ARTICLE REVIEW

The Phoenix Project

Shruthi Anil Kumar

October 29, 2020

1   Analyzing the book "The Phoenix Project"

The book **Kim, Behr, and Spafford (2013)** describes the flow of work and process employed in the company, described from the point of view of a newly appointed VP of a department. The organisation under question here is the Parts Unlimited. This organisation has the following processes namely, Procurement, Design and Development, Deployment and Maintenance.

In the book we see a mention of Procurement process from the maintenance team, but there have been no details as to who heads this business unit. Chris Allers heads the organizational unit of Application Development; his team is part of the design,development process, responsible for developing the applications and code that the business needs. The code from Chris' team is handed over to the maintenance team to operate and maintain. Wes Davis heads the organizational unit of Distributed Technology Operations; his team is in charge of the networks.Patty McKee heads the organisations unit of IT Service Support, her team is part of maintenance process and oversees and maintains a process to deploy the changes into the system and also owns some of the key processes and tools that the entire IT Operations organization relies and running the change management meetings.The main protagonist of the story Bill Palmer is the VP of IT Operations and therefore heads both Wes and Patty's team. Bill's team is part of the deployment and maintenance process.

Throughout the book there are several problems discussed with regards to the processes. To start with firstly, the business Project Phoenix which is way behind schedule and the main complication and clashes is between the Development team and the IT Operations team which is part of the maintenance process. The company seems to have four kinds of work running around in parallel. The first kind is the business project which refers to the infamous Phoenix, internal project which refers to the SOX-404 audit, third kind of work are the changes and the last kind and most destructive of all is the unplanned work, amounts to slipping deadlines, bottle neck of knowledge flow, under staffing issues. To provide some example, let us consider the instance where changes that was administered to the payroll system, specifically the timekeeping application resulted in a major risk to the company involving the hourly wage employees either not getting paid or getting paid less than they should have, because the database of the employees was lost. The reason behind this was the John Pesche, Chief Information Security Officer pushed through changes in the time keeping application without testing them and following required process for change request. Looking at another instance in one of the Phoenix project progress meeting, there is a heated argument between Chris and Wes as the IT operations team claim that they have not yet received any information regarding the type of infrastructure the project needs to go live and it cannot be achieved in a weeks' time as claimed by Chris.

One thing to note about this company is the constant reference to a resource named Brent Geller, who is the Lead Engineer, and works for Wes Davis. He is the knowledge bottleneck and seems to be in the way of all the four kinds of work described above. The book states the Theory of Constraints which mentions that any improvements made to the system anywhere other than the bottleneck will prove futile. Here, the constraint refers to the resource Brent.

References

Kim, G., Behr, K., & Spafford, G. (2013). *The phoenix project: A novel about it, devops, and helping your business win.* IT Revolution Press. Retrieved from `https://learning.oreilly.com/library/view/the-phoenix-project/9781457191350/?ar`