Driving a consistent approach

If, as a result of working through the preceding chapters, the process management team is now clear on what it needs to do, is there any need to address 'how' they do it?

The answer to this question is a resounding "Yes!" and for a number of reasons.

- A rigorous approach is required to ensure that the results are delivered.
- A systematic approach is required to ensure that the results are sustained.
- A consistent approach is required to facilitate communication and learning.
- A common approach is required to enable the above to be achieved economically.

In practice, the management approach adopted by the process teams in driving and developing the performance of their processes has proven the major determinant in the ultimate success of QFD in transforming organisational performance.

Where managers have failed to change their approach to management, progress has not been delivered. But where managers have been required to adopt the systematic principles outlined in Chapters 4 and 5, progress has been inevitable.

It is therefore incumbent on the leader to guide, support, encourage, and drive their people to adopt an effective approach to managing their process performance.

But Chapters 4 and 5 outline a general concept, not a tangible system. For the concepts to be of use to working managers, they must be interpreted in a practical system. They must use one common, simple and practical system; which managers can adopt and operate together,

The prime occupational hazard of the manager is superficiality.

Henry Mintzberg
McGill University School of Management
in The Nature of Managerial Work
(Harper & Row, 1973).

Chapter 14

The plan Lucy had developed was very tight.

Delivering clear performance improvement in three months required that all of Richard's team devote significant chunks of their time to implementing the new management approach and making it work.

Deborah had actually done most of the work for her process already, but the time she had consumed in doing so was quite daunting. Lucy had estimated that Deborah had put in at least 80 hours personally, and that her team had probably spent 600 man hours between them, in attending workshops and undertaking their actions. Richard knew that persuading some of his other managers to invest similar amounts of time was going to be a full-time job for him. And it was time he did not have.

But he also knew that without investing the time he would not meet his targets, and that would mean he was out of a job. These next three months were all important. He would have to work every waking hour to survive. Surely Laura would understand.

But Laura was determined not to understand. She did not believe it would only be for three months. She felt that she and Nicholas had sacrificed enough of Richard. She felt that the job had already taken an unfair proportion of Richard's time, and now, greedily, it was demanding what little she had left of it. Richard found himself vacantly staring at the chair she hurriedly vacated before slamming the lounge door behind her.

Richard felt sick. It was all so unfair! He was only doing this for the family. Yes, sure, he got a kick out of being successful in his career, but really it was so that Laura and Nicholas could have the lifestyle they deserved; so that they had some security in their lives. Laura would understand eventually. Until then the die was cast. Richard would focus all his energies on the job, and then Laura would see that, three months later, he would be as good as his word.

Richard called a meeting of his management team to debrief them on Cyrus's visit. He explained the three-month deadline and presented Lucy's plan. There was an audible intake of breath when the plan appeared on the screen, and this developed into muted murmurs when

without confusion; and which the leader can consistently require of all his or her direct reports.

Expectations of process management

So how should we interpret the principles of Chapters 4 and 5 into a practical effective system at the process level? What should we expect from our process owners in pursuing the aspirations agreed in the QFD?

We should expect that:

the process is operated according to its design, and procedures are followed accurately

performance of the process is measured, particularly with regard to customer service and satisfaction

performance is reflected against the agreed targets at all levels of detail to evaluate progress against forecast

unexpected gaps and issues are identified and prioritised, responsibility for addressing problems is assigned, and the team learns from its performance

problems are tackled through a defined discipline, and changes are made to plans and projects as appropriate

processes are modified and standardised to ensure consistent performance improvement.

How well do you do these things currently?

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he explained that they would each need to invest an average of about 700 man hours over the next two months.

The murmurs grew, and culminated in an explosion of words from Abs. "This is insane! Where do we find that sort of time? Production will fall over!"

Richard countered quietly: "Abs! It's two-and-a-half people for two months. It is not that bad!" Abs pursed his lips and shook his head.

Peter joined in the fray. "Richard, that is three man years of effort across our eight processes. It is the equivalent of 4% on our manpower costs over two months. We can never justify nor sustain that!"

Richard countered again: "But, over the year, it is less that 1%, against a 10% performance improvement. That would meet anyone's criteria for project payback!"

"But that assumes this hare-brained scheme is actually going to work!" Daniel expostulated. "Full house," thought Richard, who had been wondering when Daniel would see fit to enter the fray.

"Okay! Here are the facts of life: I have been charged with delivering this. I am charging you with delivering this plan. I want to know how each and everyone of you intends to meet these milestones, and your requirement for additional support to enable you to do so. This is a reasonable request of people at your level of seniority. I shall expect your plans on my desk by close of play on Friday, and I will be making appointments to meet each one of you personally next week, to discuss through the implications. Full stop. End of meeting."

There was silence. And then gradually, under Richard's gaze, people closed their files and trooped out of the door. Richard realised he had overdone it when even allies like Susan, Andrew and Deborah avoided looking at him, and left as sullenly as the rest.

When everyone else had left, Lucy said: "Richard, that was a bit harsh. You don't have to fight them all you know. Most of them are on your side."

"Oh yes!" he snapped back. "And that's how it looked to you did it?" His tone was sarcastic.

Lucy said quietly: "Yes, it did! But you did not give them a chance to say so."

Process management is the practical engine that harnesses the potential of the business to the clear aspirations of the goal-setting process. The six principles that underpin effective process management are reflected in the diagrams on the preceding page.

- Ensure a clear understanding of 'purpose'
- Establish a winning 'philosophy'
- Harness the best from your 'people'
- Develop through the 'process'
- Seek the ability to 'predict'
- Continuously strive to 'perfect'.

In this chapter we explore in more detail what these principles mean in practice.

Ensure a clear understanding of 'purpose'

It is very easy for people to get wrapped up in the task they are doing, particularly where the task is technically challenging, and this can cause them to lose sight of the customer and the real purpose for their work. In extreme cases the technical challenge can become the primary reason for their efforts, and the customer can simply become somebody who confuses the issue and distracts them from it. When this happens, relationships break down and the work quickly becomes irrelevant.

It is therefore vital that the focus on customers is maintained as consistently as the technical interest. To achieve this requires an ongoing programme of awareness, customer contact and recognition.

However there is a real danger that such a programme may become bureaucratic, mechanical and even trivial: a matter of going through the motions without having any real effect. For this reason it is important that the programme is anchored in

Anticipated evidence of 'purpose':

- Data from having explored and understood the current situation
- Clearly defined strategies for building or maintaining customer focus
- A milestone plan for how the strategies are to be delivered
- Minutes of meetings; data on progress; plans on display etc. reflecting that the strategies are in active use
- 'Customer familiarisation' and other training sessions/material
- Involvement of process staff in customer activities
- Customer visits and surveys (or interviews)
- Workshops on how to better support process customers
- Prominent visual evidence of customer satisfaction targets, trended performance, and future actions for improvement.

Richard was just about to argue, when he realised that the only people who had spoken were Abs, Peter and Daniel, and that it was Daniel who had done just enough to push him over the edge. A well-timed, emotive blow to his area of weakness: The unproven nature of QFD. He closed his eyes, silently cursing himself. He had played right into Daniel's hands like the marionette he was.

Lucy could see Richard's thinking loosen, by the shift in the tension of his body, so she continued: "May I make a suggestion?" Richard looked up into compassionate blue eyes; he felt both stupid and safe. He nodded dumbly.

"Don't wait until next week. Go round your allies now. Let them know you appreciate them. Do it quickly, before one of them does something drastic."

There was something in Lucy's tone that gave Richard the impression that she knew something she was not letting on. He looked at her enquiringly.

She knew what he was asking, but she just said: "Well some of them have had a rough ride over the last year or so. They are very good people. Very 'marketable' people. But they've hung around. And they have supported you in this. If they feel that you don't appreciate that, well, they might just have a better offer developing!"

Richard nodded. He had got the message. "I'll start this afternoon," he said.

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A bit of humble pie went a long way with most of his team, but it took time out of his day. Time from other things. Time he had to make up in the evening.

The office around him was deserted. He had just finished signing off the paperwork for the new security procedures. He looked up at the clock on his wall, ten to nine, and his heart fell as he thought of going home. When Laura did not ignore him, it was because she wanted to have a go at him. It was a choice between silences or rows, and arriving home at this time of night would probably secure him both.

He rose heavily from his chair, and slid a few reports into his briefcase. He closed it, and then heading for the door, he stopped, shook his head

reality through effective measures of customer satisfaction, with prominent displays of current performance to reinforce its importance to your organisation.

Establishing ambitious targets for the measure will then drive your staff to seek deeper and more creative relationships with your customers.

Establish a winning 'philosophy'

Appropriate targets can play a large part in driving the behaviours of your staff, but it is rarely enough to write out the objectives from the top-level QFD, hold a workshop, and stick the results on the wall or in a memo.

For objectives to be powerful enough to direct the full energy of the organisation in a consistent and shared direction they have to become part of the day-to-day fabric of the organisation. They should be explicitly and regularly repeated in explanations, rationales and general routine. In this way, the *'why we do things'* becomes clear, consistent and explicit.

But words are rarely enough in themselves - they are drowned out by the actions people see around them. If person 'A' (who 'toes the line') is not recognised while person 'B' (who doesn't) gets a promotion - then toeing the line becomes clearly not the 'sensible' thing to do.

The manager needs to understand exactly what behaviours are seen to be valued within his or her organisation, and how. The manager must then determine how these differ from the behaviours needed to support the objectives, and adjust the value set (who gets rewarded and why) to support this.

Anticipated evidence of 'philosophy':

- Explicit precise definition of the process objectives
- Process objectives demonstrably linked to the company objectives
- Prominent displays of objectives and why they are important
- Up-to-date displays of progress (measures) against objectives
- Personal and team objectives clearly linked to the department objectives
- Regular progress reviews against the objectives
- Proposals, new initiatives and all management communication reference the objectives
- Objectives are a major explicit part of the appraisal process.

and returned his briefcase to the side of his desk. Who was he kidding? How was he going to do any more work? He was totally bushed.

He headed down the stairs and out into the evening chill of the car park. He wondered exactly what his reception at home would hold for him tonight. Nicholas would clearly be in bed. His best hope was that Laura would be too! Either asleep or feigning it!

But when he got home, the house was not only in darkness, it was empty. Panic flooded through Richard. He felt like someone had pulled a plug on his insides. He felt cold. He felt scared. He felt angry.

He rushed from room to room, but no-one was there. Nicholas's bed was not slept in. He rushed into his own room and threw open the closet doors, fully expecting to see Laura's clothes missing. They appeared to all be there. But then again, she would not have taken them all.

Where had she gone? Where had she taken his son? To her parents? He would telephone them now!

He rushed to the telephone, and snatched up the receiver. And his eyes fell on the note beside it. It was to him. It was Laura's writing.

Coldness gripped him tighter. He looked at the note unseeingly. He had imagined this happening. If he was honest, he may even have wanted it on occasion. But the harsh reality was worse than anything he had considered. He forced himself to look at the note. To read it.

"Richard, Nicholas sick with a fever. Have gone to Casualty. Come as soon as you get in. If, of course, you can spare the time. Laura". The note was terse, but at least they had not left him.

Relief rushed in, and he realised how silly he had been. Of course, they could have been anywhere. Next door, or at a friends perhaps. He had built up demons in his mind. He had been victim to his own paranoia. He re-read the note, and the relief was replaced with concern.

His son was in hospital!

He rushed back out of the front door, and leapt back into his car and started the engine. As he moved off, he realised he did not know where the hospital was. Still, if he headed for the town centre he could always ask directions from there.

Harness the best from your 'people'

Only part of the value set is reflected in the formal reward system. The vast majority of it is reflected in the 'development' people receive, both at your hands, and at the hands of their colleagues. Sadly, when managers think of development for their people, their minds often tend toward formal training courses.

But in practice, most of a person's development arises through:

- being exposed to a series of challenges and new situations/roles
- receiving advice and support on the job (e.g. coaching)
- adopting strategies and frameworks to fulfil the role effectively
- learning from the result by observation and feedback.

This rarely happens most effectively and efficiently by accident. Instead, the manager needs to actively plan these opportunities and experiences for his or her people, matching their development to the improvement opportunities that are likely to arise in their department.

In this way the manager can achieve a balanced strategy: ensuring that the problems and issues that arise are used in the optimum way to develop both departmental performance, and personnel competence.

Develop through the 'process'

Of course, development becomes a lot easier to plan when the processes people need to be developed in are clearly understood. The key to this understanding is process mapping.

Within most objective professions, schematics are used whenever change is

Anticipated evidence of 'people':

- Active and agreed development plans for each person in the process
- Active use of appraisal system to guide people's development
- Measures of progress in fulfilling agreed development plans
- Analysis of competence growth in process staff
- Effective teamwork training programme
- Defined programme of personal and team coaching
- Records of coaching activity for each subordinate and team.

Things were not totally straightforward, and when he eventually walked into Casualty it was almost ten o'clock. He saw Laura by herself in the far corner of the waiting room, and rushed towards her. He expected her to be pleased to see him, but the cold glare he received stopped him in his tracks.

"Where have you been? Four hours we've been waiting here! He's been sick twice, and they still haven't seen him." At this she gestured to a play area on her left, and Richard glanced round to see his son, pale and listless, distractedly fiddling with a yellow wooden block.

"I'm sorry," he said turning back to her. Her look in return carried only hostility. Was she blaming him for this? Were hospital waiting times his fault? He turned away and went over to sit on the floor by Nicholas. When he looked back over at Laura, she was determinedly looking away.

The doctor, when they eventually saw her, three-quarters of an hour later, was apologetic and deeply tired. She explained that they had been dealing with a serious smash on the M5. She was sorry for the delay. Richard could see that she had been doing her best, her young face was drawn and her hair was all over the place.

He said: "That's okay, we understand." This drew a snort of derision from Laura.

The doctor turned to Nicholas, and forced a more sing-song tone in her voice. "Hello little man. My name is Doctor Jane, and we're going to see what we can do to make you better. Where does it hurt?"

Nicholas did not reply, and when Laura left a long silence, Richard felt he had to step in. "He's been vomiting," he said.

Laura snapped around. "Oh yes, and you'd know, would you?" she said angrily.

Richard looked at her pleadingly. "For crying out loud Laura, you explain things then!"

"I was just about to," she said. And then turning to the doctor: "He's running a temperature of 103 and isn't keeping anything down. He's even bringing up water. And there's traces of blood in it!"

The doctor appeared to take the parental spat in her stride. Perhaps she was used to them, saw them all the time. She simply picked Nicholas up, and said: "Would you come this way?"

considered or problems are to be explored, because they help people to think through the implications and consequences. This is especially true when such thinking is being undertaken by a group, because the schematic is especially helpful in explaining one person's reasoning to another.

Business lends itself to such schematics. The processes by which business is undertaken can be mapped in terms of flow diagrams, and this has proven invaluable to many organisations.

Process maps are the main vehicles for ensuring that:

- people follow the proven and optimum path
- there is a basis for redefining the ideal
- deviations can be identified and the consequences of change, evaluated
- performance issues can be tracked back to operational defects
- improvements are maintained over time.

Seek the ability to 'predict'

Measurement is probably the single most potent factor in ensuring business improvement.

The mere act of feeding someone with information on the performance of their work makes them responsible for that performance - and companies have demonstrated this time and time again whenever they have established clear performance measures: "What gets measured, gets done".

However, for sustained improvement, the discipline of measures needs to be supported by the discipline of problem-solving. Rigorous analysis of the issues that preclude us from our target perform-

Anticipated evidence of 'process':

- Clearly defined interfaces for the process (see Chapter 10)
- Overall schematic of the process (process diagram), showing how its sub-processes link together
- Process maps readily accessible and used to guide people in the process
- Records of official projects to improve the process, and updates to the map
- Minutes of process management meetings, to review its operation.

Anticipated evidence of 'predict':

- Measures of performance of the process: rate of output; timeliness; quality; customer satisfaction; unit cost
- Meetings to identify trend and performance issues, analyse causes and agree actions
- Graphs of performance against target, on display
- Use of problem-solving tools such as Pareto, etc. to analyse and solve performance issues
- Documented use of problem-solving processes.

After some time of checks and questions, they said they needed to keep Nicholas in for observation, but not to worry, it was simply routine. She was sorry that they had no facilities left for Laura and Richard to stay with him, but it would be better for all concerned if they went home and got a good night's rest and came back in the morning, since Nicholas was sedated anyway.

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Richard drove most of the way home in silence, but as they turned into their road, Laura finally exploded:

"What was that all about? How would you know what the matter with him was? You're never here to know! We're outsiders! We're no longer part of your world, part of your damn agenda! Don't you dare, ever dare, presume to answer for me ever again! You just don't know!"

Richard was caught off guard by the tirade. He had been nursing a grudge all the way home too. He vested it in self-defence.

"Look, you may have problems with me, but don't bring others into it! You ignored the doctor's question. That poor young woman had clearly had a really tough time. The last thing she needed was a sullen cow playing: 'You're the doctor, you figure it out!'."

He did not see it coming until it was almost too late. He flinched to the right, as the back of Laura's right-hand crashed into the side of his mouth, cracking his lips across his teeth. He braked hard, held up his left hand, and raised his left leg to ward off further blows. The car stalled in the middle of the road. And Laura, poised to strike again, turned, stepped out of the car, and stormed off towards their front door.

Richard closed his eyes, and mentally counted, but his mind was anywhere but on the numbers.

He could taste the blood in his mouth. He could feel his lip already beginning to swell.

Finally, he undid his seatbelt, reached over and closed Laura's door, restarted the car and drove up into their drive.

Laura had disappeared inside the house, and when he put his key in the lock he found it would not work. She had put it on the latch. He was locked out.

ance should be followed up by successful solutions, and predictable results that ensure we can be confident our performance will fulfil our commitments.

Continuously strive to 'perfect'

The primary concept and purpose of systematic management, is to free management thinking from the routines and responses that trap it in the bottom box. But 'the price of freedom is eternal vigilance'.

The challenge is to continuously identify areas where we are beginning to become prisoners of our own thinking, and also new opportunities to think differently.

There is plenty of material to help in this process - in books, papers, seminars, journals, other companies, customers, suppliers, the ideas of colleagues, study groups, think-tanks, consortia, etc.

It is only by remaining alive and awake to the constant stream of opportunities these materials provide that we will prevent our current solutions to *'Systematic Management'* from becoming future issues that systematic management will need to solve.

How can the role of the process manager be reinforced?

The battle to establish management in its proper role is long and arduous, but is unavoidable if your organisation is to fully reach its potential.

But only part of the battle can be won logically. The main fighting is actually done at a subconscious level through:

- reinforcing the management role through your questions
- modelling the management role through your approach

Anticipated evidence of 'perfect':

- Persistent pursuit of relentlessly increasing performance targets
- Workshops, in which the role of the department is reassessed, and clear performance targets are defined
- Prioritisation of improvement areas
- Regular meetings to monitor progress and address issues
- Annual in-depth review of progress
- Comprehensive audit of the current situation in the department.

He looked at his watch. It was almost two in the morning. He really could do without this. He rang the doorbell, and waited. He could hear movement in the house. He tried again. And again. Then he bent down and spoke through the letter box.

"Come on Laura, let me in." There was no reply.

"Laura, please." Still no reply.

"Laura, come on, let's not be stupid about this!"

He heard movement in the house, and Laura was on the other side of the door. She brought her hand down hard on the letter-box flap, forcing it shut and almost trapping his thumbs. Richard stood up.

"Laura, be reasonable."

This time she answered. It was half a sob. "Sod off! Go and take your precious time, and give it to that bloody doctor. You clearly prefer her to me. Go and see if she'll have you!"

Richard was shocked. That was so unfair. How could she say that? What had he done? He had not even glanced at the doctor.

Richard stepped back a few paces, and looked up at the front of the house. He wasn't really sure why. Perhaps it was that he sensed people were beginning to look at him through their darkened windows and he didn't want to create a floorshow for them. Perhaps he was trying to find another way in. He stood trying to look nonchalant for a few more moments while he weighed up his options.

He didn't feel that Laura in her current state of mind was likely to relent, and he couldn't face the looks of his neighbours if he spent much more time trying to argue his way in.

With a brief shake of his head, Richard gave up, turned around and got back into the car. He paused for a moment and then started the engine and drove off.

Richard spent what remained of the night at the Cavendish. He did not know why he picked that hotel, it was well out of the range he would normally be prepared to pay for a room. Perhaps it was because he was feeling so sore, and felt that being near Lucy might help. Perhaps. Perhaps it was something else. He was not sure any more. He felt under

- developing the appropriate management skills through training and coaching

- rewarding and recognising the correct management behaviours

- tackling incorrect management behaviours head on and ensuring that nobody profits from them

- ensuring the resources for managing systematically

- using meeting structures that reinforce the correct management approach

- using evaluation and appraisal models that assure the correct management approach.[1]

The importance of establishing a systematic process to ensure that the goals of the QFD are delivered, and delivered sustainably, cannot be overemphasised. Without the disciplines reflected in this chapter, the goals on your QFD will remain a pipe dream.

Unfortunately, most of the onus for ensuring that the QFD is pursued objectively and systematically rests with the leader, and this has major implications for his or her time.

In past implementations of QFD, time has proven to be a key factor in ensuring a successful result. Investing time in the right things for the right reasons is crucial to making QFD work effectively for you, and for this reason the whole of the next section is devoted to helping you think this through.

Men don't plan to fail - they fail to plan.

William J. Siegel
VP, Printz-Biederman Manufacturing Co.
Sign on desk

[1] A system for evaluating the adoption of systematic approaches in management can be found on the associated web-site (see Appendix 7).

attack from all sides, and he felt that Lucy was the only friend he had to share it with.

He was close to despair.