

The Competitive Advantage

P Squared Consulting

Maximizing the Synergy of People and Process Improvement

Your Most Valuable Asset

By Scott R. Playfair, President, P Squared Consulting

Did you know:

- 80% of employees could perform significantly better if they wanted to?
- 70% of employees are less motivated today than they used to be?
- 50% of employees only put enough effort into their work to keep their job?

As a business leader, I would guess you face the same challenges as the many leaders I speak with each week – being bombarded by a constant state of change as a matter of survival. This presents you, as a leader in your company, with the ever-present concern of losing focus on what really makes your business successful – your people.

Ask any successful business leader today what the key to organizational success is and you will likely hear – a motivated, productive and dedicated workforce. But as change impacts your employees

in both their personal and professional lives, the assumption that they will just naturally be OK can be a serious mistake. If you do not understand what your employees need, the result can be profound. Morale and productivity can decline. The following presents some thoughts you should consider to improve your organization.

Personal Ownership

People are intimately aware of their roles and responsibilities in the organization. They understand their work processes better than anyone else could. When employees

are empowered to manage and improve those processes, they will always step up to the plate and do the right thing. The critical factor is that employees are given the authority to manage their jobs. With authority comes immense personal responsibility to perform.

After a recent P Squared goal setting project, a comment was made about the value of the process... *“Each department was unified and given focus.*

Department employees identified their own key issues, set their own goals and better understood who does what. This created group ownership of goals.”

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10 Common Causes of Stress

Tips to Simplify Your Life

The following is a list of common stress causes – everyday things most of us hate to deal with. Check off any that apply to you. Then schedule time to deal with them in the next week or two.

Household Upkeep

Is your bathroom shower curtain hanging by one hook? Have you been meaning to replace the blown light bulb over your front stoop? Is your bathroom drain clogged?

Balancing the Checkbook

Most of us put this off because it seems too difficult or it's just

too scary! But knowing where you stand financially can reduce anxiety. If you need assistance, contact your bank.

Organizing a Closet, Wardrobe or Chest of Drawers

Take time to plan. Think about how you want these storage places to look and function. Then take it in small doses – don't try to do it all in one sitting. Buy special drawer dividers, hangers or under-bed storage boxes. Throw away or give to charity things that you never use.

Paying Bills/ Opening Mail

If you have piles of unanswered mail, don't ignore it. Unpaid bills can result in credit problems – and that can really lead to stress! Divide the pile into three separate piles, then set aside three nights this week to get to work.

Cleaning Out the Refrigerator

Coming home from work and finding a refrigerator full of moldy leftovers can put a crimp in your evening. Set aside a few minutes every night this week and go to work. Take it one step at a time. Throw away the spoiled food, clean the shelves

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Your Most Valuable Asset (cont'd)

The Synergy of Teams

A team-based environment promotes mutual support and respect among all individuals in an organization. Employees that function well as a team are capable of higher productivity and high quality outputs. A positive interpersonal environment encourages people to share information and to get involved in areas that are not necessarily within their immediate job scope. Employees contribute because they want to be part of the group. It is through these contributions that progressive productivity improvements are possible.

A winning team supports and encourages all team members to be the best they can be. Being part of the team creates a feeling of confidence and security. Employees enter the performance "zone". They are on the road to exceptional productivity. In addition, tremendous *synergy* is created that can only be achieved through teams. A high performance culture is formed that ensures sustained competitive advantage.

From the perspective of a company assisted by P

Squared to place a high standard on team performance, one employee said... *"The process provided an environment that built a stronger team working toward common goals. Getting to know and interact with team members created a foundation and direction that integrated the team."*

Communicating the Company Vision for the Future

Shared goals bring people together. Most employees would agree that working toward a proactive, positive, professional workplace is a worthy quest. When management clearly communicates the company's goals and objectives, divisions and departments can tie together as teams to supporting the company's vision. Further, individual employees can generate supporting goals. As a result, corporate goals are effectively cascaded down through all levels of the organization.

Employees then feel that by achieving their individual objectives, they are directly contributing to the success of the organization. Understanding their contribution reinforces the

employees' sense of wholeness and meaning.

Recently heard at a P Squared client site, an employee reinforced this concept by saying, *"I have a better understanding of the company's key goals and the big picture. I know how I fit in and how I can make a difference. I understand why I am important to the company; I am proud that I have a positive impact on the future of my company."*

So if you, as a manager scratch your head and wonder what it is about your employees that causes them to be unproductive or unmotivated, the solution is at your finger tips. Employees become part of the team when you make them feel ownership and a critical part of the future of the company. And organizations can't accomplish this until you make the effort to bring everyone together, communicate the company vision and empower your employees by utilizing teams. For organizations that develop a positive interpersonal environment, the benefits for morale and productivity are clear. However, none of this is possible until the organization realizes that employees are the only true **Competitive Advantage!**



"Edison was wrong...
Genius is 1% inspiration
and 99% ~~perspiration!~~
motivation"

New "Bank" Account Daily Time Management

If you had a bank that credited your account each morning with \$86,400, carried no balance from day to day, allowed you to keep no cash in your account, and every evening cancelled whatever part of the amount you had failed to use during the day – What would you do? Draw out every cent, of course!

Well, you have such a bank and its name is "time." Every morning it credits you with 86,400 seconds. Every night it rolls off – as lost – whatever of this you had failed to invest to good purpose. It carries no balances. It allows no overdrafts. Each day the bank named "Time" opens a new

account with you. Each night it burns the records of the day. If you fail to use the day's deposits, the loss is yours.

...Contributed by Robert G. Lee

*"If you fail to use the
day's deposits, the loss
is yours."*

Systems Thinking

Process Improvement Tool Box



“Systems thinking improves the quality of products or services to the consumer.”

Systems thinking is a management philosophy and an operational strategy. When implemented, it will help an organization to gain or maintain a *competitive advantage*. It can be a major factor for profitable growth and a fulcrum for innovation. It will help an organization to achieve its strategic goals more quickly than past practices.

Systems thinking is driven by the realization that organizations are a series of processes that are interrelated. The interrelationships and interdependence of the various processes comprise systems. If an organization wishes to improve an outcome, the solution is often interconnected with several processes, departments, or functions. If, for example, an organization wishes to improve on-time delivery of a product or service, the entire chain of events from receipt of an order through all the steps and departments, until delivery, must be viewed as a continuous flow of interrelated events, or one system.

The management challenge is how to take this systems knowledge and turn it into a *competitive advantage*. Regardless of whether an organization operates in a fast moving consumer goods industry such as foods or computer software; in industrial products such as chemicals or metals; or in services such as banking or health care; successful organizations around the world are beginning to rethink their businesses and actively develop systems thinking.

“When everyone in the organization is committed to process improvement, profits and ROI will follow and the organization will grow and prosper.”

Systems thinking improves the quality of the products or services to the consumer, while improving responsiveness to the consumer's demands in a timely manner. Clearly one major switch in management thinking is the need to focus on the customer and to exceed their expectations. Continuous improvement and rapid change also mandates becoming more innovative. This requires the benefit of everyone's thinking and can only be realized when everyone in an organization evidences the behavior that corresponds to these benefits. This new focus is not just for the sake of improvement. It is necessary for making rapid and sometimes radical strides in the marketplace to produce competitive advantages. When this occurs, profits and ROI will follow and the organization will grow and prosper.

Systems thinking doesn't just happen. It requires well thought out plans, strategic changes, and forward thinking leadership. One of the major flaws to successful implementation is the notion that this is a quick and easy solution, one that can be implemented with signs, slogans and hoopla, but little or no management commitment.

Systems thinking is a unified strategy. It involves the cooperation of all departments. It requires a total analysis and possible reorganizations of all activities in a system that affect an outcome. The purpose is to create processes and systems that eliminate the variables that produce waste, inefficiencies, and confusion. Non-value added steps that eat up time are eliminated. Resources, bureaucracies and redundancies are eliminated or reorganized to bring a balance or alignment to operations. The goal is to eliminate the bottle-necks which cause excessive and costly build up of inventories, frustration and waste.

Nest issue we will continue this process improvement series with a focus on implementing change.

For more information about developing a continuous process improvement culture at your organization, please contact P Squared Consulting.

Information/excerpt taken from "Cycle Time Reduction" and printed with permission by Total Quality Institute, P.O. Box 621102, Orlando, FL 32332

Process Improvement?



How to Draw A Circle...

1. Draw a man with a round face and a moustache.
2. Eliminate the moustache.
3. Eliminate the nose and sideburns.
4. Eliminate eyebrows and ear.
5. Eliminate eyes.

"A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way."

...John C. Maxwell
Leadership consultant



"The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of will."

...Vince Lombardi

"The Dog Ate My Car Keys"

We've all had them – those mornings when everything that can go wrong, does. Worldwide staffing company Accountemps (<http://www.accountemps.com>) recently polled managers at 1,000 large U.S. companies and asked, "What are some of the more creative excuses you've heard for why employees are late for work or meetings?"

Other than childcare-related delays, the most cited reasons involved canine companions. A sampling of the survey responses:

"The dog was asleep behind the car, so I couldn't back out of the driveway."
 "My dog swallowed my car keys."
 "My dog didn't come back after I let him out."

Or consider these commuting

calamities:

"I hit a mountain lion on the way to work."

"A helicopter landed in the street and I couldn't get around it."

"My garage door was frozen shut."

"The elevators in this building are too slow."

"I tried a new way in to work and it took me two hours."

"The traffic lights were mistimed on my way in."

"My wife and son took both cars and when I went outside there was nothing in the driveway."

Then there were the breakfast challenges:

"A long line at the McDonald's drive-thru held me up."

"The line at Starbucks was out the door."

"The waitress spilled a latte on me."

What's really amazing is that anyone could offer the excuses below with a straight face:

"I forgot what day it was. I thought it was the weekend."

"I couldn't remember what time zone I was in."

"My roommate locked me in the bathroom."

"I'm not late. I decided to change my hours to make them more convenient."

"The wind was blowing against me."

"My favorite actress got married. I needed time alone."

"My husband's pet spider died and I had to console him."

"I felt it was better to sleep at home rather than at the office."

"The bartender wouldn't let me leave."

What? No one claimed to have been kidnapped by aliens?

www.museumofhoaxes.com

Web Site of the Quarter

In keeping with the annual celebration of April Fool's Day, our web site of the quarter brings a bit of humor to our newsletter. This site was started in 1997 as research notes for University of San Diego graduate student, Alex Boese's dissertation. It soon made its way onto the web and rapidly transformed into a full-time means for Alex to procrastinate. It has expanded to the printed page, *The Museum of Hoaxes*, a history of sensational acts of deception.

The web site contains hoaxes that make their way into our everyday life and ones that have been around for years and years. Here you can get the history behind the 1957

BBC news show announcement that, thanks to a very mild winter and the virtual elimination of the dreaded spaghetti weevil, Swiss farmers were enjoying a bumper spaghetti crop. Or the 1996 report that the Taco Bell Corporation had bought the Liberty Bell from the federal government and was renaming it the Taco Liberty Bell.

Consider the 1998 Burger King published advertisement in *USA Today* announcing the introduction of a new item to their menu: a "Left-Handed Whopper" specially designed for the 32 million left-handed Americans. Reportedly, the new whopper included the same ingredients as the original Whopper, but all the

condiments were rotated 180 degrees for the benefit of their left-handed customers. As strange as it may sound, thousand of customers came and requested the new menu item.

Beyond the April 1st stories that have been with us for years, this site keeps track of web sites that are in themselves hoaxes as well as those doctored pictures we have all seen that are just too fantastic to believe (including the 87 pound cat!)

So, the next time you hear that a cloned human has arrived or that a company will fund a college career in exchange for a well-placed tattoo... **CHECK IT OUT!**

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*"The past gives us
experience and memories;
the present gives us
challenges and
opportunities; the future
gives us vision and hope".*

...William Ward, Journalist

10 Common Causes of Stress (cont'd)

and drawers; inventory your remaining food and make a shopping list. Then stock your fridge with healthy foods that give you energy and make coming home more relaxing.

Organizing Your Personal Papers – The instruction manual for the DVD. Personal letters. The warranty for the microwave. Birth certificates. Tax returns. If your personal papers are in chaos and causing you stress, spend some time creating a filing system.

About Our Organization...

P Squared (P²) is focused on working with companies to maximize their human capital through the facilitation of positive change. We accomplish this by the use of our expertise in the following core areas:

- ✍ Team Building at All Levels
- ✍ Training and Development
- ✍ Team-based Process Improvement
- ✍ Cutting edge HR Practices

P² is a nationally known management consulting and human resource development firm based in Houston, Texas. We have helped small, medium,

Organizing a Desk or Other Workspace – Does it take you ten minutes to find a working pen? Is your phone buried under the piles of paper? Is your workspace an embarrassing mess? If this sounds familiar, make organizing it a top priority.

Cleaning Out a Purse, Wallet or Briefcase – Purses, wallets, briefcases, knapsacks or anything we carry around with us every day can become cluttered, adding stress to our lives.

and Fortune 100 companies with equal effectiveness. P² has a staff of seasoned professionals, highly experienced in its areas of expertise.

At P² Consulting, we believe that people are your most valuable resource. Our focus is getting people to do more and feel great about it. We help them develop an insatiable desire for continued personal and professional growth and improvement - which is a win for everyone.

Our specialty is helping clients develop cultures where continuous improvement,

Car Maintenance – Nothing is more stress-inducing than having your car break down. Scheduling regular maintenance (tune-up, oil change, ...) can help you avoid this.

Spring Cleaning – For many people, there's nothing more calming than having a clean, organized home. If you're one of this people, sit down and make a list of things that need to be done. Recruit other family members or roommates. Make a party of it. Then start your attack one step at a time.

higher levels of achievement, measurable standards of excellence, and exceeding customer expectation prevail. And to assist clients in sustaining true**Competitive Advantage!**

Offices in Texas and South Carolina. Contact us by phone at (936) 271-0712 or email at p2mc@wt.net Visit our web site at www.p2mc.com

We look forward to hearing from you soon!

*Scott Playfair, President
Jan Barnett, Director, Sales & Marketing*

Brain Food

A few years ago at the Seattle Special Olympics, nine contestants, all physically or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the 100-yard dash. At the gun, they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but with relish to run the race, finish and win.

All, that is, except one boy who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a couple of times and began to cry. The other

eight heard the boy cry. They slowed down and looked back. They all turned around and went back. Every one of them.

One girl with Down's Syndrome bent down, kissed him and said, "This will make it better".

All nine linked arms and walked across the finish line together. Everyone in the stadium stood and the cheering went on for several minutes. People who

were there are still telling the story. Why?

Because deep down, we know this one thing:

What matters in this life is more than winning for ourselves. What truly matters in this life is helping others win, even if it means slowing down and changing our course.

...Contributed by Jack Beal