

Understanding Reorgs: What They Are, Why They Happen & How to Navigate Them

Arylee McSweeney, Director of Engineering (Etsy)

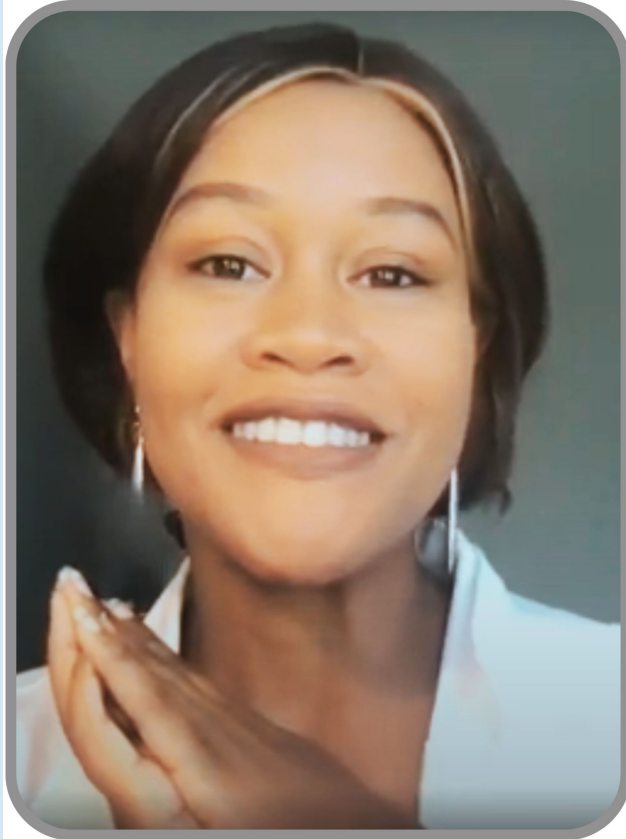
Understanding Reorgs: What They Are, Why They Happen & How to Navigate Them

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Arylee McSweeney
Engineering Director, Etsy

About Me



- 👉 Belizean
- 👉 MBA in Information Systems
- 👉 Engineering Director at Etsy
- 👉 > 10 years industry experience
- 👉 IC & Manager
- 👉 Experienced in the execution of reorgs
- 👉 LinkedIn regular/Almost never on Twitter
- 👉 DEI Advocate
- 👉 Practicing Stoic (stoicism)

What Are Reorgs?

A reorg (aka reorganization) is an organizational process that involves changing the structure and/or operations of an organization.

- A redistribution of existing teams within an organization
- Changes to the way departments and functions are organized and the way work is performed
- An undertaking that supports a broader goal

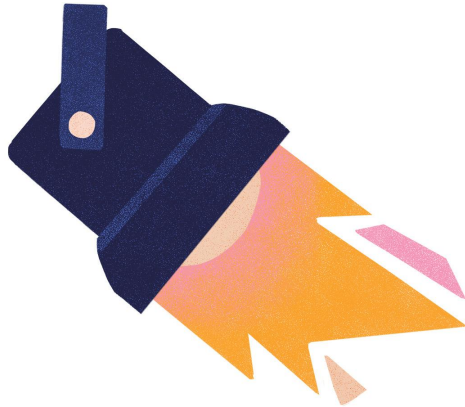
Reorgs are different from Restructures.

When an organization restructures, they are typically replacing existing teams and capabilities with new ones.

- Existing personnel may be replaced
- Job roles & responsibilities may be changed
- Entire departments/divisions can be eliminated

My Hot Take on Reorgs:

“All businesses want to grow and thrive. A reorg is one of the tools leaders have in their toolkit to respond to changes in the industry, business needs and those impacted by external forces. Leaders must take the time to understand reorgs.”



Why Reorgs Happen

Reorgs come from a good place, but they do cause uncertainty

- Increase efficiencies



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Reorgs come from a good place, but they do cause uncertainty

- Increase efficiencies
- Cost reduction
- Scaling/Growth to meet customer needs



Overall, reorgs are a powerful tool for businesses to stay competitive and remain profitable. By optimizing the organization's structure, a company can improve efficiency, reduce costs, and create new opportunities for growth.



Reorgs Have a Cost

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Employee Morale

Reorgs stir up feeling of uncertainty for employees.

- Humans don't respond well to change
- Speculation runs rampant.
- Retention

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Trust In Leadership

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- Reduces trust
- Creates doubts
- Lack of appropriate measurements for efficiency

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Impact to Productivity

While leaders are working out a reorg, team members are:

- Distracted by the impending reorg
- Less time spent on their responsibilities (before & after the reorg_
- Poor timing can exacerbate stress

The costs of reorgs can not be quantified neither can they be overstated. Leaders are accountable for ensuring that reorgs are truly necessary for the benefit of the business.



How Leaders Can Better Execute Reorgs

Before Planning A Reorg



Align on what the organizational problems are



Consult representatives from other departments & use data (surveys etc)



Make a final determination on whether or not a reorg can solve the problems identified.

Before Committing to a Reorg

Sell the Reorg

1. Make a continuous effort to sell the reorg
2. Speak to the problems the reorg will solve
3. Seek out voices that challenge your opinion
4. Share data that supports the need for a reorg



After the Reorg

Set Expectations & Check In

1. Assure team members
2. Accept that there is some settling in that will need to take place
3. Be prepared to accommodate norming needs (team offsites, trainings etc)
4. Encourage people to share their concerns



After the Reorg

Discuss Role Changes

1. Articulate the new expectations of each role.
2. Align on milestones and/or KPIs to set teams up to make progress.
3. Identify gaps and adjust scope as needed.
4. Encourage team members to surface what's not working.



Often, leaders feel that the reorg is done when the org chart is updated and the emails are sent. In many cases that's just not true and there will be challenges that surface. The success of the reorg hinges on leaders being willing to receive and address those challenges.



How ICs Can Better Navigate Reorgs

Stay Open minded, curious & positive

HOW TO BE MORE OPEN-MINDED

- PRACTICE YOUR LISTENING SKILLS
- SLOW DOWN
- ASK QUESTIONS
- STAY CURIOUS

Focus on the elements of work that you enjoy most



ERG Leadership & Activities



Starting an Interest Group

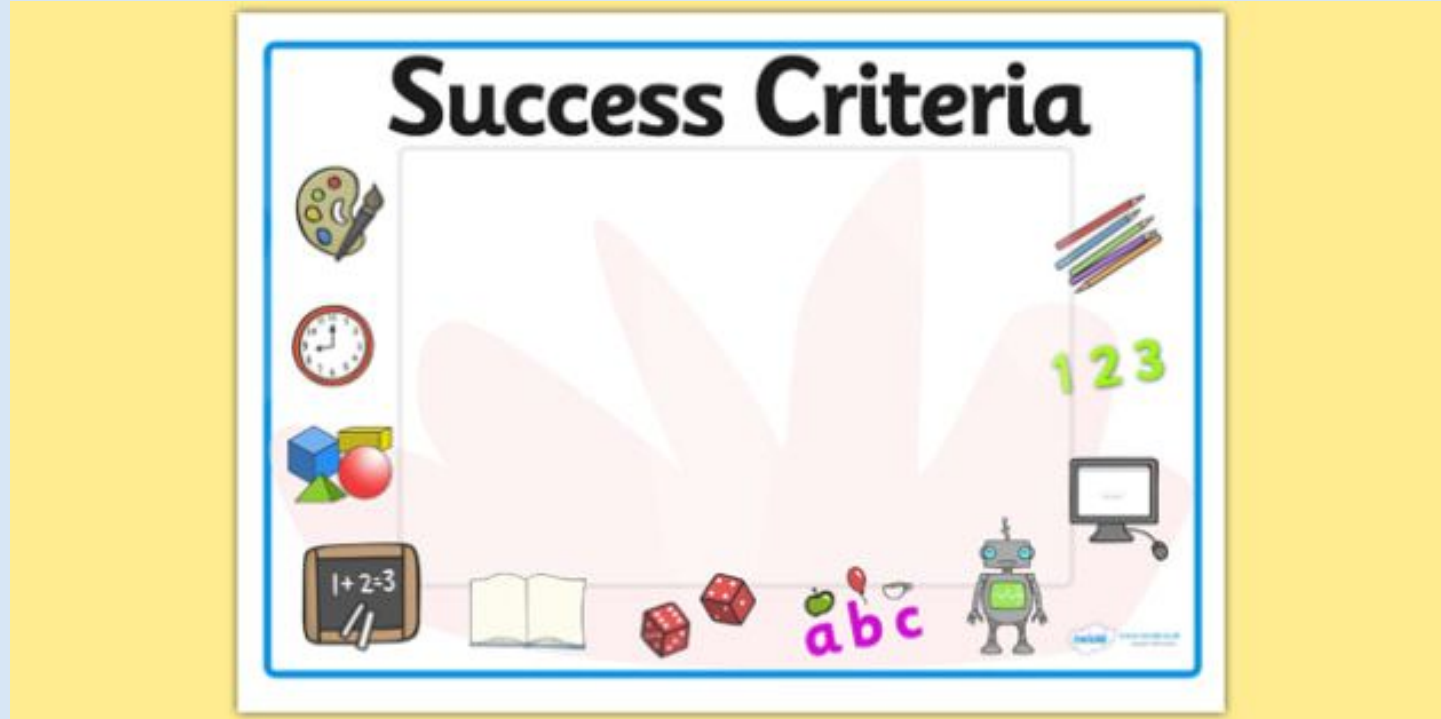


Solve the day-to-day challenges within your organization

HELP YOUR MANAGER (who is probably overwhelmed)



ARTICULATE SUCCESS WITH YOUR MANAGER



A NOTE ON QUITTING ...



ICs can play a meaningful role in supporting reorgs beyond just doing their day to day work. Intentional support for a reorg demonstrates resilience and will be appreciated by leadership.



Signs a Reorg is Coming

4 Signs A Reorg Is Near

- Timing





4 Signs A Reorg Is Near

- Timing
- Key Personnel Changes



4 Signs A Reorg Is Near

- Timing
- Key Personnel Changes
- An Underperforming Business Strategy



4 Signs A Reorg Is Near

- Timing
- Key Personnel Changes
- An Underperforming Business Strategy
- Scaling - Adding new capabilities and functions

Alternative Strategies for Navigating Reorgs

Seek an Internal Transfer

Many people leverage an internal transfers as a result of reorgs that don't go their way..

- Reach out to your manager
- Review openings on the career page
- Ask trusted colleagues about new openings
- Try a rotation in a different department



(Actively) Wait and See

- Nurture relationships internally/externally
- Look into training and professional development
- Timebox your 'waiting
- Interview



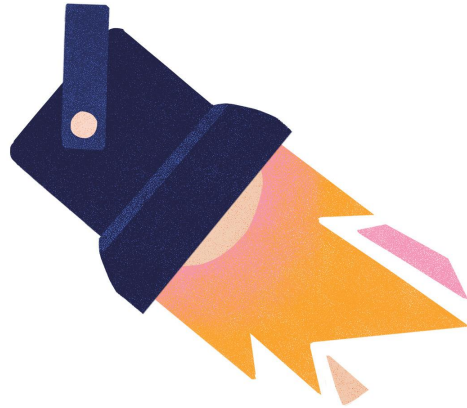
Ask for Special Projects / Assignments

If you don't like where you landed in a reorg, there are still opportunities for you to demonstrate your value by getting on a special project or assignment.


- Ideate and secure buyin
- Underused expertise




Reorgs can be unpleasant and the changes resulting from a reorg can be hard to navigate. But, it's important to learn how to navigate reorgs. After all, we can't escape them.



Q&A



Arylee McSweeney, MBA
Transformational Engineering Leader
@ Etsy | Enabling Product Delivery on ...



Arylee McSweeney
Engineering Director, Etsy

Remember ...



When it comes to reorgs, think of it as an opportunity to build a new skill



Reorgs come from a good place.



You don't have to be a victim of a reorg, with some intentional steps you can benefit from a reorg



Feel free to connect with me on LinkedIn