IS TEAMWORK ANOTHER FAD?

ONE SENIOR ENGINEER'S OPINION AGAINST THE MODERN TEAM EFFORT

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Joe is a very respected petroleum engineer who has had an outstanding technical and managerial career of over 40 years with Gulf Oil and later Chevron. Over his long career, he has experienced upsizing, "blood-letting, strenuously recruiting to fill depleted staffs, downsizing with a serious loss of technical knowledge and experience, obliteration of layers of middle management and...leaner flatter management structures" (prescribed by management consultants who are generally devoid of any knowledge about the oil business.)

In the 1970's and early 1980's when several of us started a serious effort to integrate geology and geophysicists into petroleum engineering into the Society of Petroleum Engineers and Journal of Petroleum Technology, Joe was one of SPE's great supporters of synergy.

In Joe's views the recent effort on teams is not new - just a new name: "In fact, the fundamental idea of cross functional teams and goals appears to surface about every 10 years with a new label (or different set of semantics)...usually, attempts to implement this concept in the E & P business ended with utter failure for a variety of reasons..."

- 1960's "matrix organization"
- 1970's "project management"
- 1980's "total quality management or quality circles"
- 1990's "multi-disciplinary teams or re-engineering"

Warren's view of why the various attempts at the "new" organizations fail:

- "...failure of the executive level to provide the total support needed, unclear or ambiguous objectives, lack of authority and/or leadership within the team...poor communication within the team and absence of...the whole is greater than the sum of its parts".

- "Employees who have just survived several rounds of layoffs often take a jaundiced view that every subsequent change will be bad for them particularly when they see their chances for promotion evaporate".

REFERENCE