

# Workbook

## MANAGING PEOPLE

### Are You Promoting Innovation?

BY CHARLES EHIN, PH.D.

Most organizations are still structured in a hierarchical fashion, and follow a command-and-control approach to management born out of the Industrial Age mind-set. And as a result, teams do not have the power to self-manage themselves and cannot work to their fullest potential during the so-called Knowledge or Information Age. To adapt to this new era, companies must acknowledge that work gets accomplished by informal networks and not by following policies and directives.

Nonetheless, there are a few exceptions such as W.L. Gore & Associates, best known as the manufacturer of Gore-Tex fabrics. The firm's founders, Wilbert Gore and his wife, Genevieve, organized the firm around self-managing teams and insisted that associates make their own commitments and stick to them. Thus, from day one, the Gores had no use for managers. The emphasis was put on shared leadership grounded in talent, expertise and drive rather than on position power. This open self-organizing work context gives everyone involved the opportunity to find where they can best put their abilities to work for both their own and the company's benefit since everyone has a stake in the action.

This quiz below is intended to help you assess whether your organization is empowering its employees to collaborate and share information.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Answer Yes or No to the following 10 questions, and then tally the results. An answer key is below. For an interactive version of this tool, tips on how to move to self-managed teams and an example of how one company has promoted these teams, see [GO.BASELINEMAG.COM/APR07](http://GO.BASELINEMAG.COM/APR07).

#### Tool: Are You Prepared for the Knowledge Era?

		YES	NO
<b>A</b>	Does your organization have a vigorous selection process to ensure a good fit and buy-in of the people who join the company?		
<b>B</b>	Is team membership completely voluntary?		
<b>C</b>	Do teams have self-imposed goals that stretch their performance?		
<b>D</b>	Do people have a sense of compassion, empathy and trust toward other organization members?		
<b>E</b>	Do people have an accurate understanding of the current state of company affairs, including who their customers are and the strength of their competitors?		
<b>F</b>	Is every individual and team able to visualize the impact of activities or intended activities on other organization members, teams and the company as a whole?		
<b>G</b>	Are people more concerned with how best to collaborate with each other than rank and status in the organization?		
<b>H</b>	Do people understand the difference between explicit and tacit knowledge and their importance to competitive advantage?		
<b>I</b>	Does everyone in the organization know what the core competencies of the company are and how they are used to develop new products and services?		
<b>J</b>	Is every individual and team constantly provided up-to-date information on their contributions to the success of the organization?		

**YOUR SCORE:** Count the number of questions you answered No and Yes.

#### WHAT YOUR SCORE MEANS:

**ANSWER NO, 6 OR MORE TIMES:**

Your business is not fostering self-managing teams, and therefore will not achieve its full potential in a knowledge economy. Support idea sharing; start thinking in terms of "networks" internal and external to the organization. That will give you a true perspective as to what's actually taking place.

**ANSWER YES, 4 OR MORE TIMES:**

Your organization is on its way to prospering in the Knowledge Age. Your associates should be able to function both independently and in multiple teams.

Charles Ehin is emeritus professor of management and the former dean of the Gore School of Business at Westminster College in Salt Lake City. He is the author of *Unleashing Intellectual Capital* (Butterworth-Heinemann, 2000) and *Hidden Assets: Harnessing the Power of Informal Networks* (Springer, 2005). His Web site is [WWW.UNMANAGEMENT.COM](http://WWW.UNMANAGEMENT.COM).