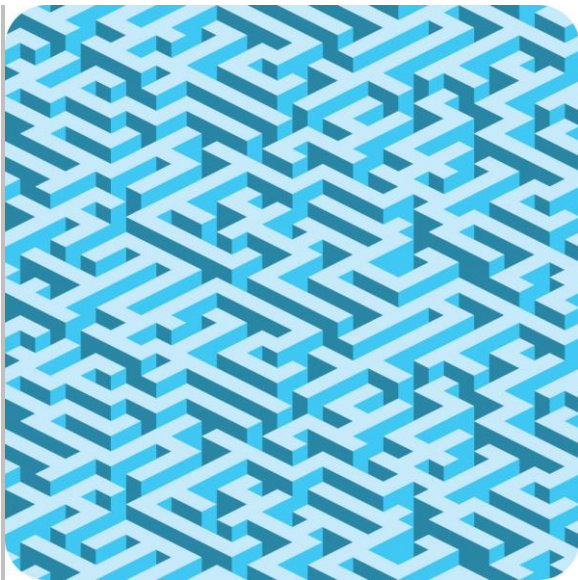


## “Are We Doing the *Right Work Right Now?*”

*In today’s economic reality, unlocking the latent potential of your staff is essential. Failing to do so could waste 25% of your company’s salaries.*



*Julian C. Chapman  
President  
Forrest & Company Limited*

Many organizations have become leaner out of necessity. These turbulent times require leaders to make tough choices: trimming their workforce, cutting costs, finding new ways to do business, and re-evaluating how they go to market.

Research at Forrest & Company Limited reveals that many organizations do not have the right people doing the right work at the right level. The implication is that there is enormous untapped potential within your organization. Specifically, 53% of manager-direct report relationships are poorly designed, resulting in compression, and gaps that reduce your organization’s efficiency, effectiveness, and trust. Compression occurs when managers are too close to their direct reports. They cannot give proper context for the work and they have a tendency to micro-manage. Gaps occur when managers are too far removed from their direct reports, resulting in lack of clarity and a feeling of alienation.

It therefore becomes imperative, to redefine how work is done and to seek new, more effective ways of doing things. Re-considering your organizational structure could be your competitive advantage. It is not just about a leaner organization, but about an organization more intelligently designed, better led, and with more aligned and energized employees.

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The following six steps provide a quick overview of Forrest's framework and how your organization will benefit from considering the question, "Are we doing the right work right now?"

1. Review your strategy
2. Review the structure based on your strategy
3. Define the work to be done in that structure
4. Populate your structure
5. Establish working relationships between functions to support the structure, and most critically,
6. Engage your leaders in supporting your strategy and their people

As a leader, reviewing these crucial steps will help you get the right people at the right level in the organization doing the right work, fast-tracking strategy implementation.

### **Step 1: Review your strategy**

Reviewing your strategy means looking at your vision, and at the impact of external and internal changes in the environment. It means assessing the validity of your strategy and choosing, if necessary, what needs to be adjusted. We firmly believe a manager needs to review strategy regularly, especially in the context of a changing environment. It provides an opportunity to validate your assumptions and to refocus your direction.

### **Step 2: Review your structure based on the strategy**

Reviewing your structure is not simply defining the future and seeing who you've got in the company to help get you there – the tail wagging the dog. Choose your strategy first and then identify the best structure regardless of the personnel. Organizational structure comes from strategy, not the other way around. At this step, focus on the work and possible outcomes. Don't focus solely on functional groupings like sales, marketing, and operations when considering structure, but also look at levels within the organization. In other words, look beyond your direct reports to *their* direct reports while considering the columns and rows of your organization. Ask yourself, "Do I have

a system that rationally structures the organization and delivers my strategy in the most efficient manner? If not, how many levels of work do I need in my organizational structure to support my strategy?"

### **Step 3: Define the work**

As a leader, do you expect people to rely on relationships to get critical work done, or should you rely on your organizational structure to do so? Defining work means making each role's accountability clear, including the rights and authority of the position. In other words, what is the outcome for each role if the job is done right? When this is done correctly, everyone in the organization is clear on what is expected of them and how they contribute to delivering the strategy. The systems, processes, and workflow need to be plotted and planned to support your structure. A clear understanding of how work will be done needs to be presented to all employees. This avoids the "bended knee" requests upon which employees can depend to get their work completed, and creates a more efficient system enabling greater self-motivation. Trust between employees and toward the organization will increase with properly defined work and will result in a highly integrated team.

### **Step 4: Populate the structure**

After you have defined the work, you need to populate the roles. This involves making the tough choices and choosing the people most capable to do the work, as per Steps 1–3. It means finding other roles within the capability of the displaced people or, if they cannot add value to the strategy, making the decision to let them go. This step is about staffing the right roles with the right people, and applying the right principles. At Forrest, we believe that employees should only have one manager. Matrix organizations, where employees report to several different managers, do not promote fast, efficient, and humane implementation of work. This simply confuses employee loyalty and deflates sustained work

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momentum. Employees can deliver results in a more efficient manner when they are accountable to one person only – their manager.

### **Step 5: Establish working relationships between functions**

Once you've clarified the work and the staff to deliver on the work, you need to consider organizational systems and workflow from a macro perspective to a micro perspective. What are the critical processes that will deliver your strategy? Remember, your processes were established in a different economic reality and may have been based on criteria no longer applicable. If you retain processes related to old strategies and structure, soon your efforts will be in vain and your employees will slide back to "old ways". How does each role within a specific function interact with other roles within the organization in order to deliver on the desired outcome? This step provides an opportunity to remove silo mentality. After all, most work occurs across functional groups. In our experience, substantial effort at this step – defining appropriate cooperation between functions and coordination of each function's work – will pay off in dividends. Staff will be clear on how their work contributes to others within the organization (and vice versa), and how their work contributes to your overall strategy. Tight alignment and efficient execution are the outcomes.

### **Step 6: Engage your leaders**

Your leaders are the powerhouse of your organization; they will make or break your organization's future. Leaders direct how the strategy is executed; to be successful, they must carefully integrate their people into the strategy. At this step, you must establish a clear set of behaviours for all leaders to follow. These behaviours are developed by establishing consistent managerial practices throughout the organization, and equipping your leaders with the skills and knowledge they require. Staff will require consistent support and instruction in the

implementation of your strategy. Remember the old axiom, "There are no bad organizations, only bad leaders."

At the end of these six steps, you will be able to honestly say, "Yes, we are doing the right work with the right people right now." It starts with you as their leader charting the path to the future, structuring the work to meet your strategy, and guiding your staff to implement. It is about building a well-crafted, solid and efficient infrastructure, to quickly make your organization more resilient in turbulent times, and a great place to work.

Please consider the exercise on the attached page and use it as another tool to view your organization's latent potential.

*Julian Chapman is President of Forrest & Company Limited. Julian Chapman has over three decades of experience leading and managing teams and organizations ranging in size from a few individuals to thousands. He joined Forrest & Company in 2002 after a career in organizational consulting and building clients' leadership capability. Julian assists Forrest's national and international clients achieve extraordinary results by designing and implementing solutions using the Forrest methodologies. He is one of the world's select few Master Trainers for Effective Intelligence™. Julian recently retired as a Brigadier General in the Canadian army reserve.*

*Since 1987, Forrest & Company Limited. has grown the capability of over 30,000 organizations and their leaders to execute strategies and optimize workforces.*

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# Exercise

How would people in your team or organization complete the following questions?

The answers that your people provide will help you uncover compressions or gaps within your organization and give you insight into how to leverage the untapped potential.

What is my manager’s intent? What is my manager’s plan?  
(A description of what your manager is hoping to achieve through you and your peers, and the overall goal for the group)

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How does my function fit into my manager’s plan?

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How does my function contribute to achieving the overall corporate strategy?

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What is my intent? What is my plan?  
(A description of what you are hoping to achieve through your direct reports and the overall goal for your team)

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