

# The New World View of Life and Work

*"You can't have a strong fabric if all the threads go one way: both the strength and sensitivity of the web lies in its construction; touch it anywhere and the effect is felt throughout."*

*Sally Helgensen,  
"The Web of Inclusion"*

Imagine a rug lying on your living room floor that has the threads of fabric all going in one direction. Nothing holding them together at the top or bottom and no connecting threads throughout. It certainly would look funny and it would probably even be dangerous. Yet many people in today's turbulent and uncertain world feel just as disconnected as these threads. They can't see a pattern amidst all the chaos and the future looks scary. Even if things aren't falling apart, they sure don't feel like they're hanging together.

**"If people are working harder but don't feel valued or valuable, there is little wonder that they feel alienated and disconnected."**

In a recent survey, employees reported that they were working longer hours and at faster speed than was required in the past and yet they felt that their jobs were meaningless. If people are working harder but don't feel valued or valuable, there is little wonder that they feel alienated and disconnected. But it's not

*by Linda Tarrant*



just the escalation in expectations that contribute to these feelings. Quite simply, the very fabric of work as we have known it has changed. The effects of these changes are cumulative and interactive and have left many people feeling as Charles Schultz described Linus "when his blanket is in the dryer, he doesn't have anything to hold onto".

Understanding where and how we fit in the New World of work is a real challenge, because even if we didn't like the way things used to be, at least many of us had figured out how to maneuver in that old system. As pyramid structures crumble and make way for self-managed teams, work-at-home, B-2-B and virtual organizations, face-to-face contact and communication have altered dramatically. As a result, many individuals feel isolated and cut-off from people, information and decision making processes. When they lose sight of where they fit into the big picture, there is a tendency to develop "silo vision" and become self-oriented. In this kind of environment, it's

easy to imagine how people might feel a bit like the threads in that living room rug that don't have much to hang on to. In order to thrive we have to develop new and different connections. We need to build a strong and sensitive web that will anchor us as the winds of change rage.

Have you ever walked through a spider web? You probably destroyed a portion of it but a lot of it remained. It withstood the assault simply because of its construction. Every strand has many internal points of contact and the overall web has multiple external anchors. When any part of the web is destroyed, the spider starts rebuilding it. No two webs look alike and the rebuilt web never looks exactly like the old ones. So what are some of the challenges that we will face personally and organizationally as we attempt to connect differently? Here are a few:

## **Connectivity Challenges**

- #1:** Connectivity requires open communication.
- #2:** Webs blur distinctions between those people who think, plan, decide and do.
- #3:** Processes and structures are interconnected and should enhance relationship building.
- #4:** Multiple connections enhance strength, sensitivity and success.
- #5:** Webs evolve as things change.

---

These connectivity lessons speak to the inter-relationship of Process (how we do things), Structure (how we are organized) and Relationships (who is involved). Like the web that Helgensen describes, when any of these elements are disturbed, challenged or changed, each of the others is impacted and "the effects are felt throughout".

When organizations attempt to radically change their old tried-and-true ways of doing things, they often run up against archaic structures that inhibit the success of these new leading edge processes. Traditional ideas of hierarchy, size, stability and producer as king are in direct conflict with the new rules of work: "fail fast", rebuild quickly and accept that we are constrained only by our lack of creativity. Any alteration of structure or process will also affect people and their relationships with one another. Everyone will be expected to behave differently in an environment that blurs the distinction between thinkers and doers. Who's in charge will not be as important as who

**"The web isn't about building a new organizational structure; it's about being attached to information, learning, ideas, customers and friends."**

is responsible and accountable. When information is accessible and shared freely, power, status and control will be impacted. Title, longevity and experience will no longer define success. Start-up companies are pushing out the Blue Chips and eBiz changes all the rules.

Successful people and organizations are rethinking many of their processes and structures. But more importantly, we should be giving great consideration to building strong and sensitive relationships. Because, in the light of eternity, org. charts and workflow don't make things work, people do.

The web isn't about building a new organizational structure; it's about being attached to information, learning, ideas, customers and friends. It's about reaching out and building multiple points of contact and support so that we're less likely to fall apart when the waves of change hit. Connectivity is about being a part of something bigger than you.

---

---

**Linda Tarrant brings insight, inspiration and humour to people and organizations in transition. She speaks on courage, connectivity and change. Linda can be reached at TOC Consulting, (416) 533-1532, e-mail [linda@lindatarrant.com](mailto:linda@lindatarrant.com), or via her web site at [www.lindatarrant.com](http://www.lindatarrant.com)**