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Under One Roof: Holding it all together

The picture that we have painted in the last chapter is of a business awash with change. Positive change; directed change; empowered change, change that will transform your business performance. But change nevertheless.

And high levels of change create a new problem. How do you coordinate the change and ensure that efforts are not duplicated and implementations do not run into conflict with each other?

Normal practice for such a situation is to establish a steering committee to run in parallel with the normal management activity and to focus on the progress and issues of the overall change programme. They are often the custodians of the 'master plan', an amalgam of all the detailed plans, which they use to assess progress, evaluate implications, and pronounce judgements on conflicts that arise. Often times they do a sterling but thankless task, working in the background to ensure things run smoothly.

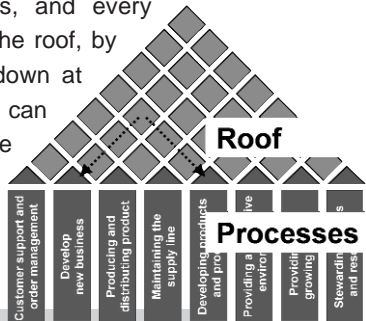
The problem with such steering committees is twofold: firstly, they introduce a new level of bureaucracy which detracts from the local ownership of improvement initiatives; and secondly, steering group meetings can be very inefficient, with many of the conversations only concerning a fraction of the participants. As a result, the key people for ensuring issues are resolved are often absent – and involved in 'more important' things.

The 'house' offers us an alternative.

The roof of the house allows us to explore the interactions between each of the processes, and thereby understand what communication (if any) should be set up between individual processes. This dispersed approach helps to ensure that process owners work together to identify and address any conflicts that arise between them, or develop joint improvement projects where otherwise there might be a duplication of effort, without involving those who are not affected. The end result is much shorter, more focused meetings, with many fewer participants. To be true, there will be more of them, but because they are short and focused (oftentimes just a few minutes on the telephone once a month) the overall time commitment is greatly reduced.

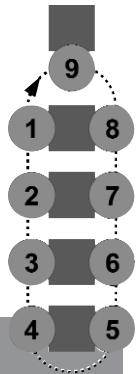
The roof is essentially a half matrix, sat on top of the house

(hence its name) which maps out the interactions between each process, and every other process. Each cell in the roof, by following two lines pointing down at 45 degrees both left and right, can be traced back to two separate processes.



To generate the roof can be a surprisingly quick activity:

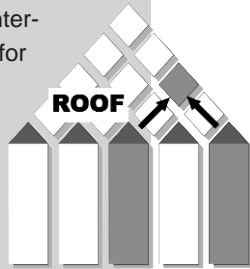
1. Create a schedule so that every process tenant meets every other process tenant once, for anything between five and ten minutes. Have multiple meetings going on at once to save time. Properly planned this can be achieved in as many cycles as you have processes.
2. Process tenants meet each other according to the schedule, and share with each other (remind each other of) their objectives for their processes.
3. Between them, the tenants decide whether their stated objectives are likely to place them in conflict with each other, or



The diagram on the right shows a pattern which will ensure each process meets with each other (for nine processes) other models can be developed for this, or by looking at the tesseracts website.

whether they are likely to provide opportunities for some joint projects, or whether it is a bit of both, or whether it is neither. This can be best determined by imagining each process driving flat-out for their objectives with no regard to the implications for the other process.

4. The conclusion of this decision is marked at the appropriate intersection in the roof. A cross for potential conflict, a circle for synergy (identified by potential duplication between the processes), a cross and a circle for both, and a blank for neither.



5. Having determined the inherent nature of their relationship, the tenants then decide what level of communication would be appropriate to avoid conflict or make best use of the potential synergy. Ideally they will use existing forums that exist between them wherever possible (except where the forum is shared with others). Failing this, they should decide on fre-

Options of methods of meeting: email; telephone call; conference call; face-to-face meeting

quency, method, and membership (themselves; a member from each team; or subsets of each team).

6. The first such communication is scheduled in their diaries. A review date is also scheduled; this is to enable them to evaluate how effectively and efficiently the communication is working, and to make any necessary adjustments.

The roof provides a means for processes to continue to review their interactions and update their relationships as their situation and objectives change.

Even in isolation from the rest of this book, this is a surprisingly profitable exercise. Regularly we discover that this is the first time that individual members of management teams have sat down and discussed what they needed from each other. The result builds teamwork at an individual relationship level, and it helps pull team members together on an ongoing basis. Through the mechanism of the roof, the strategies can be woven together, enabling them to flex and respond to each other, and providing a basis for reconciling and adapting change quickly.

