

## 8 – Making it Stick

A common, and unfortunate occurrence, in many process improvement projects is the failure to follow-up. Countless hours have been dedicated to creating or improving a process for an organization, and it is unveiled with tremendous fanfare. Owners and managers are exuberant, the consultants get paid, and everyone gets to work. But if we make a return visit six months or a year later, it is almost like walking into a time warp. The staff are not using the new process. They modified it or have gone back to the old process, or lack thereof, and are doing whatever they see fit. Leadership is doing what think is best and trying to keep things together at the top. I have even seen this happen within months, and even weeks, of a team of consultants leaving a project or client site! What happened?

Process Improvement isn't hard, but it's not easy. It takes dedication and commitment from everyone involved. As we gain experience and familiarity with the ASI Process it will become more of a cultural norm or value within the organization. That being said, oversight and monitoring are essential to maintain momentum and direction.

If possible, identify a Process Improvement Manager to lead and facilitate these efforts within your organization. It is likely not best to choose the owner, department head, or senior manager to fill this role as you, or they will be running the business or organization as a whole. Select a staff member that shows enthusiasm, understanding, and commitment for Process Improvement. Be mindful that this person also needs to excel at communication skills as change can be difficult and requires leadership, the right amount of patience, decision making, and general understanding of activities within the organization.

The Process Improvement Manager may be the same person as the Project Manager but be mindful of people's time commitments and availability. It is also a best practice to encourage participation throughout the organization so give multiple staff members the opportunity to not only contribute but help lead efforts and gain that experience.

The Process Improvement Manager is responsible for monthly Process Improvement Meetings. These do not need to be, nor should they be, long and arduous meetings. This is the opportunity to share feedback, discuss ideas and review any suggestions that have come in. This is also an opportunity to review the Process Improvement Log to see what process improvement cycles are coming up, and upcoming reviews of previous process improvement efforts.

The monthly meetings may also cover changes to the market, technology, rules and regulations, sources, vendors, partners, etc.

Maintenance and responsibility of the Process Improvement Guide will also be the responsibility of the Process Improvement Manager. This should not require too much work, but it ensures oversight and maintenance of the Guide. The Process Owner works with their time to refine and formalize a process. The Process Owner and Project Manager finalize the documentation and facilitate implementation throughout the organization. And the Process Improvement Manager maintains the Process Improvement Guide which holds the final version of the process for reference and distribution, as necessary.

Orienting new hires to the culture of continuous process improvement and the ASI Process is critical. Make it clear, even during the interviewing phase, that the organization has adopted and is committed to process improvement. This sets expectations and encourages new staff members to be a truly fresh set of eyes to bring in new perspectives, ideas, and suggestions. We want to encourage a culture of learning, growth, and improvement.

Awards programs for the staff are another way to encourage continued engagement. Identify and reward those staff members who continue to strive for the best for the organization. A simple gesture of recognition can go a long way in motivating employees and consider financial rewards as well. There is no question that the ASI Process and Continuous Process Improvement will increase your profitability, so be generous with your staff and encourage them to keep at it.

And reward yourself! Taking the time to read a book on business and process improvement takes commitment, so you should be proud of yourself for being pro-active and increasing your knowledge to improve your organization. Now get out there and get started!