The New Way of Working

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Contents

Introduction

The New Way of Working, social innovations, teleworking, flexible working... They all point to changes in the way we give structure to our work. Different social trends, technological evolutions and economic circumstances mean that work is continually subject to change:

- Think about the **aging** population; it means we will need to work longer. This calls for a viable work-life balance.
- Fast-changing markets and emerging **competition** force organisations to accelerate their productivity and innovation, and to structure accordingly.
  This demands flexible working.
- **Digital developments** have great impact on how we communicate with each other in this day and age. Distance has become relative and has created possibilities to work together in a different manner.

These evolutions and trends – as well as others – are at odds with our current views on working. A **change of mentality** in relation to our views on work: that is the challenge for staff members and organisations today. The New Way of Working offers a solution to this challenge.

What is The New Way of Working?

There are many definitions to be found for The New Way of Working. It is best described as the **flexible organisation of working times, of work content and environments, that allows work to run in an efficient, effective and pleasant manner. This is linked with a culture focused on collaboration and the attainment of results**. The New Way of Working brings staff members and their supervisors to the point where they have more options on when, how and where they will work. This can include a variety of working forms: part-time work from home; set work hours as the worker sees fit and with checks on output and performance; the choice of working 9 to 5; work hours agreed upon among colleagues within the floating hours required at the office; freedom to decide where you work; etc.

This manner of working requires a different approach from management and staff members. In this paper, Quintessence will look into which competencies are crucial for the New Way of Working. We hereby frame The New Way of Working within our Purple view on Human Resources Management: a balanced vision of the organisations of tomorrow.

The New Way of Working and Purple Management

With the Purple HRM approach developed by Quintessence, organisations can transparently combine their attention to both the perspective of the organisation and that of the staff member.   Known as the Purple approach, it ensures the passions, talents and competences of staff members belong in an environment where this is respected.   The focus is on tuning the **mission** of the organisation to the **passion** of the individual.

According to Quintessence, this is also what **The New Way of Working** is about. It covers more than a modern interior, the installation of the latest ICT applications or permission for employees to work from home. It is about a **vision** in which work is made more pleasant for staff members, while at the same time, enabling organisations to work in a more efficient and innovative manner. It incorporates a different view of **leadership and collaboration**; as such, it is representative of a fundamental move in management in the direction of **dialogue** and **co-construction**. It is in consultation that concrete interpretation is given to the vision of The New Way of Working , resulting in shared, successful practices.

What are the benefits of The New Way of Working?

Although there are some doubts about the measurability of the effects (Beijer, van der Voordt, Hanekamp, 2011), after implementing The New Way of Working, organisations have observed progress in a number of different areas.

FOR THE EMPLOYEE
More space to tune private lives and work (Kluwer, 2012; Microsoft, www.slim-werken.be; Walrave & De Bie, 2005). In research, an improved **work-life balance** was confirmed by 58% of the organisations surveyed (van Heck et al., 2011). **More efficient work** at self-chosen moments; the working hours can be better used or, in the case of teleworking, people are interrupted less frequently (ESF, 2006; in relation to a simulated future scenario, PwC, 2011). More feeling of **autonomy** when working on assignments and tasks (ESF, 2006; in relation to a simulated future scenario, PwC, 2011) Larger choice of **living and working options** (ESF, 2006) Reduction in **travel time** (Walrave & De Bie, 2005), and less traffic congestion in relation to a simulated future scenario, PwC, 2011) USG People experienced more **re-orientation possibilities** for staff members. At the Federal Government Service for Social Security in Belgium, there are now fewer women working part-time and more women have attained supervisory positions (www.slim-werken.be). People with decreased mobility and **disadvantaged groups** have more options open to them (ESF,

2006; in relation to a simulated future scenario, PwC, 2011).

FOR THE EMPLOYER/THE ORGANISATION

More **involvement** from the employees (Microsoft, www.slim-werken.be; Towers Watson, 2012; Walrave & De Bie, 2005) and a positive impact on the **retention**, **satisfaction** and **motivation** of employees (Walrave & De Bie, 2005).

Increased **flexibility** allows the organisation to respond more quickly to the changing demands of the environment (Dewettinck, Sels, Van Hootegem & Verweire, 2012). Research shows that 45% of organisations surveyed have determined this to be the case (van Heck et al., 2011).

33% of organisations surveyed have recorded improvements in their **images as employers** (van Heck et al., 2011), which equates to results presented by the Global Workforce Study by Towers Watson (2012). According to the ESF (2006), organisations acquire a more innovative image on the job market.

Savings on location costs (Federal Government Service for Social Security, www.slim-werken.be). 42% of organisations surveyed experienced a reduction in costs (van Heck et al., 2011). At Microsoft, the costs for the Belgian office dropped by 25% (www.slim-werken.be).

Healthier employees and fewer incidents of **sick leave** (Microsoft, www.slim-werken.be; The White House Council of Economic Advisers, ManagementSite, 2011).

Increased productivity (Kluwer, 2012; in relation to a simulated future scenario, PwC, 2011; The White House Council of Economic Advisers, ManagementSite, 2011; Walrave & De Bie, 2005). From research, it appears that giving staff members a higher level of autonomy results in them taking on more responsibilities (Dewettinck, Sels, Van Hootegem & Verweire, 2012).

Efficient use of time through better time allocation (ESF, 2006; in relation to a simulated future scenario, PwC, 2011). More efficient company processes because of an increased awareness of time and planning (ESF, 2006).

More **recruitment possibilities** from a geographical perspective (ESF, 2006).

With the new communication tool, Microsoft has seen **e-mail traffic** drastically decrease; at USG People, there was a reduction in the number of **prints** (www.slim-werken.be).

After the introduction of The New Way of Working at the Federal Government Service for Social Security, the average **retirement age** was increased by two years (www.slim-werken.be).

FOR THE COMMUNITY

More employment opportunities in non-urban areas (ESF, 2006).

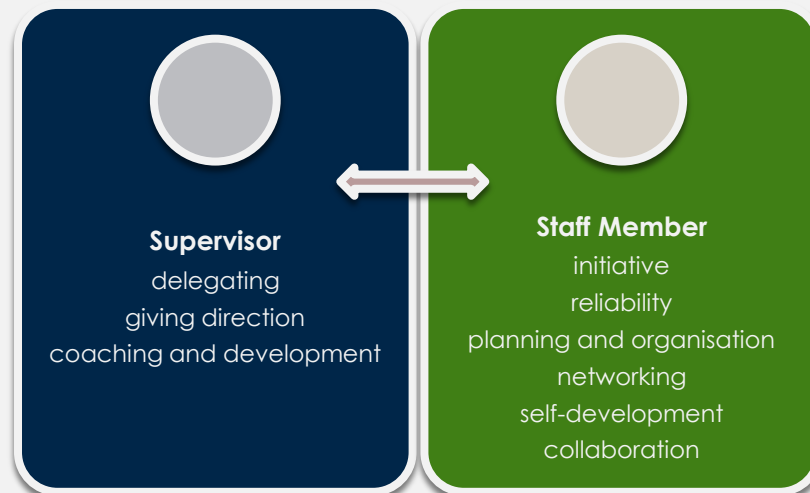*Savings on health insurance as a result of* decreased sick-leave

Possibility of emancipation (ESF, 2006).

Less pollution

Less traffic

Crucial Competences

The New Way of Working calls for a change process which is reflected in the behaviour of supervisors and staff members. Quintessence researched which competences, besides those specifically linked to functions, were responsible for the successful implementation of The New Way of Working. These competences could also become subjects in selection interviews or they could be structurally integrated into developmental activities.

Supervisor
delegating
giving direction
coaching and development

Staff Member
initiative
reliability
planning and organisation
networking
self-development
collaboration

The Purple view

Departing from the principles of Purple Management, The New Way of Working asks for **shared responsibility**. This is not about staff members having more freedom and supervisors consequently needing to trust them; trust is always something that needs to be earned. It is about creating a clear framework of agreements in which the staff member takes responsibility for working towards fulfilling goals and the supervisor performs as a facilitator and follows up results. The supervisor is responsible for the clear communication of expectations and goals; it is the responsibility of the staff member to report on these subjects.

Supervision from a distance

Delegating
• Freedom
• Trust
• Control and follow-up

Giving direction
• Output-oriented
• Agreements and expectations
• Communication
• Team spirit

Coaching and Development
• An eye for development
• Feedback
• Support
• Facilitation

Delegating

Freedom, trust and control. A healthy relationship of trust begins with a clear framework of agreements where staff members are given the responsibility and the space to perform tasks themselves. Checking, following up and staying informed are all vital, because they form the basis for gaining the trust of staff members and for finding the space to delegate (Vandendriessche & Clement, 2006). From the surveys by Kluwer (2012), it appears that 73.44% (n=86) agrees that their output is checked and 69.11% (n=48) disagrees with the statement that 'In The New Way of Working, you need to be left completely free'. A healthy relationship of trust also has a positive influence on the social inclusion, retention and satisfaction of staff members (Denton et al., 2004). Checking which is too strict increases work pressure (Walrave & De Bie, 2005) or leaves employees wanting to return to work in a regular office situation (Denton et al., 2004).
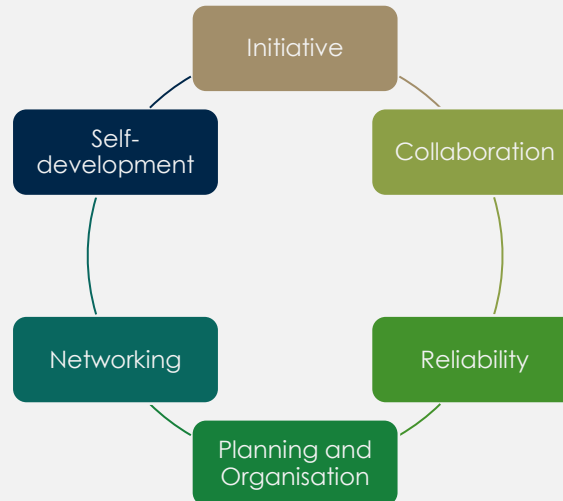
Giving Direction

Output oriented supervision and communication are central to the new way of working. It is important that the supervisor formulates clear agreements and goals. Agreements can be made not only on results, but also on efforts made, whereby it is important that all goals are measurable. (Baane et al., 2010). Goals must be followed up so timely feedback can be given and adjustments can be made. This ensures expectations are clear, while also giving staff members feedback which enhances motivation (Walrave & Dens, 2003). Communication is also a powerful tool. 63% of Belgian 'new workers' admit to missing contact with colleagues (Kluwer, 2011). Ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for contact, including face-to-face contact, so that staff members do not feel isolated. Regular contact has a positive effect on the involvement of staff members (Walrave & Dens, 2003) and on the sharing of knowledge between colleagues (Felstead, Jewson & Walter, 2003). Furthermore, the less contact, or the less the availability of contact, the greater the negative impact of isolation on productivity (Golden, Veiga & Dino, 2008; TNO, 2012). As a supervisor, stimulate informal contact, because a lack of spontaneity and dynamics between colleagues limits both the standard to which knowledge is shared and creativity (Heidstra and Pentascope, 2012).

Coaching and Development

Supporting, facilitating and stimulating are primary concerns as there is a considerable reduction in learning opportunities with increased physical distance (*i.e.* observation of colleagues; on-the-job learning). Give regular feedback aimed at the further development of staff members, even outside function or evaluation discussions. Ask about their experiences and their well-being at work, and identify possible uncertainties; the manner of evaluation, the manner in which checks are performed, not being involved with new projects, missing contact with colleagues, etc. always raise doubts (see Bosman, 2011; Harris, 2003; Taylor & Kavanough, 2005). It is consequently up to supervisors to facilitate and provide the necessary resources and social support. This calls for a personalised approach and therefore, dialogue: every staff member deals freedom in their own manner and has different needs.

The self-directing staff member

Many factors are important: intrinsic motivation, professionalism, etc. But apart from these, Quintessence researched a number of crucial competences. While they do not appear to be different to those for a normal employee, they are in fact more determining due to changes to the traditional work relationship.

Initiative

Independence and responsibility. Now that staff members are no longer always able to call on their colleagues, they are expected to work independently and find help themselves when necessary (Bosman, 2011; Heidstra & Pentascope, 2012; Walrave & Dens, 2003). 92.67% of knowledge workers (Kluwer, 2012, n=54) agree with this. Freedom also implies responsibility. It is therefore up to staff members to communicate their progress (Tietze & Musson, 2003; Walrave & Dens, 2003).

Collaboration

The **spreading of ideas** comes under extra focus. Fleeting contact between staff members means there is less time in which proposals are elaborated, which puts a brake on innovation (Heidstra & Pentascope, 2012). Besides this, group **involvement** and group targets are also important. Even when working from a distance, there are a number of other (f)actors which need to be taken into account. From a Purple perspective, staff members need to determine for themselves what is or is not desirable, but also while taking the team, the clients and the organisation into consideration.

Reliability

Creating trust. Staff members are allocated more freedom, but a clear framework of agreements remains crucial. They are expected to keep to previously determined deadlines and guidelines and, within the given timeframe, to demonstrate their reliability (ESF, 2006; Flamend, 2011; Felstead, Jewson & Walters, 2003; Kurland & Cooper, 2002; Walrave & Dens, 2003). This interplay of trust and responsibility forms the basis of a healthy relationship with room for delegation.

Planning and Organisation

Structuring and prioritising.   A time-card system offers regularity and as such, psychological safety. Work that is performed independent of hours gives more autonomy, but also means staff members need to structure and prioritise their work, thereby setting clear boundaries between work time and private time (Tietze & Musson, 2003). It is therefore the responsibility of staff members to prioritise in order to meet pre-defined deadlines (Raghuram, Wiesenfeld & Garud, 2003).

Networking

Staying in contact and making oneself visible.   As a result of physical distance, it has become a challenge to stay up-to-date with what is going on within the organisation. This is done through networking (Bosman, 2011) and regular appointments with colleagues.   The quality of the relationship between staff members always defines the standard of knowledge sharing (Taskin & Bridoux, 2010). Furthermore, there are often concerns about being left out of interesting projects (Harris, 2003). Staff members therefore need to be able to inform others about what they enjoy doing and make their work and performance visible for relevant parties (Hulst, 2011; Taylor & Kavanaugh, 2005).

Self Development

Undertaking self-reflection and learning. In order to work independently, it is important that staff members know what, for them, is a good approach to work, while they also need to be conscious of their strengths and short-comings.   They must therefore be able to critically review their performances and be open to feedback.   Contact with colleagues decreases, so do the opportunities to learn from each other. This can result in stagnation in the development of staff members (Kurland & Cooper, 2002; Heidstra & Pentascope, 2012). As such, staff members need to join with others in looking for alternative learning opportunities.

When Does It Work, When Doesn't It?

Of course, there are not just benefits associated with The New Way of Working. It is vital to be aware of a few important preconditions prior to becoming involved.

How well does your company culture suit The New Way of Working?

Resistance from management, or a company culture in which The New Way of Working does not thrive, can put a brake on the implementation of The New Way of Working (Denton et al., 2004). It is important that a culture dominates where there is **open** communication and a place for **dialogue**. Besides this, it is vital to have a **results-oriented** mind-set where staff members are given the **space** to take on responsibilities and are stimulated to work **together** to attain results.

With 42% of the 102 Dutch organisations surveyed, the current company culture was experienced as an obstacle.
(van Heck et al., 2011).

This is why it is good to examine the extent to which The New Way of Working brings about change in the current culture. For example, in an organisation that is characterised by bureaucracy and top-down management, more attention will need to be paid to the existing culture during the process of change.

The choice for everyone, or everyone the same choice?

'The New Way of Working is the same for everyone, but not carried out for or by everyone in the same manner' (Kluwer, 2012). The New Way of Working therefore requires **tuning**. Flexible working is not for everyone. From doctoral research, it appears that staff members with a greater need for structure are not motivated by The New Way of Working and require a controlling form of feedback (Slijkhuis, 2012). There is, for example, little point in forcing staff members to enter into a structure they are intrinsically against, and to exchange their set office hours for insecure scheduling. It is more important that they have the **choice** of how to fulfil their work commitments, according to their needs and those of their environment in order to optimally take on their tasks.

With the Federal Government Service for Social Security for example, employees have the freedom either to choose their own hours or to keep to the hours required by the time-clock. At the end of the day, they are assessed on their performances and output .

To what extent are there supporting processes and structures?
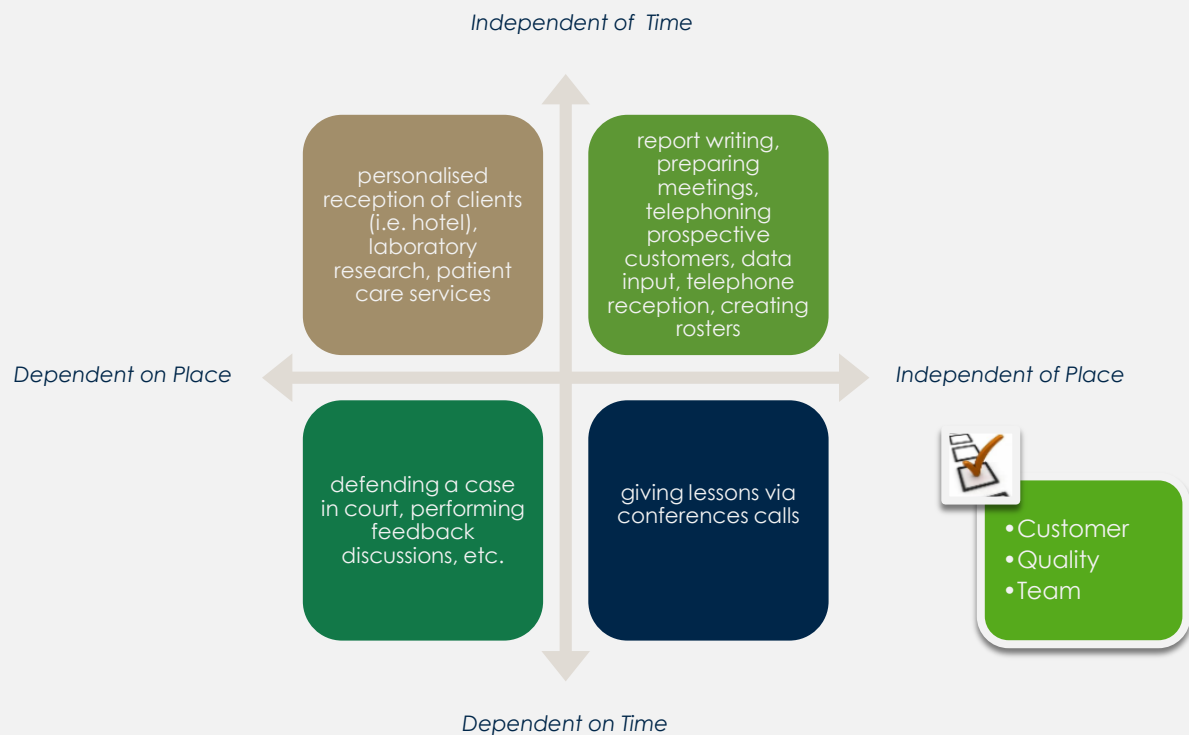
To record results and to work toward the goals of the organisation, it is important to promote collaboration and to stimulate innovation.   Staff members can be held accountable, but it is also possible to put in **processes and structures** in place which makes this easier. Consider making knowledge accessible; anchoring structures to ideas in order to innovate; holding meetings to maintain involvement; taking joint responsibility; etc.

In the creation of The New Way of Working, there have been issues relating to **Work-Life mixing** (see Walrave & Dens, 2003): this too can be fine-tuned. Since The New Way of Working should not fall under 'The New Ruling', general guidelines can be developed. When further stipulations are needed, they can be discussed.

A new rule has been issued, requiring those working from home to have access to a **professional workplace** (ESF, 2006). Functioning may not be hindered by the lack of an ergonomic workplace or of any necessary materials.

Only for knowledge workers or for everyone?

It appears as if The New Way of Working was designed specifically for knowledge workers, but for 'less evident' tasks, other arrangements can certainly be made. Whether a task is appropriate or not can be identified by use of a matrix that defines the possibilities in respect to whether they are dependent on time and on place. It is important that such factors are weighed against the **quality** of the work: is this guaranteed? The same applies to the service for the **client**: are clients served just as well, or perhaps, even better? It is also important to consider how you, as a company, want to appear to the client. For example, choosing to install a virtual receptionist creates a different impression for visitors.

Independent of Time

personalised reception of clients (i.e. hotel), laboratory research, patient care services

report writing, preparing meetings, telephoning prospective customers, data input, telephone reception, creating rosters

Dependent on Place   *Independent of Place*

defending a case in court, performing feedback discussions, etc.

giving lessons via conferences calls

- Customer
- Quality
- Team

Dependent on Time

Conclusion

The New Way of Working corresponds perfectly with the principles of Purple Management. It is a method of managing work that meets the desires and needs of the staff member, the organisation and the environment. This gives benefits on different levels: attention is paid to People (what is the added value for the staff members?), to Profit (what is the added value for the organisation?) and to the Planet (what is the added value for the environment?).   With this approach, The New Way of Working fits nicely into the requirement of sustainable and socially-responsible business practices.

Working together with staff members to give a firm interpretation of The New Way of Working within your organisation, you create dialogue and arrive at a shared idea of what The New Way of Working can and must be. This Purple approach allows you to evolve into an organisation where staff members take on their own responsibilities, where this is facilitated by managers, where employees strive to fulfil communal goals and where these goals form a match between the organisation mission and the talents of the staff members: a Purple organisation.

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