

Operational Excellence – Change at speed

Overall implementing OPEX has resulted in a significant sea change within the organisation as we have re focussed senior management downwards on having greater visibility and understanding of the day to day operational process and more importantly the outcomes associated with them.

In our organisation managers would articulate frustrations with the current processes and systems, and staff expressed discontent with various aspects of the organisation. The ability to balance between meeting these expectations, creating a meritocracy, and challenging some of the ingrained belief systems – whilst, reducing costs, increasing productivity and most importantly delivering a good customer experience was our objective.

Operational Excellence was a great vehicle to use to achieve this however you have be careful for what you wish for as it delivers just that - fundamental sea change at speed.

There are a number of things that contributed to the successful implementation, in my opinion one of which is the calibre of people used to understand the business changes required - David uses proven managers who have trodden the boards and bear the scars and can relate to both staff and managers using their own experiences and secondly to quickly deliver that change - the pace of delivery is key and progress is measured in days and weeks and not months and years.

There is also an almost metronomic focus upon deliverables – experience showed many initiatives become derailed, distracted and invariably diluted by attempting to cater for organisational sensitivities and agendas - if real change is what you are after OpEx delivers it.

Focus on the end game was well served by having David as part of the senior team for the duration of the exercise as sometimes external reflection and presentation of the key facts and realities is invaluable in removing roadblocks and ensuring visibility of the process and its progress .

One of the cornerstones to change and ensuring longevity was to equip the operational management team with new skills to manage in the new reality - as many of them were very capable in crisis management but struggle to lead when development and innovative thinking was required.

All our managers from Team Leader upwards went through Performance Management training to raise their own understanding of themselves and their performance to better manage and lead their staff - without such skills, in my view over time there is a danger of the old practices and processes returning.

Overall my experience of OpEx is that 'it does what it says on the tin' - it will produce a significant step change in performance, it will reduce costs significantly and it will deliver a better customer experience. However both staff and managers need to be aware that this is not a furniture moving initiative where nothing really changes and be prepared for what that brings.

Staff start out by asking for things to change and change they do, but holistically and not just the bits they want - this needs to be communicated and managed. It is not rocket science and essentially it's not that difficult but without the support of David and his team I very much doubt whether we would have had the appetite or the focus to deliver this successfully in house even if we had had the skills and resource levels available.

Whether an organisation needs a health check or whether there's a need due to recent business integration or pending significant growth the OpEx approach based upon my experience has significant merit and delivers tangible commercial and customer results.

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October 2008