

Challenges and Benefits of Expansion

Over the years, we have identified some solutions (“○”) to the impacts (“●”) of the larger structure, listed below.

- Efficiency: less consistency or oversight, a higher proportion of time in meetings or reading and writing minutes
 - Clear domains listing all the areas of responsibility held by circles and teams, and the limits to their decision-making authority (to avoid duplication of work)
 - Additional ‘required reading’ outside work time
- Speed of decision-making and change: may be slower than ideal
 - Devolved decision-making authority to Forum and circles - not everyone needs to decide everything!
 - Consent decision making used in circle meetings - fast and efficient decisions
 - Sociocratic approach encouraging small-scale iterative experiments: is it good enough for now and safe enough to try?
 - Regular meetings and reviews of systems to encourage scrutiny and catalyse change
- Engagement: less multitasking and more specialisation risks decreased connection to the business as a whole and greater identification with teams
 - Small groups and meetings to build confidence in speaking up
 - Feedback and communication pathways to keep all members informed and involved (see Communication Appendix)
- Accountability and scrutiny: specialisation also leads to lack of awareness
 - Fortnightly reports to Forum
 - Annual Plans
 - Robust individual and team job descriptions
 - Good procedures to deal with conflicts of interest
- Consensus ethos: less frequent face-to-face contact
 - Formal systems to maintain group cohesion (Training, Away Day, etc.)
 - Forum representatives accountable to those not present
- Shared responsibility: risk of people hiding from or hoarding responsibility
 - Ensure good balance of front-of-house and administrative work
 - Regular rotation of elected roles
 - Participatory meetings to encourage quieter voices and subdue louder ones
- Working environment: flexibility and ad-hoc planning more difficult
 - Greater reliance on rotas and advance planning

In addition, despite the difficulties inherent in a larger business, the expanded membership offers many benefits, including:

- A diverse member job description, which comprises both front-of-house and administrative work
- Increased ability to share owner responsibilities
- A larger membership with a wider pool of skills and ideas
- More people in secure, sustainable work, as per our Principles of Purpose