

actions that worked when consolidating company facilities, the team put the report together in a month, something that would have taken him six months to do alone. He says, “Pfizer pays me not to work tactically, but to work strategically.”

Discussion Questions

6-22 Describe and evaluate what Pfizer is doing with its PfizerWorks.

6-23 What structural implications—good and bad—does this approach have? (Think in terms of the six organizational design elements.)

6-24 Do you think this arrangement would work for other types of organizations? Why or why not? What types of organizations might it also work for?

6-25 What role do you think organizational structure plays in an organization’s efficiency and effectiveness? Explain.

CASE APPLICATION #2

Volunteers Work

They’re individuals you might never have thought of as being part of an organization’s structure, but for many organizations, volunteers provide a much-needed source of labor.⁶³ Maybe you’ve volunteered at a Habitat for Humanity build, a homeless shelter, or some nonprofit organization. However, what if the volunteer assignment was at a for-profit business and the job description read like this: Want a job where you work only a couple of hours a day at your computer answering customers’ technical questions, all for no pay. Many large corporations, start-up companies, and venture capitalists are betting that this new group of talented “volunteer” individuals who are quite knowledgeable about the Web and other technical areas will alter how customer service is provided.

Self check-outs. Self check-ins. Pumping your own gas (although most of you are probably too young to remember having an attendant that pumped your gas, checked your oil, and washed your windshield). Filling out online forms. Businesses have become very good at getting customers to do free work. Now, they’re taking the concept even further, especially in customer service settings, by getting “volunteers” to perform specialized work tasks.

The role that these volunteer “enthusiasts” have played, especially in contributing innovations to research and development efforts, has been closely researched in recent years. For example, case studies highlight the product tweaks made by early skateboarders and mountain bikers to their gear. Researchers have also studied the programmers behind open-source software like the Linux operating system. It seems that

individuals who do this type of “volunteering” are motivated mainly by a payoff in enjoyment and respect among their peers and to some extent the skills they’re able to develop. Now, as the concept of individuals volunteering for work tasks moves to the realm of customer service, can it work and what does it mean for managers?

For instance, at Verizon’s high-speed fiber optic Internet, television, and telephone service, “volunteers” are answering customer questions about technical matters on a company-sponsored customer-service Web site for no pay. Mark Studness, director of Verizon’s e-commerce unit was familiar with Web sites where users offered tips and answered questions. His chal-

lenge? Find a way to use that potential resource for customer service. His solution? “Super” or lead users—that is, users who provided the best answers and dialogue in Web forums.

The experiment at Verizon seems to be working well and these online “volunteers” can be an important addition to a company’s customer service efforts. Studness says that creating an atmosphere that these super users find desirable is a key consideration because without that, you have nothing. A company that worked with Verizon to set up its structure said that these super or lead-users are driven by the same online challenges and aspects as fervent gamers are. So they set up the structure with an elaborate rating system for contributors with ranks, badges, and “kudos counts.” So far, Studness is happy with how it’s gone. He says the company-sponsored customer-service site has been extremely useful and cost efficient in redirecting thousands of questions that would have been answered by staff at a Verizon call center.

Organizations are
using **“volunteers”** to do
specialized work tasks.

Discussion Questions

- 6-26** What do you think about using “volunteers” to do work that other people get paid to do?
- 6-27** If you were in Mark Studness’s position, what would you be most concerned about in this arrangement? How would you “manage” that concern?

- 6-28** How do these “volunteers” fit into an organization’s structure? Take each of the six elements of organization design and discuss how each would affect this structural approach.
- 6-29** Do you think this approach could work for other types of work being done or in other types of organizations? Explain.

CASE APPLICATION #3

You Work Where?

Yahoo!, a pioneer in Web search and navigation, struggles to remain relevant in the face of competition from the likes of Google, Facebook, and Twitter.⁶⁴ It missed the two biggest Internet trends—social networking and mobile. However, in July 2012, after the company did its own search, it snagged a gem as the company’s new CEO—Marissa Mayer, one of the top executives at Google. Mayer had been one of the few public faces of Google and was responsible for the look and feel of Google’s most popular products. Guiding Yahoo! as it tries to regain its former prominence is proving to be the challenge that experts predicted, but they’re also saying that if anyone could take on the challenge of making Yahoo! an innovator once again, Mayer is the person.

Two of her initial decisions included free food at the office and new smartphones for every employee, something that Google does. However, in

February 2013, Mayer launched an employee initiative that has generated lots of discussion—positive and negative. She decided that as of June 2013, Yahoo! employees who worked remotely had to come back to the office. The memo from the vice president of people and development (code for head of Human Resources) clarified that the new initiative was a response to productivity issues that often can arise when employees work from home. With a new boss and a renewed commitment to making Yahoo! a strong company in a challenging industry, employees were expected to be physically present in the workplace, hopefully leading to developing a strong common bond and greater productivity. The announcement affects not only those who work from home full time—mainly customer service reps—but also those employees who have arranged to work from home one or two days a week. Yahoo! isn’t the only company asking remote

workers to return. Bank of America, which had a popular remote work program, decided late in 2012 that employees in certain roles had to come back to the office.

Before Mayer became CEO at Yahoo!, it was a wonder anything ever got done there. What she found wasn’t even remotely like the way employees functioned at Google. At Yahoo!, few people were physically at work in the office cubicles throughout the building. Few cars or bikes or other vehicles could be found in the facility’s parking lots. Even more disturbing, some of the employees who were physically there at work did as little work as needed and then took off early. She also discovered that other employees who worked from home did little but collect a paycheck or maybe worked on a sideline business they had started. Even

at the office, one former manager described morale as low as it could be because employees thought the company was failing. These were some of the

reasons that Mayer abolished Yahoo!’s work-from-home policy. If Yahoo! was to again become the nimble company it had once been, a new culture of innovation, communication, and collaboration was needed. And that meant... employees had to be at work, physically at work together. Restoring Yahoo!’s “cool”—from its products to its deteriorating morale and culture would be difficult if the organization’s people weren’t there. That’s why Mayer’s decision at Yahoo! created such an uproar. Yahoo!’s only official statement on the new policy said, “This isn’t a broad industry view on working from home. This is about what is right for Yahoo!, right now.”

Where work is done most efficiently and effectively—office, home, combination—is an important workplace issue. The three main managerial concerns are productivity, innovation, and collaboration. Do flexible arrangements lead to

Where **IS** work done most efficiently and effectively?