

Management: Perspectives on the Future

It's somewhat obvious to say that any organization must pay attention to a constantly changing environment. Excellence, however, can be attained only if the organization is able to anticipate environmental change. The more the organization can identify future environmental trends, the more it will be able to define and implement the necessary strategies to ensure its continued success. This might imply having to modify its structure, procedures, policies and culture.

Many authors have examined ways to manage change and, specifically, ways to control resistance to change. What is less clear are the forecasts and descriptions of the kind of environment organizations will work in, over the next few years.

*The future, uncertain by definition, has been and will continue to be the subject of several management studies and analyses. In this issue, FORUM presents a summary of the main conclusions drawn by four studies on the social trends confronting senior management in the near future. 1. Trends and Uncertainties In *Le décor international des années 90*, a study published by the Centre de Prospective et d'Évaluation de la France (April 1987), Rémy Barré and Michel Godet have forecasted the following trends and uncertainties for the years 1990-2000:*

A **near certainty**:

- players in crisis having to deal with evolving systems.

Eleven **probable trends**:

- an increase in demographic imbalances;
- serious threats to the physical environment;
- a deregulated international arena;
- slow, constant growth, but unevenly distributed;
- new energy crisis;
- technological changes affecting processes and products;
- an increase in interstate exchanges and greater interdependence;
- heavy international competition and specialization;
- the upset of the "protectionist" state;
- a change in people's aspirations;
- an employment crisis in response to the changes.

Three **major uncertainties**:

- the speed at which new technology spreads;
- work and employment changes;
- evolution of lifestyles and social organization.

2. The Challenges of Modernity Yves Cannac, President of the Commission d'Études Générales de l'Organisation Scientifique, has identified six major challenges that society will have to face as a result of the economic crisis:

- the **scarceness** challenge - how to do more with less;
- the **competition** challenge - public administration monopolies will be broken down or threatened;
- the **technology** challenge - the implementation of new technology will demand a re-evaluation of current structures and procedures;
- the **complexity** challenge - automation will free people from repetitive tasks, allowing them to concentrate on the more complex areas;
- the **consumer** challenge - consumers will be increasingly demanding;
- the **human resources** challenge - better-educated and trained staff will aspire to self-fulfilment and personal gratification through work.

3. Work Trends Yves Lasfargue, President of La mission prospective sur le travail en 2005, has identified seven trends that will affect work:

- **abstraction** - with the advent of the electronic workplace, people will no longer "see" the object on which they are working, but will work on its image on screen;
- **unstructuring of time and place of work** - an integrated lifestyle, that is, working both at home and at the office;
- **development of an evaluation process** - the more sophisticated the systems, the more they will be subject to major breakdowns demanding immediate attention;
- **scarcity of work** - employment will tend to be a privilege; steps will have to be taken to guarantee universal access to work;
- **flexibility and mobility** - an uncertain environment and developing technology will make flexibility and mobility prerequisites;
- **reduction and individualization of work periods** - three demands: structural flexibility to ensure better use of equipment, job sharing to ensure universal access to work, and guaranteed leisure time for all workers;
- **a team, a system** - team spirit will be the norm.

4. Keys to the Third Wave According to Alvin Toffler, author of The Third Wave, eight keys will give us access to the post-industrial era:

- **demassification of the media** - the media will become interactive and will broadcast individualized images;
- **despecialization** - resourcefulness and common sense will replace routine responses;
- **desynchronization** - flexhours and flexible schedules will be necessary;
- **destandardization** - diversity of opinions, behaviours, etc., will become acceptable;
- **deconcentration** - we will attempt to disperse populations and deconcentrate the elements that make up our lives;

- **demaximization** - a greater consciousness of the appropriate scale: advocates of Bigger Is Better will not carry sway;
- **decentralization** - decentralized decision making will be preferred;
- **demarketization and prosumerism** - an economic sector based on do-it-yourself production will re-emerge.

Conclusion The Correctional Service of Canada first must meet the challenge of validating the trends identified by the authors, and then determine how such trends could impact on its priorities and strategies.

Yves CANNAC and CÉGOS, La bataille de la compétence. Éditions Hommes et Techniques, 1985.

Yves LASFARGUE, Technologies, technofolies? Comment réussir les changements technologiques. Les Éditions d'Organisation, 1988.

Alvin TOFFLER, The Third Wave. Bantam Books, 1981.