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**CEO Publication
G 88-3 (116)**

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ABSTRACT

A parallel organization is an adjunct to the regular organizational processes and structures. This paper examines the typical life cycle of a parallel organization. It makes the point that such structures tend to be unstable precisely because they are parallel. It suggests design principles to enhance their success.

Parallel Participation Structures

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During the past decade, many organizations have experimented with approaches that increase employee participation in decision making. The most common approach has been to set up special participative structures in which groups of employees can identify and solve problems encountered in organizational task performance. This approach gets around the relatively nonparticipative practices which are embodied in the culture and practice of traditional bureaucratically structured organizations by setting up parallel structures designed expressly to house participative activities.

The most widely employed approach to parallel participative groups is the Quality Circle (NYSE, 1982 Gorlin and Schein, 1984; Ingle and Ingle, 1983). Such well-known companies as IBM, TRW, Honeywell, Westinghouse, DEC, Xerox, and Hughes Aircraft have been heavy users of the Quality Circle approach. A number of public sector organizations including police departments and other government agencies have also utilized them. Although the most popular approach, quality circles are just one of the many approaches which have been tried. Task forces, standing committees, union management quality of work life

committees, and Scanlon plan suggestion groups are other popular parallel structure approaches to the involvement of employees in problem-solving and decision making.

This paper draws on our extensive research on parallel participation structures to discuss their various forms and the design factors that influence their effectiveness. Focusing particularly on the Quality Circle as an example of parallel participation structures, it depicts the common patterns of longevity, vitality, and the threats which they encounter. It points out the limitations of this approach to the involvement of employees and draws some conclusions about the use of parallel involvement structures. First, however, it examines the assumptions and beliefs which appear to motivate organizational efforts to involve employees in problem-solving and decision making.

The Trend Toward Parallel Participation Approaches

Experimentation with participative approaches appears to be motivated by a convergence of factors, all of which contribute to a willingness of managers to question some of the underlying beliefs and practices concerning authority and hierarchy in American organizations (Lawler, 1986). The 1970s and early 1980s presented a time of new challenges for most organizations. From within, organizations were confronted with a highly educated work force with increasing desires for both the intrinsic and extrinsic outcomes that work can offer. New computerized technologies demanded a work force at once sophisticated and specialized. A host of newly deregulated industries were experiencing a new competitive environment, and public organizations were being asked to do more with less. From without, American businesses faced an economy characterized by global

interdependence, dependency on foreign, sometimes hostile, nations for natural resources, and serious threats from international competition which endangered many basic industries as well as emerging high-tech areas such as electronics.

In short, American organizations started facing simultaneous pressures to become more competitive, and by implication more productive, and to become more responsive to the needs and expectations of an increasingly sophisticated work force. A logical organizational response to these pressures was to question the traditional relationship between employees and their work, and to develop ways to more effectively utilize their problem solving skills. Organizations began to recognize the need for the active involvement of personnel in the design and implementation of new practices and procedures.

The use of group participation approaches is predicated on a set of beliefs about participation, some of which are based on organizational research, and others on "common sense" (Ferris and Wagner, 1985). The research literature, although somewhat equivocal, suggests that under certain conditions employee participation can lead to acceptance of change, to better understanding and consequently more effective implementation of new ideas, and to increased intrinsic satisfaction. It also suggests that group decisions may be more effective than individual decisions because of the representation of multiple viewpoints, and may lead to more effective implementation because of common understanding and peer pressure⁽¹⁾. Some authors (e.g. Kilmann, 1984) posit that participative approaches are appropriate and necessary for addressing today's complex and multifaced problems that cannot be solved by single stakeholders who are confined to one set of knowledge

and one perspective. The "common sense" beliefs that are frequently voiced about participation include the following: "The people closest to the work have the information about how to make improvements"; and "People want to contribute more to their organizations."

Parallel Structures

Parallel (Stein and Kanter, 1980) or collateral (Zand, 1974) structures are permanent or temporary structures that are established to supplement the regular organization by performing functions that it does not perform or is ill-suited to perform well. For example, the regular organization may be structured to maximize efficient and productive operations, but not to improve on its own functioning. Parallel structures may be established to innovate and make change. If the regular organization houses top-down, authority based decision processes, the parallel organization may be designed to foster bottom-up, participative decision-making. By separating the two kinds of decision-making, the organization can house activities that follow two different "logics." It has been argued that the parallel organization is particularly useful in the creative, change-initiation stage of innovation, but that implementation of change and management of efficient operations are best handled by the regular hierarchical structures of the organization (Zaltman and Duncan, 1977; Zaltman, Duncan and Holbek, 1973).

The theory of the parallel organization is based on two assumptions. First, it assumes that individuals are capable of functioning within two different logics in the same organization. They are able to function hierarchically when performing their main job and participatively when part of a parallel structure. Second, it assumes

that the regular organization will be receptive to ideas and plans that emerge from the parallel organization. Given that the individuals who are part of the parallel organization also have positions in the regular organization, they can help introduce new ideas and serve as their champions in the regular organization. Furthermore, if the parallel structures included representatives of the different organizational stakeholder groups, their interests should be reflected in the ideas and plans that emerge.

Both the above assumptions can be challenged. It may be difficult, for example, for individuals to change logics as they go back and forth between the hierarchical and the parallel organization. Management in particular may have difficulty letting go of its authority base when operating within the more egalitarian, participative, expertise-based parallel structures. Individuals in the regular organization who have not participated in the change initiation phase may be less than receptive to ideas that may imply change or even more work for them. Not having participated in the process, it may be hard for them to see how their interests have been represented.

Examples of parallel structures include quality circles, quality improvement teams, task forces, and Scanlon teams. Quality Circles are small groups of employees from common work areas who get together regularly to identify and generate solutions for problems which they encounter in their work situation. In many respects, they are the prototypical parallel structure. They operate independently of and in different ways from the existing organization, are designed to address issues not being addressed by the regular organization, are not considered part of the day-to-day work activities, and do not in

structure or form resemble the day to day workings of the organization. They exist to introduce changes in the way work is done, but such change must generally be approved by the individuals and groups who have authority in the regular organization. The changes which are suggested leave the structure and design of the regular organization for the most part untouched. The individuals who are members of the quality circle have a primary job in the regular organization and consequently are only partially committed to the activities of the parallel structure.

Sometimes quality circles are imbedded in more comprehensive organizational thrusts. For example, Scanlon teams operate similarly but their efforts are rewarded by an organization-wide gainsharing process that enables all organizational members to benefit financially from improvements in organizational functioning. A budget exists to implement ideas that come out of these teams and are approved.

Quality improvement teams are often part of an organization wide quality effort that includes extensive training, orientation, and the development of a quality measurement, goal-setting and feedback process. Quality improvement teams are frequently composed of a cross section of individuals from various workgroups, and are often given particular problems to work on rather than identifying problems to work on based on their own experience and interest. In this sense they are similar to task teams, which are generally composed of a cross section or diagonal slice of the organization, and are mandated to address a certain problem or produce a particular product. For example, a task team might be established to research and make recommendations for a new pay system or an office automation system. A standing committee may be composed

similarly to a task team, but have ongoing responsibility for an area such as pay plans or automation.

The next part of this paper summarizes the extensive research findings on quality circles (Mohrman and Ledford, 1985; Mohrman and Novelli, 1985; Lawler and Mohrman, 1985; Lawler and Mohrman, 1987; and Hocevar and Mohrman, 1984) in order to identify the dynamics and design issues that determine the success of parallel participation structures. The focus then turns to the implications of this research for the use of parallel participation processes.

The Appeal of Quality Circles

Widespread media attention to the management practices of one of our most successful foreign competitors, Japan, contributed to many organizations focusing on one parallel approach, Quality Circles. They are widely used in Japanese businesses to actively involve small groups of employees in solving key quality and productivity issues. In the United States, consulting firms quickly appeared to market and implement circles, professional organizations were formed to support their proliferation, training materials were developed in great abundance, and the popular press was filled with accounts of Quality Circles programs.

In addition to the popular press interest in Japanese management practices, several other aspects of Quality Circles help explain their large-scale adoption. First, Quality Circles are marketed as a standardized program complete with a price tag which includes training, support materials, procedures, and consultant assistance during the implementation phase. Managers know what they are purchasing and how

much it will cost. They also are able to start them quickly and with minimal upfront disruption and cost.

Second, circle programs do not involve everyone. In fact, it is possible to stage the introduction of circles, and to expand the use of them only if the initial circles are successful. It is also possible to introduce them only where there is interest. Thus, managers can control the amount of activity and its cost. The voluntary aspect of circle programs has a special allure, since managers feel that they will capture the ideas of the truly interested employee, and not have to expend time and resources trying to motivate those who are more apathetic or negative.

Finally, many managers are willing to adopt Quality Circles precisely because they are parallel to the regular organization. Because decision-making authority is not redistributed, managers do not see themselves as giving anything up. It is not uncommon, in our experience, to hear managers say that they have little to lose--that any positive outcome will be a bonus since the organization is investing so little.

In summary, it is our experience that many managements embark on a quality circles program in the belief that it is a low-cost, low-risk approach to creating an environment where workers and managers cooperate to get the job done. Most managers do not contemplate major change in the systems and practices which constitute the regular organization, although they anticipate that quality circle ideas may result in minor changes that make the operation more efficient. Many, however, do anticipate that circles will produce ingenious ideas, which, when implemented, can save hundreds of thousands of dollars in operating costs.

Much of what has been said about quality circles is true of some other parallel structure approaches to participation. Problem-solving groups, task forces and suggestion programs all involve relatively small disruptions in the status quo but nevertheless hold out hope for significant gains. Some have more power than quality circles in that they can implement some suggestions themselves (e.g., Scanlon groups) but they still are seen as special activities.

Stages of Quality Circles Activity

Although many organizations have maintained parallel structure programs for multiple years, institutionalization has not occurred in many others (Meyer and Stott, 1983; Portis, Ingram & Fullerton, 1985; Cook, 1982; Smeltzer and Kadia, 1985; Bramel and Friend, 1987). An understanding of why successful institutionalization of parallel structure approaches is difficult can be gained by examining the typical life cycle of a quality circles program.

Quality Circles go through a series of identifiable phases or stages in their development⁽²⁾. Each one has its own key activities as well as its own threats to the continuation. Quality Circle programs that survive the threats of the first stage move into the second stage, and so forth. The characteristics of these stages are briefly summarized here.

1. Start-up Phase. During the start-up phase, a high level of activity is demanded and considerable effort needs to be put into the program. The program usually begins with a communication program and a call for volunteers. At this point it is also important to identify who the facilitators will be and to be sure that they are trained. In

addition, an intensive group process and problem-solving skills training program is often conducted for the circle members.

Most Quality Circle programs deal successfully with this stage and are able to progress to the problem-solving phase. This is aided by the fact that there are many firms offering good training packages for Quality Circle program participants and by the fact that most people like the idea of participating in problem-solving groups. As decades of research has often pointed out, people want to contribute to the place they work and want to participate in decision making. In fact, the danger is that the high level of initial enthusiasm creates expectations which cannot possibly be quickly met.

2. Initial Problem Solving. Most groups successfully identify problems and begin to problem solve. Once they start problem solving, they may find they have inadequate business and technical knowledge to solve the problem, but this too can be overcome through additional training or through adding expertise to the group, sometimes in the form of resource people. Therefore, in most Quality Circles, initial problem solving does take place and success is experienced. This leads to the next phase of activity.

3. Presentation and Approval of Solutions. Because Quality Circles are a parallel structure, the results of Quality Circle problem-solving activities must be reported back to decision makers in the line organization. If circles are to succeed, the reporting back must be done well and the line organization must respond quickly, knowledgeably, and, in a significant percentage of the cases, positively to the ideas. It is during this phase that the typical program encounters the first serious threats to its continuation.

Most of the individuals who have to accept and act on the ideas are middle level managers and in many cases they have had little or no role in the Quality Circle activities prior to this phase. Indeed, they probably have little previous experience soliciting and responding to ideas from subordinates. They have many other things to do and, as a result, they do not feel that they have the time available to respond to the ideas. They are often presented with ideas which in many cases, they feel they should have thought of themselves or with ideas that will change their own work activities. Not surprisingly, they often resist the new ideas and, as a result, either formally reject them or are simply slow in responding to them.

A great deal of pressure exists to accept the initial suggestions because of the time and resources invested and because it is known that if the ideas are not accepted the program will lose its momentum. Subsequent ideas often are received far less positively, however. If ideas are not accepted, the Quality Circle participants get discouraged and feel that the program is a sham, waste of time, and a management trick. If, in a high percentage of cases, Quality Circle suggestions are reacted to negatively or not at all, this usually ends the Quality Circle program. The groups become discouraged and stop meeting. If, however, the ideas are accepted, as they often are then the circle moves to the next phase.

4. Implementation of Solutions. Because the pressures for acceptance of the initial ideas of a Quality Circle are quite strong, many of these ideas are accepted; however, they may not be implemented. Staff engineering groups, maintenance groups, and middle management groups are often faced with a choice between continuing their normal

activities and helping to implement ideas that have been suggested to them. Because they have not been involved in the program and are not committed in its success, they often lack the motivation to act upon the suggestions.

Failure of the organization to implement circle ideas can cause the Quality Circle programs to lose momentum and die. Participants want to see implementation of their ideas and receive feedback on the impact of their suggestions. Many organizations, but not all, do successfully implement some of the ideas of the Quality Circle program, project large savings based upon them, and move on to the next phase.

5. Expansion and Continued Problem Solving. During this phase the program is often expanded to include new groups. If the program has gotten this far, then there is usually considerable commitment of resources to it and it becomes a major operating part of the organization. More facilitators are hired; more groups are started and trained. An administrative structure develops to support circle activities.

The initial success of the program leads to a desire of other people to get into the Quality Circle program. An insider-outside culture may develop. Non-members may resent the recognition and status accorded to successful Quality Circle members.

During this stage the members of the initial groups often develop aspirations for further developments. They may, for example, desire greater upward career mobility and/or additional training and technical skills. They may desire to transfer the participative process back into the everyday activities of the organization. Circle members become uncomfortable with the split between the way they are treated in the

Quality Circles and the way they are treated in the day-to-day operations of the organization.

The initial success may also bring a request for financial rewards from the participants. This is particularly likely to happen when organizations talk about their high levels of success and the great savings the circles have produced for the organization. Ironically, the more publicly the organization measures the cost-benefit of ideas and of the program, the more likely it is that employees develop a desire for remuneration if the program is successful.

Expansion of the program also may bring to a head issues of the cost of running the program and the parallel organization needed to operate it. Not only is there training time, but there is coordinator time, facilitator time, and meeting time. Savings from circle ideas often turn out to be somewhat smaller than had originally been estimated. A combination of disappointment over the actual savings from early ideas and the significant expense of running the Quality Circle program often provides the single most serious threat to its continued existence and sets the stage for the decline which usually follows.

6. Decline. Some circles maintain enthusiasm for years, and some organizations support circle activity for a long period of time. In many others, circles gradually decline. Groups begin to meet less often, they become less productive and the resources committed to the program are decreased. The people who all along have resisted the Quality Circle program recognize that it is not as powerful as it once was and they openly reject and resist the ideas.

Learning for Parallel Structures

Our analysis of the phases that Quality Circle programs go through suggests that there are many threats to their continued existence. The threats are manifestations of an inherent tension between the parallel structures and the regular organization. This tension involves a competition for scarce resources, including money, time and energy. In order to operate effectively, the parallel structure must have access to resources to implement ideas. The time and energy of the participants in the parallel structure and of the line management and resource personnel who must cooperate in the implementation of ideas in the regular organization must be "negotiated" with an operating organization that already has plenty of need for these resources.

Another tension that develops is stylistic. Managers and employees frequently have trouble shifting between two modes of management: authoritative and participative. Participants in the parallel structure attain a new sense of what they are able and expected to contribute, and develop expectations for different norms on their regular job.

A third tension is between the roles, job descriptions and training for the regular organization and behavior required for successful functioning in the parallel organization. The organizational model of the traditional hierarchical organization includes notions of top down control, clear, and narrow specifications of job duties and the classification of jobs and training of incumbents to operate in such a setting. The parallel organization requires a broadening of scope for the participants, and training, job descriptions and the authority distribution that reflects this. Effective participation in the parallel structure may require that individuals learn about areas that

are not part of their primary responsibilities. It may bring into question the notion that those at the top of an organization are paid more because they manage and make decisions. An organization serious about such approaches may have to revise many of its traditional personnel practices (Mohrman and Lawler, 1984; Mohrman et al., 1986).

These threats are common to all parallel structure approaches. The recommendations of many task teams lie dormant on shelves. Quality improvement processes often lose steam despite a great deal of upfront commitment of time and resources and impressive initial accomplishments. Because of these threats, it is likely that few parallel structure programs will be institutionalized and sustained over a long time period unless major changes are made in the regular organization to reduce the tension between the two structures. As will be pointed out in the next section, parallel structure approaches contain in their initial design many of the elements which lead to their elimination.

The Parallel Model: Design Issues

Ironically, the demise of parallel participation processes results from the very design features which make the concept attractive to managers in the first place; namely, their parallel nature. Even in organizations which have maintained some Quality Circle activity for as long as ten years, we have found that it remains "extra" and outside of the normal organizational routine. As such, the primary challenge is to maintain energy and enthusiasm among the various parties whose active involvement is essential to circle accomplishments. This is not easy to do when the work is seen as an "extra" activity that is neither required or rewarded.

We have mentioned that many managers start Quality Circles based on a belief that a more cooperative and productive climate can be established by allowing workers to become more active in problem-solving. They also believe that communication can be improved by the upward and downward flow of ideas and responses in the organization. Our research suggests, however, that a long-term interest in the process requires more than human relations victories; it requires results. Not only must the circles contribute ideas based on systematic and informed problem-solving, but these ideas must be implemented and have a visible and recognized impact on productivity and the quality of worklife. The chance to participate in a circle is not in and of itself a strong enough intervention to result in improved manager-employee relations, or greater intrinsic satisfaction (Ledford and Mohrman, 1988). Rather, it is the responsiveness of managers to the ideas of the circles, the mutual cooperation in implementing these ideas, and the resultant sense of accomplishment which can be the foundation for a cooperative climate and intrinsic satisfaction. This does not happen if there is no effective bridge between the parallel structure and the regular organization.

What do the problems with institutionalizing quality circles say about the usefulness of parallel structures? First it is possible to argue that they and other parallel approaches may be worthwhile even if they have a limited life expectancy. Many of their advantages can be realized in a short period of time if they produce good useable ideas which are implemented. They can leave behind them a valuable residue of skills and ways of thinking. On the other hand if there is a desire to institutionalize the participative problem-solving process, some design decisions can make a difference.

Ironically, to institutionalize participative problem-solving, the parallel structures must be more closely integrated with the regular organization. Specifically, the interests of the two structures must be aligned through a goal setting process and reward structure that makes it in the best interests of organizational members to put time and energy into the participative problem-solving process and the implementation of changes that result. Additionally, the problem-solving or task teams must be empowered to effect change. This involves providing them with skills, information, authority and budget commensurate with the task they have been assigned. Finally, participation in these processes and cooperation with its ideas must become an expected part of the job of all organizational members. Below, some key design decisions are discussed that have implications for institutionalization.

1. The voluntary nature of the activity. Parallel activity is often not seen as a required part of anyone's job. For members, as well as for the managers and support group personnel whose cooperation is vital, this activity can quickly be perceived as a burden. In busy times, it is often hard to "get away from work" to do parallel participation business. Thus, through the very act of establishing parallel structures as voluntary and apart from the normal workgroup, managers are designing it to be secondary in the perception of the organization.

Those designing participation groups can avoid this problem by organizing the process so that it is carried out by existing workgroups as part of their task assignment, rather than as an extra activity. Likewise, support for workgroup ideas can become an explicit task

assignment of managers and support personnel, upon which part of their performance evaluation rests. Individuals can be relieved of some of their duties to make time to participate in task teams and other special committees. To further integrate parallel and regular organization processes, participation in parallel processes can be a planned part of an individual's development and career progression.

2. Lack of resources. Parallel structures typically have no budget to support their activities and ideas. They have neither authority to proceed, control over timetable, nor stature to command response. They are in a real sense parasites on the regular organizational structure. This problem can be avoided to the extent that responsibility, budget and authority can be moved down into participative workgroups, thus enabling the group not only to generate ideas, but to be more potent in the authorization and implementation process. Just this has been successfully done for decades in Scanlon plan companies.

Additionally, parallel structures that are commissioned by a regular organizational entity that has the necessary authority and resources may be allowed to assume the power of that structure. For example, task team developing a new pay plan can assume the power of the group that has given it its mandate, such as the executive committee or the human resource department.

3. The locus of skills in the organization. Although some up-front training is usually conducted, it is our observation that parallel groups remain reliant on facilitation and implementation support from external parties such as facilitators. Managers and supervisors are not required to become skilled in the participative

process, either as participants in groups or as leaders of participative work groups. Consequently, the skills of group participation remain "special" in the organization, precluding a gradual shift toward a more participative culture in general.

Designers of the participative process can address this weakness by conducting much more extensive up-front training with managers, support personnel and supervision, and by reinforcing the use of these skills through the performance appraisal and reward process. Finally managers and supervisors can be required to play the facilitative and change agency roles that are generally performed by the special facilitator role. In short, the role of manager and supervisor can be altered.

4. Limited Domain. Quality circles and other participative groups often are not encouraged to ask very fundamental questions about the systems and structures of the organization. Their activities are generally confined to discovering inefficiencies of method, equipment, and communication. Members in many of the programs that we have studied are concerned with matters of personnel policy, division of labor, management treatment of employees, and the equity of the reward, training and promotional practices. These concerns are generally "out of bounds." Our detailed case studies suggest, however, that participative group members lose enthusiasm when they realize that these fundamental issues cannot be addressed. Interviews with members who quit quality circles, for example, suggest that a primary reason is that "Nothing has changed in my day-to-day existence in this organization." Likewise, many of those who continue to participate do so in the hopes that through the visibility they achieve, they may advance to a different role in the organization.

When parallel structures are implemented, members must be given a very clear sense of their mandates, to try to minimize the inevitable problems of inflated expectations. In addition, the organization must develop a response to issues which surface in parallel structures but are beyond the scope of the group.

5. Reward Structure. The continued success of many Scanlon type plans strongly suggests that changes in the reward systems can help support and institutionalize the parallel structure. In the Scanlon plan, problem-solving activities that successfully improve organizational performance lead to financial reward. This in turn provides an important reason to continue the activities and to implement the suggestions that come out of the parallel structure activities. It also gives a reason for communicating information about the financial success of the organization. If this is combined with financial education it can lead to employees understanding the organization's financial situation and making decisions that are based upon costs and financial measures.

Overall, the discussion has suggested certain design features which need to be built into a parallel structure process if it is to be institutionalized. First, the activity should be an official and rewarded part of a person's work activities. Second, the groups should be trained to the point of self sufficiency and given the resources to act on some of their ideas. Third, there needs to be some flexibility with respect to the kind of problem they can solve, and there needs to be an organizational mechanism to respond to concerns that surface that are beyond the mandate of the group. Finally, individuals must share the benefits and rewards of improved organizational performance.

Conclusion

For those who want to build a more change-oriented and participative environment in a lasting manner, the only solution is to design approaches that are not parasitic on the regular organization. This implies the transfer of responsibility and authority, and the alteration of role expectation and reward systems in organizations. In other words, it requires alteration in the systems and processes of the regular organization. This is a far more risky and fundamental change than the creation of parallel problem-solving processes.

Parallel participation programs can be a first step in moving an organization toward organizational effectiveness through employee involvement. They can be used as a way of moving toward a high involvement management approach that has teams, flat structures and a host of other design features intended to involve individuals in the work and organizations. Parallel programs can contribute a number of things that organizations need to have in order to be effectively run as a high involvement organization. Skills can be developed, attitudes changed, and important problems solved. Some parallel approaches, such as task teams and standing committees can be an ongoing way to involve a cross section of employees in addressing specific needs or taking responsibility for ongoing concerns.

It does not follow, however, that parallel programs are the best way to move toward high involvement structures. The ability of the organization to benefit from the efforts of such parallel structures requires that they be more tightly coupled with the regular organization. Indeed, there is little evidence that it actually happens even though at first glance it seems like a good way to start. The

reasons for this are the fundamental characteristics of activities which are parallel in nature. They are often structured to avoid impacting the regular organization's way of operating.

Notes

1. For a review of this research, see the following: Locke and D. Schweiger (1979). "Participation in Decision-Making: One More Look." In B. Staw (Ed.), RESEARCH IN ORGANIZATION BEHAVIOR, Vol. 1. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press; K.L. Miller and P.R. Monge (1986)/ "Participation, Satisfaction, and Productivity: A Meta-Analytic Review." ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT JOURNAL. 29(4). 727-753.
2. For a more thorough description of the stages, see: E.E. Lawler, III and S.A. Mohrman (1985) "Quality Circles After the Fad." HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW, pp. 65-71.

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