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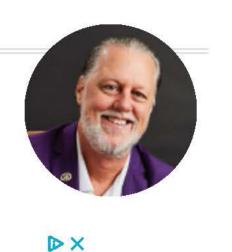# The Silo Effect: Creating Organizational Synergy by Breaking Down Barriers

Silos can evolve over time and may lurk underneath the façade of a well-run, successful business.

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Your company is growing. What may have started off with one or two employees handling all the aspects of the company such as product development, sales, marketing, fulfillment and administration is rapidly expanding to include specialists dedicated to specific areas while new departments are formed.

Unfortunately, independent "silos" within the organization may also be established. How does this happen? As these new departments are added to the organization, they tend to direct their focus on their own specific business needs and agendas. Each may not be familiar, nor make it a priority to understand other departments within the organization's roles, responsibilities, challenges, and needs. They have created their own silos — or individual "kingdoms."

For example, the marketing department may be tasked with sparking an interest in a new product or service. A catchy slogan is developed that teases potential customers with amazing deals such as, "If you purchase this or these many, you'll receive a great bonus such as 'free shipping' or 'upgrades' or frequent user bonus points!" Concurrently, the accounting department may actually be exploring avenues to reduce any "specialty programs," such as the new offering due to historically low returns on investment.

The sales team may — or may not — have been apprised of the new advertising campaign and are ill-equipped to communicate the intricacies of the promotion. The fulfillment team, or customer-facing individuals such as the front desk clerk at a hotel or the delivery person, may unintentionally misrepresent the program, resulting in dissatisfied customers. Customers who may have been attracted to the company specifically due to the advertising campaign can become frustrated and disillusioned.

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As the customer lodges a complaint, many organizations may apologetically "hand off" disgruntled customers from department to department without a smooth transition. Customer dissatisfaction creates a "blame game" mentality around the organization. The customer becomes even more agitated and feels duped!

When promises made by one department are not fulfilled at any point, the entire company suffers and runs the risk of a tarnished brand and loss of clients.

Here are some tips to avoid the silo effect and create synergy amongst the individual departments and employees:

• **Create WIIFMs (What's in it for me?) for individuals in all departments.** Employee "buy-in" and an understanding of the big picture are vital to establishing a cohesive team environment.

• **Establish an employee education program** highlighting updates, initiatives and advertised programs — along with the reasoning behind implementation! These programs should be facilitated and reinforced on a consistent basis.

• **Employ the services of outside consultants** that specialize in objectively determining organizational silos and offering viable solutions. They can help diagnose organizational communication deficiencies, recommend logistical improvements, and implement ongoing operating procedures to help ensure end-user satisfaction.

• **Develop a strong communication system.** The heart of the issue tends to be a lack of consistent, transparent communication around the organization. Ask yourself: Is everyone on the same page in the organization? Is there a defined communication process between the departments to eliminate these silos?

Silos can evolve over time and may lurk underneath the façade of a well-run, successful business. With proper awareness and diligence, silos can be avoided or eliminated, resulting in a multitude of satisfied, repeat customers.

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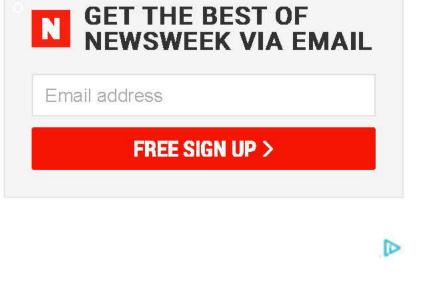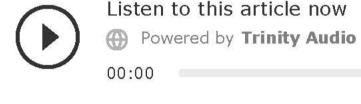
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