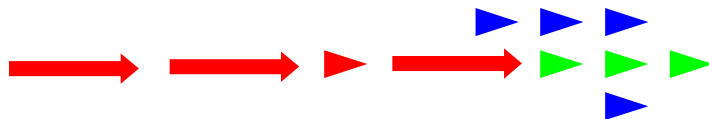


Motivating and Securing Executive Commitment to Process Improvement

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Presentation Overview

- The Role of an Executive
- Who, Actually, is “an Executive”?
- What is Executive Commitment?
- Typical Constraints on Executives
- Evidence of Executive Commitment to Process Improvement
- Types of Executive Commitment (Good and Bad) and Actions You Can Take
- Motivating Executive Commitment
- Securing Executive Commitment



The Role of an Executive

- Strategic visionary
 - Early identification of risks and opportunities
- Establishes strategic direction
- Provides top-level resource allocations
- Maintains insight into ongoing progress against major milestones
- Reprioritizes major initiatives to accommodate changing risks and opportunities



The Role of an Executive

- The *primary* role of an executive is to ensure successful organizational change
- Status quo, especially in environments that rely on computational technology, means inevitable obsolescence of your products, services, and capabilities
- “Profit”, “market share”, “current sales”, etc. are all examples of *trailing* indicators (of executive decision-making processes and capabilities)



Who, Actually, is an Executive?

- Typical large organization has many layers of executives
- Not restricted to only “C-Level” designations (such as CEO, CIO, CTO, etc.)
- Anyone who is regularly involved in establishing or ensuring strategic or long-term progress and success and who has resources she or he can allocate



What is Executive Commitment?

- How many letters does it take to spell "executive commitment"?
 - (a) 19?
 - (b) 10?
 - (c) 5?
- Can you spell it with fewer letters?



Typical Constraints on Executives

- Extremely busy
- Myriad commitments
- Numerous stakeholders in multiple contexts
- All resources committed (or over-committed)
- Normally prefer “historically proven” versus “let’s try something different”



Evidence of Executive Commitment to Process Improvement

- Allocation of money
- Allocation of their time
- Assignment of responsibilities
- Allocation of time (and typically training) for process improvement personnel
- Ongoing monitoring and active involvement
- Open to feedback and recommendations



Types of EC: Commitment Hierarchy

- **Symptoms of Counter-Commitment**
 - “Commitment” in the Context of Imminent Mission Disaster
 - Multi-Executive Stealth Counter-Commitment
- **Symptoms of No or Negligible Commitment**
 - Disguised Non-Commitment
 - Negligible Commitment
- **Symptoms of Well-Intentioned but Ineffective Commitment**
 - Inadequate but Sincere Commitment
 - Misdirected but Sincere Commitment
- **Symptoms of Partial Commitment**
 - Skeptical Commitment
- **Symptoms of Essential Commitment**
 - Conditional Commitment
 - Insightful Commitment



Commitment in the Context of Mission Disaster

- Counter-commitment scenario
- The executive is facing one or more major looming crises
 - Pending bankruptcy
 - Hostile takeover by a competitor
 - Probable high-visibility failure of one or more of the organization's largest programs
- In this type of environment, forget executive commitment to process improvement, but consider promoting
 - Disaster recovery
 - Crisis intervention and management
 - Risk management
 - Causal analysis and resolution



Multi-Executive Stealth Counter-Commitment

- Counter-commitment scenario
- Although verbally supporting process improvement, the executive is really interested in something else
 - ISO 9000 compliance
 - Additional or improved material for proposals
 - An impressive looking veneer at minimal cost
- The executive over the neighboring department really might not want your executive to succeed (first)
- In this environment
 - Look for opportunities to embed your process improvement initiative inside the “competing” initiative or effort
 - Expand the PI scope to include the neighboring department



Disguised Non-Commitment

- No or negligible commitment scenario
- Again, in this scenario the executive is often verbally quite supportive of the initiative, however
 - S/he attempts everything via "lunch hour"
 - S/he only allows you to work on PI during the week after you've billed 40 hours to the client
 - S/he often sends a delegate to "important" meetings
- Remember, unlike the prior two examples, at least this executive is not fighting you
- In this environment, strive to literally educate the executive team by whatever means possible
 - ***Defect and rework data can be invaluable in this regard***



Negligible Commitment

- No or negligible commitment scenario
- In this context the executive doesn't even pretend to like the idea of process improvement
- This is actually a better situation than the prior one—at least the executive is being honest
- In this environment look for very simple, short-term, “proof is concept” successes
 - Start with “Risk Management” (very low cost / “free”)
 - Use the results to justify implementing “Verification” processes (using a “non-zero but minimalist” mindset)
 - Find a path to get to “Causal Analysis” as soon as feasible



Inadequate but Sincere Commitment

- Well-intentioned but ineffective commitment scenario
- In this context the executive really does think that “this should be easy” because, “It’s pretty much what we do anyway, right?”
- Don’t agree with that statement—it’s a trap!
- Readily recognizable by completely unrealistic expectations
 - “We must pass a SCAMPI-A in 4 months!”
 - “Just take a few weeks and update our ISO 9000 material so we’ll also be CMMI compliant”
- In this environment, consider a series of executive orientations; leverage data from the SEI website, the SEPG conference CD, and other (legal) sources



Misdirected but Sincere Commitment

- Well-intentioned but ineffective commitment scenario
- This type of executive understands the importance of process improvement, but does not necessarily understand the human factors aspect of organizational change
- Often referred to as the “tool buyer” (on the evolutionary tree, a direct descendent of “tool user”) they think, for example
 - Buying a CM tool is how you implement configuration management
 - Buying an RM tool is how you implement requirements management
- In this environment, strive for pre-emptive feasibility studies to ensure “best fit” automated process support



Skeptical Commitment

- Partial commitment scenario
- This is an ideal situation: the executive agrees to sponsor, fund, etc., but insists that you provide proof of progress
- In any environment, someone eventually always demands proof, so having the executive insist on it from the beginning is directly in your best interest
- Get a simple measurement initiative underway as early as possible, and provide fine-grained feedback on progress and results, especially with regard to
 - Defects and defect-related trends (in-house vs. field discovery)
 - Ratio of development time to time spent performing rework



Conditional Commitment

- Essential commitment scenario
- This scenario is similar to the prior scenario, but in addition to evidence of progress, the executive establishes specific milestones and goals that must be achieved
- Again, this absolutely works to your advantage—you now know exactly how the executive is defining success
- In this environment, don't agree too quickly to goals and timetables without first doing careful analysis, documenting assumptions, and aggressively managing expectations



Insightful Commitment

- Essential commitment scenario
- “Insightful commitment” basically never happens, so we really don’t need to talk about it...
- Actually, if the executive was a prior sponsor of a successful process improvement program in a similar environment, they likely
 - Know exactly what their role needs to be, and what actions they must perform
 - Understand the importance of convincing and compelling evidence showing business/mission value resulting from process improvement investments
- Consider proposing running the process improvement PO using principles from IT portfolio management



Motivating Executive Commitment

- Forget “selling” process improvement; instead help executives become smarter via (stealth) education
- Also make extensive use of executive orientations
- Leverage process-oriented quality assurance
 - Reviews
 - Audits
- Conduct internal process appraisals
- Conduct external process appraisals (but everyone internally funded)



Motivating Executive Commitment

- Seek external process appraisals where team lead(s) are funded by an external entity, but the team is augmented with internal resources
- Seek “fully” external process appraisals (entire appraisal team funded by external entity)
- Seek completely externally subsidized appraisals (e.g., you are paid for **all** the time required for your personnel to support data collection, briefing attendance, interviews, etc.)
 - To encourage this arrangement, can you show how you can perform a “non-profit” approach to this?



Securing Executive Commitment

- How long do you have before you must provide proof of value and/or ROI?
- Reporting cost is relatively trivial, but how will you assert and report benefit?
- What about an environment where, "Money is not an issue!"?
- Anything beyond 3 months (for having evidence of benefits) is highly risky



Securing Executive Commitment

- Communication of PI results is vital to maintaining executive visibility into the overall effort (and consequences)
- Quantitative data and measurements are essential
 - You should not need to “tell the story” of PI results; the data should tell it for you
- Deliberately strive to demonstrate enhanced organizational agility
 - Can this be done prior to Maturity Level 5?
- Take credit for absolutely every positive development that occurs within your organization



Summary and Conclusions

- The *primary* role of an executive is to ensure successful organizational change
- Potentially, the most powerful weapon in your process improvement arsenal is education
 - Make the people around you smarter, and your life can improve significantly
- Process improvement is not a religion, so don't expect people to "believe" that it's good
- Consistently seek evidence
- Remember, you must allow the data to influence your thoughts, conclusions, and subsequent actions
- When you are totally convinced, you are also ***much*** more convincing





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Biographical Highlights

Dr. Bechtold is a senior consultant for Abridge Technology, a Virginia-based company he founded in 1996. **Abridge Technology is an SEI Partner** and is authorized to provide licensed training and appraisal services. Dr. Bechtold provides consulting, training, and support services in the areas of project management, process improvement, process definition, measurement, and risk management. Dr. Bechtold has assisted government and industry with implementing the Software CMM since 1992, the Acquisition CMM since 1996, and the CMMI since 2000. Dr. Bechtold's expertise spans organizations of all types and sizes, from multi-billion dollar companies and agencies, to companies with less than 20 personnel.

