

IMPROVEMENT SKILLS CONSULTING LTD.

“Simply, improvement...”



Developing Process Owner Skills

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“The brand of leadership we propose has a simple base of MBWA (Managing By Wandering Around).” [Tom Peters & Nancy Austin]

How do you embed Process Management?

Many organisations have implemented a variety of Process Improvement projects to address performance problems related to customer service, efficiency, flexibility and cycle-time. For example, in some organisations key targets were being missed and senior management teams saw Process Improvement as a useful way to get performance back on track. We facilitated projects in the public and private sectors that delivered service improvements, reduced costs, increased capacity and dramatically reduced cycle-times.

One of the key success factors in delivering improvements was the appointment of Process Owners: single, named individuals who had the accountability for improving “their process”. Mostly, they did a great job and the project teams achieved their objectives and then disbanded.

What often didn’t happen though was the transition from Process Improvement to Process Management, where there is a different role for Process Owners.

A 1996 study by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) found that in organisations that were “well progressed” with process management, 91% had appointed senior executives as Process Owners and 57% had also appointed middle managers. By contrast, only 59% of those organisations in the early stages had appointed senior executives and the same percentage had appointed middle managers. Interestingly, 57% of the “well progressed” organisations had appointed Process Owners for all their processes.

Today, more and more organisations are developing approaches to Process Management, with a range of improvement objectives: improving consistency, reducing risks and non-compliance, removing non-value-add (waste), or making processes more flexible and agile.

Process Owners are key to embedding effective Process Management and it’s no longer adequate simply to appoint someone, knowing that their job will be done in

a couple of months. So, what is the role of the Process Owner in helping to embed Process Management? It includes...

- Ensuring the process is fully defined, including its interfaces with other processes
- Establishing the standards that must be applied and the performance targets that must be achieved
- Regularly reviewing performance with the staff operating the process and identify corrective actions required
- Regularly reviewing performance with other stakeholders (e.g. customers and suppliers) to identify changes and improvements
- Ensuring the process is benchmarked against relevant comparators, to stimulate step-change improvements

Process Owner Development Programmes:

Clearly, all this requires more than “process mapping skills” and in our experience an introductory development programme for Process Owners should cover:

- The process for process management
- Tools and techniques
- A process “health-check” (or capability and maturity) framework
- Leadership and change management

The “process for process management” provides an overall picture of what needs to be done, systematically, both at an organisational level and for individual processes. Tools and techniques include mapping, measurement, analysis and improvement.

A “health-check” provides a process-independent way of assessing current capability of an individual process and making comparisons with non-similar processes. It also provides a framework for setting capability improvement targets.

All the technical and process skills in the world will make no difference if the Leadership and Change Management skills are not also implemented.

Process Owners need to be able to create the vision and enthusiasm among process stakeholders for them to want to improve performance. There is also the challenge of reconciling process and functional responsibilities as the organisation moves towards a process managed environment.

We always emphasise the importance of learning by doing, so all Process Owner development should involve working on their “live” process as part of the programme. That way, they learn new skills, while improving the capability of the process for which they are responsible and, importantly, demonstrate their leadership of that process.

Such programmes are a significant investment in Process Owners’ skills to ensure processes can be managed and continuously improved over a sustainable period.

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.

For more information on our public and in-house Process Owner Development Programmes, visit the events page of our website, or e-mail us.

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