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An Approach to the Organizational Adoption of Best Practice and Continual Improvement

Q: What were the two author references for swim lane process flows?

A: Geary A. Rummler and Alan P. Brache. The book is *Improving Performance: How to Manage the White Space in the Organization Chart* (Jossey Bass Business and Management Series)

Q: You mentioned brainstorming and fishbone as techniques for root cause analysis - are there any other techniques that you recommend?

A: When facilitating, use techniques that become the most natural and comfortable. There is Stepladder, Ask Why, etc. Do research on facilitating and find what works for you.

Q: What ways can you suggest people to be accountable...some people just won't do the steps?

A: This is dependent on the organization, highly unionized, etc. Overall, highlight the top performers and let peers apply the pressure to the outliers. Physiologically, this is very effective and works to overcome the resistance for people who refuse to do tasks.

Q: What happens when the team gets stuck in not reaching consensus?

A: Use Force Field Analysis techniques – pros and cons – to revisit the problem. Or agree that consensus is not going to be achieved at this level. Sometimes you need leadership to help. This is why reporting progress is necessary to leadership. One part of reporting is stating 'this is what I need from leadership.' Often we can't come to consensus without action from leadership.

Q: Typically, in your experience, what is the average lifespan of a breakout session before it goes into CSI...six months, six weeks?

A: How much change will the organization be able to absorb? That affects the number of break-out sessions they can withstand and timeframes. Some organizations are ready to change at a high rate and can have three break-out sessions, three days running at the same time with three iterations.

Keep in mind, part of the break-out session is teaching future facilitation techniques.

Q: This looks very effective for face-to-face breakout sessions. Can you accomplish similar results working with teams virtually?

A: I do not recommend remote facilitation. Emotional and logical side of the brains do not align when not face-to-face. Members socialize among themselves, issues and assumptions.

Q: It seems like this is a big time commitment, especially in light that many now are doing more, in less time....how do you deal with pushback from those objecting to the time commitments necessary?

A: Since time commitment is a key objection point, I did analysis on time commitment in the medical field with the impetus of change being life or death. The medical field has the same time and resources needed like any organization. The conclusion is there are no shortcuts. The time required is the time required. 89/90% of organizations underestimate time commitment needed. You need to accept the time needed to make the change happen at an organizational level. This includes new people introduced to the organization and leadership taking action on the various teams. Make decisions that support ongoing commitment. Know that smaller teams can usually make changes in a shorter period of time. Regardless of the size of the team, communication and effort are required.

We can change behavior but that behavior degrades over time to bad or typical habits if commitment to time is not there. If it is a priority, give it the time it needs.

Q: How do you deal with turnover of participants in and out of the group - due to attrition, job changes, etc.?

A: Conduct your break-out sessions for the duration of time with absolute minimal interruption. As a facilitator, you need to meet goals and objectives. If you have six people out, for example, it shows lack of leadership.

Improvement should be forever. If you bring new people in and old parties out, that should be part of your culture. The only way to continue workflow is to know (and document) the workflow. Just know high turnover itself is a red flag to the organization.

Q: How do you deal with negative people - even those that seem to be on board but make negative comments outside the breakout sessions?

A: The best thing to do is turn them into being your biggest advocate. Listen and then target communications towards concerns. Negative people can be really vocal. Once a change is made they become the biggest advocate. Use the capability of turning negative into positive as a litmus test.

Some negative people are so far gone that you do need to talk to leadership and ask them not to participate in sessions. Experience says it works out okay. It is for them and other team members that negative energy is addressed. We do want to hear everyone but if negativity becomes too detrimental to change, a change needs to be made.

Q: Excellent presentation! What would you suggest (tools and otherwise) for doing team facilitation via teleconference / Webex only -- no face-to-face interaction?

A: I have not facilitation via teleconference. So much is based on the psychological and work product on the wall, ideas on post-it notes, etc. However, it is possible. This presentation is a remote presentation and could work for proxy facilitation. Then conduct workshops onsite at locations.

Q: Do you ever tie "rewards" (monetary, symbolic, etc) into participating actively in these groups?

A: In IT Service Management or IT Operations in general, we often reward the cowboy who saves the day. In reality, the cowboy often created the problem. I believe in rewarding the process as designed. Reward those that can do the operational aspects. Do not reward the cowboy who comes in as a false hero.

Q: Any best ways to seed ideas into the group without it being "my idea vs. yours?"

A: Find a way towards group conclusion. Think about raising your own children – if a child asks for something you know is bad, find a way to get the child to conclude that it is a bad idea. Point out aspect of risk but simply saying, "Did you think of this?" Ask probing questions so participants can conclude in their minds ways to slim down their options towards a consensus and conclusion.

Q: Against demanding deployment timelines, process is usually the first casualty. How do you counter having processes compromised and be able to demonstrate quick value to fend off process dump?

A: Rely on experience. Use analogies to management to show what they are investing in as far as capabilities in people (effort) and process. Otherwise explain why they should not invest. What are they trying to achieve? Leaders often believe a tool will modify behavior. Inherently, we know this is not true. We buy a tool - first a tricycle which does not work well so then we buy a Mazarati . Then we strip down the Mazarati to a tricycle because that is what we know. Use past experiences to not make the same mistakes in the present.

Product Requirement Document (PRD) tool wish list becomes quick and dirty and not something that takes excess time; if we do need a tool than this is what it has to do. Usually, you find you do not need a tool.

Q: 30 days seems like a short time frame....are most companies that agile? What tips do you have for fast tracking?

A: I recommend 30 days to use as a maximum timeframe so a team doesn't take on anything too big or ominous. 30 days gets quick wins going in an ongoing manner. Leadership is more apt to give approval to action times - takes 10 hours of time; 2 hours for the next month - then action items get chosen that can get acted on based on what can be achieved. Organizational and cultural changes get addressed with this approach internally. It is not something outside consultants can help with.