Management Styles on the Net
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In order to triumph in e-business it is necessary to create a culture of shared information. Within the organisation, but outside of it too. Cisco was one of the first companies to publish the faults found in its products on its web page. At Cisco they have also banished paper in order to create an e-mail culture.

Using electronic means in communication has the advantage of the speedy transmission of data. However, in order for the transmission to be appropriate, it is necessary to have a profound knowledge of the nature of the means used. In short, the famous adage: "The message is the means". This refers to the fact that the means used to carry information affects the meaning of the same. There are "cold" means, such as written documents, and warmer means such as personal relations. For this reason it is proposed that the communication hierarchy be taken into account: meetings, interviews, telephone, voice messages and, finally, e-mail. The higher the level of the channel chosen, the greater the communication and its effectiveness.

E-mail culture has spread at great speed. But for communication not to be misinterpreted, among many other things, the user should know that writing words in capital letters is the same as shouting in oral conversation. Something similar may occur when sending information to several people at the same time; on the one hand it helps diffusion, but on the other it makes them less personal and contributes to the "information saturation" process.

The labour climate is also changing. The e-business employee also looks for challenges and fun on the net. He dresses more informally. Informality is paramount, ties are obsolete. For example, at the Bankinter Internet division one can see very few ties and many pairs of jeans. The value of "fun" is essential. Jorge Juan and Silvia García, the brother and sister founders of Netjuice declared: "We were tired of corporations and wanted some fun" (Expansión, 9/3/2000). Jorge, apart from an economist, is a painter and decorates his office with his works.

Companies request and require people not only with specific training in technical issues, but also who possess wider knowledge which allows them to get to know their customers better. The aim is not to digitalise human beings but to humanise the information era. These are the new entrepreneurs. Companies with table football and games machines in the office. Companies with people dedicated to their work because they like it and who benefit from the profits. Anecdotes apart, all this implies a change in relationships and attitudes and, of course, demands a more open and more participative style of management which banishes any remnants of authoritarianism. It is a mistake to think only of intellectual characteristics when recruiting.
The term mentoring defines the special relationship between managers and employees. The aim is to achieve efficient employee training, employee loyalty and improvements in the working climate. E-business companies, given the need to work in an atmosphere of uncertainty and constant change, feel it is important that their employees hold certain values such as loyalty, trust and identification with goals. In this regard, employee training is fundamental. In this new era, training is beginning to be offered on the net. Workers can now attend online courses from their office. Cambridge Technology, with 4400 employees, offers training courses online. Training all the staff previously took one year, it now only takes three months. Apart from saving time, it also greatly reduces costs, although on the negative side online training does not allow people to come together in the way training programmes which require physical presence do.

A vital aspect of collaboration within the company is teamwork. The ability to work in a team and to have a pleasant personality are indispensable characteristics for a worker in the new economy. To maintain teams or groups over networks or online is difficult. Nevertheless, according to some experts, those organisations which do not learn to use effectively the advantages brought by online equipment are destined to fail in this new changing environment.

In order to avoid the deficiencies of distant teamwork, it is advisable to set up periodic meetings with images, using videoconferencing, and others with physical presence. One can even resort to extra-professional activities in order to maintain the socio-emotional climate of the team. The leaders of these games shall carry out important tasks of coordination, communication and animation. One of the keys to the new way of working is to be convinced that one does not really know until others have learnt what one knows, so converting the teams in learning networks.

The cultural change in companies cannot be adopted by anybody in particular, rather it is the result of teamwork. The situation is not easy. The education of directors shall require special training with regards to all these questions, but also with regards to the other members of the team.