

## *The Defragmentation of Governments*

Fragment (noun) as defined by Merriam-Webster's online dictionary:

- A part broken off, detached or incomplete

Fragmentation (noun) as defined by Merriam-Webster's online dictionary:

- The act or process of fragmenting or making fragmentary
- The state of being fragmented or fragmentary

Defragment (transitive verb) as defined by Merriam-Webster's online dictionary:

- To reorganize separated fragments of related data into a contiguous arrangement

The first known use of 'fragmentation' was in 1881 but it wasn't until 104 years later (1985) that 'defragment' (the corrective action) had its first known use. So, it took the stakeholders of the English language more than a century to recognize that something new was needed in order to define a direct correlation to the fixing of something that was broke. Yes, that's a bit of 'tongue-in-cheek' but it does highlight the fact that sometimes the obvious is not always as obvious as people might think.



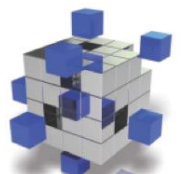
For the most part, governments have operated in the same manner for decades. Certainly, they have embraced website technology to enhance information distribution and collection with their stakeholders but have they really taken a systematic approach to reorganizing their separated fragments into a continuous whole? In this article, I'm not going to try to answer the question as the answer would be different from government to government. However, there is a method by which a government's leaders, or its stakeholders, would be able to determine the amount of

fragmentation that exists, how badly that fragmentation is hurting them and the amount of effort that would be required to defragment the areas that are causing the most waste.

Waste, as Lean practitioners would tell you, is anything that does not add value to the Value Proposition. When this concept of Lean first began use, the Value Proposition was directed only at the customers of the organization that were purchasing a product or service and only seven types of waste were identified. Today, and in the context of a government, we now create a Stakeholder Value Proposition (SVP) which includes everyone impacted by the efficiency (or lack thereof) of the organization and we have expanded the number of identified wastes to nine.

Who are the stakeholders? There may be some additions to this list, but as a basic group the stakeholders of a government are:

- Citizens (not all are taxpayers)



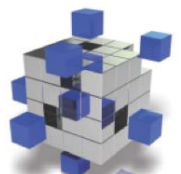
- Taxpayers (not all may be citizens)
- Businesses operating in the government
- Businesses that support government activities
  - Contractors
  - Product suppliers
  - Services suppliers
- Employees
- Government facilities:
  - Recreational centers
  - Community centers
  - Government buildings
- Educational facilities
  - Elementary and high schools
  - Colleges
  - Universities
  - Special education / vocational
- Charities



If you consider all of the goods, services and regulatory requirements that these stakeholders have an interest in and the infrastructure that is required to facilitate them, it's highly plausible that fragmentation may occur...especially in times of recession when governments are trying to keep taxes and spending down.

Let's identify the types of waste that might be the result of fragmented processes.

- Excess Resources – having products or services or people present that are not actually required to perform the process
- Inventory – having too much that is not used in a timely manner or paying excessively for a shortage
- Motion - people or equipment moving more than is required to perform the tasks
- Waiting – people or equipment waiting for a process or task to be completed
- Overproduction – executing a process or task ahead of the demand
- Over Processing – doing more work than necessary as a result of poor process design
- Defects – the effort required to inspect and / or fix products or services due to a defect in the product or poor execution of the service
- Disappointment – providing a product or service which does complete the requirement but leaves the stakeholder less than satisfied with the result
- Human Talent – this has two components:
  - The waste that results from having the wrong person in a position to deliver a product or service
  - The waste of unused intellectual capital in the organization...people that have much to offer but are not recognized or otherwise marginalized in the workplace



## *A Wedding Story*

An example of a fragmented situation occurred with an acquaintance of mine. He and his fiancée were planning to get married at government hall. It was the second time for both of them, so it would be a quiet affair with only a few friends and family members in attendance.



First, there was the trip to government hall to arrange for the marriage license and book the room and Justice of the Peace (JP) for the event.

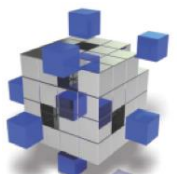
- As a taxpayer in the government, all of his personal information was on the government's tax systems but he still had to fill out the same information on a form as did his fiancée who was also a tax payer in the government. This meant they stood in line, got the form, went to a side area, filled out the form, stood in line again and handed it in.
- Then the clerk went to another database and looked up rooms available for the date they had in mind (fortunately one was available).
- Then the clerk selected another database to book the JP (fortunately again, one was available).
  - Apparently this is not always the case that both room and JP are available
- Then they paid for the license which meant using a credit card processing piece of software which tied back to the original licensing database
- The entire amount of time that the clerk was engaged was approximately 10 minutes
  - However, the form that was filled out would need to be typed into a system after the fact. That time / cost is not known.
- The amount of time that the taxpayers spent on the process:
  - 80 minutes combined travel time to / from government hall
  - 35 minutes at government hall
    - And it cost them \$4.00 for parking!

A first-step lean approach would be to input the two taxpayer identifiers into the system and print the form, sign the form and pay it.

- They would still need the travel time and would pay only \$2.00 for parking
- Their time spent at government hall would likely be less than 15 minutes
- The clerk's time would be a bit less as most of their time was spent on researching rooms and the JP.

A truly lean approach might enable them to do it all online with proper security checks in place. There would be no:

- Travel to / from the government hall for licensing
- No parking expense
- No clerical expense unless one party was not a taxpayer



To accomplish the result would only require integration of the several databases and creation of a process automation that would be available online.

### *All governments should be defragmented*

At any time, whether recession or boom, governments as a whole must be able to provide for their stakeholders. The responsibility for doing so does not entirely rest with the government, but is also the responsibility of business leaders, community leaders and other levels of government to ensure that the resources of the government are used to create a thriving environment.

There are two principles of the Lean methodologies that would need to take shape before the journey towards defragmentation could take place. They are: Respect; and, Teamwork.

Respecting each stakeholder's requirements, not just problems, and making serious efforts to build trust and shared responsibility for achieving success is the very foundation of this journey. Taking the respect of the stakeholders into the Teamwork that is required to problem-solve, engage others in their ideas and form consensus of purpose and resolution then becomes the bedrock of defragmentation. This is where the community and business leaders need to be engaged in the defragmentation journey and where other stakeholder input is crucial...and that input needs to be impartial to politics or individual agendas. Therefore, it becomes imperative to be able to collect information from a wide range of sources and validate what the leaders are thinking versus what the stakeholders are thinking.



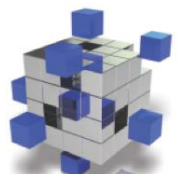
### *Who should lead this journey?*

It may be easier to say who shouldn't. This journey cannot be successfully led by a politician. That's a strong statement but is proven true in many organizational types as politicians exist in businesses, charities, religious groups and other places including government hall and other political establishments. Getting back to the government journey...politicians serve their constituents and, rightfully, advocate for what's important to that area or group within the government. This can put them at odds with others and the teamwork principle begins to fail.

The leader of this journey is typically going to come out of the business community but may also be a strong, civil-minded person from education, community support groups or other area of the government stakeholder community. This person must be a good facilitator of ideas, discussion and compromise towards common goals. The integrity of this person's commitment would not be suspect as they would be putting their 'stamp of approval' on the goals and the process by which they are expected to be achieved. In short, you need a person that would personify 'leadership' within the stakeholder community.

### *Summation*

Some of the interesting outcomes of a defragmented government would be:



- Maximum value for every tax dollar
- A business community that was sustainable at worst and thriving in good times
- A 'greener' environment with less gas, paper and other natural resources used
- A citizenry and taxpayer base that would be confident of products and services being delivered with quality and value
- Vendors to the government being engaged in the cost reduction and value-add cycles of defragmentation which creates a higher value proposition for them to the government
- Employees that are engaged in defragmentation become valued and have less stress in their jobs and work-based relationships

With the continued advancement of methodologies and technology that support defragmentation, and the changing socio-economic and demographics of most governments, any government stakeholder group that hasn't taken a strategic look at their SVP proposition and gathered quantitative measurements against the key performance indicators of the various sections of the SVP in the past five years is likely to have some level of fragmentation. Creating a Defragmented Government (or Lean Government) isn't just the right thing to do, it's the one initiative that will ensure the government thrives for decades to come.

