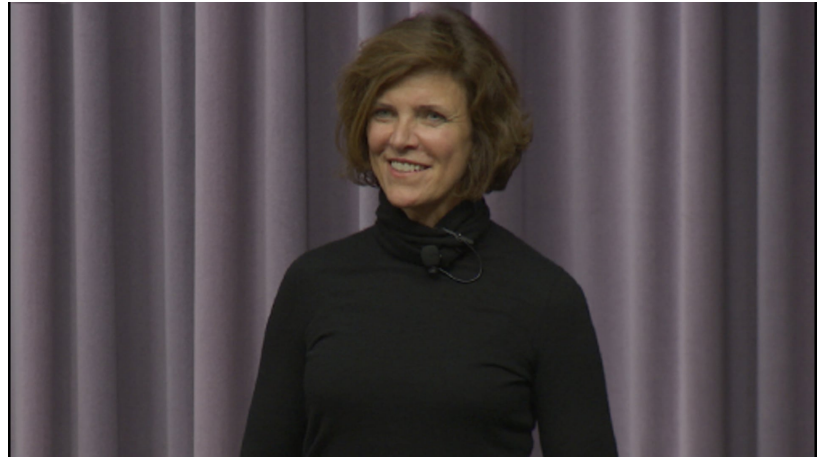


URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/an-organic-org-chart>

Jeanne Gang, founder and principal at Studio Gang Architects, talks about the importance of preserving the creativity and closeness at her firm as it grew over the years. She also explains how her organization chart resembles a tree more than a pyramid, symbolizing the firm's supportive structure and its organic growth.



Transcript

Some people were asking me like how big do you want to be, how big do you want your company to be and as we got bigger and bigger projects those are the question.. And I realized finally like there is not a question that I really feel like is the question I need to answer.. The question I need to answer is how to - we want to do more impactful work, we want to do more projects that are going to change how we think about the environment.. So the question is really how to grow it so that we're able to do that but to keep the things that we feel we are really good at and to keep the creativity like a small firm creativity even though we're growing to a bigger structure.. So it was really kind of a challenge that we've been working on over the last couple years and we have this very collegial atmosphere in our office.. We really share information, there is no hoarding of information, we like each other, we really get excited about ideas and so with more and more people, how do you maintain that? I mean people - we do a lot of things like we spend a lot of time there.. So we do things like these pumpkin carvings and many other things, camp, things like that.. But what I realized recently is the growth of us - like this is all of the firms, all the architecture firms that are in the American Institute of Architects, there's about 17,500 firms, 26% of them are sole practitioners, like one person.. I started out that way too.. I was one person when I started the firm..

But we stayed in - I guess, I was there for about a year at one person.. And then we moved into this area which 71% of the firms are only two to 49 people.. So they're relatively small and I think that most of them are on the smaller end of that.. Now, we're about 80 people and so we are like moved into this, the upper 3%, there is only 2% of the firms that are over 50 and less than 100, there is only 1% of the firms that are over 100.. So it's very interesting and it's also - so like seeing that is really giving us insight as to what our potential could be now that as we shift into this other area.. By the way, about a third of all of the architecture graduates are employed in that from the top 3% of the firms - of the large firms.. So one thing we've been doing, we continue - we grew our camp, we go to camp every year and to creativity camp and we expanded it and it's still accommodating us at 80 and we do different activities and different classes.. Together, we try to have fun together.. But at the same time, we did have to put structure in place.. And so this was really about trying to figure out how people could be mentored and grow within the firm but it really didn't feel like us..

It was like suddenly we have this pyramid and this hierarchy and what do we really want that to be? So we spend a lot of time working on that.. We have a diagram that represents our project orientation.. So when we work on a project, the project is in the middle and we're all around it.. But this one really just wasn't sitting well for us and so one day as we were just working on this, filling it out, I noticed that it actually looked better like this and that was kind of an aha moment because for us, it really is about support and growth.. This is almost like a tree and where the ideas that are coming in and they are the nutrients and they're going out and branching up and each branch with people that have been there longer can support and mentor people that are coming in that are new up at the top.. And the people that are new and up at the top have a chance of becoming a branch and becoming a tree.. So I think the lesson here is just that even when you have to change organization to accommodate something like growth, you can still own it, you can still own that growth and make it be what you want it to be, you can design it..