

PROCESS ORIENTATION

By Harold Chapman

BOTH: THE WHAT AND THE HOW

Both the process and the result that is achieved (paying attention to what is done and how it is done) are important. The result will not change unless we change the process. **Process Orientation** comes with the understanding that it is the processes that yield results. Many managers focus purely on the results regardless of the process followed. Have you ever heard someone say, “I don’t care how you do it, just get it done!” If we focus on the processes that yield the results, we are more likely to be able to improve those results over time instead of getting what we get and not understanding why.

A quote from a well-known company was, “We get brilliant results from average people managing brilliant processes, while we notice our competitors get mediocre results from brilliant people managing broken processes.” The people we recruit into our organizations work processes. Those processes yield results. If we ignore the process, it reduces our opportunity to gain the result. This chain reaction occurs in many organizations striving toward World-class performance. It is evidenced by variation in the process or product as we move people in the organization into new positions where they lack the tribal knowledge for any particular process.

It’s like a situation we’ve witnessed where a company was focused on cost reductions. They were focused on the result but not the process to achieve the result and many of the improvement ideas were focused on cost controls rather than actual process improvement. They had targeted 6% in cost reduction due to productivity improvements but had historical results of between 1 and 2% productivity with recent years trailing the historical “success.” The prevalent thinking was that the “low hanging fruit” was already harvested and they ran out of ideas on how to improve the process. When we focused on waste elimination and throughput time reduction, we got everyone involved in process improvement at every level of the organization. Not only was the 6% productivity target achieved, but it was almost doubled!

It’s a tough day when the organization runs out of answers for how to solve their current issues. Every time we experience this, we take them to their processes and together, face to face, shoulder to shoulder, finger-tip close to their processes, we identify numerous opportunities. A common response is, “Sure, but that isn’t going to get us to our target.” This is a correct statement. But continuing to identify and eliminate these issues with everyone in the organization DOES yield the results we are looking for.

Management cannot achieve desired results by simply demanding the results be achieved. However, why do so many managers and executives still simply demand a result without concern for how? The change process, the improvement process, and the technical processes of the organization must all be deeply understood and improved in order to get the desired results.

Keeping this principle in mind, can you think of any processes that are broken to the point that they are only sustained through the heroism of brilliant people? If so, your chances of repeatable/sustainable results are diminished significantly – [but LMSPI can assist your team](#). There is hope if we take the time to standardize our processes and begin our continuous improvement approach to improve the processes from that standard.

