ON PROCESS INTEGRATION

What happens inside organizations?

As organizations develop, its managers install practices aimed at planning, communications, operations, administration and many other such functions. These are generally set up as processes, i.e. series of steps leading to the desired organizational result. Over time, these processes multiply and due to their sheer numbers, tend to contribute to the creation of silos inside the organization, complete with specialized people speaking specialized languages. The results can be:

- Processes that do not inform each other, e.g. human resource management siloed from financial management siloed from strategic business planning;

- Duplication resulting in the desire to re-engineer the organization, which in turn, causes trauma to its people;

- Gradually lowered productivity, as increasing numbers of decisions take place in isolation;

- Decreased strategic direction from senior and executive management as they get caught up in intersecting management practices.

What's been tried?

Integration is now the catch-word of the self-professed modern organization. Unfortunately, most people inside the organization don't know exactly what they are meant to integrate. In response to the growing need for integration, e-consulting firms have sold their clients one large, coercive system that forces people to follow its processes. This approach fails on at least three fronts:

- People will continue to use their own processes in order to make the informal organization work, resulting in an ever increasing number of approaches in circulation;

- There is no evidence to suggest that the processes contained in the large system are well designed and match the needs of the client organization and its people;

- The large system becomes a bottomless pit of expenditure for the organizations as more and more customization takes place.

How to integrate processes?

If coercing people to follow a process doesn't work, then how should the organization integrate? RANA believes that integration can only take place through its processes. This involves:

- Identifying the processes at play inside the organization, layer by layer (i.e. Peeling the Process Onion);

- Renewing the processes of the organization (change, simplify, delete, replace) and linking them one to another;

- Developing a visible web of process connections that will function as a working framework for the organization;

- Supporting the processes with the best systems available and providing a locator system (a battle cruiser) for linking them together.

What about people?

It should be obvious that process integration can only take place through people: representative teams of people with the necessary knowledge and skills to participate in and redesign their own processes and linkages to the other teams in the organization. The cost of their involvement is paid back largely by the increase in productivity and commitment of the teams themselves, and the people they represent. The organization that sets the expectation that its people will ensure the quality of its processes and supports the effort of process integration is assured of continuous renewal and effective management. This is what re-engineering was supposed to be about before it became corrupted with the not so hidden agenda of down-sizing.

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