

Running head: ILV AND THE BOUNDARYLESS ORGANIZATION

A Proposal for Transforming ILV

Into a Boundaryless Organization

Justin Hettinga

Trinity Western University

Dr. Douglas Atha

Introduction

Change, none of us really like it. Some may encourage it, but most simply resist it. How do we as an organization, ILV (Summer Institute of Linguistics in Peru), react to change? Do we embrace it? Do we flee from it? At an international level our Vision 2025 strategic themes include a commitment to creative strategies and a commitment to set aside time to do creative strategizing. This involves new ideas, innovation and risk. This is change at its essence.

In this paper I will introduce the concept of a boundaryless organization. I will look at the data I collected through a survey on ILV and make sense of its findings. From there I will present proposals for change that I believe will help us as an organization be characterized by new ideas and innovation.

Change

Change is one of life's inevitable facts. Most mediocre and less successful organizations simply react and change when they are hit by outside environmental jolts. Successful organizations, in contrast, initiate change and innovation and they reshape their outside environments and markets. (Tushman & O'Reilly, 2002, p. 21)

In the past ILV was characterized by innovation and new ideas. New theories, developed in our organization, in applied linguistics, literacy, translation and bilingual education have been developed, published and disseminated worldwide. Sadly, we are no longer characterized by innovation and new ideas. What happened?

Oddly enough, organizations that have been very successful in their fields often find it most difficult to change. Even though their historic success may have been built on a highly innovative idea, there is a common tendency to calcification: "We've been doing just fine with what we have; let's not mess with it." Any

business leader tempted to follow that kind of thinking is cautioned to remember what happened to the railroads. (Gryskiewicz, 1999, p. 17)

What is a Boundaryless Organization? An Overview

Ron Askenas, et al, in their book, *The Boundaryless Organization* (Ashkenas, Ulrich, Jick, & Kerr, 2002), tell us that in all organizations there exist four types of boundaries. Vertical boundaries are those which separate people by hierarchy, rank, and status. Horizontal boundaries are those that separate different units within the organization, which in our case would be departments and language teams. External boundaries separate us from our clients, stakeholders and other outside partners. The last boundary is global, which separates us from SIL in other countries.

The more permeable these boundaries are, the more successful we will likely be. “When these four boundaries remain rigid and impenetrable-as they so often do today-they create the sluggish response, inflexibility, and slow innovation that cause premier companies to fall.” (Ashkenas et al, 2002, p. 12)

Today’s organizations need to be characterized by speed, flexibility, integration and innovation (Ashkenas et al, 2002). Speed is important in today’s world of instant communication. We need to be able to react quickly to things like funding crisis and opportunities. We need flexibility in our roles. Our people can no longer be locked into carefully defined job descriptions. They need to be able to constantly learn new skills and be able to fill in where needed. Integration is very important for us to pull together the whole big picture. The South Peru team is a good example of a language team that is seeking to be more integrated. They are made up of specialists in various fields working together to affect change. Integration does not do away with our specialists but it is all about our specialists being able to collaborate

with others to create an integrated whole. That integrated whole for us is changed lives through the translated Scriptures, not just the translated Scriptures. The hundreds of thousands of Bibles collecting dust on shelves around the world attest to our need for more integration. Innovation is crucial for us to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world.

Yesterday's successful organizations were characterized by size, role clarity, specialization and control (Ashkenas et al, 2002). I believe we, as an organization, can identify with these twentieth century success factors. We have experienced success in the past by focusing on these factors. But what about these new success factors, how can we change to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world? I believe that if we further open up our four boundaries and seek to be characterized by speed, flexibility, integration and innovation, we will be able to finish well in Peru.

The Boundaryless Organization Questionnaire – Interpreting the Results

In order to evaluate the boundaries that we have in our organization I sent out a questionnaire to selected ILV members that I thought would have their finger on the pulse of the organization. The full results, along with average points for each question from the questionnaire, can be found in appendix 1. In table 1 and table 2 I have a summary of the results. The results are from the responses of eight ILV members. I believe that the results of this survey accurately describe the current state of ILV. I will now look at each boundary individually, explaining the survey results and giving reasons why they do or do not accurately describe ILV.

Table 1

<i>Rating</i>	<i>Boundaries</i>	<i>Points</i> <i>Above 16=strength</i> <i>Below 12=needs work</i>
1.	Vertical Boundary	12.62
2.	Horizontal Boundary	10.63
3.	Global Boundary	10.41
4.	External Boundary	9.46

Table 2

<i>Rating</i>	<i>Success Factors</i>	<i>Points</i> <i>Above 16=strength</i> <i>Below 12=needs work</i>
1.	Integration	12.67
2.	Speed	10.84
3.	Innovation	9.89
4.	Flexibility	9.71

Vertical Boundary

In Table 1 it is clear that our vertical boundaries are fairly permeable. ILV has always been a relatively flat organization with good vertical communications. Formal rank and hierarchies are really not hindrances to the passing around of new ideas.

For example, I, as a relatively new member, would have no problem bringing up an issue with the director or the Executive Committee chairman. I appreciate this and commend our leadership for maintaining this openness.

Horizontal Boundary

In our horizontal boundary we have very little communication going on. I do not see much information sharing going on horizontally in ILV. For example, those of us in the south rarely discuss program issues with those in the north or central mountains or the jungle. We all communicate with those above us, primarily our regional administrators and the DRP (Director of Research and Programs), but rarely do we communicate horizontally.

Global Boundary

The global boundary is similar in scoring to the horizontal boundary. This is because it is, in many ways, a horizontal boundary that separates us from other branches in other countries. There is a certain amount of high level communication going on between directors but the boundaries are rarely crossed at lower levels.

External Boundary

The score received for our external boundary is interesting because we talk so much about partnerships in ILV. We have a conflict between what we say and what we do. We help many organizations but in most cases these so called partnerships are rather paternalistic and are not genuine mutual partnerships that are characterized by shared control.

Integration

Out of the four success factors, ILV rated the highest in integration. For example, our language teams' personnel are often called on to do a variety of tasks. A translation specialist will often be involved in literacy activities and a literacy expert will often be called on to give input into issues related to translation.

Speed

Speed was our second highest scoring but it was still quite low and needs some attention. Even though Peru may not be as developed technologically as many Western nations, ILV is

connected to institutions around the world and is heavily influenced by global trends. Since the executive committee and administration have adapted a Carver model of governance, our speed in adapting and decision making has greatly improved. We still have a lot of improvement possibilities with regards to speed when it comes to financial matters, programs and personnel.

Innovation

Innovation came out with a very low score in this questionnaire. At one time ILV Peru was a leader in innovation in terms of linguistic, translation and literacy. The successes of the past have led to a complacent attitude. Gyskiewicz in his book entitled *Positive Turbulance* says, "The very skills and behaviors that lead to success can become a trap." (1999, p. 18) Tushman and O'Reilly tell us that, "the more successful an organization has been, the more institutionalized or ingrained this learning becomes, further increasing cultural inertia and organizational complacency." (2002, pp. 28-29)

Flexibility

The level of flexibility within ILV is very low but there is flexibility within the vertical boundaries. Administrators are willing to take on frontline responsibilities where needed and frontline personnel are willing to step into higher level responsibilities, such as the executive committee. Flexibility is lacking in the shifting of resources from department or program to another department or program.

Proposed Changes

In this section I will look at the various organizational boundaries and suggest various ways in which we, as an organization, could change or improve. Many of the proposed changes affect various boundaries or success factors. As such, many of the proposed changes will affect

more than one boundary. I will not directly address vertical boundary changes since this is our strongest area and there is not a lot of need for change at this time.

Horizontal Boundary Changes

There is much that could be done to improve the permeability of our horizontal boundaries. The traditional structure of people working within their isolated silos is evident in ILV. I do see some very positive elements when I analyze our horizontal boundaries. Within our organization there is little evidence of unhealthy competition or enemy-within syndrome that can plague so many organizations. (Ashkenas et al, 2002, p. 112) I believe that we have healthy horizontal relationships throughout the organization, but what we lack is a sense of teamwork, communication, and there is very little crossing from one silo to the other. The changes that I propose will deal with each of these issues.

My first proposal is that we resurrect the practice of having regular organization wide team meetings. The team meetings of the past died a slow death because they slowly became less and less relevant. If our members do not see any advantage in attending team meetings then they will not come, or they will come harbouring resentment. If we are to re-instigate team meetings, they will need to be completely revamped and possibly renamed so that people will see them in a new light.

These meetings need to have dialogue as their core purpose. The reason to call the meetings would be to generate dialogue, which would lead to information sharing, which would lead to the generation of new and innovative ideas. The organization is ripe for innovation meetings since so many language personnel and administrators have recently received training in dialogue education, through the Learning that LASTS workshops. This would be a good opportunity to put into practice the training that we have invested in our members.

The re-birth of team meetings will be met with resistance by many people. But it is absolutely critical that we increase the flow of information and ideas horizontally throughout the organization.

...creating the right kind of relationships at the right time is the key to productivity, innovation, and effectiveness. But good working relationships don't happen automatically; they are not the simple product of good feelings, team spirit, or hard work. In fact, opportunities for confusion and conflict abound in a flexible organization. (Hirschhorn & Gilmore, 1992, p. 106)

This potential for confusion and conflicts is the reason why our administrators will need to also make a paradigm shift. In order to minimize confusion and conflict, administrators will need to adopt a new set of skills. The role of administrators in a boundaryless organization will include facilitating and managing the interchange that happens between language teams and/or departments. Administrators will need to be characterized as coaches, facilitators of dialogue, and conflict resolvers, rather than managers and report writers. Most of our administrators are already involved in these issues, but they will need to focus more and more on this if we are to lower our horizontal boundaries.

Therefore, managers in flexible organizations must focus on boundary management. They must teach people what new boundaries matter most, then how to recognize such boundaries in their relationships with others. Finally, good boundary managers encourage employees to enact the right kinds of boundaries at the right time, as a director helps talented actors take up and perform the roles of a good play. (Hirschhorn & Gilmore, 1992, p. 106)

Another proposed change would be to experiment with occasional role changes. Taking people out of their well-learned and engrained functions and putting them in a new function can often generate new ideas and innovation as a new perspective is introduced. (Gryskiewicz, 1999, p. 51)

These types of changes will require a new mental model of what it is to manage and administrate. These changes are not simple and will not happen over night. One way to encourage this change of mental models would be to send administrators out to observe and maybe even participate in a different boundaryless organization. (Ashkenas et al, 2002, pp. 129-130)

External Boundary Changes

Because of the low score that ILV received for external boundaries, I will place a large amount of focus on proposals for change in this area. The main changes that I propose, to lower our external boundaries, have to do with value chain. I will first look at what a value chain is, then I will relate it to our specific context and then I will propose changes that are related to our value chain.

Value Chain-overview

The concept of an extended value chain or value system is critical to understanding the need for increasing the permeability of external boundaries. Wikipedia says this, about value chains.

It can apply to whole supply chains and distribution networks. The delivery of a mix of products and services to the end customer will mobilize different economic actors, each managing its own value chain. The industry wide synchronized

interactions of those local value chains create an extended value chain, sometimes global in extent. (2005)

In this paper when I refer to a value chain, I will be referring to the extended value chain. In this concept of a value chain, ILV is one part of an integrated system. Ultimately we want to see lives changed through the translated Scriptures. Getting to the point of changed lives takes more than just us. The integrated system includes our financial and prayer teams in Peru and around the world. It includes the Bible League who prints Bibles. This system includes the churches and other organizations that use the Bibles that we translate. It also includes the organizations that we are training to do Bible translation and literacy, as well as the institutions that train us to do our work. These are only a few of the members of our integrated value chain.

In order for us to be a successful value chain that delivers changed lives we need to collaborate in both strategic and operational planning. (Ashkenas et al, 2002, p. 192) We will need to be completely open and freely share information, as well as solve problems together. Collaborating in strategic and operational planning, as well as open information sharing will create an integrated system with our partners. Within this system we will be more likely to generate ideas and innovation, because of the quantum thinking taking place. (Vella, 2002) This new type of relationship between organizations needs to be characterized by trust, honesty, openness and interdependence.

Yet the boundaryless world requires a great deal of cross-company interdependence if the overall value chain is to succeed. That interdependence is based on trust. (Ashkenas et al, 2002, p. 199)

An integrated value chain requires organizations like ILV to loosen their grip on the controls and be willing to share control with other organizations in order to most effectively deliver changed lives via the translated Scriptures.

In the boundaryless world, executives must become comfortable with *control sharing* – collaborative, collegial, consultative arrangements with a range of business partners...that strengthen the entire web. (Ashkenas et al, 2002, p. 200)

In our case here in Peru one of our value chain partners would be the local church. We could produce a fabulous Bible translation, but if we do not have a solid relationship with the church, then we will not see that translation put into its full potential use.

The concept of an integrated value chain is nothing new. We see it talked about extensively in Scripture.

...from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Ephesians 4:16, The New King James Bible)

So what does it look like? If we were to become a boundaryless organization that functioned in an integrated value chain, what would we look like and what would we be doing? Ashkenas et al et all tell us that managers in this new organization can no longer rely on the traditional tools of authority, and the control of resources in order to manage.

Managers must spend time at the interface between links in the value chain, managing relationships there rather than negotiating terms and conditions. In this role, managers need superb listening skills, a variety of problem-solving techniques, and an ability to build consensus. (Ashkenas et al, 2002, p. 202)

Value Chain – proposed actions – first steps

There are several steps that I believe need to be taken in order for us to encourage the development of a solid integrated value chain. These are all foundational steps that will help prepare us to move into become a boundaryless organization. Below are six basic steps that we can start with.

- Our SPEL (strategic planning at entity level) document needs to be re-done based upon a Results Based Management model.
- All ILV members need to see themselves as ‘Partner Relations’ representatives.
- The Director of Partner Relations must prepare members to do partner relations and not just do partner relations in isolation.
- Representatives from other value chain member organizations should be invited to speak at our annual conference and/or staff retreats.
- Members take field trips to visit other value chain members.
- Meetings held, without an agenda, other than to increase dialogue, between the administrative teams of various value chain members.

The first step is to revise our SPEL document. Our current purpose statement says,

In obedience to the Great Commission, our purpose is to serve the minority language groups of Peru through ethno-linguistic research, Scripture translation, and intercultural community work appropriate to the needs of those groups. In order to promote the impact of the translated Scriptures, we strive to assure that an environment for literacy is provided through programs such as bilingual education, adult literacy and others that favor the distribution and ongoing use of those Scriptures.

This purpose statement is good for a purpose statement. What we are lacking is a statement on the big picture, an impact, envisioned future or legacy statement. This type of statement will answer the question, “Why do we have this as our purpose?” I believe that we all want to see lives changed for the kingdom of God. We want to see the kingdom of God advanced. We want to see souls saved. We want to see the Peruvian church empowered. All of these items are what we envision is going to happen if we fulfill our purpose. We have begun training our members in Results Based Management (RBM) which begins with a clear impact statement. Why, may I ask, have we not even applied this to ILV? Administration must lead and model its use and not just send members to be trained in it.

If we do our planning in the RBM model we will have a clearer understanding of where we fit in the value chain and others in the value chain will be able to better understand us.

Because we are a rather flat organization, many of our frontline workers are already interfacing with many of our partner organizations. As we move toward a more integrated value chain, all members will need to see themselves as representatives of ILV. I think that we are already doing quite well with this but there is still plenty of growth that could take place.

In order for our members to grow in their confidence to represent ILV, it will be necessary for our Director of Partner Relations (DPR) to take on the role of preparing members to fulfill their new roles as representatives of ILV. The DPR would be able to do this through actual training sessions, through communicating the vision of an integrated value chain to members and through facilitating the following two steps.

We talk about partnering often in ILV and so all members are accustomed to hearing the partnering rhetoric but they have not seen much happening. I believe that we need to connect our members, and particularly our administrative teams, to the other value chain members. We could

do this by simply inviting guest speakers from these organizations to speak at our annual conference or staff retreats. There are also many other opportunities throughout the year for these representatives to come and dialogue with us.

Another way to connect our members with our fellow value chain members is to take members on field trips to visit their offices or visit their projects on-site. (Ashkenas et al, 2002, p. 213)

I also propose that we begin to have intentional meetings with our partners for the sole purpose of creating dialogue. This type of meeting is where we will begin to build relationships, manager to manager and where innovation can be sparked. Ashkenas et al et al suggest that we focus on sharing information on our methods of working and how we deal with issues and challenges of common interest. These meeting will also begin the dialogue on how we can help each other be more successful. (Ashkenas et al, 2002, p. 217)

Global Boundary Changes

The challenge of opening up our global boundaries is large since we are associated with so many other SIL and Wycliffe organizations around the world, in almost every country of the world in one way or another. Because we already have such a huge network outside of Peru the potential impact of lowering this boundary is immense because of the innovation that it could create.

The Learning that LASTS program is an example of a program, within our group of organizations, that has very permeable global boundaries. As I have been developing the program in Peru over the past two years, I have been in steady contact with colleagues in many different countries. We have a group email list which we used to use a lot in order to ask

questions or to get feedback on new ideas. This email group generated a lot of ideas and innovation.

We have now switched to a forum on our website, www.distantcourses.org. We have an online forum for posting questions, as well as a place to post files for other people to download. We also have a calendar where we post the dates for workshops and other events. This website is a secure website and several other SIL/Wycliffe programs are also beginning to use it for their courses and forums.

I propose that we, as an organization, set up a similar forum either within the SIL intranet or on the Distant Courses website. This would be a place for people to bring their questions and ideas. Anyone could post their materials such as manuals for literacy programs, papers written in study programs or reports from local workshops. The potential for sharing information and generating innovative new ideas is huge. If we can connect these forums to our training institutions like CILTA, in Lima, or the Canada Institute of Linguistics, in British Columbia, then we will be able to supply them with real-time, frontline data. They in turn will be able to respond with innovative new ideas that they generate within their academic training programs. A forum for information sharing would increase our level of innovation if it is properly laid out, initiated and promoted.

Conclusion

The boundaryless organization model offers us, ILV, the opportunity to put into action many of the ideals that we say we have, but have not been able to put into practice. The changes proposed in this paper will help us return to being an innovative organization, committed to seeing lives changed through the translated Scriptures.

References

- The Bible: The New King James Version* (1984). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson.
- Ashkenas, R., Ulrich, D., Jick, T., & Kerr, S. (2002). *The boundaryless organization : Breaking the chains of organizational structure* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Gryskiewicz, S. S. (1999). *Positive turbulence : Developing climates for creativity, innovation, and renewal* (1st ed.). San Francisco; Greensboro, N.C.: Jossey-Bass.
- Hirschhorn, L., & Gilmore, T. (1992). The new boundaries of the "boundaryless" company. *Harvard Business Review*, 70(3), 104-115.
- Tushman, M., & O'Reilly, C. A. (2002). *Winning through innovation : A practical guide to leading organizational change and renewal* (Rev. ed.). Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press.
- Vella, J. K. (2002). *Learning to listen, learning to teach : The power of dialogue in educating adults* (Rev. ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Wikipedia. (2005). *Value chain*. Retrieved September 21, 2005 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Value_chain

Appendix 1

	<i>Speed</i>	<i>Flexibility</i>	<i>Integration</i>	<i>Innovation</i>	<i>Total Score</i>
<i>Vertical Boundary</i>	Most decisions are made on the spot by those closest to the work, and they are acted on in hours rather than weeks. 2.88	Administrators at all levels routinely take on frontline responsibilities as well as broad strategic assignments. 3.25	Key problems are tackled by multilevel teams whose members operate with little regard to formal rank in the organization. 3.62	New ideas are screened and decided on without fancy overheads and multiple rounds of approvals. 2.88	12.62
<i>Horizontal Boundary</i>	New products or services are getting to market at an increasingly fast pace. 3.13	Resources quickly, frequently, and effortlessly shift between departments, centers and projects. 2.38	Routine work gets done through language or department teams; other work is handled by short-term project teams drawn from shared centers of experience. 3.38	Ad hoc teams representing various stakeholders spontaneously form to explore new ideas. 1.75	10.63
<i>External Boundary</i>	Customer (those we serve) requests, complaints, and needs are anticipated and responded to in real time. 2.71	Strategic resources and key administrators are often “on loan” to our partners. 2.38	Partner organization reps are key players in teams tackling strategic initiatives within ILV Peru. 2.25	Partner organizations are regular and prolific contributors of new product and process ideas for ILV Peru. 2.13	9.46
<i>Global Boundary</i>	Best practices (practices that are successful in other places) are disseminated and leveraged quickly across country operations. 2.13	Leaders rotate regularly between country operations. 1.71	There are standard project platforms, common practices, and shared centers of experience across countries. 3.43	New project ideas are evaluated for viability beyond the country where they emerged. 3.14	10.41
<i>Total Score</i>	10.84	9.71	12.67	9.89	