

IMPROVE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S PERFORMANCE RIGHT

Now!"

"Every organization is perfectly designed to achieve the results it gets."

The results your organization is currently realizing are not by chance. And although influenced by factors outside your control (not the least of which is the current economic crisis) they also have a great deal to do with factors within your control—most notably your business strategy and how you have designed your organization. Organizations looking to emerge from the current economic crisis stronger and better positioned for success will be forced to embrace new ways of thinking. They need to reinvent themselves by deconstructing ineffective organizational structures, redefining "leadership" and "performance," and revitalizing business practices around management hierarchy. Contrary to popular mythology, the thing that most impedes innovation in organizations is not a lack of risk taking. The real brake on innovation is the drag of old mental models.

A number of government organizations have had to make drastic budget cuts. The challenge with budget cutting is like dieting, you may lose weight but you don't necessarily become healthier because of it (and you may regain the weight later, but that's the topic for another discussion.) So, although cuts have been made, the organization's ability to execute its mission may be negatively impacted. Many leaders are playing an excruciating waiting game: If we can just hold on, one of these days things will finally back to "normal." It's time for these leaders to forget about waiting and arrive at a radically different conclusion: This is the new normal. Consequently, leaders have the opportunity to hit the organization's reset button. They can use the instability of the present to build on and create organizations that are capable of continuous self-renewal in the absence of a crisis. In the process, they can change key rules of the game, reshape parts of the organization, and redefine the work people do. Managers are often captives of a paradigm that places the pursuit of efficiency ahead of every other goal. The goal should be to improve your ability to manage a perplexing paradox – how to stay focused on today's business while building tomorrow's.

With smaller budgets come leaner organizations, and organizational leaders are seeking answers on how to maintain citizen satisfaction with their government, given these unprecedented challenges. Here's one guarantee – citizens won't lessen their expectations simply because fewer resources exist. So, what are you going to do? Increasingly, leaders

are implementing reorganizations to departments and in some cases, to the entire organization. It seems the trauma of this recession has made it far easier to make dramatic changes that otherwise would be off limits.

In order for an alternative organizational structure to succeed, much more than simply moving boxes around an organization chart is required. Positive change requires identifying what else needs to happen beyond the reorganization. Focusing on structure alone is unlikely to produce positive results and may unexpectedly exacerbate other pressing issues. A healthy balance between creativity and discipline is needed, and substantive changes in how work is executed must be based on an evaluation of the linkage between organizational structure and organizational performance. A well-designed organization ensures that the form or infrastructure of the organization matches its purpose and strategy, meets the challenges posed by business realities and significantly increases the likelihood that the collective efforts of people will be successful.

One way to view the linkage between organizational structure and organizational performance is by viewing it through a systemic lens. That is to say, performance is a function of a system and not any one specific element. In order for employees and organizations to achieve optimal performance the Individual employee, work Processes and Organizational conditions must be in alignment. A breakdown at any one of the levels will prevent optimal performance.

The Organization lays the foundation for a high-performance work system as it creates a purpose and focus for the organization and its members by adopting a mission, a vision, a set of core values, and operating strategies and, just as important, showing employees how they will make these goals happen. The line of sight must be clear between what employees work on everyday and how it contributes to the organization's purpose. Remember, there is no positive association between employees' completing more tasks and a successful organization. What employees work on is more important than how much work they complete.

With respect to Process, this essentially describes "how work gets done." It is focused on improving the business/work processes utilized in the delivery of services by determining if areas such as workflow, use of technology and performance management procedures support the focus of the organization.



Vital to ensuring processes are in alignment, is the creation and implementation of performance measures to use as a "dashboard". Results-based performance measures should be linked to strategic objectives, provide accurate, understandable, and timely information, be accepted as legitimate by organizational members, and produce benefits in excess of their cost. There is an increasing demand in my consulting work from cities and counties that are seeking to have work processes evaluated to determine where the work that does not add value and remove it as a means to expedite service delivery and enhance effectiveness.

Individual performers within the organization affect the processes. The relationship must be aligned among the individual performance goals, knowledge, skills, and coaching and feedback received. For example, the performance appraisal process should be utilized to provide timely, valuable feedback to employees to guide their work and help them develop skills and abilities beyond their current role. Opinions may vary on the benefit of a performance appraisal process, but when executed well it provides tremendous dividends to the individual and the organization. While your agency may have a hiring freeze in place right now, it's the perfect time to reevaluate the traditional human resource functions of recruiting, retaining, and developing your organization's talent. Establishing a unified talent development strategy is no longer

a luxury, but the standard for those who seek to not simply exist, but flourish. This economy will turn around and when it does, what type of employees will stay with your agency and which ones will depart? What kinds of new employees will you be able to attract? Determining which employees you want to retain and working arduously to ensure that happens is crucial to continued success for your organization. As workforce demographics evolve and economic constraints prohibit increases in headcount, failure to develop employees in a focused and predictable way not only directly impacts your agency's performance, but also hinders its ability to be responsive and sustainable.

In summary, it is vital that leaders synchronize these three factors – Organization, Process and Individuals – in order to achieve better results and improve organizational performance. With limited resources being available for the foreseeable future, sustaining quality government means everyone in your organization needs to know what is expected of them. It's about absolute clarity on strategy and improving operational performance and realizing the key to success is having a culture with the discipline to accept change.

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