

## **The Fast Eat the Slow in the Land of the Quick and the Dead.**

In this age of quickly changing technology, it's no longer just the big eating the little. Now, in the land of the quick and the dead, the fast eat the slow.

Speed to market is critical.

Remember learning in school that business was all about land, labor and capital? Forget it. The new elements for business success are *technology*, *marketing* and *speed*.

Here are three qualifying questions to ask of yourself or your company:

1. Do you have a new technology that gives you a competitive edge for a window of time?
2. Do you know how to market it?
3. Can you get it to market fast – before someone else meets the consumer need you're filling?

Let's look at the third element of *speed* and how it relates to teams:

## Pyramids Are Tombs

In most top-down hierarchies, in order to get something accomplished, a project must go “up the pyramid” for approval at each major stage.

As the project goes up through the layers of management for approval, each layer of management feels compelled to add its mandates and put its fingerprints somewhere. And as each change is mandated, the work comes back down for revisions before it can proceed to the next level.

Sometimes the piece being reviewed and approved is improved, but more often it's compromised by the “meddling and diddling” that occurs at each level. The higher you are on the pyramid, the further you are from the realities of the front lines. So your edits/changes are not necessarily improvements.

Front-line decision makers who deal with the suppliers and deliver the services to clients on a daily basis are often better informed than their CEO about such areas as the effects that disruptive technologies like the Internet and new software solutions can have on customer service. The actual architects of the project are often demoralized by the changes made to their work as it scales the pyramid. And projects are often slowed to the speed of a glacier!

## Self-directed Teams

The supervisors and the supervisors' supervisor are not usually at their desks waiting to review and approve. They're often unavailable at the time they're needed. So the project languishes. Pages fly off the calendar and the competition might win the game because of faster speed to market.

Self-directed teams are faster. Period.

These teams, working in a full-feedback environment, are able to draw on the seasoned experience of others in the organization for consulting and quality control, remain accountable for their own work and deliver the work on schedule.