

What is a Low Performance Organization?

An LPO is an organization which eventually and begrudgingly responds to demands within an unreasonable time by producing an inferior product or service, producing both customer and employee dissatisfaction and failing to achieve its goals by squandering its resources ineffectively and inefficiently.

Ten Characteristics of LPO's*

1. TRUST

Employees cannot be trusted to do their jobs without micro-management, frequent oversight and constant executive over-ride of logical decisions. Integrity, competence, consistency, loyalty, and openness interfere with team domesticity and company loyalty.

2. SHARED VISION

Strong leaders keep their shared vision under wraps, lest ambitious underlings use this information to advance their own careers, or worse yet, improve program performance.

3. REINVENTION, INNOVATION AND CHANGE

LPOs are skeptical of the need to reinvent themselves to meet emerging demands and changing roles. Response to change must be measured and deliberate, yet maintain status quo.

4. SHARED INFORMATION/OPEN COMMUNICATION

Knowledge is power. Only the powerful are permitted to have knowledge. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, and would only encourage insubordination by underlings. To maintain the established power structure, management must continue to restrict access to information, so that they remain indispensable, especially in the event of reorganization or political change. Feedback would only encourage dissension and sedition.

5. SYSTEMS THINKING AND UNDERSTANDING

Employees do not need to understand the "big picture". Management will instruct them as to how their individual teams relate to other organizational components and overall goals of the agency.

6. CROSS-TRAINED TEAMS AND SKILLED WORKERS

Members of low performance teams have no interest in understanding of each other's jobs. That would just be an opportunity for management to take advantage of them, getting more work out of them for the same pay. Besides, cross-training would just encourage insubordination and divergent ideas.

7. KNOWLEDGE WORKERS

Knowledge interferes with productivity, by distracting subordinates from their true role, obeying the administration unquestioningly. Just look at all the problems caused by unions once they found out about OSHA regulations!

8. MOTIVATION

Management understands that people are motivated solely by greed. Hence, they must be kept in line by arcane management policies and obfuscated directives. In addition to the seven LPO characteristics described above, staff can be demoralized by employee non-recognition, career stagnation, job dissatisfaction, organizational instability, job insecurity, and exclusion from decision-making.

9. CUSTOMER ORIENTATION

The customer must be tolerated from an internal and external viewpoint. **Internally** – other units and staff are the immediate customer, who must cope with inadequate services and poor system design before delivering shoddy products and lackluster services outside the LPO. **Externally** – the customer – be it consumer, taxpayer public or private entity – must be placated, with egos stroked and press releases extolling the LPO's products and services.

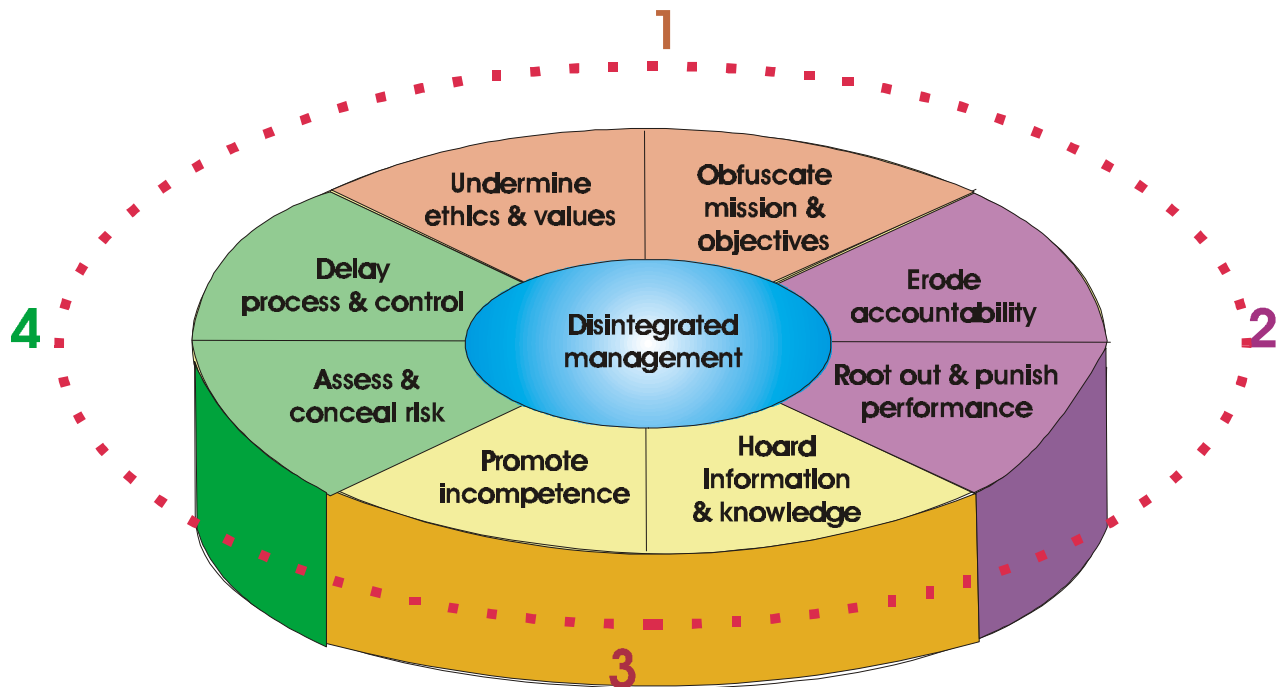
10. UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGEMENT OF TECHNOLOGY

Management is characterized by slavish devotion to new technology, regardless of relevance to mission or product. Managers must be able to brag about high-tech acquisitions during competitive cocktail party conversations. Owning a new hammer makes everything a nail.

***What is a Low-Performance Organization**

1. An organization designed from the top-down, obsessed with hierarchies and feudal turf issues.
2. Static structure, inflexible and unresponsive to changing customers and environment.
3. Elaborate hierarchy which restricts self-management at lower levels.
4. Highly dysfunctional units which keep to themselves and avoid contact with other divisions within the organization.
5. Minimal knowledge of performance and targets – financial, quality, customer satisfaction.

Key Attributes of a Low-Performance Organization



1. Leadership Strategy

Undermine Ethics & Values

- Gloss over unethical practices
- Marginalize tone at the top

Obfuscate Mission & Objectives

- Trickle-down theory of management
- Defer policies and guidelines
- Carefully edit agency newsletter

2. Accountability & Reinforcement

Erode

Accountability

- Assignment of blame
- Postpone accountability measures

Root Out & Punish

Performance

- Discipline the imaginative
- Eliminate performance indicators
- Monitor the unorthodox

3. People &

Communication

Promote Incompetence

- “We are family” (aka nepotism)
- Minimize staff development
- Ignore outside critics

Hoard Information & Knowledge

- Restrict information flow
- One-way communication
- Contract out for computer services

4. Risk Concealment & Infrastructure

Assess & Conceal Risk

- Limit risk assessment practices
- Spin doctor all management reports

Delay process & control

- Perpetuate unreliable processes
- Constrain effectiveness and efficiency
- Confound system access and security