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**Chapter Discussion Questions**

**Chapter 7: Mass customization of products has become a common approach in manufacturing organizations. Explain the ways in which mass customization can be applied to service firms as well.**

“Mass customization refers to using mass-production technology to quickly and cost-effectively assemble goods that are uniquely designed to fit the demands of individual customers” (Daft, 2016, p. 271). The concept of mass communication is made possible only by the creation of the assembly line, lean accounting, and the smart factory. Prior to mass customization manufacturing companies thrived on mass production of specific products rooted in the assembly line process. As manufacturing technology, equipment, and management become more equipped to handle customization elements the market for on-demand customization increased. The ways manufacturing organizations bring maximum value to their customers is through management techniques that incorporate methods to “greatly minimize delays, reduce costs and improve quality” by removing things that do not add value to the company (Nallusamu & Saravanan, 2018, par. 2).

These same strategies can be applied to any organization and implemented within their operational structure. A few ways to incorporate mass customization within a service firm is through strong communication, client surveys, company auditing,

Service firms such as healthcare, banking, and education provide an intangible product that “does not exist until requested by the customer” and “cannot be stored, inventoried, or viewed as a finished good” (Daft, 2016, p. 273). Due to the nature of the product-provided service firms are “labor and knowledge-intensive” which means these companies must provide technical or skilled service. Service firms have always leaned towards customized output by working closely with the client and listening to what they want and need.

When evaluating lean tools within the service industries companies should focus on the two main categories “planning and operations” (Butler & Bright, 2018). A method to utilizing mass communication within the service industry is doing an employee audit. This involves an evaluation of each company position, hours clocked, duties involved, and overlapping duties. An evaluation of each position is a way to see if there are positions that are redundant and unnecessary. If there are unneeded positions, then this is a way to reduce financial waste along with seeing which duties are no longer necessarily within the company. Additionally, hiring highly trained and educated individuals will reduce waste in the long run as they will execute their job more efficiently and quickly. Another method is creating a customer survey on the products and services received along with allowing for feedback. This feedback will show areas the company can improve whether that is in product quality, customer service, operations, or post-purchase communication.

**Chapter 7: A top executive claimed that superior management is a craft technology because the work contains intangibles (such as handling personnel, interpreting the environment, and coping with unusual situations that have to be learned through experience). If this is true, is it appropriate to teach management in a business school? Does teaching management from a textbook assume that the manager's job is analyzable and, therefore, that formal training rather than experience is most important?**

The top executive who claimed superior management is a craft technology is right in his statement. However, there are other tangible management lessons and techniques that can be taught in business school. Superior management involves both hands-on, intuitive, educational, and higher-level training along with continued mentorship and growth. The combination of these elements is what creates an excellent management individual.When earning a business degree, the courses provided are meant to be an introduction and overview of important areas of business. It does not cover enough content in great enough detail to foster expert business individuals, but it does equip, inform, and empower graduates for business practices. There are two ways to master business management and the first is starting at the bottom as an entry-level employee and learning hands-on and by trial and error (Gergescu, 2019). The second is through an MBA degree which will give you foresight into what is up ahead by equipping you with the proper mindset and tools.

**Chapter 8: Do you believe that technology will eventually enable high-level managers to do their job with little face-to-face communication?**

The reality is this may be the future if technology continues to expand in business roles and if virtual and work from home become the new normal. Prior to COVID-19, working from home was not as common and at times frowned upon due to social pressures. However, with the new shift as employees worked from home due to safety reasons, businesses saw firsthand they operate just as well from behind a computer. In a medium to large-scale companies, high-level managers are rarely seen as they are involved in various projects and outreach for their company. In traditional companies, managers practice a hierarchical control process with all aspects of the company filtered and approved from top to bottom and back down again. This allows top-level managers to see and touch each product while maintaining oversight and control of the business. It also allows adequate communication within the departments and leadership.  Managers can delegate, lead, and control with little face-to-face communication. This is done well if proper rules and procedures are provided to its employees along with a formal control system to supervise and inspect the quality and execution of tasks. However, with all things considered, face to face is still a preferred method of communication with employees and clients. Forbes conducted a survey on 380 small and midsized businesses, and they were asked about different meeting methods and their preference along with benefits. The response was clearly a preference to

“face-to-face contact as a means of building closer business relationships, they see technology-enabled solutions as a vital part of their meeting mix, especially when time and cost are important” (Forbes, 2010, p. 1). Although, technology does reduce costs, time, and allow for more flexibility it still offers human connection which is at the heart of all companies. Managers who invest in their employees see an increase in profitability, productivity, and employee retention.

**Chapter 9: Look through several recent issues of a business magazine (Fortune, BusinessWeek, Fast Company, etc.) and find examples of 2 companies that are using approaches to busting bureaucracy. Explain the techniques that these companies are applying.**

            As companies expand and grow in employee size and reach, their life cycle stage develops in a more bureaucratic organization “with extensive control systems, rules, and procedures (Daft, 2016, p. 355).  This expansion from nonbureaucratic into very bureaucratic is a result of a need to provide more structure, control, services and products, new goals, and innovation. The most effective method is streamlining their organization to make them “more rational and efficient” (Daft, 2016, p. 355). Two companies who shifted their company structure away from work titles and hierarchical positions is MassMutual and Zappos.

MassMutual is a large life insurance company that made the decision to eliminate all job titles and level the structure (Reeves, Wesselink & Whitaker, 2020).  Zappos also eliminated job titles and the “traditional boss-subordinate system”. This decentralized authority gave employees freedom to make decisions and “empowered them to make the decisions in the best interest of the customer” (Gallo, 2020, par. 10). The CEO of Zappos went on record to state, “trusting your employees to keep customers happy will eventually lead to return customers, loyal customers, and higher sales. If you’ve hired the right people, then trust them to do whatever they feel is the right thing to do for the customer” (Gallo, 2020, par. 20). This method of empowering and trusting employees is a new movement of decentralized authority meant to cultivate employee loyalty and innovation.

**Chapter 9: Do you believe that a no-growth philosophy of management should be taught in business schools?**

Absolutely, a no-growth philosophy of management should be taught in all business schools. The importance of learning this philosophy is it will help an organization when they have stopped growing or are declining in profits. “All organizations go through the stages of decline, and it is the responsibility of mangers to detect the signs of decline and implement necessary action” (Daft, 2016, p. 371). It is crucial for a company to have the knowledge of each decline stage and how the decline begins in Stage 1 and progresses into the final Stage 5. This can provide management with specific stage strategies for a turnover. However, it also gives confirmation to the company when entering Stage 5 that the best course of action is dissolution. “Properly managing organizational decline is necessary if an organization is to avoid dissolution” (Daft, 2016, p. 371).

**Biblical Integration: How can/should a biblical worldview be applied?**

Trust, empowerment, and faith is a strong encourager for employees. The belief and mentorship within a decentralized structure is unnerving at first as leadership relinquishes control. However, the benefits are strong employee loyalty, confident workers, relationship building, and transparency. The bible encourages us to “build one another up” and to “let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding” (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2011, Romans 14:19). The unique and innovative management style of decentralization is a tool used to create a clan like following among employees. It is said this environment elicits a culture following and specific personalities are attracted to this unique work dynamic. Leadership uses this type of work environment to cultivate workplace unity and a transparent workplace.

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