

News-Service

- Ideas & Content for Editors -

"Stick to the proven and make new things tangible"

Introduce enterprise-ready processes in six steps

Overview: Companies are constantly changing processes and many of these large process change projects end up being nice on paper but ineffectual. The audience, which is often the employees for which these changes and new processes are intended to benefit, do not participate. Expert Thomas Becker observes that employees often do not feel responsible for the changes. On the one hand, they were not included in defining the change, on the other hand they are not aware of their tasks and responsibilities. Thomas Becker explains what needs to be done - and has a six-step work plan.

For more than half a year, the project manager was working on more efficient processes for the purchasing department. She carefully described and documented the new processes in an online manual. From the beginning of the year, employees were expected follow the new procedures but nothing happened. Purchasing continued to work as they had always worked. Could this have been resistance to the innovations? "The changes were not extensive or a huge deviation from their known processes. Implementing the change would have freed the department from unnecessary work and stress," the project manager said. For example, it reduced coordination errors, or duplications, and it eliminated the delay caused by multiple, unnecessary decisions structures. When asked, the project manager said, "I have the impression that my colleagues did not feel responsible for the new processes." To her, everything seemed clear. But to her colleagues many things were still unclear. No one seemed to adopt the 'better way'; there was confusion around who has responsibility for what?

Thomas Becker is a Process Management Professional at the consulting firm "next level consulting" and explains that the desired effect of such process optimization projects is often not lived due to two problems. On the one hand employees are excluded from the design of new processes and furthermore, employees do not receive sufficient engagement to digest what the change means, who is responsible for what, and what tasks will be different. In six

News-Service

- Ideas & Content for Editors -

simple steps, Thomas describes how to win over employees and successfully implement new processes.

1. Determine where you stand (as-is analysis)

A primary shift in thinking is to understand that processes are not an end in themselves, therefore the question 'why do we need a new process' needs to be answered before we start 'redesigning'. Professionals suggest the use of basic questioning techniques in a kick-off workshop with their employees. What's going wrong, where do problems arise in daily operations, where exactly? And also: which processes are going well? "It pays to consciously acknowledge what is working and therefore needs to be maintained," explains Thomas Becker, in fact an inquisition on what is tried and tested can be hints to what be adopted and implemented elsewhere. Another key outcome of these workshops is that the employees feel involved. They are recognized and valued for their opinion - and are allowed to participate in defining and changing the processes.

2. Where is the journey going?

The as-is analysis concludes with a collection of ideas, a list of problems, starting points and initial proposals. Subsequently, the improvements continue in a follow-up workshop. Thomas Becker recommends systematizing and completing the first results - with the help of visualization techniques. The processes are graphically displayed on flip charts or pin boards. With such an overview, it quickly becomes clear which step follows which. Who supports whom? Which tools are needed for each step, such as forms, checklists, computer programs or document templates? The goal: an as complete as possible overview of the processes with all the difficulties and strengths. "Employees already recognize during the visualization where the processes can be improved," explains Thomas Becker. This involvement not only enables process management, but also incentivises employees to actively implement the changes and later follow the new processes.

3. Clarify responsibility and authority in the team

"Teams should discuss responsibilities early in the process," explains Thomas Becker. "For example, the usual roles in process management should be clarified." For slightly more complex

News-Service

- Ideas & Content for Editors -

processes, two core roles will need to be defined, a so-called "process owner" and the "process manager". The process owner is accountable for the goals to be achieved by a process. "Often these are department managers or other senior managers. It is the responsibility of the process owner to ensure that the results contribute to the objectives of the organization."

The process manager is different: He is responsible to ensure that the process is implemented in the day-to-day work - this could include managing the individual steps in a process and ensuring adherence of the defined tasks to complete each process step. "The emphasis here is less on strategy, but more on operational work," explains Becker. Crucial for success: process owners and process managers must know their responsibilities and work together. In addition, both should be trained for their role, such as the tools of process management, communication and dealing with difficult situations.

4. Train employees

The employees involved at different process steps or requiring output from each step need to be educated on the process. This can be achieved through various communication channels, however Thomas recommends facilitating at least one information workshop. The communication should include details to what's new/changing? How will the changes in the processes be implemented? How do you monitor and control the process? What are the goals and advantages of new processes? "In this, process managers should avoid looking at the changes from the perspective of the company only, but also from the perspective of the employees," says Thomas Becker. Specifically, work out the benefits for the employees and reduce stress with the improved processes.

5. Keep process management alive

The demands to continuously adapt, improve and optimise processes calls for a proactive approach to process management which allows organisations to be a step ahead. Examples of how to achieve this could be setting long-term goals for improvements, measuring throughput, lead-times, error rates or cost. Other indicators that are easy to measure could be the satisfaction of customers, colleagues or employees. It is good practice to have well defined and measurable key performance indicators that are checked regularly - and are used to adjust the processes. Also

News-Service

- Ideas & Content for Editors –

important: Process managers should regularly report the progress to the process owners. "Attention and support are important success factors for implementing and living new ways of working," says Thomas Becker. Process work also means evolving the company further: process management becomes the interface between strategy definition and operational implementation.

6. Prepare and offer guidance

In many companies, process manuals collect dust in filing cabinets. The descriptions of the work processes are hardly used - although experts consider this documentation anything but paperwork. "Try to make the manuals accessible, clear and easy to understand," Thomas Becker continues by explaining how he uses graphics or short texts in addition to these manuals. A more pragmatic approach is to provide employees with simple one-pager guidance cheat sheets, checklists, forms, templates or route cards. An easily accessible manual or checklist motivates many employees to follow new work processes and to fill them with life. Specialized process management tools that are integrated with existing software solutions in the company are also recommended.

About next level consulting:

next level consulting offers consulting services for project and process management, change management as well as for the development of project- and process-oriented organisations. With more than one hundred experts next level consulting is working for companies in diverse sectors, mainly from the IT and telecommunication industry, machinery and plant engineering, industry as well as pharmaceuticals, mobility and logistics, banks and insurance companies. In addition, the business that was founded in Vienna in 2000 is conducting consultancy projects in the health sector, in public administrations as well as NGOs. The business consultancy operates branches in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Slovakia, France, South Africa, Thailand, Singapore, Australia and USA.

Further information regarding next level consulting is available under www.nextlevelconsulting.com

For direct enquiries please contact Raphaela Bel | raphaela.bel@nextlevelconsulting.com.

This article may be published free of charge – please send us a copy for our information