Rethinking the Corporate World

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In Buenos Aires I've studied corporate management (I did, shame on me), and as part of that, I had to learn about all the different identified types of organizations: matrix-based, pyramidal, military, organic, etc. Afterwards, books like Peopleware made me rethink these concepts, particularly when seeing the pityful state of some software development companies here and there.

I mean, except some unusual exceptions, our work environments typically suck. Deeply. Nobody gives a damn about your ideas, and you'll just have to sit there in crowdy and noisy open spaces, and do the stupid things that you're told to do, and everything is a horrible command and conquer experience. Working in this free market, post-Berlin wall world, the only choice you're left with is suck it up or leave.

Welcome to the free world. You're free to starve or to choose who to submit your soul to during 40 hours per week.

In the software development field, changing jobs is a comparatively easy thing to do, with the few exceptions of the software crisis in the mid 70s, at the end of the 80s and between 2002 and 2004, but in any case those crisis happened during short periods of time. But in other industries, people, for many reasons (mortgage, family, etc) they have to stick with horrible workplaces, awful jobs, incredible amounts of stress and awesome levels of burnout. Why does it have to be this way?

And you know what? It doesn't have to. Some company out there, in a more "brick and mortar" industry than software, thinks that the current way of doing things is wrong. If you haven't heard about Ricardo Semler, go and watch this movie from the MIT. It is amazing. This guy, CEO of a industrial company in Brazil for the last 25 years, has totally changed the way things are done, and brought some extremely innovative ideas to his company, which has since sustained a 900% growth (!) with as little as 2% turnover (!!).

Now go watch it (it's only 40 minutes long), and I hope, learn something. I think that the Swiss business environment really needs to change, and Semler's approach might work. And by the way, the guy is really funny!

(Through 37signals' blog)