

# Computerizing an Organization:

## Indiana University Parking Appeals Committee

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I303 Organizational Informatics

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### **A. Two Changed Aspects**

Two changed aspects of the dynamics of organizing that I believe, in the future, will be correlated with mediation by digital technologies are a decrease of Taylorist practices in organizations and an increase in Zuboff's idea of the "informating" practice in organizations. I believe that these two aspects of the dynamics of organizing will be correlated with mediation by digital technologies, because digital technologies are changing and improving in a very quick timeframe. To keep up with the fast pace world of digital technologies organizations will need to adopt a dynamic of organizing that will enable the organization to keep up with the current technologies and allow their organization to communicate effectively and efficiently about the new technologies that the organization is adopting with all employees across the board.

Frederick Winslow Taylor's idea that "everything [can be] regulated like clockwork" has been called one of the "classical" perspectives in the study of organizing, along with Weber's

view on bureaucracy and its application (Beritbart 1982). Even though Taylor's idea of scientific management has been noted as one of the first studies in organizing and it was once proven to be beneficial in the mid-1900s, this organization method is now out of date and organizations who are still practicing Taylorism should move away from this method so that they can be more successful in the new "Cyberfracture" age which revolves around the "mediation of labor process by digital technology" (Hakken 2012). Taylorism requires all information to flow upwards to high level management, because upper level management has more power and authority to deal with issues; middle management and blue collar workers have little say in the organization. With the increase of digital technologies in recent years, more members can easily give their input through technologies to upper class management and the rest of the organization. More ideas from members throughout all areas of the organizations coming together should increase productivity and company success, because everyone is working together.

To increase employees working together, organizations can adapt Zuboff's structuration method "to informate". This method uses information technology to create as much information as possible while also sharing all the information with every member of the organization (Zuboff 1989). Since all members of the organization will be included in this method, the nature of the jobs in the organization will change as all positions will have a sense of job enrichment since they are being given more influence in the organization (Herzberg 1967). Thus the organizations who adapt Zuboff's method will become organizations where information is shared freely with every member creating an open enriched system.

## **B. The Organization**

The Indiana University Parking Appeals committee is composed of approximately 20 Indiana University faculty and staff. There is one individual who serves as the leader of the committee and all of the other members of the committee are volunteers from different departments across the Indiana University Bloomington campus. The committee meets once a month to review parking appeals made to the University and from there the group decides whether or not to appeal each parking ticket. Parking tickets are given to individuals who do not park where they are supposed to park on the Indiana University campus.

Once a ticket is given to an individual who has violated a parking rule they can either pay the fine or appeal the ticket. To appeal the ticket they can either send in a letter to the Appeals committee or fill out a form online. Both of these appeal forms ask the individual for their name, Indiana University ID, ticket number, reason for appeal, and license plate number (Indiana University 2012). Once the appeal form is completed by the individual who received the parking ticket, the form is submitted to the Appeals committee and they will decide whether or not to appeal the ticket at their next meeting. At the monthly meetings the members sit around a table in an office at one of the Indiana University Bloomington parking garages. One of the committee members prints all of the appeals for that month out and then the appeals are passed around the table so that at least three members see each one of the parking appeals. For a parking ticket to be appealed two out of three committee members need to say that the ticketed individual's reason is valid to be appealed. Once the group has gone through each parking appeal one of the members of the organization sends emails out to each of the individuals who submitted parking appeals and lets them know whether or not their parking ticket was appealed or not.

The general issue that this organization faces is that they are not using technology to their advantage. The specific problem that I want to address with this organization is that the

organization should increase the ability for individuals to hear back sooner about whether or not their parking tickets are appealed without increasing the workload and time commitment of the parking appeals committee. There are so many improvements that they could make to their organization to make the timeline of events easier and quicker. The organization has made a great stride with the addition of the electronic form which individuals who have received a ticket can fill out, but the organization can do so much more with this form to make this process simpler and faster. The addition of more technology into this organization will make the timeline of events faster as appeals will be seen by the committee earlier and individuals who submit appeals will know earlier whether or not their appeals were approved or not.

### **C. New Digital Mediation**

The new digital mediation which the Parking Appeals committee would greatly benefit from would be an online database where all parking appeals would be recorded and all members of the organization would have access to this database.

Currently, once an individual fills out an electronic appeals form the form is sent to the email account of the organization's leader. Instead of this form being sent to the leader through email it will be added to the parking appeals database, which will be either an Access or Excel database that will house all the parking appeals for that school year. A new database will be used for each new school year and the older databases will be kept on file for reference.

Instead of the appeals committee meeting once a month during their workday, the members can look at the database anytime during the month and vote on each case through the database on whether or not an individual's ticket should be appealed or not. With the addition of this online

database, the committee will become a virtual organization as they are an organization that accomplishes tasks without having to be in the same place at the same time. Once the appeals ticket has been voted on by three people the individual will receive an email from the system letting them know if their ticket has been appealed or not. Members will also have the ability to see how many previous appeals the individual has made and whether this will have an impact on the committee appealing their ticket.

This database will be beneficial for the organization, because they can go through the new parking appeals on their own instead of having to meet with the group once a month and the timeline of event will go much easier and quicker. Members will have to opportunity to look at the database when they have time to look at it and make their decisions online which will allow the individuals who have made appeals to be notified faster than before when they had to wait around a month to hear back from the committee. The parking appeals will all be online so this will make the process a lot easier for members to view the appeals, while also being environmentally friendly as they will not print each individual appeal out on paper.

## **D. Strategy**

The basic strategy of this approach to the problem is Zuboff's idea of informing. The strategy behind incorporating more technology into the Parking Appeals committee to make their process of reviewing appeals simpler and quicker is an example of informing, because the process is using information technology to generate as much information as they can while also sharing every piece of information with everyone in the organization (Zuboff 1989). Although more information will be shared throughout the organization, members of the organization will

have to be trained on how to process and work the new online database that is implemented into the system. Members may not be happy having to adjust how they currently process appeals, but with proper training and excitement about the new changes from the team leader the members will more than likely be happy to get on board with the new system.

The adoption of a database system to house the parking appeals will solve the Parking Appeals committee's issues of a non-technical and slow system while also increasing the numbers of appeals submitted without increasing the workload of the committee. The new adoption of a database that houses the parking appeals will make the appeals process simpler and quicker as members can look at the appeals online during a time that is most convenient for them and letting individuals know the status of their appeal quicker than the previous method.

## **E. Possible Problems**

There are a couple possible problems that I foresee occurring with the implementation of online database to the Indiana University Parking appeals committee. Three possible problems I foresee occurring with the implementation of the database are the dissatisfaction of some committee members who may prefer the old method of using paper forms to review the appeals, technology failing, and committee members forgetting about their involvement with the committee because they are not meeting as often with the committee.

When a dynamic of organizing is changed to another aspect of organizing, there can be individuals who are unhappy with the transition and who may resist the change. Members may be so used to the old system that they may feel that moving to a new system may not work as well as the previous system. There may also be elder committee members who may fear technology, because they may have little to no experience with technology. Although

technology succeeds most times, there will almost always be times when technology fails. There may be issues where the database crashes or even worse gets erased.

Another possible problem I foresee is that since this organization will change to a virtual organization, where members meet a couple times a year but other than that they work together through the database, the committee members may forget about their job responsibility of checking the parking appeals. For nearly all of the committee members it is not their full-time job to check parking appeals, it is just a volunteer position. Committee members will need to remember to check the parking appeals database to review parking appeals since the group will not be meeting each month to review the appeals together.

## **F. Preventing Possible Problems**

Going along with the possible problems listed above about foreseeable problems I see when implementing my solution with the organization's problem I am addressing, I think that there are ways in which these problems can be anticipated beforehand and hopefully these problems can be addressed before they would occur in the organization.

To prevent individuals in the organization from being dissatisfied with the implementation of a new system the leader of the committee will need to be positive in the adoption of a new organizing dynamic and show his/her committee members that this transition will positively benefit them and the organization. When the leader is excited and positive about a new structure or method then it is easier for the other members to get on board with the idea and also react positively to the new change. For members of the committee who may not have a lot of experience with technology, the leader and/or anyone else who is helping to implement the new

system should take the time to teach all of the individuals how to use the new database appeals system but also spend extra time with members who may not feel as comfortable with the system as others. The training over the new database system will cover how to open the database, review the appeals in the database, vote on the appeals that are in the database, and address questions that the committee members may have about the database.

To ensure that this database does not crash or malfunction it would be ideal to have someone who can serve as the “IT person” and make sure that the database is healthy and running effectively. The database should be backed up by a couple of hard drives so that if something happens to the database there is still another copy of the database to be used.

Since the new structure of the committee will be a virtual organization there will not be monthly meetings like there were with the past structure. Since the committee will not meet as frequently as they used to when the committee does have meetings, possibly a couple of times a year, these meetings need to be used effectively to answer any questions or concerns that the members have about the organization and especially the new database. Since members will not be meeting monthly to review appeals they may forget about their responsibilities as members of the Parking Appeals Committee since they will not have a designated monthly meeting time to review appeals. Members will have to look at reviews on their own time, but in the long run this saves the members’ time because they do not have to travel to and from the parking appeals meeting area and they do not have to spend a couple hours in a room each month looking at appeals. To remind members to keep checking the appeals online they should have a minimum amount of appeals that they have to review each week. To make sure that they are reminded to review the appeals the members will receive an email or text message each week to remind them. By having an online database that all the members can access from their personal or work



computers is a big step for this organization. The parking appeals committee will be able to review appeals much faster than the older system while also keeping every appeal ever submitted on file in the system to verify if needed. I believe this new online database will increase the ability for individuals to hear back sooner about whether or not their parking tickets are appealed without adding additional work and time commitments to the Parking Appeals Committee.

### **G. Monitoring the Organizing Correlates in “A”**

To monitor whether the organizing correlates I identified in “A”, a decrease in Taylorism and an increase in “informating” in relation to the mediation of digital technologies, are indeed manifest I will gather feedback from the leader of the organization along with feedback from the members of the organization and analyze this feedback to ensure that the organizing correlates are indeed manifest.

The classical model of Taylorism will be troublesome to monitor, because I am not looking for an increase in Taylorism but rather a decrease. In an organization that practices Taylorism the upper level management has the most power in the organization while the lower level workers have the least amount of power in the organization. One way that I can monitor whether or not Taylorism is decreasing in the organization is by getting feedback from the individuals who work under the upper level management to see whether or not they are suffering from the “blue collar blues” or if the individuals feel dehumanized (HEW 1972). Symptoms of the “blue collar blues” are, but are not limited to, “...strikes, alcoholism, drug use, and conflict” (Hakken 2012). Some reasons that the “blue collar blues” occur are because the individuals feel that the work that they are doing is not fulfilling and that the worker feel that they are being dehumanized (Hakken 2012). Individuals in the workplace may feel like they are being dehumanized, because

Taylorism stresses the idea that the workers are the problems in the organization and they need to be overtaken by machines who can do work much faster and efficiently than humans can do the work (Taylor 1916).

Another way that Taylorism can be monitored is whether or not there is little to no communication between different levels of the organization to see whether the organization is upholding Taylorism in their organization. If the feedback that I receive from the lower class working individuals show that “blue collar blues” exists in this organization and that the upper level management is not sharing information or communicating with all levels of the organization then I will be well on my way to proving that organizing dynamic of Taylorism is still operating in this organization.

To monitor the success of the organizing dynamic of informing in the Indiana University Parking Appeals committee I will gather feedback and information from the committee leader and members to see whether or not the informing method is effectively benefiting their organization. I will ask members of the committee about how easy it is to communicate with the leader of the committee and whether or not information is being shared across the organization. This will reveal a lot about the progress of the informing method in the organization because if it is easy for the members to communicate with the leader of the organization than the informing method is working. The informing method allows for more communication and the sharing of information between all levels of individuals in the organization. Job enrichment at the organization can also be used to monitor informing by asking the members if they feel satisfied with their work. The addition of more shared information across the organization creating job enrichment is a typical finding in organizations that adopt informing into their organization (Hakken 2012). If the feedback from the members is that there is no communication

or there is very little communication from the leader and no sharing of information in the organization than the feedback shows me that the informing method adoption has not been effective, but if the feedback shows that there is communication and sharing of information in the organization than I believe that the organization has successfully implemented informing into their organization.

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