

What's News

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The Most Crucial Interface: Human to Software

We recently have gotten involved with the “people side” of several huge software implementations. We have worked directly with IT groups for years and now we are closely linked to actual “project implementation.”

Without going into all the details, we have designed applications of our courses to handle the people/communication/skill deficiencies that were showing up in the software implementation projects of several of our clients. Apparently these big, drastic, “totally change the life of the end user and the company culture” software implementations don’t always go so swimmingly. In fact I started to get deluged with input about the *huge* problems these software implementations usually have. So much so, that I asked an IT Vice President that I trust, the unspeakable: **“Exactly, how many of these huge software implementations fail or at least never meet their promises?”**

He said, **“at least 70%.”**

This was of course, shocking. Hundreds of millions of dollars spent on projects that rarely meet the promises made. WOW!

What was so special about the ones with which we were involved? It just seemed to me that on those projects, the managers were doing the projects the way **“it should be done”**. As it turns out my idea of the way things “should be” is not always how it is in the normal course of human events. Apparently, for years, the context of software change was “What’s the big deal? All we are asking you to do is: change, control, alt, // to //, control, alt”. Well, as it turns out, these big new software programs do what they are supposed to do: “mess with the culture not just the key strokes.” It was obvious to us these software implementations were now messing with key issues like: *the nature of work, how work is defined, what work means to people and even why people come to work.*

Example #1 Mary Beth in Logistics (it was called shipping 32 years ago when she started) feels her “importance” to the company is assured since she is the one who has total access to crucial data. When people need the information they just call Mary Beth. The new software program gives everyone in the company, who has access to a computer, access to “Mary Beth’s data”. So if Mary Beth has her “job” security linked to controlling information and the software takes that away, how likely is Mary Beth to “Embrace Change” like the poster says?

Example #2 Arnold is a steady, hard working guy who enjoys coming to work every day with people who know him. His wife died a couple of years ago of cancer and the tightly knit group of folks at work served as a great comfort to Arnold. He's not a gushy kind of guy but people who knew him knew the subtle changes in his daily behavior meant big stuff was brewing inside. They supported Arnold during a tough time. The new software "feeds" work to Arnold without any contact from another human being. His face time with both co-workers and managers has dropped 80%, at a crucial time for him.

Example #3 Brent was excited that his bosses recognized his people skills, not just his technical competence, by giving him his own team to supervise. Two months after Brent started, the new software program was implemented. Brent's people felt angry and betrayed over all the glitches in the new system and how it appeared to make their jobs much harder not much easier. Managers and directors were sending reports asking questions about numbers coming out his department that felt like potshots and attacks. However, given the wording of the questions from the managers and directors they clearly don't have a working knowledge of the department. Consequently, his answers back to them require enormous detail absorbing time he really needs to be spending with his people, the part of his job he likes. He is frustrated and is doubting why he ever took this job in the first place.

So what should *you* do, given our experience?

Here are some of our crucial learnings:

- 1. If it doesn't work for the end user it doesn't work.** This includes **emotionally**. If end users feel betrayed because the new system makes their lives worse, not better, the emotions need to be expressed and heard. If the "deliverable" for the new system is head count reduction, every end user knows that they are the potential reduction. Who is crazy enough to work their butt off to eliminate their own job? If on the other hand they have all the skills and confidence to know they can transition themselves, survival mentality does not set in.
- 2. Every one has to manage and communicate at a higher level to have the implementation succeed.** No big change fits for all the "recipients" automatically, so requesting skills are essential. Therefore every one must have great requesting skills to cause the necessary adjustments to make the implementation work for them and their area. Leaps in software will highlight other long standing frailties of the organization that need to be addressed. Change causes conflict. If your culture is conflict averse, the organization will become mired in all the issues surfaced by the change. The organization will need good conflict resolution skills or all the unresolved conflict will actually make things **feel** worse.
- 3. All those leading the implementation must understand how much they are disrupting people's lives.** Leadership needs to understand how the examples above will be more the rule and not the exception. Often times the technical changeover is not upsetting for those leading it. However, the end users, who are not seeking change in their lives, are getting the bulk of the change. For them you are creating chaos. With out the necessary skills one of three things will happen:
 4. They will be paralyzed by the emotions of the change and resist it out of fear and anger.
 5. They will go into survival mode and sabotage the project consciously or unconsciously.
 3. They will be good soldiers through the change though it is exhausting them. This means
that as time goes on they will experience what we call "**change fatigue**". This is when
the people who implement the changes you're asking for don't have the ability or skill
level to keep the implementation from dragging them down.

Long story short, your communication and management skills must keep pace with the problems generated by the software implementation. It can be done! You can end up in the “30%” delivering on their promises not the “70%” who apologize and make excuses.

We are amazed at the level of integration of skills our clients have been able to achieve. We are impressed with their ability to use past success to plan for the level of skill development that will be needed in subsequent application projects. These are some of the most exciting and satisfying projects we have ever worked on, due to the commitment and dedication of our clients to learn and apply knowledge. Thanks! You know who you are.

If you want more information on the use of our programs in your next software implementation, call us at (303) 660-5206 or e-mail us at svvconsult@aol.com.

Congratulations Are In Order.....

To the Mary Kay Corporation on their 40 year anniversary. Mary Kay started the company 40 years ago on September 13th.

To Kathryn Aiken on her promotion at SCJ. She is now the HR Director for SCJ Japan.

To Catherine Hendy Wilson on her marriage in March. Catherine has transferred to the Diaper Section of P&G.

To Susan Neuhalfen on her promotion to Vice President of Sponsorship and Charities at the Houston Aeros Hockey Club. (Susan is married to Dave Neuhalfen)

To Bonnie Curtis and her family on their move back to Cincinnati from China. Bonnie is with P&G.

To Tom Stambaugh on his new job as Director of Quality tool Group in Comstock Park, MI

To Siobhan Becker who will be starting a new job with the Macerich Company in Phoenix, AZ.

To Robin Elston and Lorrie Tietze of E&T Associates, LLC, a V2 Consulting Distributorship for surpassing their financial target 5 months ahead of schedule!

NOTE: If you are interested in being a Distributor call Susan at 303-660-5206

In Memoriam

*Gordon Canney, the former Union President at P&G, Staten Island passed away on August 9th.
Gordon was battling lung cancer for a long time.*

There is a lot we could say about Gordon; he was incredibly intelligent; he was very effective in his role and he was a great supporter of our programs. When he retired from P&G, he went to work in HR at a corporation on the management side and was very successful at that as well.

He will be missed.

Women Moving Forward Goes to Santiago, Chile and Toronto, Canada

Santiago, Chile: Santiago Hyatt, September 7-9, 2004

Toronto, Canada: Park Hyatt Toronto, October 19-21, 2004

To find out more about these two very special international workshops call us at our office or e-mail us.

There will be only 10-12 women per workshop. Because of this, we recommend companies reserve space as soon as possible. We also have a block of sleeping rooms reserved for each workshop. There is a sizeable discount for companies who send 2 or more women. We strongly advise companies to send 2-4 women per workshop so they have a built in support system when they return to work.

This is a wonderful opportunity for our client companies in South America and Canada to take advantage of a Women Moving Forward experience in their own area. U.S. citizens are also welcome in these workshops as participants and observers.

NOTE: If you are a graduate of Women Moving Forward and you would like to observe the workshop in Canada or Santiago please contact us as soon as possible. The cost is \$500 to observe (international rate) and only 4 women per class can observe.

See enclosed Public Workshop Schedule for dates of the 4 Colorado based Women Moving Forward Workshops

Other workshop information

Productive Relationships November 11-13, 2003, January, April, and August 2004

This workshop is scheduled for November of 2003, April and August of 2004.

John Van Vleet leads this workshop to assist people in learning the skills to communicate so that productivity increases and stress decreases. Companies like J & J, P & G, SCJ, IBM, Coors, Nationwide Insurance and HP have taken this course and/or brought it inside their company.

Managing Corporate Change March 9-11, 2004

Managing Corporate Change assists you in dealing with any changes you are in the middle of or planning for. You will get the skills to manage the change and deal with any resistance.

Training For Change Agents and Change Agent Trainers December of 2003

You will learn to plan for, train for and execute changes while alleviating the resistance, sabotage and stress for you and others. This is an intensive four day program for Change Agents, whether management or not. Susan and John lead this workshop together.

Women's Leadership Retreat May 2004 Spa and Lodge at Cordillera

This is a very special Retreat for graduates of Women Moving Forward who are up to having a high level conversation about intention and creating one's own life. Only 10 women can attend. There are only a few spaces still available. So if you want to attend or are thinking of attending call Susan.

Achieving Commitment December 2003, April and October 2004

If you want to know how to get others to buy in" this is the workshop for you. First you will look at what you are committed to and why. Then how to get commitment from others.

Commitment and Delegation July 2004

This is a basic course in management and delegation. Some of you got to be managers, but were never trained in how to manage other people's commitments and promises. This is the course that trains you to manage your subordinates.

