

# How to Create Organization Profiles on Workdesign.company

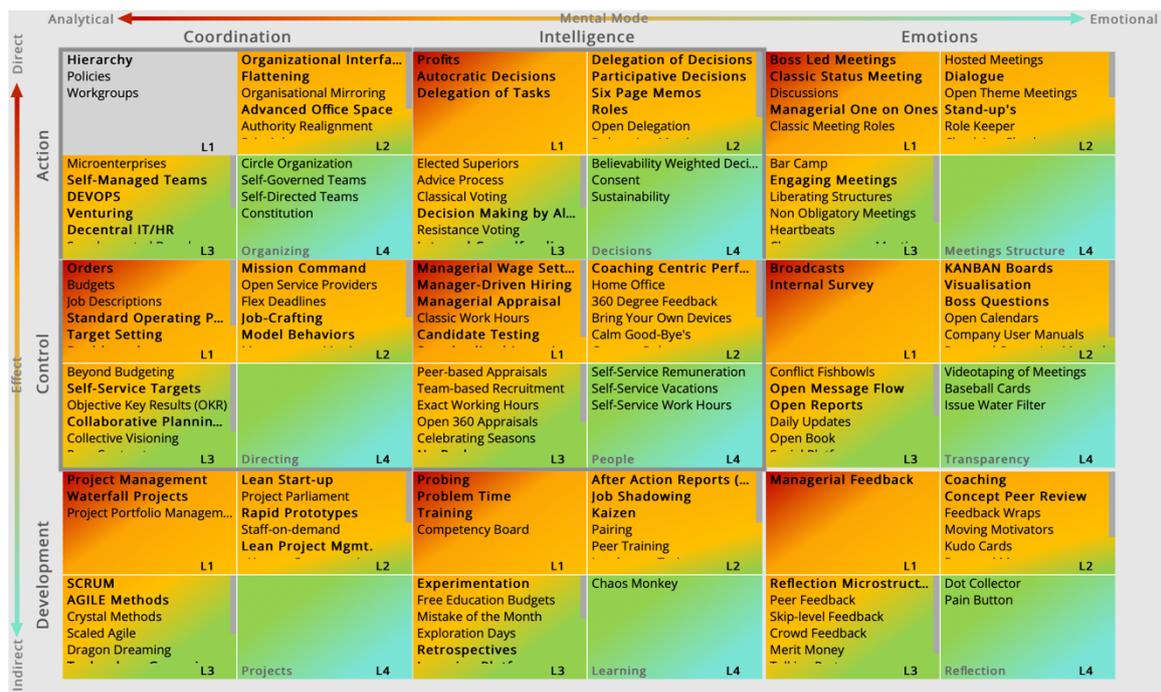
Determining how people work together in an organization is easy: Just observe and map what you see in the 200+ workdesigns on workdesign.company.

However, it can be harder than it seems. Behavior might not be easily observable, especially in big companies. In order to create an accurate map, it is necessary to know the mapping conventions. This guide is meant to help you navigate these challenges.

## The Goal of Profiling

The main goal of creating the workdesign map is to describe an organizational operating system by its repeated pattern of behaviors, its workdesigns, and the underlying belief system. This allows to recognize patterns, gaps and opportunities in order to improve and transform an organization.

There are three steps needed to create the workdesign profile: Determining what you are profiling, assigning workdesigns and describing the belief system. Here is an example what you are working towards: the configuration map.



## Required Skills

As a profiler you need to have a sound understanding of management, leadership and organizations. Without that, you will find it difficult to spot the right workdesigns.

Second, it helps to have a basic level of understanding of [integral theory](#). This will help to understand the four levels of companies. But even without that, most people know how traditional, level one or two companies, are organized. However, they might struggle to

understand how organizations at level three or four work. A solid intro can be found in my 2019 book “[Liberated Companies](#)”<sup>1</sup>, and a dictionary of terms in [this spreadsheet](#).

As said, a certain level of knowledge about workdesigns helps, but it is not required. It can also be learned on the job by studying the descriptions on the platform and the sources listed there.

### Data Sources

The most accessible data source is yourself. Your knowledge of the organization is an excellent source. If you can identify a certain way that was used to repeatedly to do certain things, chances are that you have spotted a work design.

Another great data source are books and articles. A lot of progressive companies are eager to share what they are doing. A third source are interviews with employees who have been deeply involved with the organization. These three methods work best combined all these three methods.

However, data quality will never be perfect, especially on company level. That’s why each configuration has a Data Quality field to indicate the level of confidence in the data.

### STEP ONE: Knowing What you are Profiling

The first step is to determine what you are profiling. Within the framework of workdesign.company it is possible to profile any organization of any size: Teams, departments or companies.

As soon as two people work together, they need to come up with ways to organize their work. These ways are less complex for small teams and very complex for big companies. The workdesign framework is able to describe both. Bigger organizations simply tend to use more formalized, standardized and often heterogenous work designs.<sup>2</sup>

### STEP TWO: Assigning Workdesigns to the Configuration

By observation or research, you should be able to spot the work designs the organization you want to profile is using. Just ask yourself the “How...?” questions listed in each of the nine categories in the diagram below.

		Outer		Inner
		Coordination 	Intelligence 	Emotions 
Direct		<b>Action</b> How do we organize?	<b>Decisions</b> How are decisions made?	<b>Meeting</b> How are meetings run?
		<b>Directing</b> How Do we set directions?	<b>People</b> How Do we treat people?	<b>Transparency</b> How do we share?
Indirect		<b>Projects</b> How do we big new things?	<b>Learning</b> How do we learn?	<b>Feedback</b> How Do we reflect?

<sup>1</sup> Or, read Frederick Laloux’s classic book “Reinventing Organization”.

<sup>2</sup> Check out the FAQ about how to handle heterogenous companies.

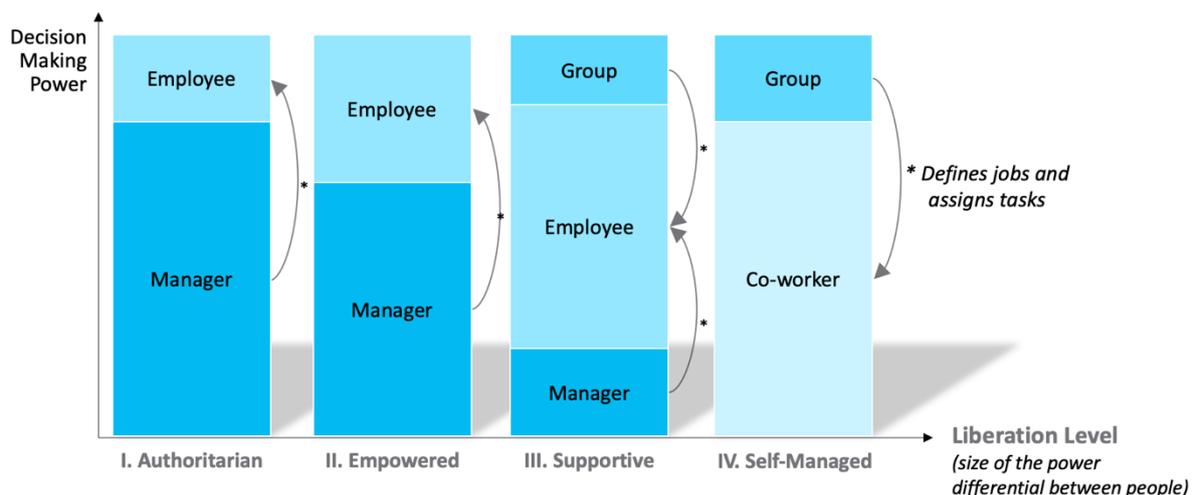
On the action level, people need to organize to split up work and assign accountability, they need to make decisions, and they use certain ways to meet.

Then they need to stay in control of the work. They do this by agreeing on goals with one another (directing), by negotiating their role and their share of the work results (people), and by informing each other (transparency).

The action and the development categories would suffice to describe a company in a static world. But the world is dynamic, and so is work: Projects are performed accelerate change, and people learn and reflect together in an attempt to make sense of the work and improve.

Ask yourself, how does your organization achieve all of these challenges, category by category. Chances are, you will find a well enough fitting workdesign for every structure your observe in an organization in the data base on [workdesign.company](http://workdesign.company).<sup>3</sup>

While looking for the right workdesign, you have to scan the four quadrants of each category. Each quadrant measures the degree to which power is centralized in managers or decentralized to the workforce – as shown in the diagram below.



So, for more top-down driven workdesigns, look at level one, in the first quadrant. More participative workdesigns will be found on level two and three, outright democratic workdesigns on level four.

When should a workdesign be assigned to a configuration? There is really only one condition: Are many people using the workdesign over and again with a sufficient degree of consistency in the organization? If the answer is yes: Add it. If not: Leave it out. However, it is often not so easy to judge whether workdesigns are consistently and frequently applied. Often you have to rely on heuristics to answer the questions, as it requires large scale academic studies to come up with more objective answers. These proxies are interviews, books, blog posts and normative statements by companies' executives.

<sup>3</sup> If not, check out the FAQ at the end of this document how to suggest a new workdesign.

These are the most common problems you might encounter while describing organizational the operating systems and how to solve them:

*Problem 1: You find a workdesign, but it is not in the category you think it should be in.*

- Workdesigns are assigned to categories by what we perceive to be their primary purpose.
- However, in practice, most workdesigns have multiple purposes.
- So don't get hooked on "proper" allocations of work designs to categories. The assignments of workdesigns to categories made in the platform allows everyone to compare organizational operating systems.

*Problem 2: There are meeting workdesigns, for example "conflict fishbowls", that are found in the transparency category, outside the meeting category. Why is that?*

- The answer is the same as for problem 1: Workdesigns are assigned to categories by what we perceive to be their primary purpose
- As meetings always have another primary purpose as "to meet", this would leave this category blank. Instead, you find quite a lot of workdesigns in there.
- The workdesigns you find in the Meeting Quadrant are meeting microstructures, i.e., segments and routines used in meetings to collaborate better.
- Hier noch ein Punkt mit das andere ne andere haupt purpose haben?

*Problem 3: Isn't the whole model rather subjective? Workdesigns, Categories, Levels and Severity – at first glance they all make sense. But is there any academic prove for it all?*

- Yes, there is. Here is an [overview of the main influences](#).
- Organizations are complex. The framework on the platform aims to describe that complexity – and that cannot be done without informed judgement calls.
- Where quantification fails, you need to rely on (subjective) judgement, while never losing sight of what you can actually measure. Check out the end of the FAQ section of this document for more answers – or read the book 😊

### **STEP THREE: Describing the underlying beliefs**

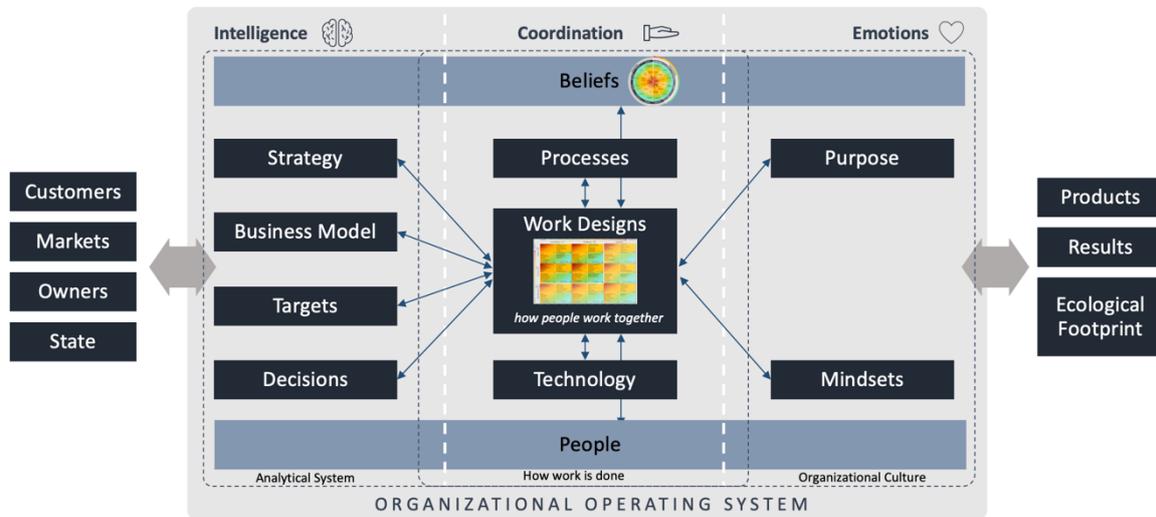
So, what's the ultimate benefit of describing and comparing organizational operating systems? It's about improving organizations. But what exactly does improvement mean? Performance, engagement, work satisfaction, sustainability, enjoyment, scaling, innovation, efficiency, or safety? That's all a matter of the belief system<sup>4</sup>.

A belief system underlies the way people act. It is what they believe to be true. It is also called "corporate culture". Every workdesign a company uses reveals a certain set of beliefs. If you want to improve organizations, it's a very good idea to try to unearth those beliefs. The

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<sup>4</sup> A belief is "a mental attitude of acceptance or assent toward a proposition without the full intellectual knowledge required to guarantee its truth ". Consequently, a belief system is a set of mutually supportive beliefs. In organizations, it often includes judgements about causal relationships and motives.

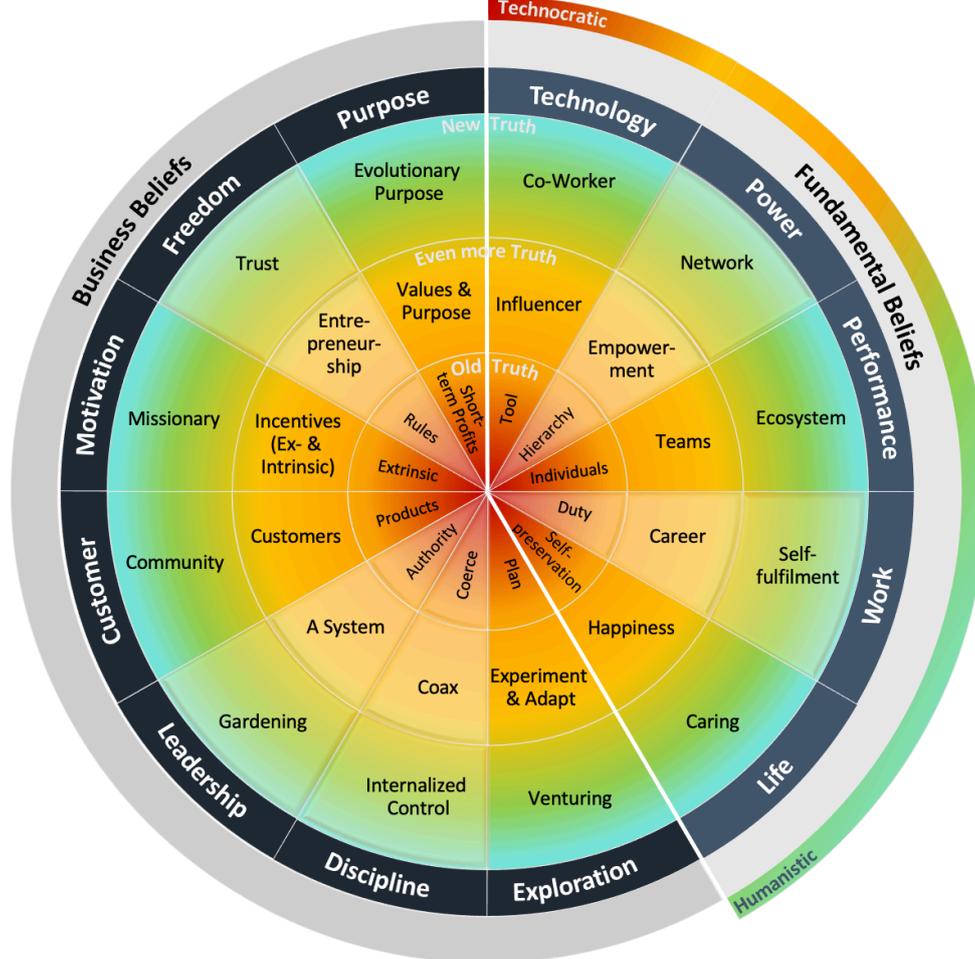
diagram below shows the interconnection between the analytical system, workdesigns, and organizational culture, in what we call an organizational operating system.



What workdesign.company aims at is describing two elements of a company: The configuration of workdesigns and the belief system. We choose to not cover analytical systems, as they are well described in many business books already.

The belief system used here is based on integral theory (see above). It is this theory that has inspired the red-yellow-orange-teal color scheme that can be found everywhere on the platform.

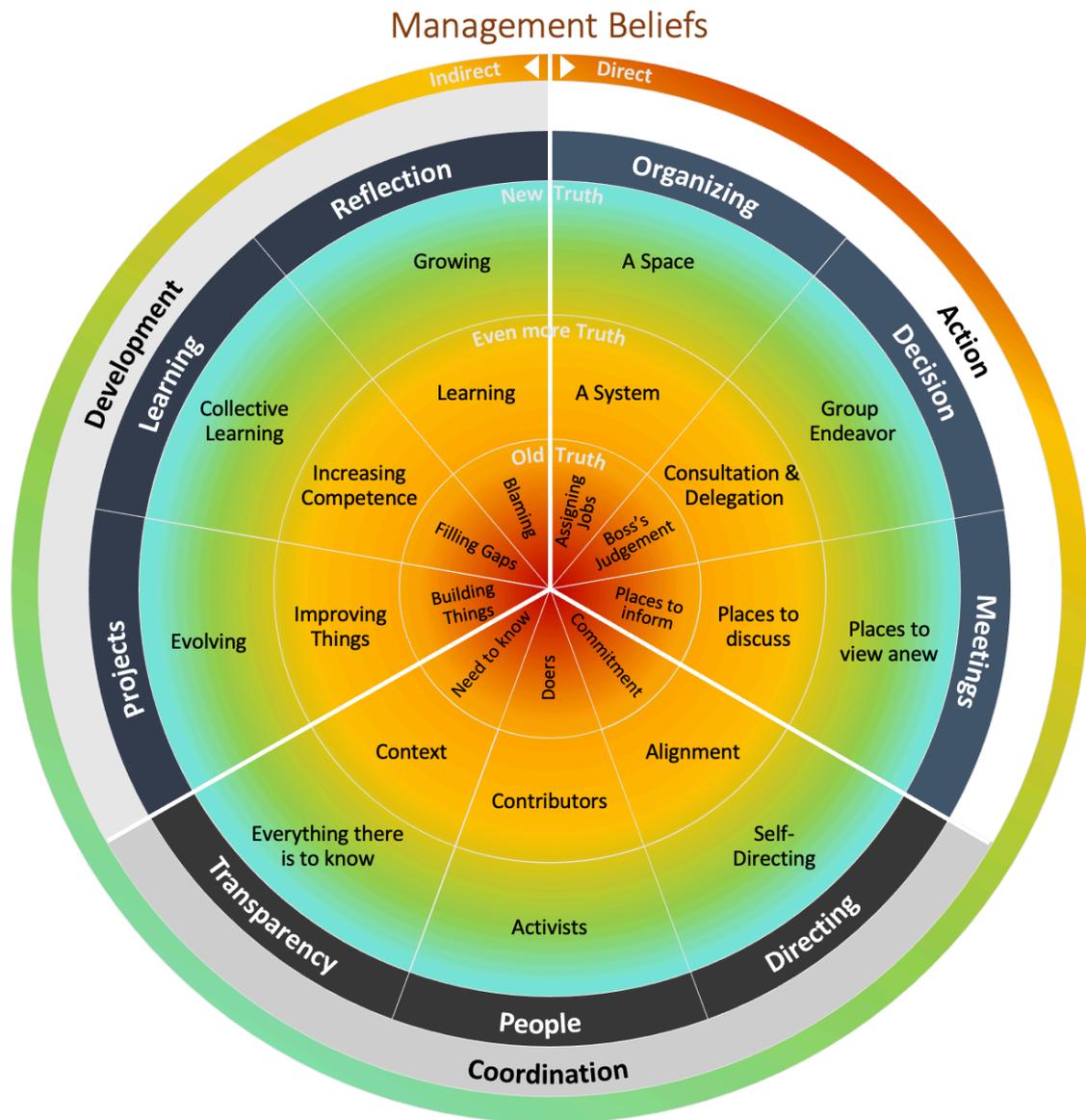
## Fundamental & Business Beliefs



This diagram shows the first of three belief categories. The fundamental beliefs are fundamental to create an understanding of the underlying processes in a company. They are as pervasive as they are difficult to unearth. Good hints are (in descending order) to inspect the configuration of workdesigns itself, and those corporate value statements that seem to be validated by reality. To increase the ease with which beliefs can be described, the platform lets you choose from three typical beliefs for each category. If possible, add a few words to describe more exactly what the corporate culture is about.

The next category of beliefs is a easier to describe. Business beliefs are all about what it takes to manage a company well. How to motivate coworkers, what is the role of the customer, the amount of freedom, the purpose of the company, the way leadership should be done, the way discipline (call it commitment if you like) is enforced, the expectation of managers for people to explore or stick to their assigned tasks.

The third category, Management Beliefs, are the underlying beliefs of the nine categories of workdesigns, as found on the configuration map.



These can be determined by looking at the nine categories of workdesigns and summing up their essence, in one of the three categories and by adding a few words of written text.

Once you are done you can use the profile to:

- Recognize where your company is currently at
- Determine where your company should be – use the compare feature and get inspired by other companies
- Identify gaps between goal and reality
- Try out some new work design to fix the gap

We believe organizational design is primarily about evolution. Still, companies are target-oriented systems, so the evolution should be guided. So let yourself be guided into a process of experimenting with new workdesigns. We hope workdesign.company is useful for your journey!

## FAQ

This FAQ is sorted from practical to theoretical question focus.

How can I suggest a new workdesign?

- Describe it using the format we use on the platform.
- Send it to us for review: [Info@workdesign.company](mailto:Info@workdesign.company). We will get back to you with questions and may add it to the database.
- We aim to open the workdesign database for users to contribute at some point in the future. Our aim is to build a user driven platform for organizational design.

Can anyone create Organizational Operating Systems or are there limits?

- Any user can self-register and work with the platform.
- There are currently no limits to the number of organizational operating systems a user can create.
- We have created the platform in such a way that you can create planned and actual configurations and compare those with one another, or with the configurations of other companies.

What about companies that behave in a certain way in one part, and differently in other parts of the company?

- The bigger companies get, the more heterogenous they become. But even in smaller companies, some functional areas (e.g. sales, logistics, production, finance) might use very different work designs.
- Therefore, you have two options. The first one is to describe what the main part of the organization is doing and ignore the variations. A good idea is to explain which parts of the organization you are describing in the long description of the operating system.
- The second option is to create multiple configurations for a company. That requires more effort but may help to reveal inconsistencies or opportunities.

What about organizational structures? Where are they represented?

- Within the framework, organizational structures are just workdesigns, i.e., patterns of arranging human behavior.
- The most structure-like workdesigns are the Hierarchy, the Circle Organization (a network), Microenterprises, Flattening (basically flat Hierarchies) and some others.
- All the nuances of organizational structural design that are not represented (e.g. matrix, the functionally-, product-, geographical-, Business area structured hierarchy) fall into the leftmost column of the “Organizational operating system” diagram, the analytical system. As these questions are well described elsewhere, we choose not to include them into the system.

What are the theoretical foundations?

- There are many. The framework is a mesh-up of many academic or business [sources](#).
- It is important to understand that the model we use at workdesign.company is “non-MECE”. MECE stands for “mutually exclusive – collectively exhaustive”. So, a non-

MECE Model implies that there are overlaps and gaps between workdesigns, categories and levels (non-exclusiveness). And there are more subjects, esp. more workdesigns that, are out there and are not (yet) part of the platform.

- The great thing about Non-MECE frameworks is that they are great to describe complex environments. The catch is that they do not lend themselves well to quantification, and causal relationships.

We think it is shocking how many people mindlessly adopt ways of managing that are undermining the engagement, intellect, moral integrity, happiness and growth of coworkers – at their own and their organizations detriment. If we can get more people to reflect and change their ways, we would consider our job well done!

Hamburg, Germany on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Frank Thun