



POINT OF VIEW

Accelerating your productivity program through
a **people-first approach**

INTRODUCTION

Operations leaders, does this sound familiar?

A team arrives on-site to conduct a review of your operations, but instead of a collaborative effort, you feel frustrated:

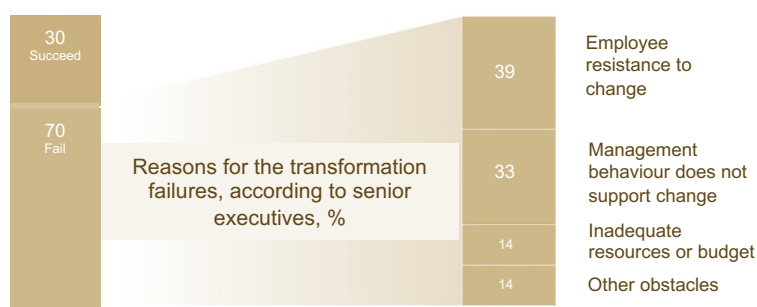
- The review process feels disconnected and predetermined, with the team not adapting to your schedule and staying disengaged from your team.
- There is a lack of understanding of mining basics, requiring you to spend significant time explaining, which adds to your workload.
- Previous reviews have led to little or no change, creating frustration and a sense that the process is ineffective.
- The review team often makes assumptions, doesn't listen, and sometimes talks down to you, leading to a feeling of not being respected.
- Recommendations are often impractical, and information is presented to head office without your input or approval.

If any of this resonates, you're not alone.

These issues arise when review teams focus too much on the review output, technical correctness and visual appeal, and not enough on the experience and engagement of your operations team during the process.

Reviews are the first step in an improvement journey, with value only being realised once the recommendations are implemented. According to Scott Keller et al¹, the success of an improvement program is driven by the level of operations buy-in and ownership and not the technical correctness of the original review (refer image below of reasons for transformations failing).

This ruthless focus on the review output and not on the level of engagement and buy-in results in many reviews being only as valuable as the paper they're written on.



¹Scott Keller and Collin Price, *Beyond Performance: How Great Organisations Build Ultimate Competitive Advantage*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sonns, 2011.

In this Point of View, we'll argue that taking a people-first approach to working with operations delivers significant value. It accelerates the delivery of your improvement programs and reduces the risk of overloading or burning out your leaders.

We will cover:

1. Why a people-first approach delivers significant value
2. What's involved in taking a people-first approach
3. How OX Solutions applies a people-first approach

1. Why a people-first approach delivers value:

- I. **Develops improved buy-in:** When your team isn't engaged in the review process, they won't believe in the outcomes, even if they're technically correct. This lack of belief can lead to stagnation in decision-making
- II. **Creates speed to implement and embed change:** If leaders don't believe in a decision or solution, it becomes challenging for them to convince their teams of its value. Early engagement with leaders ensures alignment and facilitates quick implementation of changes.
- III. **Reduces overload and burnout of leaders:** Running Business as Usual (BAU) operations is challenging enough without adding reviews and initiatives to the workload, which can often be the tipping point. The process of improvement should recharge your energy just as much as it uses it. Making the review and improvement process engaging, enjoyable, and built on trust helps to reduce burnout and gets your team excited about implementation.
- IV. **Builds capability for future reviews:** A people-first approach not only delivers immediate results but also builds the capability of your team to conduct similar reviews independently in the future. This helps create a more self-sufficient team and improves overall efficiency.

V. Delivers better quality results:

Building trust with operations through a people-first approach allows the review team to understand the true root causes of problems, not just the symptoms. This ensures that the solutions co-designed with operations are focused on addressing the real issues.

- VI. Co-Design:** A collaborative process that involves actively engaging all stakeholders, ensuring their needs, perspectives, and goals are integrated into the design and decision-making process to create solutions that are more effective, inclusive, and sustainable.

2. What's involved in taking a people-first approach

The reason review teams focus so much on the output is due to an inward mindset where they have an objective (to deliver a review) and see the operations team as vehicles through which they can achieve their own objectives.

At the essence of a people-first approach is seeing others as people with their own goals and aspirations, just like we do, rather than as vehicles to achieve our own goals.

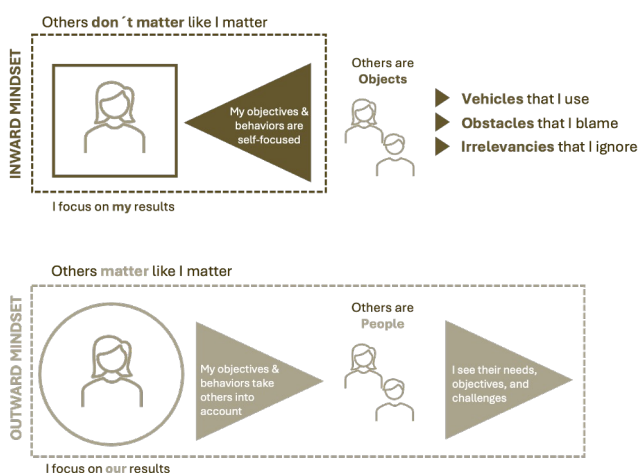
The Arbinger Institute refers to this as an "outward mindset," which focuses on the needs and objectives of others. "Others matter like I matter; I focus on our results"

This people-first approach involves several key principles:

- I. Seeing people as people:** Recognising and valuing others as individuals with their own needs, objectives, and challenges.
- II. Understanding impact:** Being aware of and taking responsibility for how one's actions affect others and contribute to collective goals.
- III. Collaboration and partnership:** Building genuine relationships through open communication, trust, and mutual support.
- IV. Adjusting efforts to help others succeed:** Adapting actions to assist others in achieving their objectives by providing support and being attentive to their needs.
- V. Empathy and active listening:** Listening and understanding others' perspectives, emotions, and motivations to build deeper connections and resolve conflicts.

VI. Accountability and continuous improvement: Maintaining accountability for an outward mindset and continuously seeking to improve interactions and relationships.

Visit [Arbinger¹ Institute blog](#) for more details.



Some of the common symptoms associated with an Inward and an Outward Mindset are exhibited through:



An outward mindset can help businesses become more resilient and adaptive in a rapidly changing business environment.

3. How OX Solutions applies a people-first approach

OX Solutions realise that reviews are only the first step in an improvement program and that the success of this program is driven more by the level of buy-in to the program than the technical correctness of the recommendations. We leverage an approach built on an outward mindset that is designed to build trust, promote transparency and align with the unique goals and passions of the individuals we work with. Here's how we put this approach into practice:

- I. During project kick-off, we ensure all key stakeholders understand what, why, and when of the engagement through face-to-face information sessions, emailed communication, and individual introductions.
- II. We engage with people in their workplace (we come to you) and adjust our schedule to suit yours.
- III. We take a genuine interest in you as a person—your goals, ambitions, and passions—and how we can help you.

¹the Arbinger Institute blog, (2024). *What is an outward mindset?*, <https://arbinger.com/blog/what-is-an-outward-mindset/>

- I. We validate findings with each level before presenting them to the next level up.
- II. We spend time listening and understanding why things are the way they are.
- III. We adjust our approach as we go, factoring in stakeholder availability and feedback (we will never force a solution).
- IV. We join in your social events to build relationships.
- V. We respect your time by deploying teams with mining experience, so you don't need to spend time explaining the basics.
- VI. We don't take credit for your work; instead, we involve you in every step of the process, from problem definition to initiative scoping'
- VII. We integrate your improvement people into the team.
- VIII. Those that will be impacted by any change are consulted from the start to end and have input into the recommendations

This detailed and empathetic approach may raise concerns about time and resource commitments. However, the investment in a people-first strategy not only avoids the common pitfalls of traditional reviews but also ensures lasting and meaningful improvements. Let's address some of the common concerns:

"It Takes Too Long"

While a people-first approach may take extra time at the start, it ultimately reduces time to start implementing and realising value by preventing delays throughout and reducing the need for rework due to lack of buy-in.

"It Takes Up Too Much of Operations' Time"

Engaging your team throughout the process ensures that the time invested leads to actionable outcomes, not just ideas that sit on the shelf.

“But if I spend all my time helping others, how will I achieve my objectives”

While it may seem that spending time helping others detracts from achieving your own objectives, adopting an outward mindset has a powerful, reciprocal effect. When you focus on supporting others, it fosters a culture where they, in turn, instinctively adopt the same approach towards you. This creates a positive feedback loop where your objectives become shared goals, and you receive the help and collaboration you need to achieve them. Ultimately, by prioritizing an outward mindset, you're not sacrificing your own progress but rather multiplying it through the collective efforts of those around you.

CONCLUSION

A people-first approach is not just a feel-good strategy but a necessity for effective and sustainable improvements. It eliminates feelings of being ignored, misunderstood, and overburdened.

This approach ensures your team is on board, excited, and motivated to implement solutions that address the true issues, not just the symptoms. It makes the improvement process replenishing rather than draining and prepares your team to handle future reviews independently. By incorporating team insights, adjusting schedules, and promoting genuine collaboration, the benefits far outweigh the perceived drawbacks of time and effort.

Ultimately, a people-first approach turns improvement from a burdensome task into a collaborative journey toward excellence.



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