**A Case for Organizational Development for Operational Effectiveness**

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As many of us who seek to pursue entrepreneurship by starting our own business or consulting practice, we often find ourselves taking slight detours towards those objectives. These pathways may include unrelated temporary jobs or accepting positions that only allow us to engage a smaller portion of our overall skill sets. Such was the case for me while I was in the beginning stages of launching ***LONG INSIGHTS, LLC***. I was approached by a temporary employment agency to take a position in Quality Control for a company that led to me going to work full-time as the Sr. Distribution Manager. The real irony looking back is the fact that the company I went to work for really had neither of those positions established officially within their organizational structure. Stranger still, I discovered as I began to get more involved with the company, that they really had no organizational structure at all. What a blessing in disguise this turned out to be as it gave me the perfect place to apply the purpose for starting my venture ***LONG INSIGHTS, LLC*** in the first place.

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***Disorganized Chaos***

Now to set the stage for the environment, this facility is the largest distribution warehouse in a chain of more than 13 distribution centers throughout the Southeast for a cabinet company based out of Florida. It was a beehive of activity consisting of an Operations Manager, a Warehouse Manager, a staff of eleven fulltime employees, and on any given day between 20 to 25 temporary employees. It was explained to me that the reason for the quality position was to help the company validate the orders shipped to customers for accuracy and completeness. Up until this time, there were apparently no secondary checks for orders staged for customers and no signatures required by third-party trucking companies who were hired to transport orders to local builders. With no real process or accountability, the performance metrics for the distribution center was tracking between 18 and 22 percent. The rumor mill was that builders (customers) were so disappointed with the dismal deliverables, that contracts were being cancelled and that the facility might soon close. This presented me the opportunity to grab ahold of what is best referred to as “the low hanging fruit” by applying some basic principles of quality control processes.

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***Mapping a Course***

My first couple of months as a temporary employee was seeking to learn more about the nature of the business while I developed processes geared towards improving the continuity of deliverables (product) to the job sites and monitoring accountability through the changes being implemented. We quickly saw improvements tracking from an average of 20-percent to over 70-percent in just a few weeks. It was about this time that the company wanted to make some organizational changes at their Kennesaw facility, which is when the opportunity for me to take on a full-time position with the company came about. After completing the application, going through a series of interviews, and submitting a business plan requested during the interview process, I was chosen to lead the facility as the Sr. Distribution Manager. Previously this role was referred to as the Operations Manager, but the company sought to change that as part of their overall organizational change model. As the old saying “A rose my any other name…” goes, the responsibilities of the position were still very much operational in nature.

My first step in any new environment is to basically survey the landscape to get a feel for the culture, the people, and the basic day-to-day activity that was a part of the operation. To provide a bit of an analogy here, one certainly cannot provide directions to a destination unless you first know where someone is coming from. For me to apply my decades of knowledge towards providing the pathway to the objectives necessary for this company, I had to have a complete understanding of where they were exactly from both an individual and group perspective. This required a series of one-on-one interviews during lunches, setting up Teams meetings with individuals at corporate headquarters, and meeting with local field service and sales personnel. Gathering the information and perspectives from these various sources, along with witnessing the daily activity within the facility, helped me to formulate the strategic roadmap for me to get the operation moving toward the desired outcome.

As I mentioned the phase “low hanging fruit” earlier, the simplest although somewhat difficult phase of impacting change at the facility came in the form of the physical layout of their distribution center. When I started, the entire 87,000 square foot facility was one gigantic pick bin with seven zones as they called them to place inbound product in. The characteristics of these zones were that they were basically a 40-foot by 40-foot square within which customer product could be placed. Order-pullers would have to consistently rummage through these large areas picking out specific items for an order, a process which could take them hours to do depending upon the size of the orders and where those items may have been placed within that zone. Often not everything could be found, so orders were either shipped short or items were “borrowed” from other customers. The solution to this problem was to create a warehouse binning system comprised of rows, bays, and bin positions. This allowed us the opportunity to separate the custom kitchen and/or bathroom cabinet orders into specific bin locations. Not only did this allow us to have greater accountability on inbound product, but it also automatically reduced the average order picking time by more than 70%.



***People Development***

The next phase had to do with determining the various roles and responsibilities among individuals in the organization in order to determine the efficiency of workflow throughout the process. During this time, I discovered several communicative gaps that resulted in missed steps due to the existence of silos among the various “departments”. After reassessing job descriptions, individual skillsets, and determining the best utilization for the presently assigned personnel, I embarked on several realignments of responsibilities and began a series of cross-trainings to develop more effective depth within the operation. This was necessary to ensure that key activities would continue to be performed in the event someone was absent due to illness or scheduled time off. I also set standards for performance that were critical for the success of the organization. It was during this period that we saw a few people either leave the company on their own due to their unwillingness to work with others, or for us to end their employment with the company due to their unwillingness or inability to meet newly established standards. What resulted was a solid core team of individuals who communicate effectively and who willingly seek out opportunities to assist their fellow coworkers in whatever tasks need to be completed for the success of the company.



***Process Evolution***

While there are still several areas that need to be addressed with respect to process documentation, determination of proper headcount, continual cross-training opportunities, and outside factors impacting our internal operations, I can say unequivocally that the operational effectiveness of the Distribution Center I inherited in September of 2021 is vastly different today. What was once a facility operating at an average of 20% efficiency with more than $45,000.00 per month in contract labor cost to now delivering an 86%-plus efficiency rating with a contract labor cost well below $19,000.00 per month as of July 2022, it is the lifetime of experiences I have garnered throughout my career, along with the philosophical approach I take through ***LONG INSIGHTS, LLC***, that has allowed me to affect such drastic change within an organization in such a relatively short period of time. Organizational development and effectiveness are my primary focus, although my methods do include personnel development and process documentation as well.

***Contact us for your free consultation:***

Although your organization may seem to be operating smoothly, or perhaps you feel there are already some areas you’re seeking improvement in, what is the risk of having a conversation of how ***LONG INSIGHTS. LLC*** may be of service to your company? Perhaps a better question though, is what is the risk of not having that conversation?