

this way is dismal. This is not to say that process changes should not have a positive effect on the financial situation, or that initiatives should not be subject to scrutiny and justification—they should. But equally, sometimes we should do things and be committed to things simply because we know they are the right things to do. Good leaders doing what are

tive sponsor.” Watts Humphrey is right when he asserts that, unless the top people want it, it won’t happen. But what if they do want it, but are unable or unwilling to give it their direct attention? To paraphrase T.S. Eliot: between the executive thought and the practitioner implementation, lies the shadow. There is a need for solid and relatively unequivocal com-

ELEMENTS OF LEADERSHIP

Assigned authority is important to the effectiveness of the operational sponsor. However, authority that is simply conferred by an organization may not be enough.

- **Positional authority**, the power wielded by a person based on his or her position in an organization, can be quite weak in terms

If the core goal and purpose of a business is simply to make money, then the organization should be a bank or a casino.

clearly the right things, consistently and with commitment, operate at a higher ethical level than those in the raw pursuit of more. People respond very positively to this demonstrated ethic and identify with and engage themselves in the success of the initiative.

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

So how does an organization truly demonstrate and operationalize this commitment? Bob Galvin achieved this at Motorola through his personal attention and time, but this is quite rare. Few CEOs seem to have the time available to commit to a small number of high-priority issues (apart from that “making money” one). Or perhaps there are so many pressing issues that it is difficult to focus on just one or two. One thing I have found essential to the success of (particularly) a software process change initiative is to assign an “operational execu-

munication from the leaders. There is a need for demonstrable and clear consistency and commitment. And there is also a need for a way to transfer that authority downward.

THE OPERATIONAL EXECUTIVE SPONSOR

The mechanism that seems to work best is the assignment of an operational executive sponsor. This is someone in authority who is able to attend to the daily sponsorship needs of the initiative. It must be someone with sufficient authority to be able to rattle a cage or overcome an obstacle when the need arises. It cannot be someone too high up in the organization, if the span of control means that appropriate and continual attention cannot be paid to the process initiative. This person cannot be too low in the organization if that means he or she cannot exert sufficient authority when needed.

of the push necessary to drive a process change, especially if that is the only source of the sponsor’s influence.

- **Line authority**. It may be helpful if the operational executive sponsor also has line-management duties. When a leader is responsible for a significant production activity their role carries a certain weight with practitioners that a corporate or a staff role may not. Out of the line development, the sponsor might have the conferred authority but might not be able to exert sufficient influence.

- **Intellectual authority** is the idea or “thought leadership” component. It is very valuable if the operational executive sponsor is a thought leader in the organization and carries authority that is not simply conferred by position. People are more likely to listen to and follow a sponsor when the sponsor’s role is also backed by a certain amount of earned professional respect.