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Building Maintenance: Keeping your business at peak performance

In the preceding seven chapters we have looked in some detail at how you can build a better business. We have looked at how your business objectives should be a logical extension of your values, and how you need to support them through your business processes. We have considered how your processes and systems can nurture and harness the commitment and creativity of your people. And we have developed a communication

system to weave through the business and ensure that it remains harmonised and attuned to what is needed.

But the world doesn't stand still, and today's wonder-product can easily become tomorrow's curiosity, unless of course it adapts with the times.

So how can your house enable you to keep your business in tune with the possibilities of its environment?

At a micro-level, tuning is an intrinsic part of the design we have laid out. As the environment changes, it will have an impact on your progress against your goals. This will be picked up by your management system (Chapter 6) and will initiate corrective actions (including new innovations if the scale of the problem warrants it) within your existing process structure. Your processes will adapt to ensure your strategic objectives are met.

But sometimes the potential for change will be too great too accommodate within your current objectives or within your current process structure. These circumstances can arise for two main reasons. The first is relatively obvious; an external threat or opportunity which demands: higher performance; a different tack; or new approaches. The second is less obvious and is actually internally created; outgrowing the potential of your current business model. This second reason is a natural consequence of the creative effort that is applied through the 'house'; eventually you run out of room in your model: all major competitive challenges have been addressed; all sources of process inefficiency have been resolved; all the best ideas that fit within your current model have been adopted. As with the first case, the only way forward is to develop new objectives, develop a new model to optimise their delivery, and re-establish your management system to ensure it is delivered.

In most cases however, apart from the targets which need to extend each year to create the headroom necessary to encourage growth, the change often only affects one or two objectives and a limited number of processes. But it doesn't hurt to explore whether everything needs to change; at the worst it can provide the confidence of confirming that you are still on the right track.

Such 'building maintenance' should take place annually, unless there is good cause to do it more frequently (such as major changes in the business environment).

The following is a comprehensive picture of a full maintenance programme, but it is likely to be fairly rare that you will need to complete all of the steps in full:

1. Undertake a review of your progress over the preceding year: clarify your progress against your targets at both organisation and process level; audit the management approach that has been utilised; evaluate the extent to which your values have been manifest in your culture and practice; understand the changes that have taken place in the external environment.

    Reviews can be achieved through interviews, questionnaires, audits of current practice, SWOT analysis, walk-throughs etc. Ideas and resources to help with some of these can be found on the Tesseracts website.

2. Decide on the basis of the results of step 1 which other steps you

need to undertake in this years
maintenance process, and create
a schedule for them.

3. Reconsider your Why-How chart
to ensure that it still reflects your
values at the higher levels of the
chart, and adapt it if that
is no longer the case.
Follow the arrows down
from the values and con-
sider the impact of any
recent changes in the
external business envi-
ronment; make appropri-
ate adjustments to suit.
Use the results of your
audit to consider the rel-
evance and appropriate-
ness of other objectives
in the chart, and adjust
them accordingly.
Review the whole chart to ensure
that its logic is restored; adjust
arrows and supporting sticky-
notes until you are confident that it
once-again represents a holistic
and firm foundation for your busi-
ness going forward.

Reviewing the Why-How chart ensures that changes in the external environment are not taken out of context and that strategies to address them are integral to a holistic strategy for the business. Updating the Why-How chart both provides a basis for integrating new learning into the logic of the business, and for ensuring old learning is not lost.

4. Reconsider your objectives in the
light of any changes to your Why-
How chart. Remove any redun-

dant objectives, and use the techniques outlined in Chapter 2 to identify any new objectives that you need to pursue. Review their relative priority to the business.

5. Review the measures you use to assess success in each of your objectives, and change them where they are failing to provide sufficient indication of progress or issues.

6. Review the 3-5 year targets for each of your measures.

7. Set new 1 year targets for each of your measures using the clothesline method (Chapter 2).

8. Reconsider the appropriateness of your processes for your new objectives and targets. Either repeat the model development approach from Chapter 3, or lay out the existing model in stickynotes and consider any appropriate movement or re-grouping of activities to provide better focus on: deliver-

Targets should always be reset for the following year (since last year's targets will already have been achieved). But two times out of three it is important to maintain consistency in the top level objectives and measures. The consistency helps the organisation plan and deliver longer lead time improvements and to really understand the opportunities of the model before they are forced, once again, to think of the organisation from new and different perspectives.

ing the objectives; removing caus-
es of inefficiency; or providing new
scope for innovation. Ensure any
new activities required to deliver
the objectives are included.

9. Review the grid of the house; the
relationships between
the processes and the
objectives. Consider any
new relationships where
the processes or objec-
tives have changed using
the approach explained
in Chapter 4. Decide on
which other areas of the
grid need to be reconsidered and
work through each of the cells in
these areas, row-by-row.

*Even where the objectives
and the processes regain
largely unchanged, peo-
ple will have grown to see
new potential in the rela-
tionships between them,
and this needs to be dis-
cussed and incorporated.*

10. Recalculate process priorities if
appropriate, and agree on the
implications of these.

11. Reconsider the tenancy arrange-
ments, particularly in regard to
providing new opportunities to
develop skills and abilities, and to
build a wider understanding and
collective ownership in your team.

12. Cascade the responsibilities iden-
tified in the house down to the ten-
ant teams for each process, who

then rethink their own visions, measures and targets in response.

13. Consider new strategies for developing and reinforcing the management process and culture.

www.tesseracts.com has a number of instruments to assist in evaluating the current management culture and in planning further improvement