The Five Critical Success Factors That Define Success in Achieving Business Technology and Process Change

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INTRODUCTION

Every year sees major organisations fall. 2008 and 2009 and the effect of the Global Financial Crisis has brought this into stark reality for many. 2009 was also the year of Charles Darwin and he is quoted as saying "It is not the strongest species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change ".

For organisations, change means change to the way they do business. Whether the source of change lay in strategy, tactics or operations, they only materialize and are sustained once the changes are reflected at the operational level. Yet changing organisations at an operational level, particularly large and complex organisations, can be difficult, complex and carry many risks.

Our increasing reliance on technology means that operational change also brings technology changes. Recent high profile organisational failures in this regard have been demonstrated by Queensland Health's payroll project and by Virgin Blue's reservations systems failure. Yet they are not alone. This phenomenon has implications for all industries, educational institutions included.

CCA-EDUCAUSE Australasia 2011 states that "According to some leading thinkers, the very survival of the university is on the line if we're not able to adapt to the new rules and playing fields." Adaptation is a key element to survival and success.

The examples above, and the many more I speak of during the presentation, demonstrate the potential for negative impact on organisations attempting to adapt. These impacts can include:
- Profitability loss in the short-term due to loss of service
- Increased costs to manage the short term ramifications of the failure
- Reputation impact and the attraction of shareholders, clients, suppliers, employees and other stakeholders
- Additional stress and distress for employees with implications for productivity, morale and turnover.

Yet the adaption to new methods of working, and the new technology to support these new methods, to change the game for our organisations, is becoming central to an organisation's ability to succeed.

CCA-EDUCAUSE Australasia 2011 asks: "What game changers do you see in your organisation? What are the new rules and who are the players? What do we need to do to adapt? And what things remain constant, no matter what the external appearances of transformation?"

This presentation uncovers the five Critical Success Factors that are required to successfully and sustainably change the game for organisations.

ORGANISATIONAL RISK

Your organisation is already operating with a level of success. It wouldn't be here if it wasn't. Changing means the chance of disrupting current practices to introduce the new. There is always some risk involved in this.

When improving the business systems in your organisation, those meeting good fortune and those meeting misfortune have one thing in common; they both manage this risk. The less fortunate don't understand this risk until it literally hits them, and their organisations. It can be a painful journey of discovery, but understandable, because these risks can be easy to under-estimate. The attributes which increase the under-estimation of the risks of change include:
- These change projects are unique or are one-off without the opportunity to trial, practice and improve
- Changing business procedures or systems is not considered to be core business and is rarely a core capability
- In many organisations, the investment in business process and business technology is relatively modest in comparison to their core business investments – this can keep them below the executive radar
- Accountability for business processes and business data and what that entails is unclear in many organisations. Most organisations allocate responsibility for major assets, but not, for example, the sales process?

The majority of business change projects have these attributes. The formula we use to describe this phenomenon is:

The Risk per dollar spent on Business Change projects is much greater than the risk per dollar spent on most other organisational projects

This presentation will bring into stark reality through a number of cases, the risks to be managed, and the options available for those involved.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Closely related to risk and impacting upon the way risk is managed is organisational culture. All organisations and people work to some rules, published or not. And sometimes those rules prevent things from being said and problems from being raised. We are now entering the heartland of all business change and that is problem solving.

If problems aren't dealt with openly and constructively they don't go away, they get lost or buried, at least in the short-term. And with business changes, they don't stay buried...they rise again and sometimes at the most inopportune time. Culture is recognised as a key factor in corporate risk and corporate failures yet still misunderstood. This presentation will examine some elements of culture through cases and the part that culture can play in supporting success or failure.

MISSION

Achieving a business objective starts with knowing what the objective is. Sounds simple right? But when business benefits are sensitive, such as staff cost savings or outsourcing they can be kept secret. Also when a project needs to trade off speed to market for gold standard quality (or vice versa) these priorities need specifying. Being specific about these intentions, i.e. about the strategy, is paramount. This presentation introduces through cases where lack of mission clarity has lead to problems and what to do about it.

TEAM COMPOSITION

Once the Mission is clear, do you have the team? A Project Manager does not define the key capabilities required. Do you require the team to promote and persuade to achieve transformational change? Do you require the team to calculate and schedule a logistics maze? Do you require someone who delivers only the highest standards, or someone who can achieve speed of execution at some predefined cost?

SUPPLIER SUPPORT

One of the most crucial parts of a team in large scale change is your extended team or your suppliers. They can include consulting or systems integration or product vendors. Manage them well and have an excellent result. Manage them poorly and have them "do their job" and leave you in disarray. They are masters in managing their risk. They have survived a high risk industry for many years. Have them masters in managing your risk and you have a winning formula.

CONCLUSION

Through discovering the success and failure points discussed, this presentation will highlight five Critical Success Factors to measure an organisation's adaptability. Using these factors will then enable your participants to lead their organisation in a way that makes it more effective in adapting to change and taking on the challenges that are confronting us all. This has ramifications, not just for their organisations, but also for how they can navigate the increasing workplace complexity each of us is finding ourselves within.

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