

Thriving in Ambiguity

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A panel of experts will discuss how to work in an authority vacuum. Whether working within or consulting to an organization, multi-talented, multi-tasked professionals are finding themselves working in an authority vacuum. Often, these jobs are nestled in the management ranks. Often, too, the position and the job are so new that the rules have not yet been written.

Not everyone can function in such ambiguity. Yet major economic changes are forcing many of us to face more uncertainty than ever imagined. Not only can the panelists help define anew type of evolving management structure but they can also help in giving us concrete ways of dealing with daily uncertainties.

ONE EXAMPLE

As the professional on the hot seat you know there are underlying assumptions and innuendoes about what and how the job is to be performed. You just aren't exactly sure what those unwritten rules are. You try to consult with those in authority, but it's hard to find someone who will take that responsibility. The person who hired you is either long gone or has other priorities (read crisis). Given your fuzzy charter, you know you will always have more than enough work to do. But there are too few resources at your fingertips to accomplish it all. Your mission is so distinctly different from that of your peers' that no one but you can decide the priorities of the job. So you draw the line and prioritize, putting on hold some things you know have to be done soon. You're still getting paid, and, generally, you're doing the things you want to. Yet, you wonder. When does the rug get pulled from underneath you? How do you keep your balance? How do you watch yourself in the mirror when there is no mirror?

QUESTIONS

Here are a few questions that the panelists will be prepared to answer

- How do you get feedback appropriate to your job?
- How do you prioritize?
- How do you measure your value? How do you communicate your value to those who sign your pay check/invoice?
- What tool or technique do you consider the most valuable for staying afloat and thriving?
- How would you structure the job to expand it to other areas of your company?

THE PANELISTS

The three of the four panelists are all in unique positions within their companies. One works for a startup and the other two for Fortune 500 firms. One is a technical writer, one an engineer, and a third began her career with her company as a graphic artist. The fourth panelist, with many years of consulting experience in technical communication, has also been a manager for a Fortune 500 firm. The four proposed panelists are experienced technical communicators who will make a strong, interesting panel.

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