



Time Management and Productivity Expert Laura Stack Discusses Cross-Functional Thinking in the Workplace



DENVER, Colorado, December 26, 2012 – The concept of cross-functionality is not a new one, but according to time management and productivity expert Laura Stack, few business organizations today practice it in any significant way. In her latest blog titled, “[Think Beyond Your Desk: Applying Cross-Functional Thinking to the Workplace.](#)” Stack discusses the business ethic that promotes coordinating and sharing tasks across all levels in order to increase response time for the customer’s benefit.

In a 1988 article, Management Consultant and Author Peter Drucker predicted that most organizations would embrace cross-functionality within 20 years. However, Stack says, although a respected visionary in the business management world, Drucker’s prediction did not come to fruition.

“While most business schools do emphasize the cross-functional approach nowadays, relatively few real-world organizations practice it in any significant way,” Stack says.

In fact, corporate training often teaches the exact opposite, and most leaders accept team-first functionality as the norm. The cross-functional team consists of a group of individuals with varying levels of functional expertise, all working toward a common goal. It can include company employees as well as outside consultants.

And although Stack says corporations pay lip service to the organizational mission and vision, the modern business structure encourages leaders to carve out individual “fiefdoms” rather than integrate seamlessly across departments, as the cross-functional approach requires.

The resulting informational silos, turf wars, internal sniping and other obstacles clog productivity, and hold corporate teams—and ultimately the organization—back.

Stack offers team leaders and managers some ideas on injecting tenets of cross-functionality into their structure as a way to better align team efforts with overall organizational objectives.

1. Share. Stack says that information silos, whether deliberate or resulting from incompatible systems, plague modern businesses and may cost corporations billions in lost revenues annually.

“Make sincere efforts to communicate laterally across teams and departments,” Stack says. “Open up those silos, so the grain spills out to all who need it.”

2. Empathize. Stack challenges managers to consider whether they have become so focused on their team’s needs that organizational goals and objectives have been forgotten.

“Stop and think about the needs of other groups and consider how much more you and your co-leaders might accomplish if you actively attempted to help each other,” Stack says. “Think about how any action or decision will impact another and have conversation around it before you pull the trigger.”

3. Appreciate. Stack has long been a vocal proponent of management making the effort to understand and appreciate other departments, rather than belittling another department’s contributions to the company’s overall goals.

“The org chart includes them for a reason, even if it isn’t obvious to you,” Stack says. “Consider the pancreas in the human body, which doesn’t seem important at first glance; yet if just a few cells within it stop producing insulin, diabetes strikes.

“That odd department you’ve never really understood may just be the pancreas of your organization.”

4. Respect. Once a manager has taken the time to understand and appreciate other teams, Stack says it is important to learn to respect what they do.

“Reach out and connect with them, so you can better serve each other,” she says. “Whenever feasible, attend their big meetings, so you can acquire better knowledge of their inner workings and needs.

“Find ways you can reduce redundancy or save them time.”

5. Change. Mutually beneficial relationships founded on sharing, respect, and appreciation drive cross-functional thinking, which in turn drives organizational [flexibility](#) and a better bottom line, Stack says.

“Do everything in your power to encourage a shift to cross-functional thinking; emphasize how moving forward with a more holistic strategy is in everyone’s best interest.”

6. Heal. According to Stack, old-school functional methodology is merely a crutch. Functional thinking is prone to brittle self-absorption, causing breaks across the organizational structure. Open, honest cross-functionality helps reset those breaks, so each team can all move forward more easily.

At some point, Stack tells her readers that they will hit a fork in the organizational path. The break from a well-traveled road of functionality needs to give way to a cross-functional future if an organization hopes to continue to compete in today’s marketplace.

“The cross-fertilization and new viewpoints that emerge from true teamwork can prove insanely profitable,” Stack says. “Stop wasting your team’s potential to achieve greatness and unleash cross-functional thinking in your working life.”

For information on cross-functional thinking, visit [TheProductivityPro.com website](http://TheProductivityPro.com), Email Laura@TheProductivityPro.com, or call 303-471-7401.

About Laura Stack:

[Laura Stack](#) is a time management and productivity expert who has been speaking and writing about human potential and peak performance since 1992. She has implemented employee productivity improvement programs at Wal-Mart, Cisco Systems, UBS, Aramark, and Bank of America. Stack presents keynotes and seminars internationally for leaders, entrepreneurs, salespeople, and professional services firms on improving output, lowering stress, and saving time in the workplace.

The president of [The Productivity Pro®, Inc.](#), a time management firm specializing in high-stress environments, Stack is the bestselling author of five books: [“What to do When There’s Too Much to do” \(2012\)](#); “SuperCompetent” (2010); “The Exhaustion Cure” (2008); “Find More Time” (2006); “Leave the Office Earlier” (2004). The 2011-2012 President of the National Speakers Association and recipient of the Certified Speaking Professional (CSP) designation, Stack has served as a spokesperson for Microsoft, 3M, Xerox, and Office Depot and is the creator of The Productivity Pro® planner by Day-Timer. Widely regarded as one of the leading experts in the field of employee productivity and workplace issues, Stack has been featured nationally on the CBS Early Show and CNN, and in USA Today and the New York Times.

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