

I: ROUTE TO THE BOOK

While the story proper starts in the mid- to late 1990s, there were two events in the 1980s that are relevant to the story. The first was picking up Peters and Waterman's *In Search of Excellence* in the early 1980s. There are many good management practices described in this book. I added many of them to my toolbox for use in my first proper management and leadership jobs, where I enjoyed some early success.

The second was from 1985 to 1987, when I served in *Her Majesty's Canadian Ship Nipigon* as the marine systems engineering officer. We did very well at the mid-cycle workups. The team popped! While we did implement a very active training program over the two years prior, the team's performance was more than a training program could reasonably explain. I did not have the experience to know what that was.

It was 1997 before the topic came up again. I was on a course at The Institute, which was a Canadian federal government training facility managed and operated by Public Works and Government Services Canada. The subject of the course was "Managing the IT/IM Function," and it was delivered by Dr. Walter Baker. If my memory is correct, this is when I first heard the idea that "A manager's role is to release the power of their team." On hearing this, my immediate thought was, "This is self-evident." It was exactly what had happened during that workups period, ten years prior. But it still did not illuminate the details for me!

My understanding from that course was that managers had to adjust their style to suit the team, to get the most out of the collection of individuals. A manager that was too controlling restricted the team to their power, while a manager that was too laissez-faire for their team lost efficiency and effectiveness. It was from here that I started to adjust my management style toward the team and adopted my understanding of Dr. Baker's thinking on objectives and results management, which I started to practice on return to the workplace. For the purposes of this book, team one.

At that time (1995 to 2002), I was employed at the National Defence Headquarters, Ottawa, supporting the procurement and maintenance of ships and ship systems. My director general at that time, Commodore Wayne Gibson, created an uncomplicated work management system to optimize the wise expenditure of his budget. It worked very well. I was fortunate enough to be the staff officer who oversaw the daily activities in building and putting this information system to work. From a ring-side seat, I observed several lessons, which were applied to my future work.

- For a work management system to work and be accurate, it must be accessible to the team and used for its purpose.
- To be used for its purpose, the information in the system must fill an obvious need. The supervising manager was clear and precise about the information needed to do the work and why it was needed.
- The importance of the question: What's the work?

In the early 2000s, I moved on to my next team, which was tasked to develop an enterprise architecture framework based

on systems engineering principles. The team developed a set of information artifacts for each level in what is called a system baseline. There were six baseline levels in our model: concept, functional, architectural, design, product, and operational. The model facilitated communications between the various stakeholders. It worked very well, advancing several projects that had hitherto become bogged down in process.

During this period, I had the pleasure of attending a course on the Zachman Framework delivered by John Zachman. If my memory is correct, he articulated the following thought: “The framework should help you think about things.” This was something I found to be true of enterprise architecture as a subject. It should help you think about how an organization operates.

In the later part of this decade, I moved to team three, where the task was to provide a full-service support (technology system and subject expertise) in requirements engineering. It was in this team that, with the help of one of the younger team members, Mr. Kevin Jackson, I developed my understanding of the then Telelogic now IBM tool, Dynamic Object-Oriented Requirements Software (DOORS). For two to three years, my focus was completely on requirements management and at the end of that period, I concluded that it was more helpful to a successful implementation to consider requirements as representing the understanding—as distinct from a hard and fast statement of requirement—of the need at the time the requirements were written. This understanding frequently evolves as the work progresses and time passes. Better to be prepared for discussion and evolution as distinct to defending something for reasons that are not helpful to the end goal.

During this period, I attended a user conference in Austin, Texas, on IBM Rational software products. During one of the enterprise architecture sessions, the presenter (I cannot recall his name, unfortunately) pointed out the error many people make with defining, explaining, or otherwise considering processes: they often include decision logic. This was another idea that once heard was, to me, self-evident. Going forward from there, I adopted the practice to keep process diagrams clear of decision logic and confine such relevant content to procedural type documents.

At the end of this period, support was withdrawn for the requirements management initiative and many other teams were transferred in under my oversight. Team four.

My work evolved toward client relationship and team management across multiple aspects of the larger organization: policing, technical document (drawings and publications) management, customs, supply and inventory, and so on. I used my newly acquired expertise in DOORS to oversee the requirements for each of these areas, the work that the teams were doing toward results for the clients, and the resource management for this work. For budget management, with some simple code, it was possible to make a DOORS module work like a spreadsheet. I found this particularly useful to track year-on-year performance. I had created an information environment that met the overall requirements of the work management system I referred to in the period from 1995 to 2002, with one big advantage. The environment could be easily adjusted and amended to meet changes in the overall and detailed evolving requirements without the need of an IT tech to make the changes. As a manager, I had empowered myself.

The next challenge appeared in 2011: teams five and six. In-service-support contracts are normally associated with physical equipment that can be delivered into an external contractor's hands for maintenance and repair. There is a separation between the operational and maintenance environments. The idea of an in-service-support contract for an information system is something different because the separation is not present. To achieve the benefit of an in-service-support contract, the external contractor must work independently—to the greatest extent possible—in the body of the main network. Access to and operations in the interior of complex government networks is tightly managed—as one might expect. The challenge was to oversee the contractors' work in a way that allows their freedom to work as a private sector company in a tightly regulated government environment.

Progress in our approach to the problem was accelerated by a high priority project originating high up in government. Team five delivered the project well inside time and budget expectations. Evidence in the user community indicated the delivered product was well used in the first year of operations. The information model (figure 5) was a product of our success in this project. This team popped!

The answer to the question I posed to myself in 1987—How did that happen?—was there in front of me. The right combination of leadership, management, and followership skills distributed in the team, supported by the right approach to the work and access to accurate information required to guide and progress the work, will motivate people with the ability to apply themselves, to get the job done and done right!

Team six implemented the information model (figure 5) in the steady state operation.