Enterprise Process Management – Creating Uniformity of Purpose

Business Process Management – just like every other "new wave" of how to better run our organizations – is stymied by existing social structures that exist in our organizations. Call them silos, functional management structures, or anything else you like – the fact is that organizations have social structures in place that govern how things get done.

These social structures have their own hierarchies of power and influence. In almost all cases we have people in our organizations tasked with certain levels of responsibility, and it is very dangerous to try and create mandates that supercede these existing power structures. Most times when we try the results are very, very messy.

But we have to do something – or at least we know that we need to do something. Yet what can we do? There is an answer that will help us in the majority of business cases but before we look at the answer let's peer a bit deeper into the essence of the problem.

There are several general scenarios that exist in organizations that can be addressed, and perhaps at least one scenario that is "iffy" in respect to achieving real uniformity without exposing the organization to excessive risk. That brings us to the first two major points we are dealing with when we seek to improve our organizations as a whole:

1) We need uniformity of purpose (common goals)
2) We must minimize the organizational risk that comes with any attempt to create better uniformity

It's a big deal on both points. Creating uniformity of purpose has BIG benefits. Attempting to create uniformity of purpose is an even BIGGER RISK. The reason why most organizations take partial measures, try little nudges or avoid the issue completely is because of the track record left behind by these kinds of change initiatives. That track record looks a lot like a junkyard, with CXOs and even businesses that where "totaled" by the attempt lying about, broken and shattered.

So we have to address the risk issue while finding a way to grant permission for unification to occur. How do we do that? Let's refine the risk issue a bit more before we discuss the "how" of accomplishing just that.

The Key Characteristics of Risk in Organizational Change

Ok, so your organization has functional areas or silos or whatever you want to call them. You may be in a leadership role in the organization seeking to create more uniformity, in one of the "silos" knowing you've got to do something "different" to get things working together better, or you may be in a professional role that puts you in a place where you need to "sell" change within your organization. Regardless of what your role is, you are facing these risk issues.

1) People in your organization have power. They also have responsibility. The people that must be influenced to change have significant influence within the organization themselves. You can't mandate anything to them and you can't challenge the power structure.

2) The power structure will protect itself. Make no mistake about this folks. If you do anything that challenges the existing power structure it will respond aggressively. It's like cornering a badger. Badgers like to be left alone, and they leave most other things alone. Corner one though and you will find you're facing a barrage of claws, teeth, fur and fury that can send a grizzly bear running for cover.

So we can't challenge the power structure and we can't mandate our wishes. Well then, what do we do?

Let's add in a few more characteristics to help us understand what we can do and why it will work.

Common Characteristics of People

When we looked at the need the CPP training program fulfilled, we found that we were giving people permission to be successful. Do the people in the organization that have control of our silos and functional areas care about this too? Sure they do! They have the desire to be successful as well. Many of these people have that desire even stronger than the rest of us.

They also want the organization to be successful. They really do. If the organization isn't successful then their pride, prestige and rewards are threatened. So anything that helps the organization be successful, that helps them be successful, and that DOESN'T threaten their "fiefdom" or power will be perceived as a good thing, serving their own wants and needs.

So we are really dealing with the same "challenge – opportunity" we have successfully dealt with in the CPP program, only this time we are dealing with different context. Getting that change in context into perspective is the key to unlocking the opportunity and this is how we do that.

Creating Uniformity without Risk – Changing the Game with Process

So we once again change the game for people. How do we do that? It's simple really (just like everything else we do). We move our unifications efforts outside of the "fiefdoms" and drive our uniformity of purpose against a higher level purpose – the experience we deliver to our customers.

Let's talk that through. Very few organizations have actually documented or attempted to "manage" the highest level processes in their organizations. BPM companies certainly don't go there, they got stuck in the IT trenches a long time ago.

Those highest level processes are what our customers' experience. So when I say they are high level processes I mean what our customers *really experience* – from their perspective – and their perspective doesn't include ANY of the STUFF we live and breathe (and manage and do) internally within our organizations.

Can we document these processes? Of course we can!

Do these processes care about functional lines or silo structures? Of course not. They cross these "lines of demarcation" with impunity. They touch every aspect of our organizations in one way or another...

Have you ever watched an American-style Football game? I think this is a great example of what we are talking about here. In American football there is a defensive team, an offensive team, special teams, coaches for each, and a head coach...

But what is the process the customer is really in? The customer wants to be entertained and they want to win. Customers of football teams get vicarious "success" from "their" team winning. So what makes a winning team?

For football, it takes performances by the Offense, Defense and Special Teams that COMBINE to produce a WIN. So WINNING is a unification goal. That goal doesn't dictate to the Offensive Silo HOW they do their job, but it does create responsibility and ownership in the unified goal of WINNING. Do we care how the Offensive Silo scores their points as long as they score? Of course not. Do we care how the Defensive Silo keeps the other team from scoring more points than we score? Of course not. We care about the unified goal of winning, not how each silo delivers on their part of our combined goal.

So for unification to work, we need:

1) A unifying goal that sits outside or above the "domain" of each functional area or silo

2) An outcome or result that we can all take ownership and responsibility in

3) The characteristics by which we will determine our success

4) And the freedom to deliver on that success in our own way, without challenging the existing power and social structure already in place.

Customer Processes, Intended Outcomes and KPIs

Now let's move this discussion to simpler terms. Can we bring people together to talk about these "customer processes"? Sure we can, we do it in the CPP program with a technique we call SCO Mind Mapping. The SCO Mind Map asks us five questions about our customers, what we currently deliver, and what our customers really want (need) from us.

It's a simple discussion that takes us out of our silos. It's something we can do without going near the boundaries we already have in place. It's a discussion about something that is effectively "outside" of

the organization. It's what our customers experience when they do business with us, and it's a place we can go to in creating agreement on what we want to deliver.

Interestingly enough, what we find when we do this is that it is not at all hard for us to agree at this high level on what kind of experience we should be delivering to our customers. We end up with a set of statements that we agree we should deliver on, and from there the magic starts happening!

Of course it doesn't matter what our motivation is when we do this. We are self-serving creatures, right? So maybe we are doing this to increase revenues or expand market share. No problem. When we identify customer experiences that increase customer value these things are going to happen.

Now when we take the next step, and convert these statements describing what we will deliver to our customers into *KPIs* (with what we will measure, how we will measure it and what our goal is) something very, very interesting happens. We have created a common goal with common responsibility across functional areas or silos. We haven't said ANYTHING about HOW each functional area will support this goal but we have identified the goal – we even have the KPIs we will use to measure our success!

Do we care how each functional area goes about helping us achieve that goal? Do we care HOW the offensive team scores the points we need to win? Do we care about how the defensive team keeps the other team from scoring too many points? Of course we don't. We care about WINNING, and the KPIs we create for our customer processes are what we must deliver on to WIN.

And because we have identified what those KPIs are - what we will measure, how we will measure them and what our goal is - the translation down into functional areas is very easy to see. For example, if we are an insurance company and our KPIs include responding to a request for quote in 24 hours or less we can take that "customer process" and "roll up" the time deliverable for each functional area that supports the process to see if we are really going to "win" or not.

Because customer processes always cross functional boundaries when we bring them into our "management stack" we start creating unification. Because we aren't telling people how to run their department or do their job we avoid the majority of risk associated with unification change. Because it's really not hard to get agreement on what we should be delivering to our customers the buy-in process is far simpler than anything else we have to push for unification. And because the entire "process" of creating these unified goals is a simple set of activities ideal for use in teams we aren't asking our functional leaders to adopt a whole new set of practices, thinking, knowledge, skills or behaviors.

Unification can only come from building ownership in a goal that sits outside of all the functional areas in our organizations. It has to be something everyone can understand, make obvious sense, and be linked to "success, winning and/or increased financial reward" for the stakeholders you are bringing to the table. It cannot dictate or mandate what they will do but it must create something they can agree needs to be done, something we can all measure and judge our success against.

And it works phenomenally well.

Variations, Challenges and a Bridge to Far

I mentioned at the beginning of this paper that there are several scenarios that can be addressed with this approach and perhaps at least one that cannot. Let's review that briefly.

Leadership – When an organization has leadership that is pushing this kind of change the program works extremely well - and very quickly - assuming that there is either very strong commitment by leadership or functional leaders that in general desire the company to be successful. There are many organizations that fit these two profiles.

In either case, leadership can quickly build the KPIs needed to drive the organization into unification or motivate good functional leaders to build them for the company. In either scenario the unification effort can move so fast it is really hard to believe (we worked with a Generic Pharmaceutical company that restructured their corporate strategy in the second scenario into an operating plan hitting deliverables in just 90 days).

Champions – Internal champions can achieve this by gaining consensus on specific customer processes one at a time until the results of these efforts start to take hold – and they will take hold.

Leadership Mandate – In some cases leadership mandate will also work – but this is going to be more painful. It requires tying compensation and even employment to the KPIs – and once that line is drawn it MUST be held to with firm and unwavering resolve.

A Bridge to Far – For some organizations that are very deeply mired in what can best be termed "dysfunctional functionalism" there is far less opportunity to succeed. It can still be done by Leadership Mandate but it will be messy, and as the saying goes "heads will roll." Trying to make this kind of change happen in these types of organizations is a "do or die" scenario, because if leadership is not strong enough to do what must be done the resulting kick-back is likely to push the company over the edge into abject failure.

Closing Remarks

Once again we carving our way through the complicated world we have created by happenstance or design with a highly refined (and simple) approach to achieving success. The route to success that we take provides the way to go directly to creating results instead of marching into a battle that could easily turn into an all out war. Why go there when there is no need? It's not a question of do we know where we want to go. It's not a question of do we what to go there. The question that keeps tripping us up is HOW do we go there?

People want to succeed. People want to move past functional boundaries. People want to be a part of anything that is BIG and is likely to SUCCEED. That's what we provide - a way to simply, easily, and successfully use process to unify functional areas and silos, usually with hardly a whimper of protest from anyone, anywhere. By using process in the right way we can consistently achieve uniformity of goal and purpose regardless of the social structure in place.

Why would we do anything else?

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