

## **/// Deployment Strategies**

After implementing Lean Six Sigma and various other major change initiatives in multiple different organizations, I've learned several lessons, some harder than others...

As in most things in life, there are multiple ways to achieve your objectives. The best one is the approach that fits most closely with your culture and your capabilities. Remember, change management takes a lot of effort, passion, and commitment over a long period of time no matter which Deployment Plan you select. Be advised that it will take a minimum of three to seven years depending upon the size and complexity of your organization. Most change initiatives fail because leadership fails to understand the long-term nature of change management and the fact that you will see little to no significant improvements in the first 12 – 18 months. Most executives are looking for something to happen in weeks...not years. While you can get short-term wins and fix some substantial problems in very short order, truly significant cultural change will take much longer. I'm talking about change that lasts and is measurable by your customer as well as your financial people. We will discuss this at length as we develop our different strategies.

We need to recognize that change and world-class performance follow 4 key principles.

1. Effective Change Is Driven From The Bottom Up!
2. Effective Change Is Supported From The Top Down
3. You Must Relentlessly Identify And Eliminate “Stupid Stuff”
4. You Must Identify And Minimize All Forms Of Variation And Variability



### **Deployment Plan Outline:**

#### **Phase 1: Developing Commitment**

Find out the level of support your change initiative has within and without your organization. Who specifically wants this and how deep is the level of commitment these people have?

NEVER confuse approval or agreement with strong support. Finding a business leader who “allows” you to go do something is a far cry from having a true “champion” who will provide you with deep support, commitment, and passion for results for you and your team! Look for people who have a “burning platform” that your initiative can help solve and show them the power and results you can achieve with your efforts. Do not always assume that you have to have support from the very top (although that can make life infinitely more enjoyable...), you need deep commitment from someone (or some group) that has the resources and influence to help you get your “beach head” established and your program off the ground. Most effective change initiatives actually started from the bottom up and gain executive support after they have demonstrated substantial results!

Spend time talking with people, gauging the need, evaluating the level of effort required. Develop a clear picture of the resources required, and begin to establish a business case for why the investment your change initiative will require is well worth the “hassle” it will create in the organization. Remember, you cannot accomplish a major change initiative “on top of” everything else you’re doing; you need to accomplish it “instead of” everything else you are doing!

### **Phase 2: Developing Your Support Infrastructure**

Spend time to ensure your initiative will be clearly aligned with your organizational culture and structure! Here is where a lot of well-intentioned efforts begin the process of derailment! A lot of people take a “canned” or “off the shelf” approach or simply “import” somebody else’s program directly into their organization. It’s simply not that simple! While the principles and the fundamentals should never be compromised, how you introduce and implement your new initiative should be strongly aligned with your cultural biases and unique experiences. Do not be afraid to “make it yours”. This does NOT mean simply taking off their logo and inserting yours! You need to think this through and that will require you to be intimately familiar with what you are implementing yourself. Here is our rule of thumb: The principles and the structure are not up for negotiations! Everything else should be subject to modification for you and your unique culture and organizational influence. This will require you to know for certain what is principle and what is flexible!

The ability to customize your implementation will significantly increase your organizations willingness to adapt and adopt the new methodology. Many people strain at accepting something from “out there” because history has taught them (and us) that “outside” solutions seldom work the way the consultants and salesmen have sold them. Use this natural skepticism to help you “sell” the program internally.

Next, ensure you fully understand the focus of your leadership team and carefully think through how your initial efforts are going to strongly support that focus. A major failure mode for a lot of deployments is that they focus on the things that are bothering them and not their executives! It is always easier to simply go do the things you already control yourself...it is far more difficult, yet far more effective, to attack the things that are keeping your business leaders up at night! **Make** the time to go talk to them, interview them, find out where they are having trouble meeting schedule, making numbers, or meeting budget and make those your early projects. Nothing will gain your new initiative support like solving a problem that is costing the company money and reputation!

Strongly focus on achieving some early wins. There is often a dynamic balance between selecting a strong strategic, executive driven project and finding one that can be done quickly yet effectively. You need to put a lot of thought behind the initial selection of projects to accomplish this task. If you make the early projects too simple, you will get no attention and no credibility. Too complex and they take too long and you lose the “story” of how the new change management method brings power and capability you did not have before. Establishing the

value of your program is critical and needs to be done early and often. Do not take for granted that because you got “approval” from a presentation last quarter that they still understand what you and your teams are doing today. A major failure mode is the lack of connectivity between your team’s outcomes and the change management system you are putting into place. With Lean Six Sigma for example, we often assume the executives “know” that is driving the results. Remember, they expect things to happen every day and solving problems is what they are paying people to do. You have to have an effective Communications Plan to ensure you “connect” the actions of your deployment with the results achieved. Never assume in the world of business...

Let’s discuss the value of Strategic Planning. This is actually a two-fold exercise for you while implementing a change management initiative. First, you need to review and fully understand your organizations current strategic plan and its relevant action item plans. Knowing what is currently being done will help you fully align your activities with things that will be seen as helping the organization accomplish those goals and objectives that people are on the hook to provide now.

Second, we need to fully understand our long-term strategy. Tying where our deployment is going with where the organization is going is critical. Only then can we begin to develop an effective strategic plan for our initiative that begins to be fully integrated with the overarching plan of the organization. Few things are as frustrating to a team as completing a significant project only to learn that all their hard work is going to be eradicated because of a planned change that they were unfamiliar with and did not take into account in their new Future State Process change! Let’s face it, very few organizations are truly good at strategic planning...most have a 5-year plan that is only reviewed once a year when they update it. Optimistically, you can often begin to use this fact to help you and your teams actually drive strategic change in an organization by tying your efforts to strategic goals. The greatest tool for this is most often an Enterprise Level Value Stream Map. The deliverable of this event is a 2 -5 year road map that identifies and prioritizes the actions, activities, and changes that need to be accomplished over a 2 – 5 year period to achieve the new Future State Enterprise organization. We have seen considerable success for creating value and credibility for a new Deployment Plan when used to help an organization covert its 5-year Plan from an “academic exercise” into a true roadmap for change and growth!

### **Phase 3: Developing Your Team**

Begin to develop a deep “bench strength” of support and structure for your change initiative! This requires us to fully understand all the facets that go into a strong program from a personnel point of view and how we utilize those resources.

First, we need to develop true “Champions” for our initiative. Business leaders who are truly “bought into” the program and all that it requires of them. They have seen the benefits and realize they far outweigh the costs. These champions need to be developed...not assigned! Their development requires them to receive some initial training to help them realize up front what their roles and responsibilities will be. How the program will work, what it will require,

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and how it will be rolled out. For Lean Six Sigma, we have found that a One-Day White Belt course is ideal for this level of orientation! Do not give them 8-hours of “Death by PowerPoint! Make it hands on and full of simulations and exercises. Give them insight into what this can truly deliver and the importance of their roles in helping to sustain this long-term. The time and effort required to develop a Champion that truly supports you and your team is money in the bank for you long-term. Continue to provide them with a respectable ROI and they will support you far more effectively than is the case when they simply “show up” at the out brief and thank everybody for their participation. Failure to cultivate effective Champions is a major failure mode for the Phase 3 Deployment.

Next, let’s take a hard look at your Practitioners. Whether you call them “Belts”, “Jonah’s”, or “Bifurcated MucketLifters”, they are the heart and soul of your change initiative! The single greatest failure mode I’ve seen in most deployment failures is inadequate training and support for the practitioners who are responsible for delivering the immediate results and facilitating the teams to accomplish the projects / events. The biggest single failure mode is to send someone to Green Belt training (and in particular a course that includes only “tools” and no facilitation skills”) and then assigning them as the Lead for a project team. You wouldn’t send a surgeon into an operating suite if they had only taken a course in surgery nor would you allow a pilot who had only taken an “online” course in piloting to fly a plane full of passengers. So why would you allow a person with minimum exposure to lead something as complicated as changing your key business processes to immediately begin working with a team to use multiple tools and techniques that they have just learned in class? You wouldn’t! This is even applicable to a lesser degree with individuals who take a Black Belt course, although that course provides an individual with a great deal more experience and understanding of the tools and techniques. They still need additional developing and training.

The very best way to develop a strong practitioner force is to provide them with training as we have been doing. Then allow them to participate on a team as a Team Member. Then the next event, they participate as the Team Lead. Next they apprentice as an Assistant Facilitator with a trained and skilled Coach or Master Facilitator. Then, they can co-facilitate with a mentor or a coaching Master Black Belt or a very experienced Black Belt. Finally, they are the Lead Facilitator with the coach in the background to observe and correct in private. Only then are they truly ready to lead a team in both the tools and the techniques of facilitating teams through difficult discussions to achieve fantastic results! It is a true development process in and of itself. The time and effort required to develop a strong practitioner force within your organization is critical to your long-term success. A word of warning! Business leaders who become expert at facilitating groups through difficult sessions and get outstanding results are HIGHLY sought after in the business community. Both inside and outside your organization! Find a way to recognize and retain these individuals as they are truly valuable to your organization in the long-term.

Next for your consideration is the issue of how do you find and/or select individuals who will be good at the required skill set to achieve and sustain change long-term in your organization? That

is a great question! A major failure mode is to select (or allow) people to go through the training because they are “available”. Let’s think this through for a moment...Do you really think that a person who is available because we don’t have a place for them is going to have the credibility to influence business executives to change major business processes that are already causing them problems? I thought not. I have found it is incredibly effective when we challenge our “A” players and make entry into the program both exclusive and significantly difficult to be selected. I designed and established the Master Black Belt Program for a Fortune 25 company and one of my non-negotiables was that the program had to be extremely selective in who was allowed to participate. This met with considerable pushback from very senior executives who had been “conditioned” to expect whoever they sent would automatically be allowed to participate in any new training program.

Each candidate was interviewed three times by multiple people and they had to produce real results in the projects they had facilitated. We only selected about 15% of the people who applied. The results were that we had people who wanted to be in the program. People who were committed to doing whatever it took to become a success and achieve things others thought were impossible. This completely changed the dynamic from a class that had to be “endured” to an opportunity to be highly desired! It became obvious after the first year that this was a fast track for high-potential candidates and was seen to be an executive developmental assignment. The value in this was that we had people who were willing to put in long hours, take significant risks on occasion, and who believed in what we were doing. In short, we selected people who had a passion for what was required. It made a tremendous difference in the success of the results achieved and the value perceived by the rest of the organization. Conversely, some years later, the “exclusiveness” of the program was eliminated resulting in declining level of results. It’s as simple as “Good People In...Good Results Out!”

If you select great people, those individuals tend to attract others like them. They provide excellent role models to the organization for what good business leaders’ look and act like. They are often great recruiters for others like themselves who want to join. And last, but not least, great people set the bar of expectations. That bar should always rise in value, never lower.

### **Phase 4: Sustaining Your Gains**

As you well know, 60% to 80% of all change management initiatives and new ideas fail. We have spent considerable time and efforts trying to understand why and we have broken the code on some of the major failure modes and causes. Of particular interest to us in this arena is the fact that we seldom have supporting infrastructure around the new process or initiative to provide visibility, support, and measurement of progress or success to effectively sustain our new creations. They almost immediately begin to atrophy and revert to the status quo resulting in no perceivable savings or lasting effect. There are some things we can do to reverse and eliminate these unwanted effects from our efforts.

- A. Develop a very specific **Action Item Plan**. This plan should utilize the S.M.A.R.T. philosophy: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-Bound. In

- addition, always have a single “belly button” responsible for each action. Also, ensure that the entire team accepts accountability and responsibility for some share of the items. Having one or two people responsible for the majority of items is a sure fire way to ensure they will not get done in a timely manner.
- B. Develop an effective **Communications Plan**. This plan should answer the Who, What, When, Where, Why, How, and How Often questions each person in your organization and your customer base needs to know in order for them to truly appreciate the magnitude of the changes taking place. The plan also needs to be multi-media in its approach. Each of us has a preference for how we like to receive and process information. Communications is one area where “one-size-fits-all” definitely does not apply! Also, ensure that each person hears and receives your messages 6 to 26 times. Just about the time you think they are sick and tired of hearing from you, they are just beginning to fully understand the import of your message.
- C. Develop an effective **Executive Support Plan or E.S.P.** We refer to this as an ESP because your executives can’t read your mind and they don’t know what you need from them unless you are very specific. This plan should be color coded to highlight for them the priority of the requests and requirements you are laying out for them. Red should indicate that without their approval or resources this item will result in the failure of the new plan or process. Yellow indicates that without support or approval, the process or plan will be severely impacted and the potential savings or benefit will be degraded. Green indicates that the item is “nice to have” but we can live without it. Develop a strong business case for each of the Red and Yellow items. Show them that you have put serious thought into why you need this, what it will cost, what benefits it will deliver, and the potential ROI this item will generate. A major failure mode for this is people simply say they need something and expect the execs to just “pony it up”. A pure cost item seldom has a high probability of approval on its own. Yet, an item that has the cost benefit analysis already accomplished stands a far better chance of approval. Common sense, yet few people do this effectively.
- D. Finally, develop a particularly strong **Sustainment Plan**. Be specific! How often is your team going to meet to review progress to work on developing new information or solve developing problems with the new process? Who is going to be responsible for tracking each of the other plans and measuring their results? How are you going to track progress and continue to generate energy to motivate the team? Few people realize that the easy part of change management is actually coming up with the new process or idea! The real work is in implementing it over the long haul and keeping the team and yourself motivated when things seem to grind to a halt. Without an effective Sustainment Plan, you have a 99.9997% chance for failure. It is said that “A failure to plan is a plan to fail”. Implementing and sustaining change is truly where this is spot on target!

In addition to these plans, develop a strong database of “**Lessons Learned**”. Have each team member record his or her biggest “aha” moment during the project. In addition, capture what they would have done different if they had the project to do all over again. There is no excuse for having to learn the same lesson twice in life! It’s been said that there is no additional education in the second kick from a mule...The first time we find a problem it is a golden nugget to show you and your team members how to become world-class. Every time you face the same problem after that is simply unacceptable! A collection of “Lessons Learned” is one of the best ways I’ve found to avoid that problem.

### **Phase 5: Measure and Market Results!**

It is a fact of life that unless we can measure something we cannot improve it! You need to develop and initiate a strong system to track your results, quantify and validate your savings, and communicate the message to the rest of the organization and to your customers. To this end, we strongly advise you to include a member of the financial team on each event. Where possible, have them be a part of the multifunctional team full time. If this is not practical, bring them in often so that they understand the Current State, the problems identified, the solutions developed, the new Future State for the process or the plan, and the implications for these changes. Only by fully integrating them into each step will they be able to accurately calculate the potential savings your changes will deliver. And their certification of the results will be vital for your team’s credibility for results delivered. Never forget, virtually everything in business, whether you are a “for profit” or a “non-profit” runs on money. “No Bucks...No Buck Rogers”.

In addition to the financial impacts, ensure you are accurately capturing ALL of the ways your new changes impact your organization. Another major failure mode is not considering the internal process dynamics and focusing all of the attention of the process deliverables. By this I mean the Touch Times; Queue Times, Travel Distances; Waste Elimination; Reduction in Handoffs and Approvals steps; reduction in number of needless signatures and duplications / reworks. The output deliverables are important, but your charge is to change the process. Only by measuring the internal dynamic process variables can you accurately show just how much you’ve improved the process. The output deliverables can be improved or changed by simply increasing labor or by changing suppliers and delivery schedules...these have nothing to do with the actual process you are trying to change. Do not overlook this crucial area to ensure your Deployment Plan creates and maintains credibility and generates deep commitment because of the measurable results you and your teams actually achieve. Credible results can be used to actually market these changes to your customers because you can show them actual results that match the Voice of The Customer and what they told you was critically important to them. This can often be a real discriminator in selecting you over your competitors. Don’t overlook this possibility!

Last, but not least, hold yourself and your teams, and especially your practitioners, to the highest standards. To this end, we have designed and developed something we call a Project Review Board. In this, we look at the results obtained but more importantly, we do a “deep dive” on how

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they did the project. What went right? What went wrong? What did they learn? And what would they do different if they had it all to do over again? The answers to these questions often take your practitioners to the next level of competence and confidence. No project every goes perfectly. When they try to tell me that there were no problems and it went “just fine” I know to dig deep and tear into the detail to find the truth. We have to be “brutally honest” with ourselves and each other if we are to fully achieve our true potential and generate the kind of change that transforms an organization from what it is today into a truly world-class operation!

There is far more to developing an effective Deployment Plan than we’ve covered here. But this outline gives you the insight and the order we’ve found that works to design and implement a change management initiative or a Deployment Plan for almost any organization. Do not be afraid to try things for yourself. Insist on developing something that fits your culture and conforms to your organization’s strategic objectives. And never forget, the executives are NOT the key to success for driving this into your organization. **You are!** You and only you can control what you do and how you spend your time and effort. Make certain that at the end of each day, you can answer the question, did what I accomplished today move the ball closer to the goal or did we lose ground? That answer gives you what you need to know in order to **A**chieve what You Were **C**reated to **B**ecome!

Now go change the world!

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