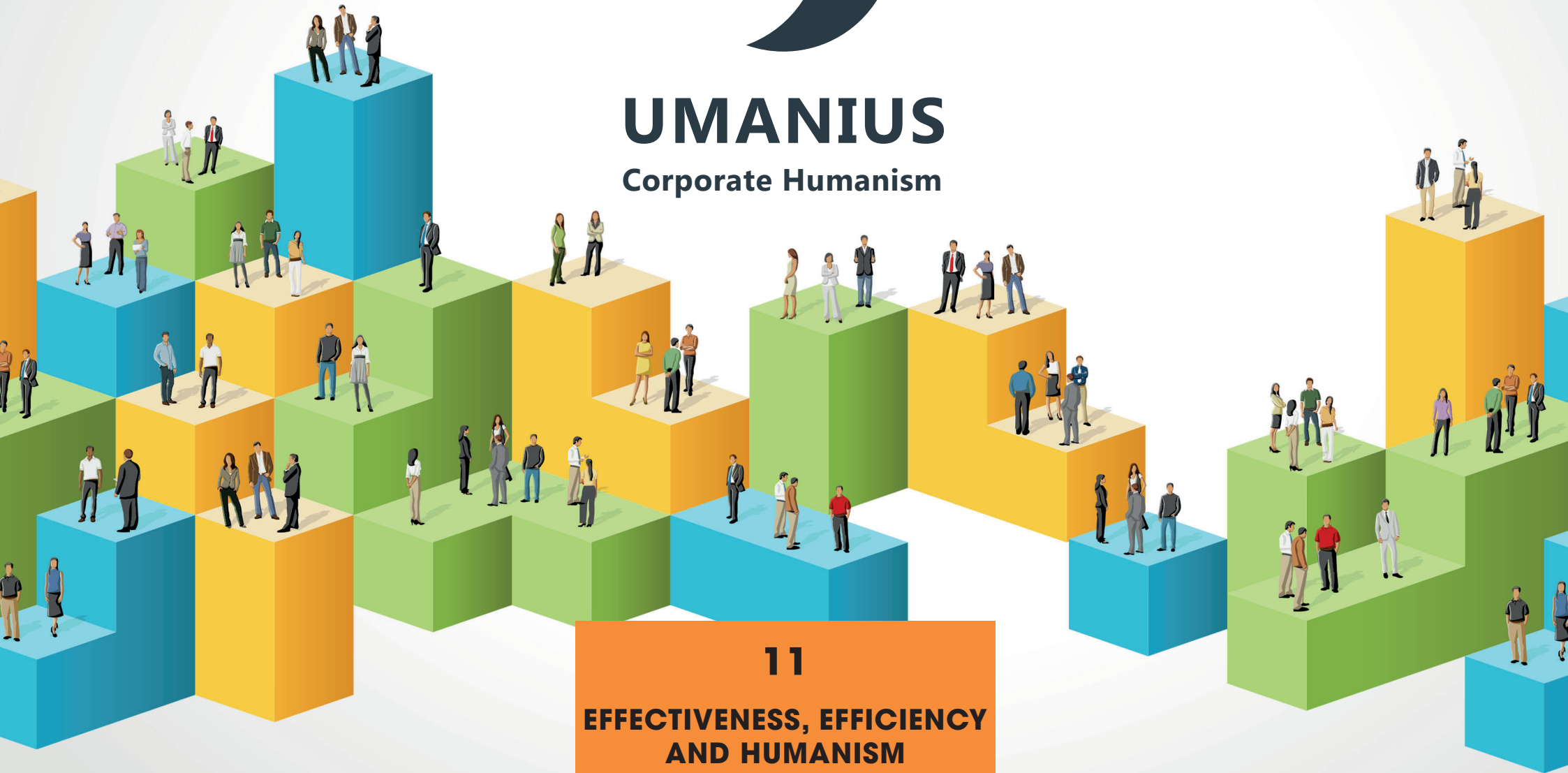




UMANIUS

Corporate Humanism



11

**EFFECTIVENESS, EFFICIENCY
AND HUMANISM**

October 2026

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UMANIUS is the publication of Auren Foundation, which, as part of its founding mission, succinctly addresses topics related to corporate humanism. Its aim is to present, propose means of implementation, disseminate, and encourage the values advocated by civic humanism within private and public enterprises and organizations.

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Conceptual Framework

Effectiveness, Efficiency and Humanism



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Effectiveness and efficiency are cross-cutting policies within any organisation, and they must also be infused with humanistic principles. According to their classic definitions, effectiveness refers to the extent to which proposed objectives are achieved, whereas efficiency focuses on the relationship between means and ends, seeking to minimise resources or maximise outcomes. Both have been cornerstones of business rationale since the twentieth century, establishing themselves as key indicators of corporate success.

However, in recent decades, a growing critical awareness has emerged: is it acceptable to be effective and efficient while simultaneously causing human, environmental or social harm? What happens when these concepts are pursued without any regard for consequences beyond measurable results? Where is the ethical boundary for a company that prioritises performance above all else? Faced with these potential distortions, humanism within a business context does not reject the importance of achieving results; rather, it integrates this into respecting, and holistically developing, people and their environment.

Effectiveness and efficiency have been pivotal in product and process design, resource allocation, performance evaluation and strategic decision-making. Nevertheless, when treated as absolute guiding principles, many organisations have fallen into reductionisms that strip these concepts of any meaning. It is possible to be effective in achieving objectives that lack human or socio-environmental legitimacy, and it is possible to be efficient while sacrificing the quality of the work, social and environmental context, emotional wellbeing and family balance of employees. However, it should be asked whether a policy that incorporates humanistic considerations contributes far more to both effectiveness and efficiency in the medium and long term.

Indicators associated with these factors tend to prioritise what is quantifiable, immediate and standardised, often overlooking qualitative, relational and intangible aspects. Consequently, effectiveness and efficiency can become modes of operation in the corporate world where what is not measured does not count, and what does not yield immediate returns is deemed to be unworthy of attention.

The architectural solution of this dome, conceived and built up to the drum by Michelangelo Buonarroti, and finished by Giacomo della Porta and Domenico Fontana, is functional, effective and efficient, as well as a work of art that has been replicated on multiple occasions.



Title of the work: Dome of St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican (Rome, Italy)

Author: Jebulon (own work)

Photograph reproducing the facade of St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, Vatican City, Italy, available on Wikipedia under license: Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication.

Created on: August 25, 2013

Uploaded on: January 26, 2014

Source on Wikipedia: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Saint_Peter%27s_Basilica_facade,_Rome,_Italy.jpg



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COMPARATIVE TABLE OF METHODS AND SYSTEMS COMMONLY USED TO MEASURE OR IMPROVE BUSINESS EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

Method / System	Type / Approach	Primary Objective	Key Tools / Metrics
Just in Time (JIT)	Lean Philosophy / Production	Reducing inventory, lead times and waste	Lead time, inventory turnover, Takt time
Six Sigma	Statistical Methodology / Quality	Minimising variability and defects	DMAIC, DPMO, Sigma level, CPK
Lean Manufacturing	Continuous Improvement Philosophy	Eliminating waste and optimising processes	Muda, Kaizen, VSM
ISO 9001 (Quality)	Standardised Management System	Ensuring quality and continuous improvement	Audits, non-conformities, customer satisfaction
ISO 14001 (Environmental)	Environmental Management System	Minimising environmental impact and ensuring legal compliance	Environmental indicators, audits
ISO 45001 (Occupational Health & Safety)	Health and Safety Management	Preventing workplace risks	Accident rate, regulatory compliance
Balanced Scorecard (BSC)	Strategic Management	Aligning strategy with execution	Strategic KPIs, strategy maps
Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Measurement / Control System	Measuring organisational performance in real time	ROI, ROE, customer satisfaction, units per hour
Benchmarking	Comparative Technique	Identifying gaps in best practices	Gap analysis, industry ratios
Productivity Analysis	Quantitative Technique	Assessing the relationship between inputs and outputs	Input/output ratio, production per hour
Business Process Reengineering (BPR)	Radical Process Redesign	Transforming key processes	Cost per process, cycle times
5S	Workplace Organisation	Order, cleanliness and visual efficiency	Search time, visual order, ergonomics
Kaizen	Continuous Improvement Philosophy	Consistently achieving small incremental improvements	Number of improvements, team participation
Total Productive Maintenance (TPM)	Maintenance Management	Minimising failures and downtime	OEE, availability, failure rate
Theory of Constraints (TOC)	Bottleneck Management	Optimising the limiting resource	Throughput, cycle time, resource utilisation
ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning)	Integrated Business Management System	Integrating processes and data for greater efficiency and control	Integrated data, traceability, reports
MRP (Material Requirements Planning)	Material Planning (part of ERP)	Ensuring material availability without excess	BOM, inventory levels, procurement planning





A vision that prioritises immediate effectiveness and efficiency without considering potential medium- and long-term consequences entails risks that may have an impact on the organisation:

» Ethical risks:

- Prioritising results at the expense of internal or external fairness.
- Making decisions that, while legal, may be legitimately questionable.
- Treating people as means to an end rather than as ends in themselves.
- Creating emotional exhaustion, alienation and a loss of purpose due to pressure to obtain results.
- Reducing employees to mere cogs in a machine rather than recognising them as active agents with creativity, emotions and dignity.
- Diluting the value of time, human connection and work as an experience of personal growth.

» Technical risks:

- Using automated measurement systems that tend to reduce organisational complexity to quantifiable elements, thereby rendering intangible dimensions, such as trust and motivation, invisible.
- Employing technological tools to maximise control and extreme efficiency, which can dehumanise the work experience.
- Applying algorithms that may reproduce structural biases and limit critical thinking in decision-making.
- Over-relying on digital metrics, which can create rigidity and reduce flexibility, thus undermining organisational adaptability.

» Identity-related risks:

- Forgetting that a business is a community of people and transforming it into a mere results-generating machine.
- Losing the ability to ask why someone works and for whom.
- Reducing the meaning of work to pure economic gain, disconnected from any personal development or contribution to the common good.
- Fostering a culture of control, surveillance and rivalry.
- Eroding collaboration due to the logic of individual performance.
- Rendering corporate language void of values and endowing it solely with metrics.

» Social and environmental risks:

- Making decisions focused on effectiveness that may generate negative social outcomes, such as inequality, precarious employment and exclusion.
- Misinterpreting efficiency and resorting to irresponsible cuts that harm communities or natural environments.

When faced with these risks, business humanism offers a superior integrating perspective that places the human being at the centre of any corporate decision-making.

This approach does not reject performance; rather, it seeks to redefine it in terms of dignity, purpose and positive impact.

Effectiveness and efficiency are essential for the life of an organisation, but they cannot become its sole *raison d'être*. A humanistic perspective values the meaning of work, the capacity and dignity of individuals and the social role of the company. This does not involve rejecting performance, but rather integrating it into a broader logic of human development, equality and sustainability.



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Effectiveness, Productivity, Quality, Bureaucracy

At times, effectiveness is added alongside efficiency, understood as the ability to achieve desired results consistently and sustainably over time. In other words, it is not only a question of reaching objectives but of maintaining an optimal level of performance in the long term.

For their part, productivity and efficiency are closely related yet different: while productivity refers to the amount of work or results that can be achieved with given resources within a set period (essentially a measure of output), efficiency focuses on minimising resources in order to maximise outcomes.

Effectiveness and quality are also interconnected, albeit with subtle differences: whereas effectiveness is the ability to reach a specific goal or expected result, quality emphasises achieving that goal in accordance with standards that ensure the product or service is optimal, consistent and satisfactory for the user.

Finally, bureaucracy (as an organisational system based on rules, formal procedures and defined hierarchies, which establish a rational order of management) can have either positive or negative effects on effectiveness and efficiency, depending on how it is managed. An organisation that minimises any unnecessary bureaucracy while retaining its benefits gives rise to agile bureaucracy that serves people rather than existing as an end in itself. Such an approach values clear processes while also promoting autonomy, trust and creativity.

In order to achieve proper management, effectiveness and efficiency must take into account effectiveness, productivity, quality and the degree of bureaucratisation, harmonising them in a manner that respects the organisation's humanist philosophy and broader corporate policies.



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Labour productivity is one of the most widely used indicators of economic efficiency, measuring the value created per hour worked. However, the most productive countries are not necessarily those where people work longer hours, but often those combining innovation, skills, strong institutions and effective people management. GDP per hour worked shows great differences among countries. Different factors have influence on that, for instance, Ireland and Luxemburg can be affected by high presence of Financial and other multinational companies. These differences suggest that sustainable productivity depends not only on efficiency but also on the ability to develop human talent and organisational capabilities.

Country	GDP per hour worked (PPP USD)
Ireland	135.7
Luxembourg	107.5
Norway	94.2
Denmark	92.2
Germany	83.2
United States	83.6
France	81.6
Spain	62.5
Italy	67.6

Source: OECD, GDP per Hour Worked and OECD Compendium of Productivity Indicators 2024.
<https://www.oecd.org/en/data/indicators/gdp-per-hour-worked.html> 
(oecd.org)



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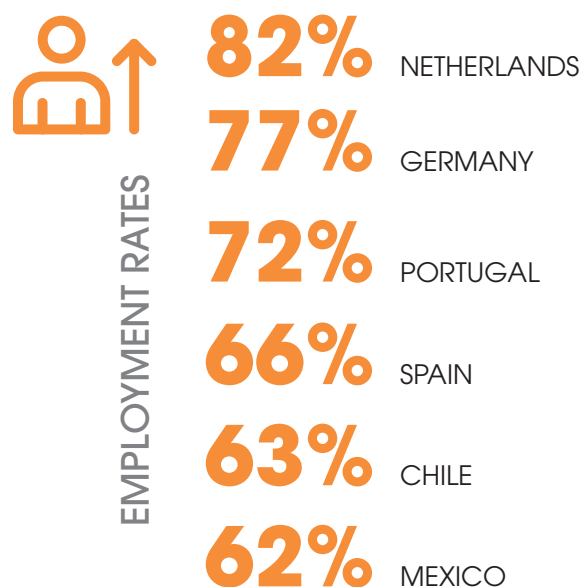
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Employment rate is a key indicator of both economic effectiveness and social inclusion, as it reflects a country's ability to create opportunities for work and participation. Recent OECD data show significant differences across countries: employment rates are around 82% in the Netherlands, 77% in Germany, 72% in Portugal and the United States, compared with approximately 66% in Spain, 63% in Chile and 62% in Mexico. High employment levels indicate a greater capacity to mobilise available talent and contribute to economic growth while fostering social cohesion. (oecd.org), (oecd.org)



Source: OECD Employment Database and OECD Employment Outlook 2024.
<https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/oecd-employment-database.html>

Female employment is increasingly recognized as an indicator of both economic performance and inclusiveness. Economies that successfully integrate women's talent typically benefit from a broader skills base, higher labour utilisation and greater resilience. According to OECD and ILO data, female employment rates are around 76% in the Netherlands, (percentage of women aged 16/65 years, working), 73% in Germany, 71% in Portugal and 62% in Spain, compared with 58% in Chile and 47% in Mexico. These figures highlight the importance of organizational and public policies that facilitate equal opportunities and work-life balance. (webfs.oecd.org), (data.worldbank.org)

Source: OECD, ILO and World Bank.

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?locations=OE>



FEMALE EMPLOYMENT IS
INCREASINGLY RECOGNIZED AS AN
INDICATOR OF BOTH ECONOMIC
PERFORMANCE AND INCLUSIVENESS.

Sickness absence is not only a health indicator. It may also reflect organisational climate, leadership quality, workload management and employee well-being. It affects significantly on productivity and efficiency of organizations. Absenteeism from work due to illness, days per employee per year, change a lot from some countries to others, for instance according to WHO, are around 25 in Germany or 17,5 in Spain , to 5,7 in UK or 7,9 in Portugal.

(https://gateway.euro.who.int/en/indicators/hfa_411-2700-absenteeism-from-work-due-to-illness-days-per-employee-per-year/#id=19398)



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Business Role



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Certain actions can be undertaken by companies to enhance both their effectiveness (achieving objectives) and efficiency (doing so with minimal usage of resources) while also taking into account humanistic aspects:

1. Actions for Improving Effectiveness:

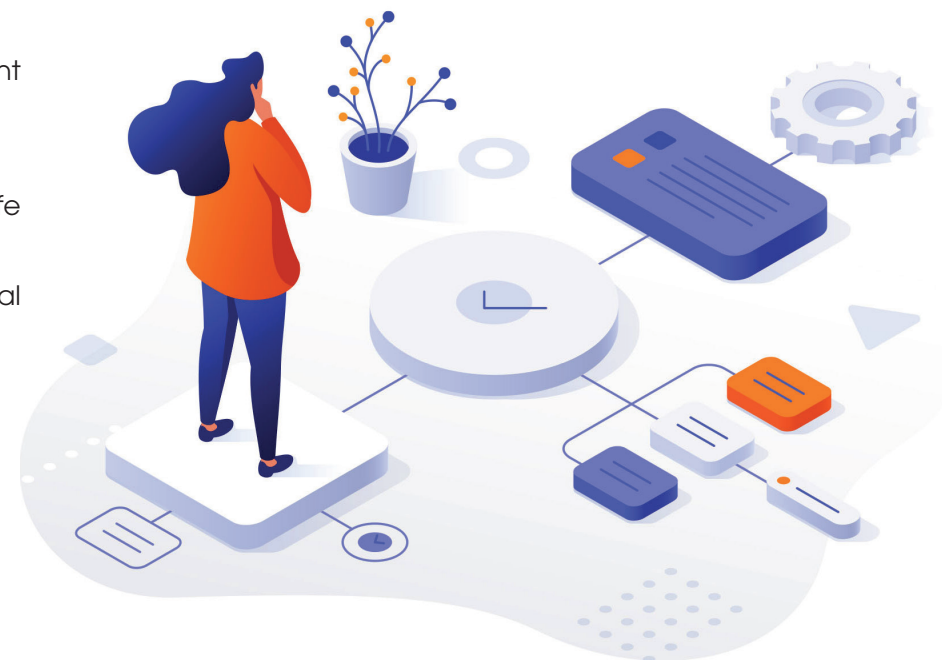
- Defining clear and measurable objectives in order to ensure that goals are attainable.
- Fostering a culture of open transparent communication.
- Promoting leadership founded on respect and empathy.
- Setting targets that consider the holistic well-being of the team.
- Optimising processes.
- Providing ongoing training and professional development.
- Strategically leveraging technology.
- Conducting continuous evaluation and improvement through key performance indicators (KPIs).

2. Actions for Improving Efficiency:

- Implementing work practices that support a healthy work-life balance.
- Encouraging active participation and recognising individual and team contributions.
- Ensuring safe and fair working conditions.
- Automating processes where appropriate.
- Managing resources efficiently.
- Delegating responsibilities effectively.
- Adopting energy-saving strategies.
- Optimising the supply chain.

3. Combined Actions (Effectiveness + Efficiency):

- Promoting diversity and inclusion throughout the organisation.
- Implementing mechanisms for two-way feedback.
- Encouraging collaborative work and a shared sense of purpose.
- Evaluating the social and environmental impact of operations.
- Adopting methodologies that streamline productivity.
- Digitising and analysing data for informed decision-making.
- Developing innovation policies that balance costs with continuous improvement.
- Managing talent strategically in order to align capabilities with organisational goals.



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Purpose-Driven Narratives

The Invisible Clock



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At Pinturas Industriales, everything seemed to be running smoothly: modern equipment, trained employees and an expanding client portfolio. Nevertheless, there was an invisible problem that nobody seemed to notice.

Sandra, the Chief Operations Officer, was repeatedly confronted with delays in project delivery. Despite everyone working diligently, tasks piled up and deadlines were rarely met.

One day, while reviewing activity logs on the project management platform, she uncovered some alarming data: on average, employees were spending 12 hours per week in internal meetings. Furthermore, more than 40% of emails sent were solely to clarify misunderstandings about projects. To make matters worse, the company was using outdated software that prevented any effective cross-departmental synchronisation, resulting in an unnecessary duplication of tasks. The company's operations were prey to an invisible clock that was silently eroding productivity.

Determined to find a solution, Sandra immersed herself in the company's workflow. She discovered that teams spent hours on meetings with no clear objectives, that emails proliferated without adding any real value, and that the project management platform lacked basic features such as automatic task allocation or integration with other tools.

She set up an improvement committee. After one month's work, the committee proposed an action plan for discussion:

1. Reduction of unnecessary meetings: Meetings would be limited to a maximum of 30 minutes and only permitted if there was a defined agenda with specific objectives.



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2. Implementation of new management software: The company selected an application that allowed real-time tracking from order to invoicing and payment, integration with other existing Pinturas Industriales applications and workflow automation.
3. Review of internal communication: A protocol was established to ensure messages were only sent when really necessary, while promoting the use of a collaboration platform designed for teams, enabling users to send messages, share files and organise conversations into thematic channels, thereby facilitating project management and internal communication.
4. Introduction of an alert system: Alerts would be triggered if any stage in the pre-delivery processes experienced delays in respect of the timelines foreseen.

Once the plan was approved, initial resistance was expected. Some employees were accustomed to the old methods and questioned the effectiveness of the changes. However, Sandra knew that the key to improving efficiency lay in optimising time and resources.

After several weeks of adjustment, results began to emerge. Teams became more autonomous, meetings were shorter and more productive, and the new platform allowed the status of each project to be visualised in real time.

The data spoke for itself: weekly meetings were reduced by 60%, productivity increased by 30% compared to the previous quarter, and the time spent on unnecessary emails dropped by 45%.



Moreover, employees began to notice improvements in their well-being. With fewer interruptions and clearer tasks, they experienced less stress and greater motivation.

Sandra had achieved what had once seemed impossible: she had transformed a company plagued by an invisible productivity problem. Since then, whenever efficiency was discussed at Pinturas Industriales, the “invisible clock” was remembered - the time nobody saw, yet the very time that had been quietly consuming much of the company’s efforts.



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"Efficiency is doing things right; effectiveness is doing the right things."

PETER DRUCKER, WRITER, PROFESSOR, CONSULTANT,
ENTREPRENEUR, JOURNALIST

"Collaboration matters... So learning to collaborate is part of equipping yourself for effectiveness."

DON TAPSCOTT, CANADIAN AUTHOR, CONSULTANT, AND SPEAKER

"Modern technology has become a total phenomenon... in which efficiency is no longer an option but a necessity imposed on all human activity."

JACQUES ELLUL, FRENCH PHILOSOPHER, SOCIOLOGIST,
THEOLOGIAN AND ANARCHIST

"I wanted a company that made healthy profits...with ethics, dignity and morals."

BRUNELLO CUCINELLI, ITALIAN LUXURY CREATIVE DIRECTOR

"The most brilliant strategy won't lead to success unless it's executed effectively."

BILL GATES, FOUNDER OF MICROSOFT, PHILANTHROPIST

"Effectiveness is considered with people, efficiency with things."

STEPHEN R. COVEY, AUTHOR, SPEAKER AND PROFESSOR

"The key to business success is the combination of efficiency and creativity."

STEVE JOBS, CO-FOUNDER OF APPLE AND PIXAR



"Effectiveness is the ability to turn a vision into reality."

TONY ROBBINS, AUTHOR AND MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER

"Efficiency is not doing more things, but doing the important things better."

JEFF BEZOS, CEO OF AMAZON

"Efficiency without innovation is merely routine."

SATYA NADELLA, CEO OF MICROSOFT CORPORATION

"Efficiency is the best strategy for sustainable growth."

TIM COOK, CEO OF APPLE, SUCCESSOR TO STEVE JOBS



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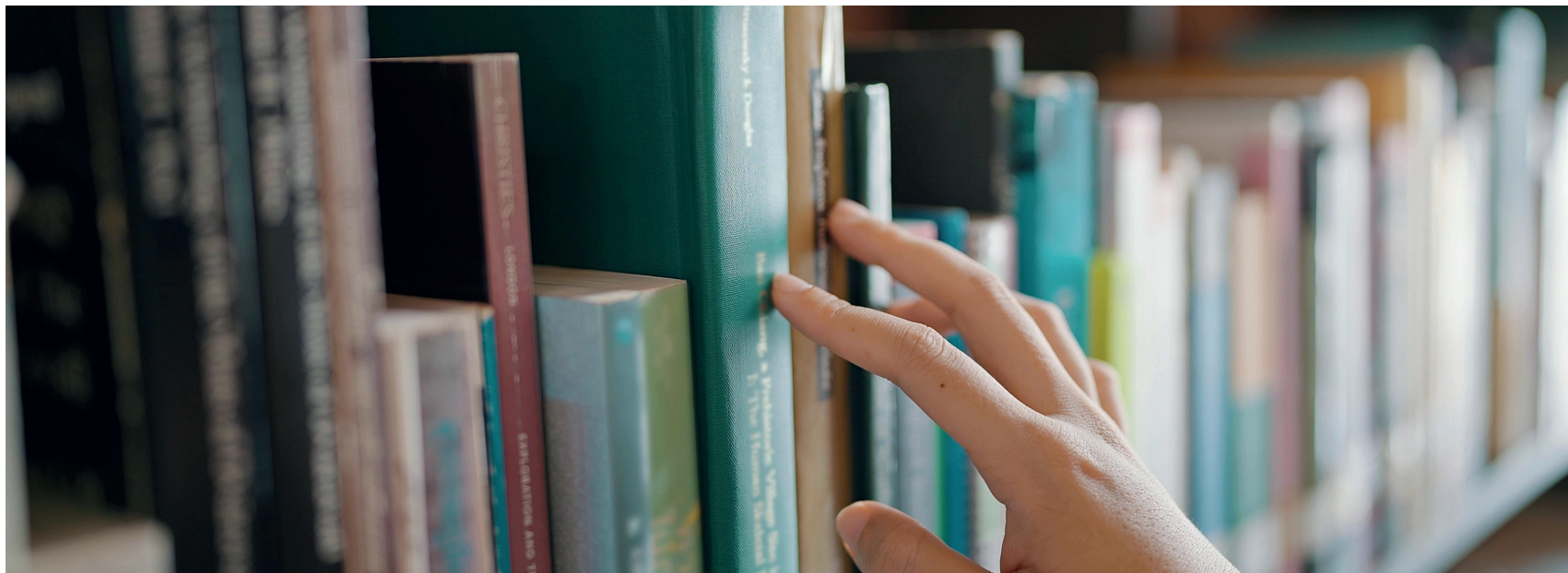
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Studies productivity, resource efficiency and effective public policies across countries.
- International Labour Organization (ILO). www.ilo.org
Focuses on labour productivity and efficiency across sectors and countries.
- World Bank (Banco Mundial). www.worldbank.org
Provides analyses of public resource efficiency, economic development management and productivity across sectors.
- Eurostat. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>
Official EU statistics on productivity, resource efficiency and other economic indicators.
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Focuses on energy efficiency and sustainable resource management in the EU.



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The paradox of efficiency. Edward Tenner



Effective Executives, Peter Drucker



Robert S. Kaplan — Communicating
Strategy with the Balanced Scorecard



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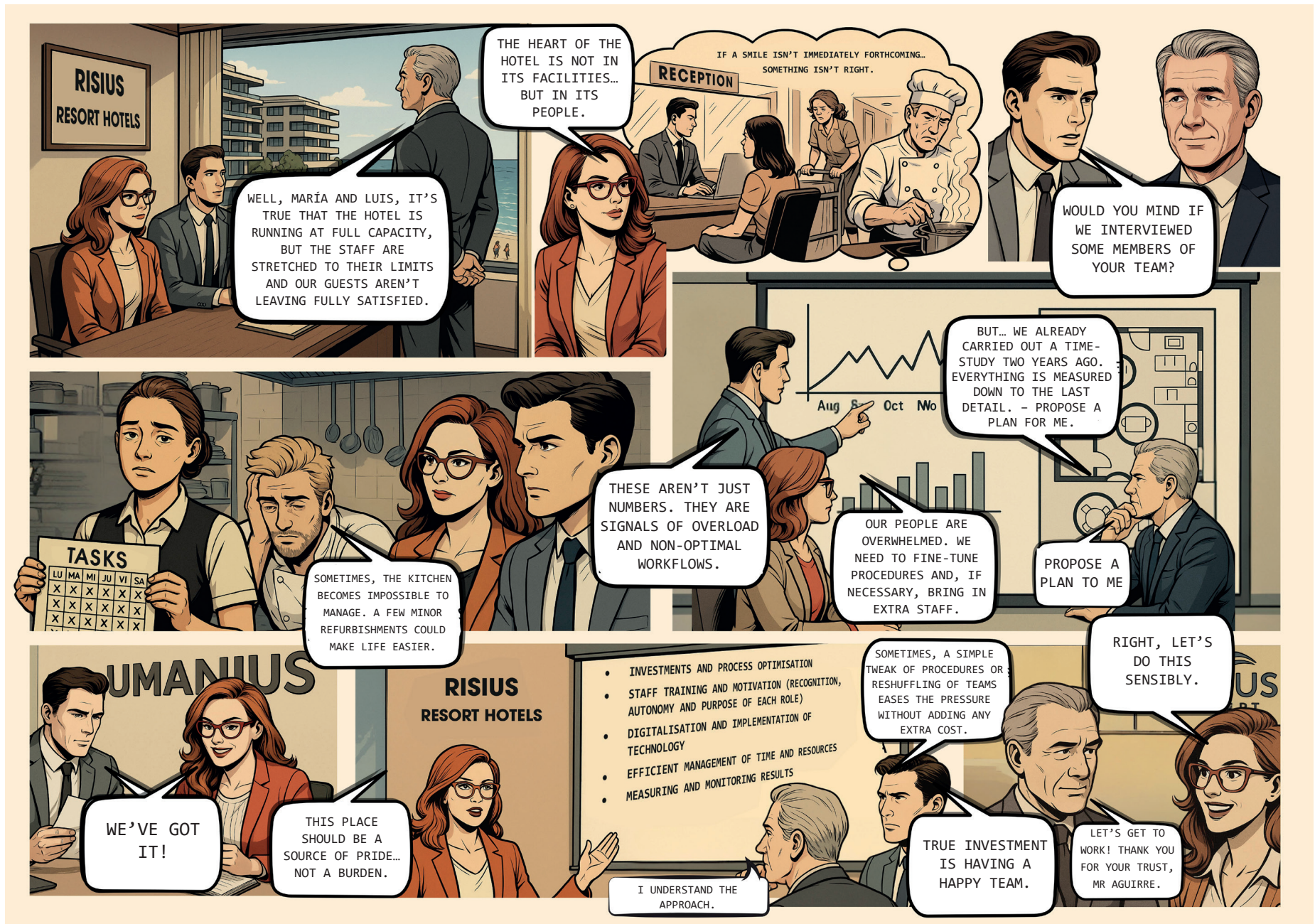
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