Table of Contents

Processes

Process Facilitation

A. Purpose:

The purpose of process facilitation is to HELP advance the stages and steps of events in a predetermined sequence. Doing so in a way that the quality of results is enhanced.

Process is defined as sequenced stages and steps that culminate in attaining specific and predictable results.

B. Systems:

A system is a collection of parts working together for a common purpose. Four major elements exist in a system:

The environment – everything outside

Input – resources from the environment

Output – results flowing to the environment

Throughput – systemic conversion processes-the only place where value can be added

A process facilitator focuses attention on the throughput processes of a system.

Since each process is influenced by all elements of the system within which it operates, improvements mandate a consideration and potential modification of all system elements.

C. Process Hierarchy:

(Please refer to Organization Change System Manual)

1. Stages. Stages are major elements of the change process. Stages provide a macro view of the change effort and follow a logical progression from beginning to end. Sequential steps contribute to attaining each stage.

Typically, the end of each stage activity marks a significant milestone. Milestone passage normally calls for progress reports of some type, and release of resources. Resources for subsequent stages are normally obligated for the next stage as the current stage is completed.

Stages are nested. Once a stage has begun, it is always open for potential modification until the entire process has been completed.

2. Steps. Steps are minor elements of the change process that contribute to completing a significant stage. There are thirty-three (33) sequential steps in the Eight Stage Change Process. Steps will not generally provide a macro view of progressions. Process steps may be repeated even out of sequence.

NOTE: ***Both stages and steps are a process. Steps contribute to attaining a stage effort. Stages contribute to a change effort.***

3. Process flow. All processes have a sequence flow that defines a beginning and an end. The flow takes a predictable amount of time and resources to complete.

Processes are imperfect; flaws are produced. As such, when a flaw is produced, it affects everything in the process flow that follows it. Flaws are most economically detected and corrected closest to the point where they are produced.

4. Cycles. A cycle is an automatically repetitive process. When using the Ten-stage system, an underlying assumption is that the process is cyclical.

D. Process Elements:

Every process has six essential elements. Each element has a specific culture that determines the capacity of the process.

- ? Cues
- ? Activities
- ? Decisions
- ? Timing
- ? Resources
- ? Results

Although other elements may exist in one process or another, these elements exist in all processes. Understanding these elements must result in:

The ability to recognize the contribution each element makes to the process.

The ability to diagnose and remedy difficulty.

1. Cues. By definition, a cue is a hint or intimation. It is entirely appropriate to use the word as a descriptor of a process element. Nearly everything done in a process is done on cue. Many are overt, easily recognized and cannot be mistaken. Others are covert, hidden and easily overlooked or mistaken.

The process facilitator must be able to successfully identify and interpret cues. Individuals being assisted by the process facilitator may not have identified cues or be able to interpret demands based on a cue. A process facilitation intervention must be offered as a genuine gesture to improve process flow.

A cue is intended to perform one of two functions: start something, or stop something. Like an electric switch, cues turn off or turn on.

a. In terms of process elements, a cue –

1) starts or stops an activity

2) prompts a decision

3) activates or deactivates a resource expenditure

b. If cues are not apparent and engaged –

1) Activities get out of synchronization

2) Decisions are made by the wrong person, are inappropriately timed, or are not made.

3) Resources are expended prematurely or after the projected need for them has passed.

2. Activities. People perform activities. Three types of activities are discussed, and for the purpose of process examination are irrevocably linked:

? Sole activities performed by one person in isolation
? Interpersonal activities performed by a team or work group while isolated.
? Interconnected activities performed by individuals or groups separately, then connected.

The three types of activities described produce benefits as well as flaws. Flaws cannot be eliminated from any process for very long. This makes process facilitation a continuous effort it also means that the production of flaws is neither good nor bad, but expected.

The process facilitator must be ready to intervene effectively when a process flaw is detected. In the absence of process flaws, more proactive organization development activities are always appropriate.

From a process facilitation standpoint, the following three types of activities have built-in flaws:

a. Sole. Sole activities are performed by an individual in isolation. An isolated individual may be part of a group, but not interacting with others while forming thoughts and ideas. The major drawback is that results from these activities are limited to the meanings that the individual had in mind when the activities occurred. Typically, meanings (standards of perfection, for example) are difficult to transfer in the communication process and impossible

from an isolated individual. Thus, activity passes along the process chain are vulnerable to flaws generated from inadequate transfer of meaning.

b. Interpersonal. When people work together on a part of the process another type of flaw is generated. Relationships among group members are continually subject to misunderstandings that result in withholding of information from one another. As information is withheld, individual choices and group decisions are made based on incomplete and inaccurate information.

The quality of the relationships among members of a group provides insight into the yield that can be expected from the group. Where relationships are poor, yield can be expected to be poor as well.

When a group is working together, a process facilitator must be alert to information being withheld. Typically, group decisions will be made too quickly or with unspoken hesitation. These are cues that group members are withholding their opinion. In these cases, the quality of dialog and decisions will suffer.

c. Interconnected. Potential flaws from interconnected activities result from:

1) mismatched context

2) lack of understanding intent

3) lack of systemic view

Process facilitators can easily detect these flaws by performing the essential link between interconnected activities. Asking for clarity about underlying assumptions between individuals and groups produces faster and more accurate information.

3. Decisions. All processes incorporate decisions made by people. Personal choice and decision making styles are a special consideration of cultural facilitation and are covered extensively separately. This section addresses group-decision making standards and the influence of those standards on advancing the process.

a. Autocratic and Automatic. Autocratic decisions are made by a single person or group with the authority to make a specific decision. Input from others may or may not support the decision made. Those who have to implement the decision may agree with it or they may not agree with it. An automatic decision is one that is embedded in a process and has the appearance of not decision at all. If recognized, it is often referred to as a rubber stamp decision.

b. Democratic. A democratic decision is one voted on by those present. Normally, a simple majority rules. Usually, the vote is cast for one or the other of two alternatives. The problem with a democratic vote is that up to nearly half of those voting, and perhaps a majority of the implementers may disagree with the results of the decision.

Those not in agreement may implement with hesitation. They may even take every opportunity to bog down the process and delay advancement. The final effect of a democratic vote can be slow progress with low quality implementation among those in the minority.

c. Consensual. In a consensus decision, everyone present agrees that they can live with the decision being made. They may or may not agree with the decision. Because consensus requires full participation in the discussion of alternatives, proposed solutions often become defused.

d. Concordant. A concordant vote is made from the gut level on subjective and objective terms. Participation in the actual vote is mandatory, vocal, open, and demands robust commitment. The concordant process is extremely slow until the group becomes accustomed to the process.

4. Timing. Sequence and duration (flow) of process elements determine timing. Good process timing results in –

? Zero slack – no delay or down time
? Zero value-depleted or repeat tasks

To detect timing flaws the process facilitator must focus attention on three possibilities –

a. Missing elements. The process is flawed if any required element is missing. A process delay may suggest that a required element is missing.

b. Out-of-sequence elements. If tasks are completed before the need for that task is at hand, it may indicate that an element is out of sequence.

c. Inappropriate element duration. Task completion must occupy a predictable amount of time. Completing a task too quickly may be an indication of poor quality. A task that takes too long to complete may indicate unnecessary activity.

5. Resources. Resources are consumed or expended. For the purpose of process examination, resources are traded for the medium of exchange (money).

Many people object to the use of the language HUMAN resources because we don't like to think of HUMANS as expendable. Yet, it is the human ACTIVITY resource that we trade for money, and activity is expendable.

The medium of exchange provides the basic common denominator for resource examination. The value of resource expenditure determines the baseline value of the process.

6. Results (output). Process yields are output-results. Even poorly executed processes yield results. The five categories of process results are –

a. Outcomes. Subjective results produce a feeling about what has transpired. These gut-level intuitive feelings are value-laden and form the basis of intuitive decision making patterns, and are therefore are critically important.

b. Culture. Cultural results produce the evidence required for people to either validate or modify the dynamic set of acceptable rules that define successful relationships in the organization, work group, or team.

c. Objectives. Objective results are measurable and highly accurate if done well. Objective results contribute significantly to decision making. Objectives are often linked directly to process performance indicators and metrics. Under ideal conditions, subjective criteria are applied objectively as well.

d. Products. Products and services are inseparable. There is always a tangible product associated with a successful service. Every successful process results in some type of tangible product.

e. Services. Services and products are inseparable. Services are provided to generate a product. Often, product servicing is of equal importance following delivery and a good indication of quality.