

**Economist.com**

Search  Economist.com   
 Requires subscription

Log in: e-mail  Password    
 Remember me

**Get 4 FREE trial issues >>**[Subscribe](#)[Student offers](#)

Thursday July 2nd 2009

[Site feedback](#)[Home](#)[This week's print edition](#)[Daily news analysis](#)[Opinion](#)[All opinion](#)[Leaders](#)[Letters to the Editor](#)[Blogs](#)[Columns](#)[KAL's cartoons](#)[Correspondent's diary](#)[Economist debates](#)[World politics](#)[All world politics](#)[Politics this week](#)[International](#)[United States](#)[The Americas](#)[Asia](#)[Middle East and Africa](#)[Europe](#)[Britain](#)[Special reports](#)[Business and finance](#)[About our new page](#)[All business and finance](#)[Business this week](#)[Economics focus](#)[Management](#)[Business education](#)[Economics A-Z](#)[Markets and data](#)[All markets and data](#)[Daily chart](#)[Weekly indicators](#)[World markets](#)[Currencies](#)[Rankings](#)**The Economist****Great minds  
like a think****Get 4  
Free Trial  
Issues**

## Management

### Guru

# Elliott Jaques

May 1st 2009

From Economist.com

In "The Strategy Paradox", a book published in 2007 and written by Michael Raynor, a consultant and co-author with Clayton Christensen of "The Innovator's Solution", the author says: "For my money, the most undeservedly ignored management researcher of the modern era is Elliott Jaques (pronounced 'Jacks'). The Canadian-born psychologist's work on the nature of hierarchy spans half a century and is based on extensive field data on how people behave at work and how they feel about their roles."

Jaques (1917-2003) decided that jobs could be defined in terms of their time horizon. For example, a director of marketing might be worried about marketing campaigns for next year, while a salesman on the road is worried about reaching his targets for the week. Jaques also believed that people had a "boss" and a "real boss". The boss was the person to whom they were nominally responsible, while the real boss was the person to whom they turned to get decisions crucial to the continuation of their work.

The sales manager in charge of a salesforce would not have a longer time horizon than the people in his salesforce. So when a salesman wanted a decision on something affecting his ability to deliver to his clients, he would go over the head of the sales manager for that decision. Jaques called this "level skipping", and identified it as a dangerous pathology in any hierarchy.

He then looked at the time horizons of people, their bosses and their real bosses, and he found that people with a time horizon of less than three months treated those with a horizon of 3-12 months as their real bosses, and so on up the scale. He identified seven different time horizons, from three months to 20 years, and argued

[Comment \(4\)](#)[Recommend \(45\)](#)[E-mail](#)[Share](#)[Print](#)[Reprints & permissions](#)

## Related Items

### From *The Economist*

Management guru: Elton Mayo

Apr 24th 2009

Management guru: Ikujiro

Nonaka

Apr 16th 2009

Management guru: Alfred

Chandler

Apr 9th 2009

Corporate strategy 

Jul 12th 2007

### More articles about...

Corporate leadership

Advertisement

Big Mac index
Science and technology About our new page All science and technology Technology Quarterly Technology Monitor
Books and arts All books and arts Style guide
People People Obituaries
Diversions
Audio and video Audio and video library Audio edition
The World In The World in 2009 The World in 2008 The World in 2007 The World in 2006 The World in 2005 The World in 2004
Research tools All research tools Articles by subject Backgrounders Economics A-Z Special reports Style guide
Country briefings All country briefings China India Brazil United States Russia
My account home
Newsletters and alerts Manage my newsletters Manage my e-mail alerts Manage my RSS feeds Manage special-offer alerts More »

that organisations, no matter how complex, should have seven levels of hierarchy, each corresponding to a different managerial time horizon. Jaques's theory has come to be known as RO (requisite organisation).

Much of Jaques's work was carried out in Britain. Although a graduate of the University of Toronto and the Johns Hopkins Medical School in Baltimore, he was a founding member of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in London, and much of the research on which his theories were based was carried out at Glacier Metal between 1948 and 1965. His first important book, "The Changing Culture of a Factory", was about his research at Glacier, and he subsequently wrote "The Glacier Project Papers" (1965) with the company's managing director, Wilfred Brown.

Raynor and others have speculated as to why Jaques has not been more widely recognised for his achievement. One suggestion is that neither he nor Brown felt the work of management academics had scientific validity. So they never quoted them, and the management academics returned the compliment. "The net impact has been the isolation of this theory from the main dialogue on management and organisations," speculates one commentator.

#### Notable publications

"The Changing Culture of a Factory", Tavistock Publishing, 1951

"Measurement of Responsibility: A Study of Work, Payment and Individual Capacity", Tavistock Publishing, 1956; reprint, Heinemann Educational, 1972

"A General Theory of Bureaucracy", Heinemann, 1976; reprint, Gower, 1986

"In Praise of Hierarchy", *Harvard Business Review*, 1990



It is never possible to tell from an organisation chart just who is manager of whom; in effect, it is a wise manager (or subordinate) who knows his own subordinate (or manager).

Economist.com

#### Classifieds

ASI - Managing Director  
ASI GmbH

Economists (2 posts),  
from 29,000 to a target  
rate of 37,000

Assistant Director  
Victorian Govt

Senior Project Manager  
UNOPS

Various positions  
NZAID

Economic Growth Team  
Leader 612-S-00-09-  
00024-00

Executive Positions  
Available  
Masada Resource Group

Post your own ad ▶

---

**Print subscriptions**

Subscribe to *The Economist*  
 Renew my subscription  
 Change my print subscription delivery, billing or e-mail address  
 Pay my bill  
 Activate premium online access  
 Report a missing copy  
 Suspend my subscription  
 More »

---

**Digital subscriptions**

Subscribe to Economist.com  
 Manage my subscription  
 Mobile edition  
 Audio edition  
 Download screensaver  
 More »

---

**Classifieds and jobs**

The Economist Group  
 About the Economist Group  
 Economist Intelligence Unit  
 Economist Conferences  
 Intelligent Life  
 CFO  
 Roll Call  
 European Voice  
 EuroFinance  
 Reprints and permissions

---

**EIU online store**

---

**Economist shop**

Advertisement

**More management gurus**

This profile is adapted from "The Economist Guide to Management Ideas and Gurus", by Tim Hindle (Profile Books; 322 pages; £20). The guide has the low-down on more than 50 of the world's most influential management thinkers past and present and over 100 of the most influential business-management ideas. To buy this book, please visit our [online shop](#).

[Back to top ^^](#)

**Readers' comments**

Readers have commented on this article (the window for new comments is now closed).

[View all comments \(4\)](#)



Want more? Subscribe to [The Economist](#) and get the week's most relevant news and analysis.

Advertisement

