

W. L. Gore & Associates

W.L. Gore & Associates, possibly most well known for GORE-TEX fabric, was founded by Bill Gore in 1958. Since its inception, Gore has been a team-based, flat lattice organization that fosters personal initiative. There are no traditional organizational charts, no chains of command, nor predetermined channels of communication.

At Gore, all individuals communicate directly with each other and are accountable to fellow members of multi-disciplined teams. The company encourages hands-on innovation, in which teams organize around opportunities and leaders emerge. This unique kind of corporate structure has proven to be a significant contributor to associate satisfaction and retention.

Maximizing individual potential, maintaining an emphasis on product integrity, and cultivating an environment where creativity can flourish, are key to the company's success. According to Gore, "Associates (not employees) are hired for general work areas. With the guidance of their sponsors (not bosses) and a growing understanding of opportunities and team objectives, associates commit to projects that match their skills. Sponsors help associates chart a course in the organization that will offer personal fulfillment while maximizing their contribution to the enterprise. All of this takes place in an environment that combines freedom with cooperation and autonomy with synergy."

Another feature of Gore is their way leaders are developed. Leaders tend to emerge rather than being selected. Anyone who wants to lead a team must first assemble people willing to work with him or her.

Associates adhere to four basic guiding principles articulated by Bill Gore:

- Fairness to each other and everyone with whom we come in contact
- Freedom to encourage, help, and allow other associates to grow in knowledge, skill, and scope of responsibility
- The ability to make one's own commitments and keep them
- Consultation with other associates before undertaking actions that could impact the reputation of the company

Directions:

Read and review the case studies of the business.

Questions:

Based on what you have discovered about Montessori's principles of autonomy, purpose, and mastery, can this model be replicated in business?

What elements have been attempted in the business case?

How has this element affected the autonomy, purpose, and/or mastery of employees of the business?

Can it be duplicated in the business of education?