"Organizations must be designed to reflect not only their strategy, their values and their philosophy, but where they will need to be to achieve a competitive advantage in the future." – Deepak Lalwani
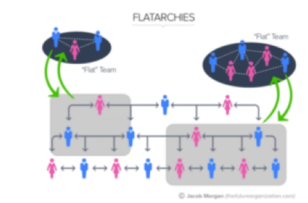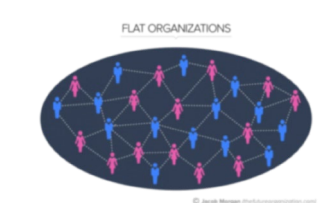
Continuum of Organizational Complexity

Structure	Hierarchical	Flatter	Flatarchy	Helix	Holocracy	Flat
Diagram						
Features	Many tiers and layers, divided by ever more specific functions. Functions often centralized by one business unit (e.g. Marketing). May include matrixed relationships with multiple bosses. Employees exist to support mgmt..	Fewer tiers of authority, leaner. Requires technological "central nervous system" to allow collaboration and cloud information access. More employee-centric. Managers exist more to support employees.	Some hierarchy for management but ad-hoc, flat teams for greater agility (between Flatter and Flat). Common for innovative or product/services incubator programs. Seen as a temporary structure with pockets of new structure.	Two equal lines (or "axes") of accountability: capabilities manager (*people manager*) and value-creation manager (*productivity manager*). Streamlines roles and responsibilities, simpler decision-making process.	Flat or self-managed, No job titles, no seniority, power is dispersed, functions often decentralized, workers do what they do best, distributed decision-making, "Circles" by task and function	No job titles, seniority, managers, or executives; everyone is equal. "Self-managed". Employees can join what projects they want, start own project (and secure funding and recruit team members). Order is emergent from a framework of rules and free actors.
General Pros and Cons	**Pros**: Clarity on who the bosses are, clear chain of command and control, resilient management structure, works well if outer world never changes. **Cons:** Accountability can be unclear, tendency to "pass the buck", slow to change or make decisions, less respect for individual worker and their expertise. Leadership confusion if matrixed.	**Pros:** More scalable, better(2-way) communication, doesn't require a radical new structure, new ways of working. **Cons:** Lesser ability to control the company from the top, fewer opportunities to be in leadership roles, less likely to be able to climb higher in management.	**Pros:** Company operates within existing structure but allows employees to run with ideas. More agile. Ideal for development, especially new ideas outside of R&D. More powerful and potentially more disruptive, with focus on innovation. More competitive than other structures. **Cons:** Finding resources for newly forming teams can be a challenge.	**Pros**: Flexibility required to operate in today's marketplace. Agile, focused on value. Simpler decision process. Empowers employees to act. **Cons**: Requires significant shift in operations and management if coming from a hierarchy. Requires relinquishing control and "a healthy dose of humility".	**Pros:** Great for startups, agile, can handle unpredictability, disruption. Increased innovation, rapid pivoting. **Cons**: Difficult to implement, requires big change in vision, culture, and roles. Informal hierarchies may form by seniority, duplication: each group has to have separate resources.	**Pros:** Great for startups, agile, can handle unpredictability, disruption; increased innovation, rapid pivoting, learning from mistakes **Cons:** Recruiting a team, selling an idea, and garnering funding requires an entrepreneurial spirit. Not very scalable. Informal hierarchies may form by seniority. Accountability and reliability issues requires radical change from hierarchical structure.
Communication	Very restricted channels of communication, staying within local tiers and in silos. Questions/approvals must be vetted through series of vertical managers. Limited visibility between silos.	Better two-way communication (from employees upwards, from leadership downwards)	Better communication with some restricted channels within management hierarchy.	More open with two accountability managers. Traditional reporting lines don't matter. Employees capitalize on both business and personal development opportunities.	Fully open channels of communication	Fully open channels of communication; but conversations may need to be grouped by team. Better communication with fewer layers. Potential employee role confusion, poorer performance, w/o supervision.
Teamwork	Teams mostly of people from same silo and tier. Teams may work at cross-purposes with teams in other departments. Almost no decision-making power.	Greater focus on collaboration resulting in the same results as hierarchical structure but in shorter time, with less effort and use of resources. Also often produces better results.	Employees come forward with ideas by forming separate teams. Teams operate with more autonomy, less bureaucracy, but require more resources.	Small ad hoc teams with people from different departments and functions. Strong collaborative structure and strong project management. Cross functional groups.	Fluid teams or "circles" form to meet organizational goals, then dissolve. Teams can make decisions without other approval, i.e. decisions delegated to lowest possible levels.	Employees can join what teams they want and do the work they do best. Teams may be hard to form if the project idea, funding, and workers are not popular or available.
Decision Making & Agility	Most decisions are made at the top. Supports centralized decision making, power, and control. Little delegation. Relatively inflexible, slow to recognize problems or change, slow. Org change slow to implement Conservative and not agile. Employees least motivated.	More employee centric. Often no annual employee reviews. More flexible work locations and hours. Leaders empower and enable, delegate more while focused on results. Control is maintained while delegation of tasks is increased to lower levels.	Agile, yet traditional. The formation of temporary "flat" teams allows for quicker decision-making if management honors what the teams produce. Versatile. Teams may always delegate the same tasks to the same individuals so no cross-training.	Very flexible. Decisions made where most necessary knowledge resides, at small group level. Pragmatic and more efficient. Finds solutions, tests them, and learns from failures. However, Accountability and Productivity managers must be in agreement.	Freedom to start own project, fully agile, very flexible work conditions. Can change direction quickly, create a team that makes own decisions. Higher workloads since mgrs. have more subordinates. Teams may always delegate same tasks to same people, so are stuck in their role. Rules-based approach to mgmt. may feel out of sync cultural values.	Employee centric, better communication, flexible and agile. Employees empowered with autonomy and responsibility. Delegation to lowest org level increases efficiency. Managers, with more subordinates delegate responsibility more. Challenges in delegating decision-making authority without losing control. Least supervision and guidance of employees.