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The idea of democracy in the workplace will mean many things to many people.

To some it will suggest a completely different way of doing business.

To some it will be seen as already inherent in many corporate governance and ownership structures.

To others it will be seen as a simple representation, and natural fact, of work in the knowledge economy and age of the Internet.

And to others still it will simply mean having the authority, as an employee, to work when you wish, your own way, as long as the work gets done.

That is why there is great wisdom in how Traci Fenton, WorldBlu founder and convenor of the workplace democracy movement, has placed the idea and criteria for being a democratic workplace.

She has defined the idea with a balance of clarity and enough openness to create a big tent.

There are many ideas about workplace democracy to consider, and each of them deserves to be honoured in its own right. For each organization either grappling with organizational democracy or aspiring to it, different definitions of the idea will suit. There are not yet right ones and wrong ones. Where we draw the line is fuzzy and plays in the grey.

Within the confines of each element of a democratic workplace including; governance, ownership, decision-making processes, healthy transparency, the

degree of control employees have over their daily work, democratization of the wealth produced — there are deep principles and details to contend with.

One of the dominant themes arising out of WorldBlu LIVE 2008 was that democracy in the workplace was most often and consistently expressed in the ownership over your work, when and how you do it, and less often in terms of ownership of the company itself.

The progression towards the democratization of wealth, or a company's profits, moves along a spectrum with lots of room for discussion as well. Profit sharing is one method, ownership, and the distribution of dividends another.

In a one-member one-vote structure a strong governance structure and system of decision making is necessary to keep the politics and power of personality in check. And, in a one-vote-per-share environment there are decided principles at work favouring the power of the invested dollar.

It is how well the decisions in each of these arenas of democratic design balance together that in the end makes the difference.

There are many, many possible configurations. In true democratic fashion each of us has the freedom of association and with it the freedom of disassociation. In exercising that choice we will vote to join those organizations that create the configuration most suited to our own values and preferences. Those organizations that are most successful, most effective over time, will retain the best people. Over time we will see the strongest family of decisions pattern out and become self evident.

Traci's WorldBlu Democratic Workplace Scorecard, is the perfect conduit for the time. Her [categories and scoring](#) provide focus on specific elements workplace democracy, point out their utility in creating effective organizations, and channel our best practices toward a new body of knowledge.

The more organizations participating in the WorldBlu survey the better. The more discussions and decisions around workplace democracy the faster we will together lift this model up as an answer to many of the world's social and economic opportunities.