Enrichmentors Business Review

Providing Organizational Support
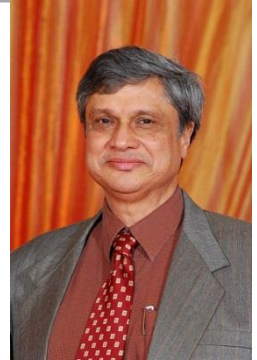**Learnings about how to provide organizational support to your people so that they can perform their best**

July 2013

What is in this Issue
From The Editor's Desk

Arun Singhal is the Founder and Principal Mentor & Managing Partner of Enrichmentors India. He founded Enrichmentors in 2007 to help Small & Medium Enterprises in India improve their business though consultation, coaching and counseling. He has done his Post Graduate Diploma in Management in Marketing and Finance from Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Bangalore, India. Arun worked for Dumex, Johnson & Johnson and Unilever in India and Asia Pacific based in Delhi, Mumbai and Singapore in a variety of management roles spanning over sales, marketing, operations and general management for 26 years. His mission now is to share his knowledge and experiences of these 26 years with Small & Medium Enterprises and help them improve their business. Some of the companies he has worked as a consultant are Ayushakti, Mind Technologies, Hia Designs, Bayer, Cello, Makarizo, Kris & Volkswagen. He operates out of his office in Mumbai and can be contacted at arunsinghal@hotmail.com.

Dear Reader,

Hope you enjoyed the last issue where I had shared with you how could you develop your people, build a talented organization and move to professionalization!

In the March 2013 issue we had talked about how can you get the best out of your people and looked at briefly the three ingredients required for getting the best out of them. We had mentioned that one of the most often forgotten ingredient is providing organizational support to your people without which the most motivated and capable people can also become ineffective. In this issue, I will share my learnings over 30 years in providing organizational support.

My first understanding with need to provide organizational support came after joining Johnson & Johnson as General Sales Manager of Consumer Products in 1989. Within a few weeks of joining, I discovered that my direct reports were fairly well motivated and capable in their own work and could do better if they could their better support from HO- Head Office in terms of timely stocks to their regions etc. Gently guided by my immediate superior Anil Nadkarni, I started focus on such things they needed to perform better and the rest in history in better performance of the entire team!

Many of the J&J processes like Quarterly Regional Sales Meeting also taught me the usefulness of understanding the support required by people and benefits of providing the support in getting superior performance of the organization.

Following this simple principle of treating your people also as your internal customer in providing support, I saw many years of faster growth in sale and profitability along with a high level of employee and customer satisfaction.

Try treating your people also as your internal customer of your support and see the wonderful impact it can have your organization's results in all areas!

Providing Organizational Support

Learnings about how to provide organizational support to your people so that they can perform their best

This process development paper attempts to answer following questions in learning how to provide organizational support.
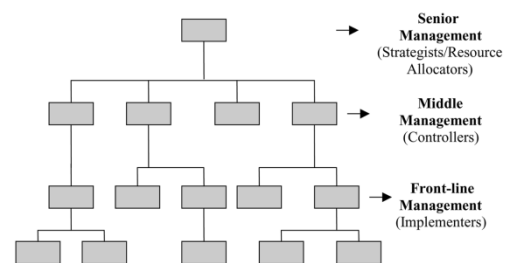
➢ *What do we mean by organizational support and who owns this process?*
➢ *What is the process you can follow to provide organizational support?*
➢ *How can you implement each step of the process?*
➢ *How do you measure if the process is working fine?*

What do we mean by organizational support and who owns this process?

We talked about that only individual capability and motivation are not sufficient for getting the best performance from your people. Each one of us working in any organization is dependent on many others in the organization for successful completion of work. It is very important to identify these dependencies at each level and ensure that these other people do their work in agreed time and cost delivering the required quality. In the situation of these work not happening as agreed, some one has to take the ownership and ensure that these work happen. This process of ensuring that required support is provided to each and every individual in the organization is what we mean by provide organizational support.

As mentioned briefly in the March 2013 EBR issue, the Chairman & Managing Director (CMD) has the overall ownership of providing the organizational support to all individuals. Of course while the buck stops there, that does not means it is only the responsibility of the CMD. Each manager can be the immediate process owner for his people under the overall leadership of the CMD. But the CMD has to drive it as s/he controls the resources, strategies and policies of the organization.
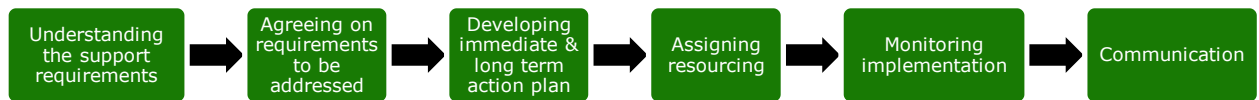

Senior Management
(Strategists/Resource Allocators)

Middle Management
(Controllers)

Front-line Management
(Implementers)

Source: adapted from Hope and Fraser (1997)

The understanding of this process ownership is particularly important in Small & Medium Enterprises (SME) because the CMD there is mostly the owner and the concept of treating your people as internal customer may be quite difficult to adapt. But that is where the most gains are likely to come. The SME owners have to learn to separate their ownership role with the CMD role either physically or otherwise. They can either forget their ownership status and continue as CMD or remain owners and appoint non owner CMDs and support them with right level of authorities. Remaining Owner and CMD is tight rope walk forcing you to fall frequently

Having understood the concept of providing organizational support and the process ownership, let us now look at the what process can you use to deliver effective support to your people!

What is the process you can follow to provide organizational support?

The overall process to provide organizational support is quite simple as follow.

| Understanding the support requirements | → | Agreeing on requirements to be addressed | → | Developing immediate & long term action plan | → | Assigning resourcing | → | Monitoring implementation | → | Communication |

Understanding the support requirements
Naturally the first step for the CMD and his managers is to understand the support their people need to deliver their own commitments. Each manager needs to understand the support requirements of his direct reports at a pre determined frequency depending on the dynamics of the business and the responsiveness required. At the least the frequency should be once a quarter increasing to once a week for more dynamic businesses. Each manager needs to also talk to one level below his direct reports are a less frequent interval to understand if they have any support requirements not being met. I would strongly recommend the CMD to keep asking every day all the people s/he meets about the support they need so that it is driven down the organization.

Agreeing on the requirements to be addressed
You may ask why the agreement on the requirements? Should not all the support requirements be addressed.
Many times, many people confuse what they need to do themselves vs. what they need to get from others. Some have the tendency to shoot from other's shoulders. Such requirements for support need to be filtered.
This step is also required to prevent from the "upward delegation" by smart subordinates. We will talk about how to filter and agree on the support requirements to be worked on.

Developing immediate and long term action plan
Most of the support requirements come either due to inadequate resources or inefficient resources, processes etc. If there is more work in a function vs. the manpower, they will not be able to meet the needs of internal customers. Same is the case for people, machines, processes etc. which are not efficient. Support required from such function will emerge as unmet support and will require to be handled effective by first developing an immediate and long term action plan. The immediate action plan will ensure the required support is provided in specific case and the long term action will ensure that such issues do not arise in future for some time.

Assigning Resources
Once the short and long term action plan has been determined, the manager or the CMD needs to assign resources for the successful execution of the action plan. The first level of this assignment could simply mean assigning responsibility for completion of the action plan and but is normally more than that depending on the size of the action plan. You may also need to consider separate responsibilities for the immediate and long term action plan depending on the work required.
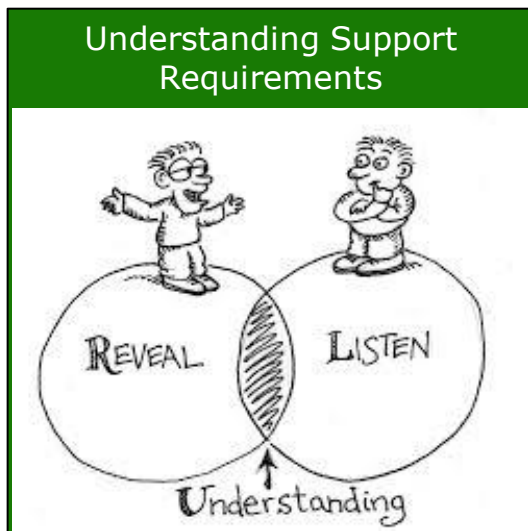
Monitoring implementation
The obvious next step is to monitor the implementation of the immediate or long term action plan because it will otherwise mot happen!

Communication of the completion/ progress
Ensuring the implementation of the support action plan is good but not good enough. The completion or progress needs to be communicated you the internal customer who raised the support requirement so that s/he can take his work forward now.

Let us now look at each of this in bit more detail as the devil (and the success) is in details!

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Understanding Support Requirements

You need to begin understanding support requirements by first defining who all are your internal customer for your support.

For each of your target internal customers you need to determine the frequency of understanding and the processes you will use to effectively understand their support requirements so that they can perform as required.

The most important thing there after is to realize that "Understanding" requires that you encourage your internal customers to share with you their concerns and support requirements on one hand and your ability to effectively listen on the other!

Let us look at how can you do the above.

Defining your internal customer for support.
You need to include all the people who you would have personally and professionally have a performance expectation. These would be your direct reports as well as their subordinates down the line. I would recommend strongly that you include all the levels in this list of internal support. That will keep all the managers on their toes in providing support to their people. Certainly you do not need to provide the same level attention of coverage at all the levels. At your direct reports levels, you should cover 100% of them and as you go down you could cover representative samples for each group.

Determining frequency of interaction
The frequency of interaction is basically dependent on the time you expect to take to deliver the results. If your expect your direct reports to deliver results every week, you need to interact with them couple of time a week to determine if they need any support for the week; if the time period is a month a weekly interaction would be good enough.
The basic principle is to provide enough opportunity for your people to seek and get the requires support with the time plan they are expected to deliver. This ensures that there is enough discussion on support requirements within the time plan rather than it going over and delaying the completion of the work.

It is expected that your review with levels down will be at lesser frequency and hence the discussions on the support required as well

Processes
There are many processes you can use to determine the support requirements. One of the best ways I seen it happen is to ask the people in any review meeting towards the end as to what support would they need form you to making things happen on time. Another way to institutionalize it to encourage people to list the support required as the last slide in their presentations. The true instutionlization happens when you make it habit in all your people interaction to say " What can I do to help you" in addition to "Thank you" and " What are you going to do?"

You don't need to set up separate processes for determining support required, You just need to include it as one of the items on your agenda in all your people interactions!

The last thing is to encourage the people to reveal their concerns and support required and you to listen effectively. That is a subject by itself!

Agreeing on requirements to be addressed

Having understood the support requirements, you need to decide the ones you will personally work on in getting them addressed.

You do not need to take up addressing all the support requirements yourself. If you are an CMD and you did, you would end up taking all the work and many people in the organization will have rather easy life.

You need to decide which ones you need to take it on yourself and which ones you need to redirect towards the other people in the organization. This however needs to be done with utmost sincerity without playing the "Passing the Back" game.

How do you decide what do you need to take on and work?

You could filter the support requirements list in agreement with the person raised in two ways.
1. Determining the Stickiness of the issue
2. Determining the Impact and Urgency of the issue.

Determining the Stickiness of the issue

You need to understand how sticky the issue has been by asking a few questions to the person who has raised the requirement, like the following

➢ "Have you talked to the person who is expected to provide you the required support?"
➢ "Have you talked to the manager of the person who is expected to provide you the support required?"
➢ "Have you talked to your manager about this issue?"

If the answer to these question is still a "NO", you need to encourage him/her to take the matter as appropriate with the supporting person, his/her manager or own manager. This will generate a culture to "Direct Dealing" and increase the efficiency in the organization. I can not resist and quote a line from J&J where such a culture was encourage on why should you deal direct.

"**Because the shortest distance to travel between two points is a straight line and it takes longer to go through a third point !**"

Most good organization develop "Escalation Matrix" which defines the people you need to contact for getting your work done in case of any issues. Having such a "Escalation Matrix" and making it public itself makes the organization more effective in providing support to each other.

Obviously, if the person who has raised the support requirement has not got the support required in spite of his contacting the right people, you need to take it up.

Determining the Urgency and Impact of the issue

The other aspect you need to consider is the impact and urgency of the issue on the task in general and to the task to be competed.

If the impact and urgency is high, you then need to take it up on yourself to provide the required support, even if the issue is not a sticky one!

You can determine the urgency and impact based on your judgment for most situations. For more complex ones, there are techniques you can use as help!

Developing immediate and long term action plans

You now have picked up the right support requirement to work on which will either be sticky one or a one with high impact and urgency!

Given the above, It would be very useful to develop a immediate and a long term action plan to provide the support requirement.

The immediate plan will help the concerned person get the require support as desired and complete his/her task.

The longer term plan should look at the root cause of the support not being provided and find actions that needs to be taken so that such events do not recur.

You can call them a "Quick Fix Plan" and the "Long Term Solution Plan"

How to develop the "Quick Fix Plan" and the "Long Term Solution Plan"?
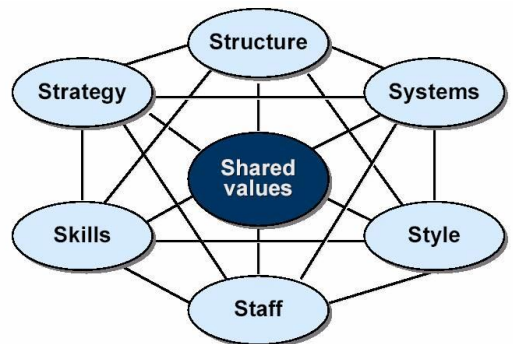
Quick Fix Plan

The Quick Fix Plan will consist actions required for addressing the immediate support requirement. It might involve asking the supporting person to take this requirement on priority over other work he has or to assign this work to some one else. Normally this will take care of the immediate situation and work will proceed as per plan.

It however does not assure you that such issues will not arise in future. The danger of only working with Quick Fix Plans is that such issue keep recurring and "eating away" the precious resources of the organization.

Long Term Solution Plan

It would be good to look at the issue from a root cause point of view and determine if anything needs to be done there so that such events will not recur.

The long term solution plan will look at the corrections required in the following aspects of the company resources (4Ms, 7Ss) etc.
- ✓ Men (People)
- ✓ Money (Finances)
- ✓ Materials
- ✓ Methods (Processes)
- ✓ Structure
- ✓ Strategy
- ✓ Systems
- ✓ Skills
- ✓ Staff (People)
- ✓ Shared Values
- ✓ Style

You need to choose one thing that is most important to address as a root cause.

Finding a root cause is still a missing art in the organizations even large, while there are very scientific processes that can help you find the root cause of problem and save millions!

Training people in finding root cause was one thing I did and immensely benefited, so can you!

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Assigning Resources

> No agile method will help you if your organization is assigning people 10% to a project
>
> about 21 hours ago via web
> Retweeted by 25 people
>
> ☆
>
> 🗑 Delete
>
> **cory_foy**
> Cory Foy

Cory Foy's above tweet sums up the implementation issues in SMEs be it in proving support or any other project.

Assigning resources could as simple as putting a name against the Support Requirement. But does that work?

The difficulties are two fold.
1. Have you assigned the work to the right person?
2. Does that person has enough time to take this additional work?

The tendency in assigning additional work is based on either who is available or who is willing. Both can be right way of assigning if they have the capabilities to handle the work. If not, you need to go beyond and assign to the person having the right capabilities.
If the person being assigned work does not have adequate time or motivation, it requires one to address them.

There is no way to determine if you have provided the 100% resources. In fact in the SMEs the resources are normally loaded more than 100%. So how do get your work done including the support requirement. The chances are that the person you have just assigned the responsibility is already overloaded.

In absence of any scientific measurement of how loaded the supporting function is, you have the depend on the observations and feedback from people.
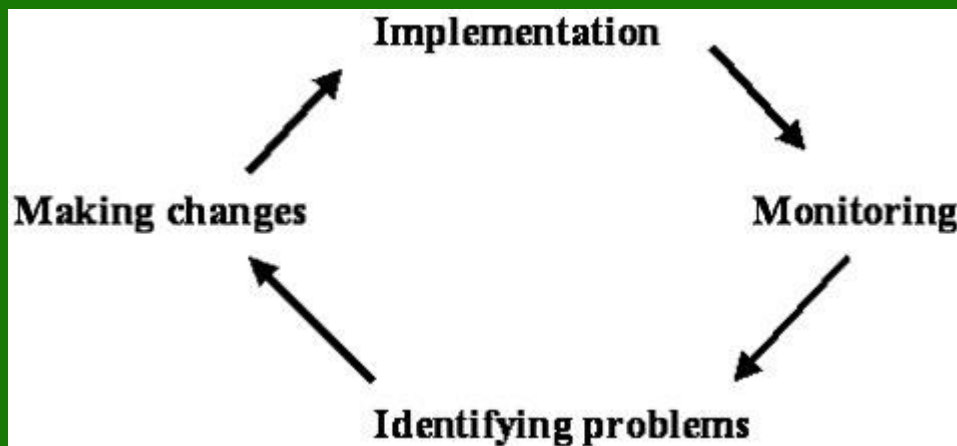
You have to ask the person being assigned responsibility if he has adequate time to take those work as well in addition to his day to day work. If the answer is a yes, you are either lucky or a good resource planner! You can then go ahead and assign the responsibility to such a person.

If the case turns about as I would guess it would of not having adequate time, some resource planning is required. It would be good to ask the Supporting person to list what resources does s/he needs to carry out the support requirement.

This kind of resource discussion can go a long way in building the organizational capabilities and resources. Once you have done this well, rest is cake walk?

Monitoring implementation

Having made a short and long term plan and assigned the right, one would think the implementation would be a cake walk. Right?

Wrong.

Only 50% work has been done with all the planning and resourcing. As you begin implementation many things can go wrong depending on the complexity of the plans.

For **simple action plans** you may just need to decide how frequently should you monitor the implementation progress with the resource assigned and resolve any issues that may arise during implementation.
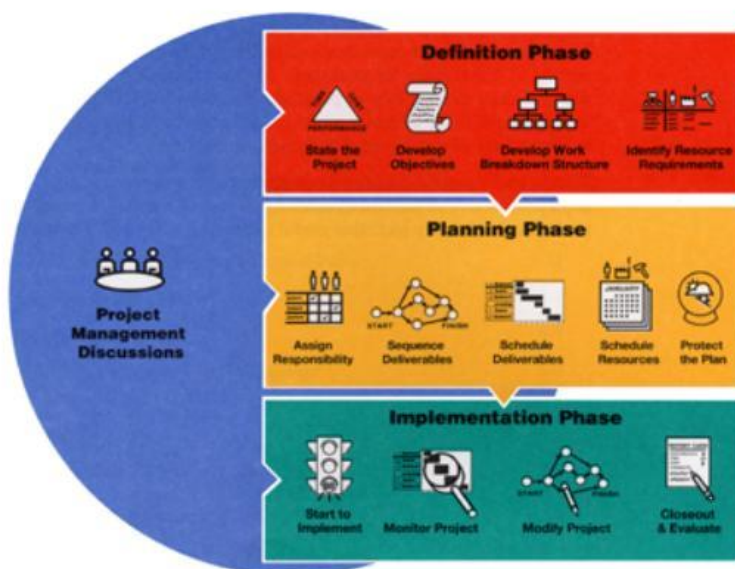
The frequency of implementation could be daily, weekly, monthly depending on the total duration of the work. Short the duration of the work, higher the frequency.
The discussion on the issues and resolutions could be while walking a corridor taking a minute of time.

More Complex Action Plan will require use of systematic processes like K T Project Management Discussion including the Project Definition, Project Planning and Project Implementation.

The Definition Phase clearly defines what is the expected outcome, timing, cost as well further tasks required to complete the project

The Planning phase assigned the individual responsibilities to the tasks, sequences and them and also looks at potential issues.

The implementation phase monitors and reviews the project till completion

Some of the monitoring implementation is easy and some will require more sophisticated project management tools!

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Communication of the Completion/ Progress

Communication back to the person who had raised the support required as important as the all the other work.
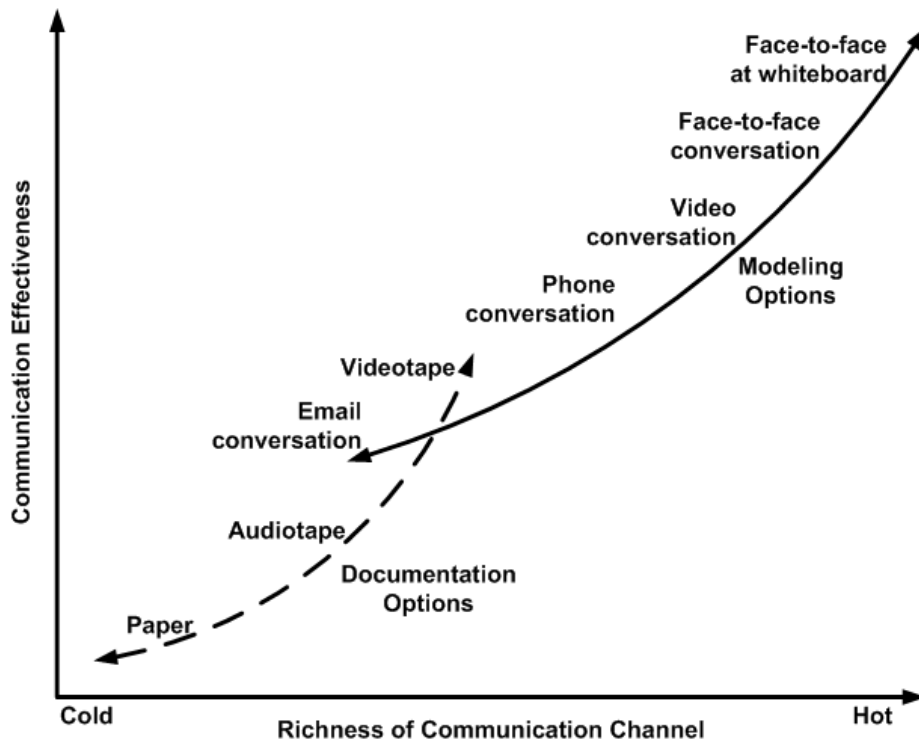
One hand it allows that person to start or schedule his work accordingly

On the other hand it build the credibility of the management who had taken up the task of providing the support required.

While communication is not a big challenge in small companies, it is a huge challenge companies face as they grow.

So how do you communicate back to your people?

You could choose from a very cold and less effective method like Paper to a very warm and effective method like face to face at whiteboard communication.

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Original Diagram Copyright 2002 Alistair Cockburn

It all depends on the matter to be communicated and person/s to be communicated.

More difficult the message to be communicated and the target audience, more you need to move to the top right of above chart.

Providing effective organizational support to your people one of the key three ingredients of getting the best out of people and I have found not many CEOs and senior managers doing it naturally.

Try treating your own people as your internal customers and see the difference it makes to your betting better performance of of them!

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