The Transformation Minded Process Owner

How can the transformational minded process owner mitigate obstacles and establish credibility outside their traditional role? He or she needs to:

- Measure what matters to customers,
- Forge essential partnerships, and
- Promote an enterprise view.

**Measure What Matters.** Measuring what matters to customers is the foundational tactic for mitigating the obstacles of perception and complexity. It enables the process owner to raise questions around operational performance. By emphasizing metrics such as perfect order delivery (on-time, complete, error-free), perfect response to inquiries and complaints (first-time-right, complete, error-free), and variance to promise date for new product or service introduction, the process owner can raise thought-provoking questions that directly strike operational performance and where the resolution of problems demand cross-departmental collaboration.

When customers receive perfect orders and responses to inquiries that are right the first time, they not only pay invoices faster (a good thing to keep days’ sales outstanding (DSO) on target), but this also helps increase customer loyalty and build revenues. The addition of these metrics to the leadership team’s scorecard can offset the imbalance of focusing solely on financial measures of performance, and the ensuing discussion can counter the perception of the traditional role, building credibility.

**Forge Essential Partnerships.** Forging essential partnerships is another key tactic to use to mitigate the obstacles of perception and complexity. Establishing a close and collaborative relationship with key members of the leadership team, especially the chief information officer (CIO) and the senior human resources (HR) executive are crucial. A strong and close alliance
with the CIO is indispensable. Not only is it difficult to imagine a successful transformation today that doesn’t rely heavily on enabling information technology, but both the process owner and CIO often have to contend with others seeing them as simply technical experts, and they both need to make sense out of increasing complexity. Accordingly, they should be natural partners. When aligned in their efforts, the process owner and CIO can forge the enterprise-wide view that’s necessary for thinking both strategically and operationally, and they also hold the key to the funds and technology to take action.

A strong alliance with the senior HR executive is similarly important in mitigating the obstacles of perception and complexity for the transformational minded process owner who believes that the enterprise is a multifaceted social system. Transformational efforts must first be led, but then the change program needs to be managed, which is where this alliance can pay dividends in developing the best organization design and the related alignment of recognition and reward systems.

**Promote an Enterprise View.** Measuring what matters to customers and forging essential alliances set the stage for taking an enterprise view of the organization, which is the third tactic to use to overcome the obstacles of perception and complexity. The transformational process owner can facilitate the development of a schematic of the enterprise that’s accompanied by a story of what the company wants to accomplish, taking into account performance for customers, key business processes, and the technology that enables performance. Here it’s important to ask, not tell. This means asking questions about the current and desired level of performance needed to create customer value. The questions should provoke thought and move the leadership team toward a shared understanding of the scope of the organizational challenge and the need for collaboration. Ask questions such as “What’s the impact of late raw material purchases on our
on-time delivery performance?” and “What’s our success rate in responding to requests for proposal on time and how does this translate into revenue.” Transformation is a team sport, and most leadership teams simply don’t practice. That is, they don’t discuss how different departments need to work together for value creation in any regular and disciplined way. They don’t work diligently on reducing jargon and assuring clear communication on major issues. Once there is action on measuring what matters to customers, forging key partnerships, and encouraging an enterprise view of performance, the stage is set to engage in the best practices needed to make a successful transformational change.

Andrew Spanyi is the author of three books emphasizing the importance of cross-functional collaboration and a customer-oriented, process focus: More for Less: The Power of Process Management, Business Process Management Is a Team Sport: Play It to Win! and Operational Leadership. Andrew invites readers to contact him for practical guidance related to their specific situation. You can reach him at www.spanyi.com or andrew@spanyi.com.