to move ideas, information, talent, and decisions where they are most necessary (Ashkenas et al., 1995), the boundaryless organization may be less likely to realize organizational adaptability and performance problems compared to other organizations. The possibility of adverse impact seems a more likely threat. However, if employees are chosen on the basis of the organization's core values which reflect pivotal norms (Shein, 1980), and not on the basis of all possible organizational values and norms, the chance for worker trait homogeneity is lessened.

It may be that just as the organization needs different skill sets to accomplish a unified performance goal, organizations need different traits and worker characteristics to accomplish the longer-term goal of survival (Schneider, 1987). However, worker heterogeneity does not necessarily preclude the selection of homogeneous traits that primarily serve to reinforce core values and pivotal norms. More research is needed to build theory and enhance practitioner success in recruiting and selecting workers for boundaryless organizations.

### Summary and Recommendations

A boundaryless organization presents a challenge to some forms of job analysis, and traditional recruitment and selection practices that center around a job to be analyzed in terms of relatively stable tasks. There now exists evidence to suggest the job, as a structure within the organization, is no longer stable enough to use as a basis for making strategic human resources decisions. Although the scope of this paper was limited to job analysis, recruitment, and selection, boundaryless implications for compensation, training and performance management are certainly as important (Lawler, 1994).

The importance of rethinking and developing job analysis and recruitment and selection strategies which consider the realities of the boundaryless organization, contemporary employment arrangements, and the importance of person-organization fit has been the focus of this paper. Recent work in the area of person-organization fit suggests that value congruency may significantly affect employment satisfaction, organizational commitment, likelihood to quit, and actual turnover



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(O'Reilly et al., 1991). Thus, value congruency might also be used to help predict employee performance across jobs within an organization. On the other hand, a perfectly value-congruent workforce may present a different set of problems, namely poor adaptability to change (Schneider, 1987) and adverse impact. The boundaryless organization's focus is on reducing unnecessary structures so it can be highly adaptable to change. More research is needed to determine how much value congruence is necessary for optimal organizational adaptability and performance without adverse impact.

### Recommendations

1. Some method of analyzing what workers do (i.e., job analysis) is necessary in the boundaryless organization. Worker-oriented job analysis approaches such as the PAQ and the JEI allow more flexibility in the boundaryless organization because they focus on worker behaviors instead of specific tasks. Additionally, worker-oriented approaches provide a standardized way of collecting data across many "jobs." Newer approaches like work analysis, based on workflow, should be pursued.
2. An organization's understanding of its culture and its ability to communicate its cultural attributes (i.e., organizational values) to recruits will benefit both the organization and the recruit more than the conveyance of a job and its immediate climate, leading to a better person-organization match.
3. Recruits who receive cultural information from those employees who share similar group memberships (e.g., race, gender, age, family responsibilities) will be able to make better "matches" between themselves and the organization.
4. Understanding its own culture will enable the organization to articulate core values which can then be translated into traits and non-technical abilities to be validated as selection measures, ultimately enhancing organizational and individual outcomes (e.g., commitment, satisfaction, turnover).
5. Attracting and selecting candidates whose traits highly "match" the organization's cultural profile may result in two problems: organizational dysfunction and adverse impact on different social groups. It is possible that if the boundaryless organization

selects employees based on its core values, and affords employees creative individualism in the area of its peripheral values, adverse impact and poor organizational adaptability will be less likely. Research is needed to determine the relationship between worker trait homogeneity and these potential threats.

Rethinking the role of the job in a boundaryless organizational context has tremendous implications for human resource researchers and practitioners alike. Such implications necessitate an examination of how human resources can best fulfill its strategic roles in an environment of fewer vertical, functional, external, and geographical boundaries.

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