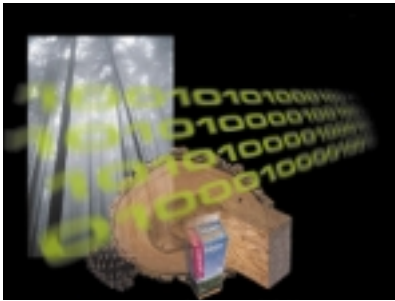




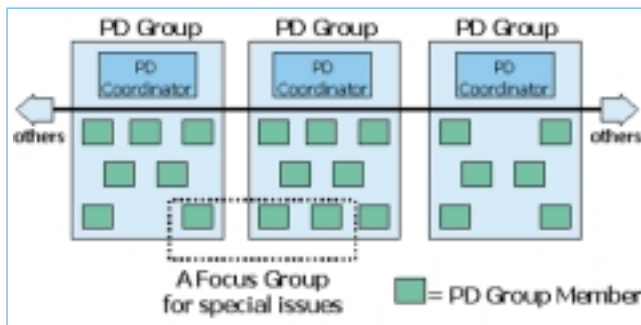
PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT IN RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY ORGANIZATIONS

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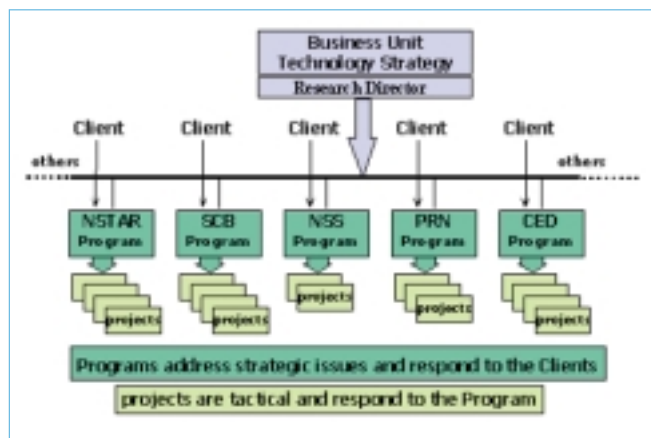
TRADITIONAL RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY (R&T) organizational models, built around competencies, mission themes, or focused program objectives, are not well suited for people development. People development covers individual needs rather than organizational needs and addresses issues such as communications, skills development, personal growth, performance assessment, feedback, compensation, dispute resolution, and career planning.

Because of dissatisfaction with performance in the people development area, MacMillan Bloedel Research devised a new organizational form that would specifically meet the individual needs of each and every staff member in the organization. This was termed a "People Development Network" or "PD Network." This organization form was invented and developed over a period of many months, involving all staff. It was implemented and refined over a further 18-month period, and proved to be a huge improvement over past practices, with a high degree of "buy-in." Unfortunately, corporate restructuring prevented more than one year of operating experience with the PD Network, as MB Research was closed down in 1998. Nevertheless the concept attracted a great deal of attention from other parts of the company and other organizations for its potential to make large gains in people performance and overall productivity.

The principle of the PD Network is shown in **Fig. 1**. All staff are organized into cross-functional PD Groups of about six to nine individuals, with a PD coordinator filling a leader or mentor role. The PD coordinators also form a group. Thus everyone has a "PD Home" that looks after the individual needs outlined above. This organization is considered a "shadow" organization to the dominating Program Organization shown in **Fig. 2**. A "Focus Group" is a temporary team initiative to deal with special issues concerning the overall functioning of the R&T department. Focus groups (such as the Safety Committee, the Computer Users Group) provide an opportunity for all staff to become involved and to contribute. Setting up the PD Network is done in a democratic fashion, involving all of the staff. It is not appointed. The PD coordinators are nominated by the staff using a set of criteria reflecting commitment, communication and mentoring skills, as they would be perceived by the organization as whole. All staff are accommodated with their first or second choice (in most cases) for a PD coordinator. Status, seniority or function department are not relevant in this grouping. In fact, a diversity of people in the PD Group is an asset. The PD coordinator role is a two-year commitment, after which others would assume the role. PD Group Members can also change group for compelling



1. The people development network



2. Program team matrix organization

reasons. The PD Coordinator Group has a rotating chairperson and is accountable to an Operations Committee, which represents a coordinating management team.

The PD coordinator is not a "boss" and has no formal authority, but does take responsibility for the two-way communication needs of the group and the performance and development activities for each individual. The PD Groups meet regularly, about once a month, to discuss group concerns, bring forward suggestions, attend training and development programs, and perhaps debate a focus topic. The PD Group has a budget for training and development, which they administer as a group. The PD Coordinator Group also meets once a month to share PD Group feedback and questions, and to coordinate information for dissemination to the staff.

A guiding principle for people development is that each individual is responsible for his or her own development; the PD coordinator helps chart the course and facilitate the training and experience. The individual gets his or her own information on personal skills through a "360° Feedback Skills Inventory" and uses this as a base for a personal development plan. Development

may be in technical, interpersonal, communication or leadership skills. Individuals are also assisted in clarifying career objectives. Organization-wide group training sessions may also be set up in, for example, public speaking (Toast Masters), report writing, conducting meetings.

At MB Research, a special room was set up as an open and visible focus for the PD Network. The so-called PD Room was where PD groups met and posted their minutes, where information on PD issues was posted, where an inventory of training videos and literature was kept for borrowing, and where job postings could be found. Our experience was that the PD Network was evolving into a "living" entity that relied on all staff for its maintenance and well-being. Most staff were very supportive and innovative in their contributions, and most recognized the linkages with organizational and personal performance. As with any change process there were the detractors, but these were few in number and tended to become isolated. TJ

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COURSE INFORMATION

An 8-week online course, "Managing Technology for Value Delivery," has been developed by The University of British Columbia, Distance Education & Technology (<http://det.cstudies.ubc.ca>).

This course is being sponsored jointly by TAPPI and the University of British Columbia, and will be next offered from Oct. 2 to Nov. 25, 2000. You may view a demonstration web site at <http://www1.cstudies.ubc.ca:8900/public/RMTD/>

For additional information, contact the course instructor (Procter) at a.r._procter@telus.net or through www.alanprocter.com. Course description and registration can be accessed through the TAPPI web site (www.tappi.org) or through TAPPI's Service Line at 1 800 332-8686 (U.S.) 1 800 446-9431 (Canada), or +1 770 446-1400; Fax: +1 770 446-6947; or by email: serviceline@tappi.org