FROM THE FIELD

Tackling Fragmentation and Building Unity in an International Nongovernmental Organization

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Growth and decentralization have brought increasing conflict to many international NGOs, particularly between field and headquarters. This case study, written by the executive responsible for the activities portrayed, examines an attempt to define a clear new role for a headquarters department in a large, decentralized INGO focused on building unity of purpose. By ensuring that decentralized units of the organization took the leadership in related corporate initiatives whenever possible, with headquarters coordinating an inclusive process rather than implementing, unity was increased and tension reduced. Senior managers at the headquarters of growing, decentralized INGOs should find this case study relevant as they strive to maintain unity in the face of institutional fragmentation.

When I arrived at the international headquarters of PLAN International to take up the new position of director, planning and program support, in the fall of 1993, decentralization of field operations was nearly complete, and PLAN was growing rapidly.

PLAN was not unique. As growth accelerated, geographical spread grew, competition for funds increased, and public scrutiny...
sharpened in the 1980s and 1990s, INGOs began to decentralize their management structures. Though this was undoubtedly an appropriate move, many large INGOs found it difficult to clarify and differentiate the roles and responsibilities of decentralized management and headquarters staff. This seemingly simple task has been accompanied by increasing levels of conflict between field and headquarters staff, falling morale, and proposals to recentralize operational management.

Why has it been so difficult to clarify roles and responsibilities, and why so much conflict and fuss? Suzuki (1998) indicates that when an NGO decentralizes, it not only increases its diversity but also typically undermines co-ordination between offices, fragmenting the NGO into multiple small organizations. . . . Offices may lose a sense of sharing the mission of the organization as a whole and seek to address only locally identified issues, even if working on those issues does not make sense from the point of view of the entire organization. . . . When an NGO faces fragmentation, its leadership tends strongly to seek organizational order and standards to maintain organizational integration. The objective of maintaining integration tempts HQ to reinstate a hierarchical order, with HQ at the top to regulate the organization. But this temptation can easily lead to another pitfall: the negation of diversity. The difference between fragmentation and diversity is subtle but vital. While fragmentation implies disorganization, diversity does not. Rather, the latter emphasizes the capacity to have different parts that can still be integrated. . . . This analysis implicitly raises the issue of how to balance decentralization and hierarchy in order to maintain the organization’s ability to coordinate. Unfortunately there are no simple answers [pp. 72–74].

Hudson (1995) mentions the tension between centralizing and decentralizing forces in nonprofit organizations, concluding that “it is always tempting for senior managers to involve themselves in the detail of the services to the detriment of their primary task of setting objectives and boundaries and delegating practical responsibilities to their unit managers” (p. 199). (See also Dibella, 1992; Edwards, 1994; and Fowler, 1992.)

This conflict has deep roots, related to the value-driven nature of nongovernmental organizations. Because INGOs strive to create a better, fairer, more just, and more sustainable world, an emotional association is formed between the self-image of staff members and their day-to-day work. But decentralization distances headquarters staff from achievement of the organization’s mission, reducing the feeling of contribution to the cause that originally brought these
people to their work—to pursue alleviation of poverty, protection of the environment, rescue of the vulnerable, or the fight for justice.

Second, the new role of headquarters, after decentralization, remains unclear. There are few clear objective indicators of success for INGOs: the work is too ambiguous. This has made it difficult for headquarters to engage in many of the traditional activities of corporate headquarters in the private sector, such as measuring effectiveness, compiling results, and so on. And, to field staff, attempts by headquarters to measure impact, design global systems, or enhance control seem irrelevant and burdensome. It is easy to see why many headquarters staff tend to view decentralization so negatively.

In this context, my department began to consider how best to build organizational unity of purpose and reduce conflict, while retaining the advantages of PLAN’s strongly decentralized structure. The three major initiatives that emerged, and lessons learned along the way, are the subject of this case study.

**Growth, Decentralization, Conflict**

PLAN International is a large child-focused development INGO operating in forty-three countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, working at the grassroots level, with communities and individuals, to build a better future for children. Child sponsorship is the basic foundation of the organization (PLAN International, 1999).

PLAN began to grow quickly in the late 1980s (see Figure 1), in financial terms as well as geographically and programmatically. It rapidly became clear that headquarters could no longer oversee operations across what had become a very wide span of control; as a result, the organization took steps to decentralize its management structure.

By 1991, PLAN had a strongly decentralized management structure, with six field-based regional directors responsible for operations (two each in Asia, Africa, and Latin America). Five

![Figure 1. Total Field Expenditure](image-url)
An us-versus-them atmosphere developed as regional staff gained confidence and began to seek the authority they considered necessary to deliver programs; headquarters viewed this same trend as creating “islands” endangering organizational unity.

Headquarters department directors were charged with providing support services and measurement, and an international executive director (IED), reporting to the chairman of PLAN’s international board, was the chief executive of the organization. These twelve positions formed the International Management Team (IMT).

In the midst of this decentralization, and increasingly from 1991 to 1993, internal conflict grew. One continuing element during these difficult years was the struggle between headquarters staff and regional teams. How did this conflict emerge?

Before 1988, headquarters staff directly managed and supported field operations. An atmosphere of commitment to PLAN’s mission was tangible at headquarters; it was a busy, heady place to work. Many field visits took headquarters staff to the action, to project sites, to see the effect of the policies they developed, the results of the support they gave.

During the initial months of regionalization, this feeling continued, as headquarters departments viewed regional staff simply as members of their own departments, located in regions. Thus, the reach of headquarters was extended by decentralization. This initial period was in fact the decentralization of headquarters departments, rather than the regionalization of PLAN’s operational structure.

An us-versus-them atmosphere developed as regional staff gained confidence and began to seek the authority they considered necessary to deliver programs. Headquarters viewed this same trend as creating “islands” endangering organizational unity. Regionalization distanced headquarters staff from their ability to make a contribution to a better world for deprived children, without any clear alternative role. Headquarters drifted; conflict grew.

A new IED was named in 1993, and one of his first acts was to eliminate a layer of management, while assuming direct supervision of the six regional directors. Next, a review of the role and performance of PLAN’s international headquarters led the new IED to merge three existing departments, creating the Department of Planning and Program Support (PPS). The role of headquarters was to be transformed, focusing on providing services to the regions and international board, and measurement.

I joined as director of PPS in September 1993, leaving my position as regional director for South America. My first two months as director of PPS were spent in part reflecting about the state of the organization, and considering the causes of the conflict and fragmentation I could see growing in PLAN. By the end of 1993, PPS had articulated its priorities, working within board-defined parameters to clarify PLAN’s purpose (what the organization would achieve) by defining organizational goals, identify where PLAN would work in the coming years, and build consensus on how PLAN would work by identifying a new common operational structure.
Just as important were the methods to be used in carrying out these projects. A minimum of headquarters staff would be employed, seeking to build support networks and work teams with field staff. Field staff would lead these networks and teams, wherever possible.

Thus the purpose of PPS, a headquarters department, was clearly articulated as building unity of purpose by supporting field units, working in a manner in which conflict between headquarters and field staff would be eliminated, or at least reduced. The IMT endorsed these priorities and methods, and work began.

**PLAN’s Program Goals**

As Hudson (1995) indicates, “Third sector organizations, in particular, have fuzzy boundaries and countless opportunities to drift away from their primary purpose.” This drift was clearly occurring in PLAN. By 1994, PLAN’s organizational goals had multiplied to include three formal program goals (education, health, and economy); six program policies (HIV/AIDS, special-need children, family planning, women in development, the environment, and urban-rural work); a global program document, with nine policy themes and strategies; and an official *Program Manual*, including additional related statements.

These goals and policies were developed over a number of years and became outdated, incomplete, and inconsistent in form. They were a mixture of strategies, targets, and indicators, predating the development of PLAN’s vision, mission, and strategic directions, the World Summit for Children, the World Conference on Education for All, and other important development milestones. PLAN’s program goals and policies were not relevant to field practice, and they did not enhance unity of purpose or accountability. Importantly, these statements were not child-centered.

For these reasons, it was felt worthwhile to review PLAN’s program goals and policies, in a manner consistent with the new role for PPS. IMT endorsement and board authorization were obtained for this review.

As a first step, a conference was organized using a “future search” methodology (Weisbord and Janoff, 1995). Participants at this week-long conference included senior staff from each region, from headquarters, from PLAN’s partner fundraising organizations, and from other international NGOs.

A complete set of “domains” of child development were articulated as representing organizational goals, and another full set of “principles” guiding PLAN’s work in each domain were also proposed. These domains and principles were designed to replace the patchwork of existing goals and policies. Exhibit 1 shows the basic framework that emerged.
Output from the conference served to mobilize the organization. Several decentralized units, coordinated by PPS, managed the ensuing process of reflection and discussion. For example, the region of Central America and the Caribbean led development of the learning domain, and an existing organizationwide network led in developing the principle of gender equity.

In several cases, PPS handled principle development directly, in the absence of a champion inside a decentralized organizational unit. But to a great extent, decentralized units handled the development of these organizational policies, working with other units and consultants and reporting results out to the wider organization for discussion. PPS set up guidelines for domain and principle development; organized project timelines; and coordinated and monitored the overall process of review, discussion, and consensus building. PPS also compiled draft documents into complete versions for review by the IED and IMT at critical stages in the development process. Purposely, the role of PPS was quite limited.

This process worked well. Ownership of the process and the result was strong across PLAN. The role of PPS was clear and widely accepted; as a result a businesslike and harmonious atmosphere characterized the development of PLAN goals. Headquarters staff felt that their role, though somewhat indirect, was still valuable. At the same time, ownership of the process was strong in field units, as they directly managed policy development for the wider organization. However, two difficulties were encountered. In several cases, decentralized organizational units found that they were simply not able to dedicate sufficient time to developing a domain. In these cases, PPS stepped in to support the process. Also, at one point in the development process, an interim draft of the complete document took a direction that was unacceptable to the IMT in some particular
aspects. But even this was constructive, since it defined the outer limit of options acceptable to management.

The international board of directors endorsed the final draft, and the resulting document has had a healthy effect on PLAN, building the unity of purpose that was its broader aim. The domains and principles have been the basis for much subsequent organizational development.

By the end of 1999, country strategic plans, based on the framework of the domains and principles, were being finalized for all program countries. Guidelines for field implementation of the domains and principles had been developed and issued, and PLAN’s board of directors had approved a further refinement of the domains, termed the “core program,” identifying particular components of the domains as mandatory. A new corporate planning, monitoring, and evaluation system was being rolled out, systematically supporting programmatic cycles centered on the domains and principles. This, together with implementation of a new financial system in which all activities are framed in terms of PLAN’s domains, allows measurement of organizational progress related to the program directions.

Structure

In 1993, PLAN’s field structures were diverging. Notwithstanding superficial consistency, regional offices were gradually evolving, some moving toward larger structures, others devolving responsibilities downward. Of equal concern was the situation below the regional-office level. Prior to regionalization, structures were clear and consistent: a field director managed each field office, reporting directly to headquarters. Most countries had several local field offices; no country-level structure existed. But as a result of decentralization, these structures were diverging. In 1992, for example, the region of Central America and the Caribbean proposed eliminating all field director positions, releasing a large number of expatriate staff to be absorbed by other regions. In West Africa, a country-level field-director position evolved and local management was put into place, sometimes using a team-based approach.

This structural divergence was seen as a problem by the IMT, and in 1994 PPS was asked to begin a study to define a common structure toward which all regions would evolve.

Mintzberg (1993) advises that “the elements of structure should be selected to achieve an internal consistency or harmony, as well as a basic consistency with the organization’s situation” (pp. 2–3). Consistent with this aim, and mindful of PPS’s commitment to build organizational unity while recognizing PLAN’s decentralized nature, a bottom-up, participatory process was designed.

During a preliminary stage, internal documents covering PLAN’s entire experience with decentralization, relevant academic and
professional literature, and practice in other (INGO and private sector) organizations were reviewed. Concurrently, each region named a team to carry out a study of current structures and make recommendations. An extensive organizational design survey was circulated, collecting information about individual jobs, office workflow, and work-related communication from 232 managerial and professional staff in regional offices, country offices, and field offices in all PLAN regions.

As a result, a set of general design options were presented to the IMT. Results of the ensuing discussion are shown in Exhibit 2. Subsequently, the international board of directors endorsed the proposal that “countries . . . become the prime operational units in PLAN International.”

**Exhibit 2. Agreements Made Regarding Regional Structure**

The International Management Team (IMT) recognized that introducing country structures will lead to adaptation and change in the current regional offices, and that country operations are being implemented in diverse forms across the organization. After reviewing current structures in each region and discussing the results of a study commissioned to propose a common field structure for the future, the IMT reached consensus on the following:

1. Countries will be the prime operational units in PLAN International.
2. Over the next six months, standard countrywide functions will be defined, and a uniform job profile for country directors will be produced. This will be carried out by the director of human resources together with selected IMT members and country directors.
3. Using existing methodologies, an analysis of skills required, and a review of training needs of the current incumbents, training programs for country directors will be designed. This will be coordinated by the director of human resources together with selected regional and country staff, over the next twelve months.
4. After fully defining standard country roles, regional offices will evolve into networks. By moving some functions to countries, regional offices will shrink, becoming more focused on networking and learning. If new functions or additional human resources are needed for multicountry functions, the bias will be to locate them in countries, whenever feasible and cost-effective.
5. Countries will be given latitude to structure program operations. However, best practices will be defined and implemented for nonprogram functions, unless valid reasons for variation exist. This will allow the organization to focus more on program matters in the future.
To this point, the role of PPS and of the field was clear. PPS managed the process of organizational reflection, but regions took the lead in analysis and proposal development. The process continued, as agreements recorded in Exhibit 2 set the stage for a full-scale, participatory design of PLAN’s field structures, led by PPS. From December 1995 through October 1996, a core, common country structure for PLAN was developed in a bottom-up, participatory manner. Modeled after the process taken to develop PLAN’s domains and principles, a workshop was convened to create a foundation for organizational discussion. This workshop, held in February 1996, again included participants from much of PLAN, at various levels.

The workshop first produced a purpose statement for the country office. Key activities carried out by the country office and the front line were articulated, and grouped into six “functions.” Most important, a recommended core, common structure for PLAN country offices was developed, with four core positions that would be included in each country office; job profiles and performance standards were defined at the workshop for these core positions. However, it was made explicit that other positions and structures would be designed and implemented in program countries, depending on local needs.

Output from this workshop was shared with PLAN’s IMT, and then with partner fundraising organizations, in another two-day workshop. Nearly all country directors and regional directors, along with regional office staff, participated in full-day review sessions, during which they examined draft structural recommendations and made suggestions for improvement.

Throughout this process, a series of updates were issued to all staff, detailing progress, reporting interim results, and building consensus. Much of the feedback received was incorporated.

The country office was to be the key component of this new structural architecture. Positioned as the fulcrum between the micro and macro levels in PLAN, the country office would handle program implementation at the grassroots level, while also becoming the key point of contact within the broader PLAN organization outside the country. The country office would interpret and localize policy and implement operational systems and procedures in the country context. As part of this balance of micro and macro, it was deemed necessary to include some measure of standard structure. This core would tie the organization together; the remaining structure could be adjusted to suit local realities.

In late 1996, after preparing job profiles and performance standards for each of the four core positions and finalizing detailed guidelines for filling these positions in each country, final proposals were approved. In addition, a clear planning mechanism for the new country structure was developed, leading to production of country strategic plans. It was agreed that the roles of regional offices and headquarters would be reviewed in light of the new country structures, to ensure that duplication and structural conflict were
minimized. It was further agreed to develop training packages for each core position.

This process worked well, but perhaps not quite as well as the development of PLAN’s domains and principles. Generally speaking, field involvement and ownership of the process of restructuring was high. But it was difficult to assign discrete portions of the project to decentralized operational units, particularly in the second phase of the project, so ownership of the process was not shared quite so widely. This was due at least in part to the highly sensitive nature of the project, which was reshaping core senior positions (and livelihoods) in PLAN. As a result, the role of PPS became somewhat more directive and the atmosphere slightly less harmonious.

Perhaps the level of process ownership was not quite as high as that achieved in developing PLAN’s domains and principles, but the resulting structure has been accepted and implemented.

As a result, by the end of 1999, all program countries had implemented the core common structure, and the core positioned networks were operational in much of the PLAN world. However, comprehensive training and development packages had not yet been developed for the core positions; the review of regional and headquarters functions was under discussion.

A Rational Growth Plan

Before 1995, PLAN’s geographical expansion was guided pragmatically and opportunistically. Incremental resources were directed toward countries where the growth could be handled, where the organizational capacity to grow already existed. In fact, PLAN was unintentionally evolving toward less needy countries.

As Suzuki (1998) notes, “NGOs need to balance two more pressures: the pressure to remain flexible, adaptable, and responsive to diverse local problems, and the pressure to remain consistent so that the organization can steadily and continuously seek to attain its objectives” (p. 212). For an organization seeking better futures for deprived children, families, and communities, the drift toward less-needy countries was unsettling and inappropriate. Especially during a decade of exceptional growth, a mechanism to enable PLAN managers to balance responsiveness with a focus on strategic objectives was needed.

PLAN’s situation was not unique. Geographic expansion experienced by INGOs is often strongly influenced by where growth can be managed. Internal politics, pressure from governmental development agencies and other external funders, attention from the mass media, theories currently in vogue among development professionals, the ability of an individual manager to speak persuasively in public, or simply the dynamics of a particular meeting often drive these decisions. As a consequence, organizational strategy—particularly concerning target populations—can become less of a focus. Day-to-day pressures dominate the attention of managers.
Such pressures are not necessarily harmful. But without objective analytical tools that can demonstrate that resource allocation decisions are consistent (or inconsistent) with institutional strategy, organizational drift of the sort that PLAN was experiencing can result.

To help correct this evolution toward less-needy populations, the IMT agreed that a methodology be developed to direct PLAN’s geographical expansion. (For a more detailed exposition of the development of PLAN’s growth plan, see McPeak, 1999.)

A wide-ranging in-house analysis of global poverty trends, funding prospects, and organizational capacities was carried out in 1994. The culmination of this strategic review was the November 1994 approval by PLAN’s international board of nine “Strategic Directions for Growth,” covering a range of issues such as program effectiveness, priorities for institutional strengthening, the fundraising approach, and a policy for human resource development.

One of these strategic directions was particularly relevant in developing a methodology to guide resource allocation: “where to work,” according to which “PLAN should gradually evolve towards needier countries, and towards poorer regions within new and existing program countries. The essence of PLAN’s intervention is that useful and sustainable development is achieved, so that the quality of life of deprived children in developing countries is improved. The potential for this impact should be verified before entry into new program countries” (emphases added).

From strategic direction number one, a series of indicators defining where the organization could and should grow were derived. This yielded a rigorous, quantitative result, ranking countries for growth. The quantitative analysis was reviewed by a panel of PLAN staff; a member of PLAN’s international board; and an invited guest from another large, international NGO. A complementary set of qualitative indicators, relating to fundraising, NGO saturation, and so on, were also considered.

These discussions produced a proposal for resource allocation—a growth plan—that was then reviewed by the IMT. Thus the objective analysis was complemented by extensive discussion based on real, on-the-ground experience. For example, although analytical work highlighted Niger as the highest priority in 1995, political instability there meant that PLAN did not actively consider working in that nation until much later. Some PLAN regional directors felt strongly that PLAN should continue to direct resources to countries such as Colombia and Sri Lanka, but analytical results were helpful in convincing managers that these countries, though undeniably poor, had less child-related need than others and should thus be lower priorities for the organization. The final growth plan was therefore created by combining the priorities and recommendations emerging from rigorous analysis with the informed experience of field-based staff.
PLAN’s senior management team frequently reviewed resource allocation requests, both when annual budgets were formally approved and when adjustments were made during the year. Since discussions began with a review of the analytical results from the growth plan, the entire process became less confrontational, more objective, less emotional, and more productive. The competing views of field managers were tempered with objective and rigorous analysis. Rarely, when consensus on a particular resource-allocation decision was not reached, the international executive director made the final decision. In most, but not all, cases, he endorsed the course of action recommended by the growth plan. Where his decision varied from the plan, it was often to strike a geographical balance across PLAN’s regions. These more-objective discussions have had a significant effect on resource allocation decisions.

However, the process used to develop the growth plan was far from perfect. PPS managed the project. Feedback was sought and endorsement gained at several points along the way, but unlike the development of PLAN’s organizational goals and the design of PLAN’s country structure, real involvement from the field was minimal. The emotional commitment of members of my department to the redirection of PLAN’s growth toward particular areas or issues was strong; a vocal “Africa lobby” took vigorous part in the discussions as well as behind the scenes. The process did not begin with an organizationwide workshop, and communication of results to the wider organization was sporadic. Personally, I was enamored of the elegant methodology that emerged. As a result, even though the IED was pleased with the end result, ownership of the growth plan was less evident outside headquarters, and resistance to the resulting policy was encountered.

Why did development of the growth plan stray from the lessons learned in successfully developing the program directions and country structure? Unlike the other two projects, the growth plan was by nature a win-lose proposition. Quantitative growth of the organization was redirected from one area to another, with some regions gaining resources and others losing. This led to a high level of anxiety on the part of field staff. Together with the emotional attachment of PPS staff and myself to the growth plan model, the trap was set and we fell into the old top-down behaviors that had plagued PLAN’s postregionalization headquarters.

Still, the growth plan has served a useful purpose. By the end of 1999, another review of PLAN’s growth strategy concluded with recommendations forwarded to senior management. This review was based on the work I have already described; it further refined the model built in 1995. Although reaching similar conclusions, the study focused on internal systems needed to ensure effective short-term management of growth supply and demand, while updating the long-term, strategic aspect of the original plan.
Lessons Learned and Conclusions

PPS's efforts were more successful when the emotional nature of the staff’s attachment to their work, and the ambiguous nature of NGO work, were taken into account. For example, PLAN's new program goals, widely recognized as having strengthened the organization, were developed by various decentralized organizational units, working in teams with outside experts and PPS staff, who were responsible for overall management of the process. In this manner, headquarters staff felt that they were directly contributing to development of PLAN's goals, yet at the same time decentralized units were in charge of the bulk of policy development. This worked well, and the result is still serving to enhance organizational unity of purpose.

Development of PLAN's country structure, although managed by PPS, was characterized by a tremendous amount of communication as well as extensive and real input and participation. In the first phase, regions directly managed the process; in the second phase, field staff actually designed the final country structure in great detail. So even if project implementation was not so consistent with the ideal roles of PPS (as facilitator) and the field (as operational units), the process worked well and the resulting structure has stood the test of time, unifying PLAN to a great extent. In both of these projects, owing to the approach taken, the level of conflict was lower than might have been encountered otherwise in such sensitive and fundamental activities.

Still, the growth plan was managed directly by PPS staff and did not gain as much acceptance across the organization. It was a top-down initiative, for which input was requested. The field was passive. Perhaps this was because the growth plan was the only one of the three PPS initiatives that was zero-sum. In this atmosphere, perhaps it was not realistic to expect various decentralized units to take leadership roles in developing the growth plan, because in a sense they were competing against each other. Thus while the project produced an effective, workable growth plan, resistance to implementation was strong, and as a result difficult questions of growth still face PLAN.

In this light, a few suggestions are offered to headquarters managers seeking to build unity in decentralized INGOs.

First, recognize that decentralization is a fact; design your organizational initiatives taking this into account. Don't fall into the trap of managing major initiatives at headquarters, no matter how expedient this may seem at the time, because the fundamental effect of centralizing such initiatives is to obstruct organizational unity and foster conflict.

Therefore, whenever possible, build decentralized operational units into the design process, as owners and managers of discrete
aspects of the project. At times, this may seem to lead to inefficiency and delay. But the PPS experience shows that these effects are a small price to pay for the enhanced unity and reduced conflict that result.

Second, wherever possible and practical, focus headquarters on overall coordination of project implementation, with as low a profile as possible. Occasionally, it is necessary to directly manage components of the projects, where the decentralized unit cannot manage. Do this when necessary; be pragmatic. But corporate initiatives need not be managed wholly, or even partially, from headquarters.

Third, clarify for headquarters staff that their role is no longer implementation, but instead focused on building unity of purpose. This is a unique, valuable service to the cause that brought them to NGO work. Headquarters staff who want more direct, hands-on work with the real mission of their organizations should move to field positions.

Finally, make extra effort to cultivate acceptance when addressing zero-sum issues, in which some parts of the organization gain while others lose. In these cases, managers should expect a somewhat higher level of conflict.

In the end, tension between headquarters and decentralized management is unavoidable. It is a consequence of the nature of INGO work, exacerbated by decentralization. Emotional attachment of headquarters staff to their work, and their ambiguous role, combine to produce hostility toward decentralization.

How can the tension be reduced and managed? Headquarters offices should take full advantage of decentralization to carve out a new, preferably low-profile role: building organizational unity and accountability, and balancing the divisive centrifugal forces caused by decentralization with centripetal forces designed to foster unity of purpose. This is a valuable, necessary role. But some degree of conflict with decentralized management goes with the territory; it can be managed and minimized but probably never eliminated. Perhaps the approach taken by PPS helped to minimize tensions for a time.

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References


