

FURNITURE EVERYDAY



Bill McLoughlin

Does your company suffer from organizational entropy?

April 13, 2015

The term entropy, most often associated with thermodynamics, is defined roughly as a measure of the energy that isn't available for work in a system. A related principle suggests that entropy is constantly increasing, meaning that the system has a declining ability to produce work.

Eventually, a state of maximum entropy is reached. No available energy remains and the system dies. Organizations are subject to the same principles. Typically at the beginning, a small number of people handle the workload, applying their full energy only to those tasks directly related to delivering relevant goods or services. Communication lines are short, direct and regularly utilized.

Over time, as an organization grows, energy is diverted to other tasks, structured oversight is required, record keeping needs increase, lines of communication grow and diverge and new processes are implemented to define roles and responsibilities in each of these areas. At each of these stages energy is diverted from primary tasks to manage supporting activities, to share information across increasingly complex, lines of communication.

Ironically today, technology that facilitates discourse at unprecedented speeds and seemingly with unprecedented ease, often serves to inhibit communication. Case in point — the group e-mail. Employees, A, B, C and D are tasked with a new project. Too busy for meetings, they decide to brainstorm via e-mail. As group leader Employee A sends out an e-mail outlining the project and defining four key points to address. Employees B and C agree with the first two points, B challenges the third point and C adds a fifth point they believe has been missed. D does not respond.

If you've ever worked in a company where this type of exercise is common you know what follows. Streams of e-mails back and forth, in-boxes filled to overflowing, and other employees are looped into and out of the conversation — all to reach a result that likely could have been achieved in a well-run 20-minute meeting.

This is but one example of organizational entropy that can afflict companies as they grow and evolve. New processes are often layered on top of old, organizational structures become superimposed one over another as successive managements each impose their own vision.

The key here is that, unlike the "closed systems" inherent in the thermodynamic definition of entropy, companies have it within their power and should have it as a mandate, to throw open the doors to new ideas. To ferret out potential sources of entropy and redirect energies toward the vital work necessary for success.

What are you doing to insure that your company's energies are properly directed? We'd like to know.



SPONSORED LINKS

- F/T's "Top 100 Furniture Stores"
- F/T's "Retail Giants of Bedding"
- F/T's "Key Sources for U.S. Market"
- F/T's "Consumer Health & Wellness"
- F/T's "Fastest Growing Furniture Stores"
- F/T's "Top 15 Bedding Producers"
- F/T's "2016 Imports/Export Report"
- F/T's "Economic Roundup"

Author Posts

[Measuring time frame for change in months, not years](#)

[How someone doing everything 'right' can cost you a sale](#)

[What can Tylenol teach the furniture industry?](#)

[5 resolutions for the furniture industry in 2017](#)

[3 shifts to prepare for in 2017](#)

Other Blog Posts

[Where to start in Vegas? Try Restonic](#)

[Not too old to spend money on new furniture](#)

[Measuring time frame for change in months, not years](#)

[Winter Las Vegas Market is a chance to start the new year off right](#)

[Will Amazon Go Change Retail?](#)

[RSAs need to master digital world](#)

[Do you talk about politics at work?](#)

