Chapter V

The Turf Conversation-
Who Does What To Whom

Not too many controversial topics here. Here are the turf topics we’ll discuss:

- Figure out how to **neutralize the politics around turf**: I have no magic here … it’s been going on since people began to congregate … but take it seriously because it undermines effectiveness.

- **Forget titles**: you have to organize your companies to collaborate, support collaboration and enable it with integrated technology … you may or may not need “chiefs,” or “directors.”

- **Forget about consensus-based decision-making** in flat management structures … forget about big teams.

- **Command and control works** … even in decentralized organizations – which, by the way, I’m not that crazy about.

- **Innovation is special**: make sure your organizational structures encourage business and technology innovation.
Watch Your Flanks

Batten down the hatches. We’re going to talk about organizational structure. Isn’t it interesting how everyone perks up when these conversations begin? How many management revolutions have we endured? How many of us still have a completely unacceptable sane:jerk ratio in our companies? How many times have we re-organized when a new management team arrived? Do we learn from our organizational mistakes? Have our management structures changed with the times?

This last question is key. If you’re feeling more comfortable with the whole collaboration and integration discussion – the whole business technology convergence argument – then it may be time to determine the extent to which your organization supports collaboration and integration, along with the traditional functions of your company.

From another perspective, how many of us wrestle with the “who-should-report-to-whom” question several times a year? Seriously, have your efforts to “re-organize” the business technology relationship been proactive or reactive? Often because some influential people complain about the relationship, things change. But reactive changes usually don’t last long.

Other changes are triggered by real problems with reliability or security. Context changes everything. While we all recognize the importance of terrorist threats today, why don’t we recognize the potential of collaboration? And the necessary integrated technology to enable it? It’s always about the big questions – but we have to see them before we can answer them.

There are also lots and lots of political agendas out there. We’ve all learned to be very careful about friends and enemies and the times when it’s impossible to distinguish between them. Not so many years ago business people wanted their technology strong and cheap and technologists wanted the respect, time and money they deserved. Uneasy partnership? Absolutely. But the convergence argument I’m making here says that not only are the two in the same camp, but they each have to get wood to keep the fire going. They’re teammates. The vested interests should be defined around this partnership, not around obsolete adversarial relationships.

Yeah, I know. Naïve. But is it? Adversarial proceedings are nearly impossible to manage. Maybe it’s time to converge vested interests rather than play them off against each other.
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