

IMPLEMENTATION OF TEAL ORGANIZATION IN THE SALES DEPARTMENT OF AN INTERNET MARKETING AGENCY – CASE STUDY

Janusz KRAŚNIAK^{1*}, Szymon GORLAK²

¹ Poznań University of Economics and Business; janusz.krasniak@ue.poznan.pl,
ORCID: 0000-0003-1864-9687

² Collegium Da Vinci, Poznań; szymon.gorlak@cdv.pl

* Correspondence author

Purpose: The article attempts to answer the following research questions: What are the main challenges associated with implementing a teal organization in the sales departments of marketing agencies? What actions were taken to shape the attitudes and values desired by the studied company, which are characteristic of the teal organization model? What benefits were achieved as a result of the actions taken?

Design/methodology/approach: Attempting to answer the research questions required a literature review and conducting research procedures. The case study method was used in the research process. The aim of the study was to describe a typical case of implementing the teal organization model in the studied company. Additionally, the research employed direct observation techniques, surveys, interviews, and organizational documentation.

Findings: The effective implementation of the teal organization model requires methodical actions that focus the efforts of organizational participants around the values and attitudes desired by the organization. Identifying the key values and attitudes of a teal organization and recognizing gaps in these values and attitudes within the sales department enabled actions that contributed to transforming the existing organization into a teal organization.

Practical implications: The analysis of actions taken by the studied company leads to the conclusion that they contributed to raising employees' awareness of the teal organization principles and embedding its values and assumptions within the organization. Considering the research findings, it can be assumed that the teal organization model has a place in modern management. This assumption is based on the desire to work in an environment that nurtures human values; the employees' contribution, their engagement, feedback culture, and trust. Barriers in implementing the teal organization model often include a lack of trust in the concept, which relies on empowering employees and relinquishing traditional control over the work process.

Originality/value: The innovation lies in highlighting the need to incorporate values and attitudes characteristic of the teal organization concept in the implementation process, identifying actions that contribute to shaping these values and attitudes, and determining how an effectively implemented teal organization can impact the development of sales departments in marketing agencies.

Keywords: teal organization, teal organization attitudes and values, teal organization implementation.

Category of the paper: Case study.

1. Introduction

In the context of managing sales departments in internet marketing agencies, the importance of modern management models and organizational forms that prioritize people and their potential is increasingly emphasized. One such model is the teal organization. The teal organizational model is based on values such as responsibility, transparency, decision-making ability, safety, and learning (Laloux, 2014, p. 13). This model differs significantly from traditional organizational models, emphasizing deeply ingrained trust in the organizational culture (Wzrorek, 2019, p. 103). Laloux highlights that organizations adopting values of mutual trust, autonomy, and collective rather than individual development — focused on individuals — achieve better results, as confirmed by his research (Laloux, 2014, pp. 272-274). Although management based on trust and collectivism had been previously analyzed (Blikle, 2019), it is Laloux's literature and research that has contributed to the popularization of the idea of self-managing teams. In response to the challenges faced by modern organizations, such as bureaucracy, an excess of meetings, or frequent internal conflicts, Laloux proposes an alternative approach to overcome these problems (Laloux, 2014, pp. 72-77). Increasingly, management teams are seeking more efficient ways to replace traditional methods that do not meet the expectations of the 21st century. In sales departments of marketing agencies, where innovation, flexibility, and a fast-paced work environment are key elements of organizational growth, the implementation of the teal organizational model can bring numerous benefits. On the other hand, sales departments in internet marketing agencies may also face significant challenges when implementing this approach. The key question, therefore, becomes how to implement the teal organizational model and what benefits can result from its implementation.

Identification and understanding of these challenges and benefits are crucial for sales department leaders in internet marketing agencies who are considering implementing this innovative approach. The aim of this article is to answer the following research questions:

- What are the main challenges associated with implementing the teal organization in sales departments of marketing agencies?
- What actions were taken to shape the desired attitudes and values characteristic of the teal organizational model in the company under study?
- What benefits were achieved as a result of these actions?

The answers to these questions will help to better understand how the teal organization can influence the development of sales departments in marketing agencies and what steps need to be taken to successfully implement this organizational model.

2. The Teal Organizational Model vs. Traditional Models – According to F. Laloux

F. Laloux, in his book *Reinventing Organizations*, presents the concept of organizational evolution, based on an in-depth analysis of research and theories related to the development of human consciousness. Drawing on these models, Laloux describes how organizations evolve from Red to Teal, where the key factor in transitioning to a higher, more innovative organizational and management model is the development of people's consciousness and the pursuit of a collective organization based on a culture of transparency.

In Red organizations, there is a lack of formal hierarchy and established roles, aside from the dominant position of a leader who imposes their authority through the use of force. The boss has direct control over the management of the entire organization and its structure. Today, some organizations still operate based on the Red model, manifesting in the privileged placement of family members in key positions (nepotism) and maintaining control over employees through fear (Laloux, pp. 30-32).

Amber organizations emerged in response to significant advances in human consciousness, combined with the development of agriculture, the creation of city-states, civilizations, and bureaucratic and religious structures. Amber organizations are characterized by development through slow but steady growth, order, and predictability, basing future actions on past experiences. They operate under the belief that there is one right way of doing things and that the world is static and does not need change to continue its development. Their main problem is resistance to change, making them struggle in the face of competition, as they aim for monopoly and market dominance (Wzrorek, pp. 41-43). In modern times, the Amber approach can be observed in government institutions, public schools, as well as in religious and military organizations (Laloux, p. 33).

Orange organizations introduce three key changes: innovation, accountability, and meritocracy. However, they still retain the pyramidal structure typical of Amber organizations, though they begin to implement certain modifications (Wzorek, p. 54). Leaders in these organizations are open to change, viewing innovation not as a threat but as an opportunity for further growth. The pursuit of modern solutions is a constant element in their operations. In organizations where the Orange management style prevails, there are well-developed sales, marketing, and R&D (Research and Development) departments. Management is based on goal achievement, a bonus system for accomplishments, and meritocracy, where

roles can be dynamically assigned depending on performance and generated profits. The Orange management style predominantly dominates in corporations (Laloux, pp. 36-37).

The Green management model is characterized by a significant shift towards empowerment, a culture of values, and inspiring through a shared purpose, while considering the interests of all stakeholders involved. Although Green organizations still maintain a hierarchical structure, most decisions are delegated to lower levels, giving frontline employees considerable freedom to make decisions without the need for supervisor approval. The introduction of decentralization and empowerment means that upper and middle managers must actually relinquish some control and share power. In the Green model, the leader plays a servant role, focusing on supporting, motivating, and developing their employees (Laloux, pp. 46-47). The Green management model can be found in small consulting firms and large enterprises that emphasize a good atmosphere, values, and a sense of community.

The Teal organizational model refers to a new, holistic form of managing organizations, where key elements include trust, employee autonomy, open feedback, and self-organizing teams (Januszko-Szakiel, 2020).

The Teal management model is distinguished by the absence of hierarchy, decentralized decision-making, and a strong emphasis on shared values and organizational goals that transcend traditional divisions within the organization. In Teal organizations, employees have full autonomy in managing their tasks and projects, fostering innovation and creativity. Moreover, this creates a work environment that promotes team member satisfaction, within a specific time and context, supporting their self-motivation in developing competencies, autonomy, and relationships with others (Ryan, Deci, 2018).

This model rejects classic control and motivational structures based on punishments and rewards, replacing them with systems of collaboration, support, and personal development. It also strives to integrate spiritual and personal values with professional life, leading to a more engaged and responsible approach to work. Rzepka (2021) argues that organizations that have successfully implemented certain elements of the Teal organization have reaped several benefits. In these organizations, a faster pace of development, improved financial situations, greater employee engagement, higher job satisfaction, and lower turnover rates have been observed.

3. Values of Teal Organizations

In Teal organizations, values are the key foundations for three main principles: self-management, wholeness, and evolutionary purpose. These values act as a compass that guides the desired attitudes and behaviors within the organization. Additionally, they support the decision-making process for both employees and the organization as a whole (Pluta, 2022).

The implementation of the Teal model requires organizations to cultivate desired values and attitudes. The values and attitudes characteristic of Teal organizations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Values and Attitudes of Teal Organizations

| Values of the Organization | Attitudes of Teal Organizations |
|----------------------------|--|
| Trust | Trust, especially at the supervisor-employee level, naturally accelerates and shapes the desired relationships within the team. Trust strengthens confidence in the decisions made by both supervisors and their subordinates. |
| Mutual Responsibility | Each member of the organization bears full responsibility for its functioning. Every participant in the organization is obligated to take the necessary actions to ensure the smooth operation of the organization, regardless of their personal interests or roles. At the same time, each individual is accountable for fulfilling their own duties. |
| Transparency | Transparency means access to complete information about the organization's operations. It facilitates insight into the organization, its successes, and its mistakes. Transparency within the organization prevents undesirable intentions and enables quicker responses in crisis situations. |
| Decision-Making | Trust, responsibility, and transparency lead to the belief that employees are capable of making sound decisions based on their knowledge, skills, and personal experiences. Additionally, it is assumed that group decision-making is more effective than decisions made by individuals, which is why decisions made through a consultative process are preferred. |
| Sense of Safety | The organization provides an emotionally and spiritually safe environment where employees can fully be themselves. Mutual respect is a priority, and openness to employees' emotions and needs is actively promoted. |
| Learning | Every difficulty becomes an opportunity for learning and gaining insights. The organization embraces failures and mistakes as a natural part of the learning process. Through a culture of feedback and mutual respect, employees support each other in developing and improving their skills. |

Source: Own elaboration based on Laloux, 2014, pp. 275-278.

The values presented, along with their associated attitudes, create a synergy that is an inseparable part of the process of implementing the Teal organizational model. Each of these elements—from trust to continuous learning—defines the essence of a Teal organization, one that prioritizes the values of the group rather than selected individuals or a rigid, top-down hierarchy (Robertson, 2016). A lack of autonomy, trust, and responsibility can lead to an absence of psychological safety (Edmondson, 2018), which can cause problems in daily communication among employees, hinder knowledge exchange, and discourage seeking support from supervisors.

In the Teal model, the organization becomes a space full of energy for its employees. This potential ceases to be the property or co-ownership of stakeholders. Managers are tasked with uncovering the creative potential of the organization to support it in fulfilling its mission, which is connected to its unique self-management, wholeness, and evolutionary purpose (Laloux, 2014, p. 221).

4. Research Methodology

The case study method will be used in the research process. The aim of the research was to describe a typical case of the implementation of the Teal organizational model in the company under study. To achieve this objective, the following were described:

- the process of identifying values and attitudes characteristic of the Teal organizational model,
- a typical case of a company implementing the Teal organizational model,
- actions taken to shape the desired attitudes and values characteristic of the Teal organizational model in the company under study,
- the benefits resulting from the implemented actions.

In the research process, the techniques of direct observation, surveys, interviews, and organizational documentation were used. The starting points for the implementation of Teal organizational values and attitudes were the values and attitudes presented in Table 1, namely: trust, responsibility, transparency, decision-making, safety, and continuous learning.

An evolutionary approach to organizational change was applied during the implementation of the Teal model, assuming that it would focus the actions of the organization's participants around the values and attitudes desired by the organization.

The company under study is an internet marketing agency that exclusively serves the Polish market. The services provided by the agency were aimed at serving clients from the SME sector. These services mainly included: website SEO, creating paid marketing campaigns, and building websites and online stores. The agency consisted of four departments: marketing, finance, HR, and sales.

The primary rationale for the decision to attempt the implementation of the Teal organization by focusing the actions of the organization's participants around the values and attitudes desired by the organization was the management's decision. This decision was made in response to emerging issues, such as unsatisfactory sales results and increasing employee turnover, especially in the sales department. The sales department was selected for the implementation of the Teal organization. Among the employees of this department, 10 people were chosen for the experimental team (representing 50% of the sales department's workforce), who would participate in the implementation of the Teal organization by taking actions that contribute to reinforcing the values and attitudes desired by the agency. The duration of the experiment was set at 6 months. The identification of the most important values and attitudes of the Teal organization, along with the identification of gaps in these values and attitudes within the sales department, allowed actions to be taken that contributed to transforming the existing organization into a Teal organization.

5. Implementation of Teal Organizational Values and Attitudes in the Organization – Research Results

In the research process, the actions undertaken in the studied company contributing to the implementation of values and attitudes characteristic of a Teal organization were characterized. These actions included:

1. Trust

An expression of trust was granting employees autonomy in carrying out their tasks. Brock defines autonomy as the degree to which a person can make significant decisions without the approval of others. Autonomy in an organization begins at the individual level, where a person has top-down permission to make decisions — from the company's management and/or its managers — and then this autonomy passes to individual members of the organization, provided that the organization and its authorities approve of individual autonomy (Brock, 2003). An employee who is granted the right to make decisions becomes more inclined to do so, and therefore engages more effectively in completing the tasks assigned (Wzorek, 2019).

In the process of implementing the Teal organization, the selected group of salespeople involved in the study was granted full autonomy in their decision-making. As a result, they no longer needed to consult with their supervisors before making changes. During the first week, an increased willingness and motivation to perform their duties was observed among the salespeople. It is important to note that these were salespeople with several years of experience in the internet marketing industry and several years of tenure in the organization. The granting of autonomy was based on mutual trust. Management trusted their subordinates in their decision-making, and the subordinates trusted their supervisors in terms of the complete removal of control during the attempt to implement the Teal organizational model. Supervisory oversight was limited to reviewing a weekly report prepared by the salespeople involved in the study. In this report, the salespeople provided detailed descriptions of their workweek, the number of tasks completed, and predictions of their expected sales results for the upcoming week and the full month of collaboration.

2. Mutual responsibility

The development of awareness in employees' decision-making within the organization is closely linked to the growth of organizational responsibility. Awareness development is a construct used to describe the changes that occur in individuals as they pass through different stages of life (Kormanik, 2002). In relation to organizational life, awareness development is the process in which individuals or teams within an organization experience changes resulting from transitioning through various stages of business development, such as structural, technological, or cultural changes. These changes affect how individuals think, make decisions, and adapt to new market and organizational conditions (Morrison, Phelps, 1999).

Employees, as well as their supervisors, under the influence of the development of organizational awareness, show a greater tendency to complete the tasks assigned to them (Galat, 2018, pp. 35-46). On the other hand, employees have a sense of responsibility and a greater ability to assess whether they can successfully complete a given task or project. As awareness develops within the organization, employees naturally become more assertive when they foresee potential failure. Additionally, collective (organizational-level) responsibility transforms into the achievement of goals. In order to foster greater responsibility among the sales department employees involved in the study, they were granted autonomy in the decision-making process across all of their duties. Responsible employees are those who can rely on their colleagues and collaborate effectively with their supervisors (Wzorek, 2019). Thus, the implementation of the Teal organizational model, where responsibility is a core value, translates into employees taking the necessary actions for the efficient operation of the organization.

3. Transparency

A transparent organization limits the occurrence of conflicts within the organization and reduces their spread (Wasiluk, 2022, pp. 647-658). As M. Wzorek (2019) rightly points out, the implementation of the Teal organizational model primarily involves ensuring its key value, which is transparency. In the analyzed company, the implementation of the value of transparency primarily took place during daily meetings among the employees involved in the study. The sales department employees participated in these meetings, which were held in 10-minute slots. Previously, such meetings did not take place in the organization. During the meetings, employees addressed the most important issues concerning their work or performance levels. The meetings featured presentations on:

- sales results and plans,
- strengths and weaknesses of collaboration with clients,
- selected techniques that helped employees achieve specific goals,
- barriers that hindered achieving the expected results.

The sales department manager did not participate in the meetings; only the salespeople involved in the study attended. The meetings were characterized by an open and informal exchange of information. Their purpose was to share experiences among employees and improve the execution of sales plans.

4. Decision-Making

In the analyzed case, the sales department employees were given full freedom in the decision-making process regarding all aspects of client collaboration. These decisions included:

- changes to the contract terms,
- modifications to the offer conditions,
- amendments to the contract conditions,
- granting a higher discount than 10% off the final contract price,

- non-standard conditions that the client considered essential for cooperation, taking into account: choice of communication channel, communication outside of working hours, and the possibility of meeting with the client outside the company's premises.

Previously, the above-mentioned decisions had to be approved by a supervisor, which made the process tedious, time-consuming, and greatly limited the flexibility of the salespeople's work. This, in turn, reduced their motivation to work and resulted in a lack of engagement in achieving the desired outcomes for the organization.

5. Sense of Safety

Teal organizations based on holarchy provide a safe environment where employees can fully realize their potential. Referring to Wilber's integral theory, holarchy is a broad morphogenetic field that creates conditions for the development and evolution of human potential (Wilber, 2020, pp. 22-25). The safety of the space is built on two key pillars: an open communication model and shared values.

In relation to the studied organization, safety was based on open and transparent communication, as well as collaboration grounded in equal and shared values. Each of the employees involved in the study could count on transparency and openness. Ideas were not criticized, and questions were not overlooked. Through the application of transparency, employees admitted that they felt more at ease, were more willing to discuss their goals, and were not afraid of unexpected criticism. Building a sense of safety based on highly developed transparency and acceptance has a direct impact on the quality of employees' work and their sense of belonging to the organization or desire to leave it (Xiaoxing, 2021). According to the employees surveyed, the shared values made the pursuit of a common goal simpler and more tangible. Each of them felt a weakening of hierarchy and an equal status among all participants in the organization. This described sense of safety not only helped them build a strong sense of value within the organization but also improved their relationships with other team members. The final result was a regular increase in achieving planned goals.

Such a foundation allows employees to be authentic and open with each other. The surveyed sales department employees received full support during the implementation of the Teal model to realize themselves in their roles while feeling secure. In this case, building a sense of safety among employees was based on collaboration between supervisors and employees. Each sales department employee felt that they were an active part of the organization, rather than merely executing commands. The sense of safety and belonging directly translated into increased sales results.

6. Learning

The effect of the regular meetings was the generation of ideas that emerged during discussions. Employees were free to implement these ideas into their daily work plans. The solutions implemented were not evaluated by their supervisor, only their outcomes. If a task proved beneficial, the supervisor would ask for details about the solution, how it was implemented, and the time it took. Likewise, if a task ended in failure, the supervisor would

request a presentation of the task and an explanation of the reasons the employee believed the solution did not succeed.

One of the implemented solutions was dividing work into time blocks. Employees divided the workday into three blocks, including:

- Team meeting and analysis of the upcoming day plan (1 hour).
- Time for making calls (3 hours).
- Time for correspondence with clients (3 hours), most often conducted via email or through another communicator (LinkedIn, WhatsApp, etc.).

Within a few weeks of implementing the described meetings, the attitude of the employees changed significantly; they became less prone to conflicts and more willing to collaborate with each other. The introduction of regular meetings and the change in employee attitudes resulted in a 20% increase in the total sales performance of the surveyed employees in the sales department over the six-month study period. After the testing phase of the Teal organization implementation process among the surveyed employees, a survey was conducted to answer the question: how do employees and their supervisors evaluate the change in the management model within their team? The conducted survey research demonstrated that the employees of the studied sales department are positively inclined toward changing the current management model to the Teal management model. This model was accepted by all employees surveyed. Among the perceived benefits of changing the organizational model, the following were highlighted:

- liberation from organizational hierarchy,
- execution of tasks according to a coherent value system,
- improvement of relationships with other team members,
- increased trust between employees and their supervisors,
- influence on employees' salary levels through greater agency in carrying out daily responsibilities in client relations.

The analysis of the actions taken by the studied company leads to the conclusion that they contributed to raising employees' awareness of the principles of the Teal organization and anchoring its values and assumptions within the organization. The authors of the article are aware that the implementation of the Teal organization is an ongoing process. It requires undertaking many actions that will contribute to shaping and reinforcing the values and attitudes characteristic of this organizational model. In addition to the actions taken by the studied company, these efforts must also include: a rational employment policy, the development of employee career paths, fostering an appropriate organizational culture, and modifying motivational systems to ensure alignment between employees' traits and expectations and the requirements of a Teal workplace.

6. Conclusion

The Teal management model can evoke extreme emotions in today's highly competitive business environment, especially in the field of internet marketing. It resembles a realm of consciousness and spirituality more than scientifically validated principles of contemporary management concepts. Its foundations may seem abstract, and its assumptions almost naïve when confronted with the hard market realities that modern companies face. Nevertheless, it is important to consider that businesses that have adopted or are in the process of implementing principles referred to as Teal are grounded in the rational belief that individuals operate most effectively in an atmosphere of transparency, freedom, trust, partnership, and collaboration (Laloux, 2014). These same companies are transforming current workplaces into environments conducive to creative realization, replacing competition with collaboration, abandoning traditional hierarchical management in favor of self-organization, and shifting from hierarchical structures to process-oriented ones based on interpersonal relationships (Wzorek, 2019). To achieve success in fulfilling the organization's mission and goals, all its members—employees, leaders, and owners—must change their perspectives on interpersonal relationships and their approach to work. They should learn to express their needs without the risk of rejection, build mutual trust, and take responsibility for both themselves and their tasks.

Considering the research conducted on the sales department described above, it can be assumed that the Teal organizational model will find its place in the realm of contemporary management. The premise for this assumption is the irresistible desire to work in an environment that nurtures human values; the contributions of employees, their engagement, a culture of feedback, and unconditional trust. These aspirations can directly stimulate innovation in the area of internet marketing and lead to relational and financial success for Teal organizations. More and more companies are adopting the Teal management model, and many organizations are introducing its elements into their operations. The biggest obstacle to implementing the Teal management model often turns out to be a lack of trust in a concept that is based on empowering employees and relinquishing traditional control over work processes and decision-making by team leaders (Tracy, 2014, pp. 62-64). Doubts may arise regarding the success of a project based on relationships, transparency in collaboration, and trust in management and colleagues. An additional challenge may be the issue of employees accepting full responsibility for the tasks they carry out. Nevertheless, the Teal model offers the possibility of greater employee engagement, significantly higher productivity, and consistent achievement of set goals. The Teal model bases its values on self-organizing teams, which is also a response to their self-organization and responsibility. However, as the conducted research indicates, employees in the field of internet marketing are more inclined—provided the conditions allow it—to take greater risks and have more autonomy than to follow established paths that hinder their professional and financial growth.

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