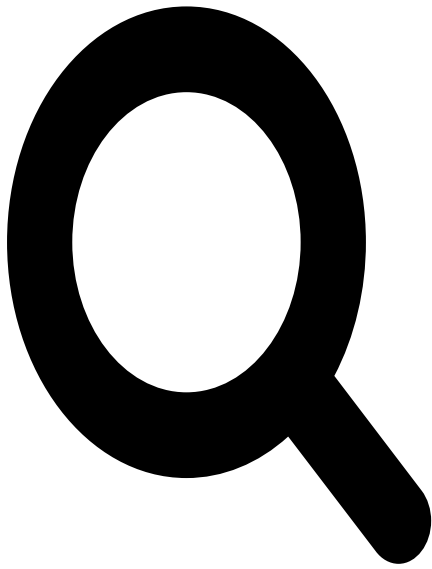


THOSE OF US WHO NEVER HAD A PLACE NEAR THE WINDOW

Posted on 26/04/2010 by Naider

In a few weeks I have a dinner for former co-workers that we have titled "dinner for those who never had a place near the window".



A few years ago we all worked in an organization dedicated to the consulting business that had a curious system of space distribution: the more important the position of an employee, the further he was from the door and closer to the window. Consulting activity has a considerable turnover, so it was very common for someone to enter or leave the company and cause a migratory movement of colleagues from one side of the corridor to the other carrying boxes of documents, computers and chairs to their new location.

The situation was in fact quite ridiculous and there were even those who claimed that it was in the office of the CEO (top floor, exactly the same as the one described by Jabi Salcedo and Koldo Saratxaga in their book ["Success Was Confidence"](#)) an audible and light alarm would go off like a fire station every time a technician from the floors below sat too close to the window, so that he could go down and quickly solve this serious matter.

The time we had free when we weren't migrating we spent doing projects. Of course, scrupulously respecting the distribution of hierarchical information. As in the story "The fable of the white elephant" the manager saw the whole elephant (almost always), the senior consultant saw the head of the elephant, the consultant saw the trunk and the lucky technicians saw the three hairs on the nose of the we didn't know if it was an elephant or an anteater. And with that information we had to work. And above learn.

The distribution of the equipment was also hierarchical: the people at the lowest levels took the oldest computers, which gave rise to a curious paradox because in consulting it is precisely the technicians who spend the most time in front of the computers and therefore want to need better equipment to do their job. So there we were: writing wonderful products by the door about open innovation and the importance of people in organizations and getting as much juice as possible from the three hairs in the bug's nose (we didn't know what it was) while we restarted the computer every ten minutes to see if it could last a while longer without crashing.

Little by little the computers got better, the information about the projects stopped being (almost) a state secret, and when I finally got a seat near the window, I left there.

The project I landed on and the [I'm a part of now](#) is basically a group of people. We all share the same physical space, with no walls, no shelves, no windows or huge pots to mark the differences between us. And a few years ago, when we changed offices, each person chose their place in order of arrival at the company. Who had come first, chose first, regardless of age, experience or position.

As in all companies, we also have computer and telephone relics that people leave on the shelves, but each new person who arrives has at least one device in good condition and the same model of mobile phone as the founding partner of the company (which is not the same as having the same

mobile phone as the founding member but ten years after he has retired...). We also have some wonderful green sofas in the middle of the office, which invite you to sit down with a coffee and talk calmly about any topic and at any time.

When we start a new project, the people who can contribute something sit around the table. And on the table we put the elephant so that everyone can see it well. Let's say that some already have many elephants behind them, and others are still deciding whether an elephant is a marsupial or a pachyderm. But see it, we all see it. And we all learn. From the Old Model to the New Model.

A few months ago a client asked us to help him design a space that would allow all the people in his organization to participate and give their opinion and take part in the company's decisions. When we presented them with some ideas that would allow them to create open spaces for the exchange of information and other initiatives, one of the middle managers asked us: "but what are you telling me? that I am not going to be able to control the information that my people receive? ". I was so horrified and so offended that it was almost sympathetic and everything.

I am telling this because, contrary to what it may seem, the change from one model to another is not easy for those of us who have grown up professionally in the Old Model of Relationships.

It is often necessary to fight against prejudice, against the need to have a hierarchy, against the need to keep some information to ourselves to feel that we are in control, because to be honest it is terrifying to find that you have in your hands the freedom to be wrong, that it does not exist no one above you to solve your problems or to correct your mistakes, that you are not the one who knows the most about almost nothing. It is an opportunity to develop, but it is very scary. However, reality confirms that the teams in which the information flows work, that the people who feel that they are trustees of the people, respond. And above all when things go wrong, feeling supported by a team you trust is the only way to successfully overcome adverse situations.

To this day, I have learned two great lessons from my experience.

The first lesson is that it doesn't matter how good you are or how well you know how to do your job because the immutable truth is that if your team has all the information, trust and the certainty that they are responsible for the decisions that are taken, the result of your team's work with you will always go further than the result of your work alone.

And finally I will reveal to you a great secret and the second great lesson that I have learned: the place by the window is the worst place in the office; in winter you freeze to death and in summer you roast alive. Pay attention to me and never choose it :-)

Note: The image that illustrates this article belongs to the cover of the book "Success was trust" written by Koldo Saratxaga and Jabi Salcedo, and which you can download for free at the following address:www.loslibrosdek2k.com.

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