



## Bureaucracy

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Although it should be dead, the company in Bureaucracy is kept alive by artificial life support. The company was born the first time in Infancy, it was reborn in Adolescence, and its third "birth" is in Bureaucracy when it gets an artificial continuance on its life. Death occurs when no one remains committed to keeping the organization alive. If there is no business or government commitment to supporting a company in Recrimination, death can occur instead of bureaucratization.

In the Bureaucratic stage, a company is largely incapable of generating sufficient resources to sustain itself. It justifies its existence by the simple fact that the organization serves a purpose that is of interest to another political and business entity willing to support it. The Bureaucratic organization:

- Has many systems and rules and runs on ritual, not reason.
- Has leaders who feel little sense of control.
- Is internally disassociated.
- Creates obstacles to reduce disruptions from its external environment.
- Forces its customers to develop elaborate approaches to bypass roadblocks.

Bureaucratic organizations accomplish very little of any value. Their focus is frequently on control for the sake of control. With no inclination to change, everyone's day is filled with systems, forms, procedures, and rules. People know all the rules, but they can't remember why they exist. If you ask why they do things in a certain way, managers in a Bureaucracy will likely tell you, "Because it's the policy." The response to almost any request is, "Write me a memo."

After the pressures of Recrimination, working in a Bureaucracy is a low-stress environment. There is little pressure to perform, so long as one abides by the rules and regulations.

Bureaucratic managers are among the nicest people you'll ever meet. To make change happen, they now need the cooperation of others, which is a near impossibility in a Bureaucracy. A single executive cannot mobilize people across organizational lines. Rituals must therefore substitute for action. Meetings take place. Minutes are taken. Papers get filed. There is plenty of voting, and debates rage but one sees little, if any, real action.

Bureaucratic companies are internally disintegrated. Each department has responsibility for a particular task, but no one has responsibility for the combined result of the separate tasks. It is usually up to the client to put all the pieces together. Employees don't know the inner workings of other departments. The customer service department often consists of telephone reps whose job it is to listen, record complaints, and answer them with a standard, routine letter: "We regret any inconvenience, but we will do our best to resolve your problem." Mostly they respond to customer requests by demanding yet another document. Bureaucracies do not ask in advance for everything they will require. Rather than show its entire hand, a Bureaucratic organization shows only one card at a time.

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Like an older person who follows a set routine every day and becomes highly aggravated with any change, Bureaucracies resent outside disruptions and aggressively create obstructions to limit them. Customers are an example of one such disruption. Bureaucracies minimize the possibility for external disruption by connecting to the external world through very narrow channels. Perhaps they allow only one incoming telephone line or they keep their customer service departments open for only a few hours a day. They keep people standing in lines, only to tell them which line they must go stand in next.

In a Bureaucracy, the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing. One department rejects what another one requests. Customers are puzzled, frustrated, and lost. To get results, a customer must build their own systems to deal with the ineffective organization. Businesses that must work with Bureaucracies usually have dedicated departments, systems and people that are experts on the inner workings of a particular government agency and getting the results they need from that Bureaucracy.

Because Bureaucracies rely on laws that provide them with a monopoly on services and allocation of funds generated by taxation, heads of Bureaucracies spend most of their time in halls of government and with politicians safeguarding the source of their funds. What annoys politicians most is negative press. So, heads of Bureaucracies are careful to ensure that there is no negative press about their agencies. Ask people in a bureaucratic organization, "Who is your client?" The answers generally include a long list of state or federal agencies that either supervises its performance or its budget, other Bureaucracies that it works with, unions, newspapers and other media. Lost at the end of this long list of stakeholders, are the customers whom the Bureaucracy is really supposed to be serving.

The health of a full-fledged Bureaucracy is very delicate. Although it appears to be a robust monster, it may be relatively easy to destroy it. Many are rotten to the core, teetering on the brink of bankruptcy. Since many of them get their financial resources from politicians, they survive only as long as they are political assets. When they become political liabilities and the funds are withdrawn, they can collapse promptly. Others are vulnerable to changes in laws, privatization, loss of corporate support.

Any sudden change could ruin them. Bureaucracies forced to confront these sudden changes, quickly, often don't survive the effort without considerable external support. This is particularly true for government-owned monopolies that are privatized. Many of these organizations have nothing in place that resembles marketing, sales or business development and so they quickly flounder in a competitive environment.

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