

IMPROVEMENT SKILLS CONSULTING LTD.

“Simply, improvement...”



Process Change
Engagement is Key

Process Change: Engagement is Key

“Process Mapping is not Process Improvement”

“To Be” Processes

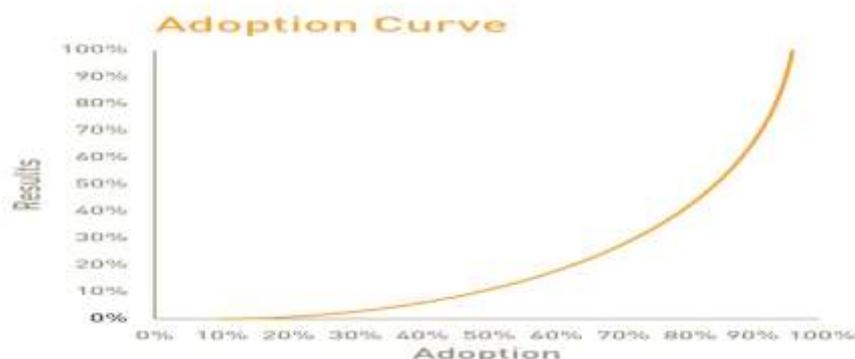
There have been quite a few occasions recently when, talking with clients, it’s been clear that they have been frustrated at the lack of performance improvement they have achieved despite having re-designed their “broken” processes. Often the story goes like this...

“We had xyz consultants in and they ran workshops with staff to map our processes. They then came up with a proposal for the “To Be” process, with all the waste stripped out and Lean flow principles built in. They’ve left us these process maps (and sent us some big invoices) but nothing’s been implemented and we’re not seeing any benefits.”

A “To Be” process map is all very well, but you only get benefits once it’s been adopted. NimbusPartners (www.nimbuspartners.com), with whom we work, have a simple equation that describes this:

$$R = I \times A^2$$

The Results you should expect are equal to the Initiative that you undertake multiplied by the Adoption you achieve – squared!



Simply put, the right people, documented processes, and appropriate technology do not produce results by themselves. It is the adoption of behaviour and “ways of

working” that harnesses the people and technology around the right processes that produces the result (benefit).

So, the key is adoption and that takes much more than simply engaging a few staff in process mapping and re-design workshops. Until the operation of the new process becomes habitual, it’s unlikely to deliver its theoretical benefits.

Designing-in Adoption

We develop and run a lot of project management skills development workshops for clients and one of the key tools in the PM kitbag is Stakeholder Analysis. Oddly, this seems to be completely lacking in many process improvement projects and may go some way to explaining the lack of adoption and benefits.

Actually, it’s not the Analysis that’s important; rather it’s the approach to engaging and managing the stakeholders throughout the process improvement project lifecycle that matters.

In practice, that means identifying who the stakeholders are at the start of the PI project and building “engagement” activities into the process of process improvement.

Many organisations will be using the DMAIC approach for process improvement projects:



Engagement needs to be built in at every stage so there is a continuing and growing emphasis on delivering benefits as the stages progress. And, it needs to be thought through right from the start. The specific approaches will need to vary depending

on the nature of the project and the prevailing organisational culture; one size definitely does not fit all as far as change management is concerned. Some of the factors that affect the specifics include:

-  How “process aware” are senior managers and is there an owner for the process being re-designed ?
-  How easy is it to take staff off-line to participate in mapping, measuring, analysis and re-design?
-  To what extent is the line manager who will be adopting the new process skilled at managing change and making improvements stick?

When you produce a project plan for a DMAIC project, engagement needs to be included. Some organisations have a well mapped out process for process improvement (the lower levels of detail for each of the DMAIC stages). These processes also have to include engagement activities.

If there is no “owner” for the process being re-designed, don’t be surprised if the “To Be” maps sit on the shelf, gathering dust. In the “Define” stage, an owner needs to be found and signed up to their role in all five project stages.

If staff can’t be released to get involved in workshops, you’ll have to find a way to engage them via one-to-ones, or through their existing team meetings.

If the line manager(s) of the new process have no track record of making change happen or making it stick, they will need significant hand-holding and coaching through the “Improve” and “Control” stages. They need to be helped to make operating the new process habitual and that includes routine measurement, analysis and corrective action.

No surprises

Although the ultimate aims of engaging with key stakeholders throughout a process improvement project are adoption and delivery of benefits, in reality it’s all about ensuring there are no surprises which can result in blockages to adoption.

There must be no surprises for the:

-  Process Owner/Senior Managers who have to approve the re-design
-  Line manager(s) who have to manage the new process
-  Staff who have to operate the new process

Some of the things you need to build into the project plan to avoid surprises include:

	Process Owner/ Senior Managers	Line Manager(s)	Process Operators (Staff)
Define	Setting SMART improvement objectives	Arranging staff involvement in mapping	Mapping the As Is process
Measure	Agreeing data needs	Planning data gathering & stratification	Defining data needs Gathering data
Analyse	Understanding emerging data/analysis	Understanding emerging data/analysis	Identifying problems with the As Is process
Improve	Signing off the change/ implementation plan	Planning for implementation and removing blockages	Contributing ideas for the To Be process and how to implement it
Control	Holding Line Managers accountable for benefits	Reporting process performance results (weekly)	Getting involved in corrective actions

While these don't guarantee successful change, the approach of "no surprises" does ensure a regular, planned involvement of the key stakeholders throughout the project. They are directed at "ticking all four boxes" of the requirements for successful change:

Pressure	Vision	Capacity	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reason to change and agreement on "why we can't stay here" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear view of what the "improvement" looks like 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge, skills and confidence to make the change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do-able improvements, owned by those who have to implement them

Our track record

Our consultants have been helping organisations in the private and public sectors to manage and improve their processes for nearly two decades. We have supported European Quality Award winners in their approach to process management.

We are not wedded to a particular methodology. We help clients identify their improvement goals and then develop an approach to achieve these; invariably ensuring their people develop the skills to make further improvements themselves.

Please contact us for more information about how we can help you to manage and improve your processes.

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