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Furnishing with Style: Harnessing the potential of your people and inspiring their creativity

We have looked briefly at the expectations we have of the 'ideal tenant' in regard to their abilities, their approach and how they work with the team. But we have not as yet said much about the task of tenancy: what we expect our tenants and their teams to do in practice.

Actually, that is not entirely true. The tenant and their team, together with the responsibilities that have been conferred by the top-level house, are in reality an organisation in their own right, and therefore it might be appropriate to reapply chapters 1 to 5 (or at least 2½ to 5 if the objectives are now already clear) at their level.

But at some point, the rubber needs to hit the road, the responsibilities conferred in the cells of the house (top-level or process level) need to translate into physical improvements and activity. In this chapter we assume that the responsibilities have been broken down enough, and that the tenant and the team are now eager to translate the theory into practical answers; they want to sense the blue smoke billowing and feel the traction build; they want to see results!

So how do they set about it?

Well, inspired by new understandings of what is possible and what is required, they could just launch in and do what they think is necessary. In the first year of undertaking this sort of planning, that sort of approach is amazingly successful. It seems that the clarity and commitment that are generated through the planning exercise unearth so much that is 'obvious' and such enthusiasm to do something about it, that it is hard to fail to make a difference, particularly if you regularly measure and report what that difference is.

But in the second and subsequent years, such dramatic progress requires a more methodical and analytical approach, and it is good to begin to establish that approach in the first year so that your people are familiar with it, and competent to use it effectively, as it becomes more and more essential to progress.

In simple terms, the approach we propose you take consists of the following steps:

1. Provide an overview to your team of the planning process to this point, and how this has culminated in a series of responsibilities for your particular process. Use the relevant column of the house to explain these responsibilities, and encourage them to contribute their own ideas on the possibilities and potential.
2. Work with your team to develop a vision of how effective the process could be in fulfilling its potential. Build an enthusiasm in the team for doing something extraordinary; something that will make full use of their talents and creativity; something that they will see as a fitting expression of their own potential.
3. Translate the vision into clear time-based measures and targets for performance (using the tools in

Encouraging contributions from the team, albeit within a defined framework can help generate commitment at all levels of the business. The 'house' helps to ensure that the contributions are at the most constructive level.

Exercises to help with this are fairly common, and some can be found on the tesseract website www.tesseract.com

Chapter 2), and check that these will fulfil the expectations of the wider organisation reflected in the house relationships. This latter point can be best achieved by collecting the targets for all of the processes in the house, and working together at the management team level to ensure that they all add up to the fulfilment of the objectives reflected on the left hand side of the house.

4. Implement measurement systems within your process, and use these to evaluate baseline performance; the performance that exists before you set about doing any improvements.
5. Compare baseline performance against target performance, and develop strategies to improve the performance within the necessary timescales. The strategies may be developed by sub-sets of your team, but these should be reconciled with each other to ensure that the total set of strategies is practicable and not in conflict with each other.

Strategies should only be developed in response to a clear deficiency between desired and actual performance. This simple discipline will ensure that all improvement effort is both focused and effective.

If resources are an issue, and they probably will be, the order of implementing the strategies will need to be prioritised. In some cases the necessary improvement strategy may be obvious, particularly in the first year, but if there is any doubt we suggest you use the approach proposed in step 8 (see below).

6. Fully plan and schedule the implementation of the finally agreed strategies, including deadlines and responsibilities. Use this information to forecast how performance for each measure will improve toward target over the coming months as the implementation plan proceeds and improvements come on-line. Plot these forecast lines on separate graphs for each measure.
7. Proceed with the implementation plan as scheduled. Monitor performance on a monthly basis, and plot actual performance against forecast performance on the graphs for each

The development of a forecast serves two very important purposes. The first is that it ensure the benefits and implications of the plan have been fully evaluated against what is required (that it is not simply wishful thinking). The second is that the execution of the plan can then be monitored in terms of its quality as well as its timeliness.

measure (see step 6). Meet monthly to review the graphs and discuss any progress or performance issues.

8. Where actual performance is below forecast performance, the reasons for this need to be understood, and a corrective plan put in place. For simple issues, this is relatively easy and straightforward, however, for more complex issues the following steps will enable members of your team to ensure that the issue is

addressed methodically:

- a. Understand the true extent of the deficiency: what is the nature of the shortfall; when does it occur, where and how frequently; what are its implications; who is affected?
- b. Analyse the reasons for the deficiency: what are the underlying root causes; what is the evidence?
- c. Develop possible solutions: what are the available options for addressing the root causes;

Steps a to f represent a problem solving methodology. Such methodologies need not be bureaucratic, but they have tremendous potential to ensure effective and sustainable solutions. The alternative can be imagined simply by considering that consequences that might arise from doing a step badly.

what are their merits and weaknesses; what are their timescales?

- d. Select the optimum solution(s): balance short term and long term needs; ensure the deficiency will be resolved in time to fulfil the target performance.
- e. Plan and project manage the solution: integrate the tasks into the existing improvement plan; schedule resources, manage progress.
- f. Evaluate the effectiveness of the solution: integrate the monitoring activity within the monthly management process (best achieved by redrawing the forecast line for the measure to reflect the current situation and the new plan - see step 6)

9. Celebrate your success.

(If required, a more detailed version of this approach to problem solving is available at no extra charge from the Tesseract website www.tesseract.com.)

The approach outlined above will do much to ensure that your teams creativity is inspired and focused where it is most needed. The essence of the approach is a flow of information, regularly reviewed, that stimulates and invokes responsibility, and empowers your team to rapidly implement what is needed.

Once the approach is established, it will enable your organisation to respond quickly to changes in circumstance both internally and externally generated; and manifest either through fluctuations in your performance or in increased expectations on your targets. In conjunction with the house, which can rapidly deploy the implications of any strategic change down into process responsibilities, the approach outlined in this chapter will ensure an automatic and effective response by appropriately directing the focus of each process team and by empowering them to develop and implement the optimum solution.