Four Critical Steps to Becoming a High Performance Organization

Operations provides organizations with some of the most fundamental building blocks to overall success by boosting annual efficiency gains, responding to the needs and conditions of the market and customers—and by its overall ability to meet organizational objectives. As the manufacturing landscape becomes more complex, operational leaders must become more agile to drive the business forward toward more efficiency in global operations.

A 2015 TBM study found that the greatest opportunities for improvement in the operations organization are in

Identifying and Addressing Your In-House Operational Leadership Expertise Gaps

Two areas in which most organizations find operational leadership gaps. How leadership development is a focus at all levels of the operations organization—what to do to address the gaps and become a high-performance organization.
fundamental management skillsets—providing leaders with the tools and readiness to convert lean improvements into clear financial gains. To create a competitive advantage that you can leverage in the marketplace, you must develop and improve your processes and leadership skills to a point of excellence that stands out from your competition. For this reason, leadership development and training must be a key focus at all levels of the operational organization.

There are two areas in which most organizations find operational gaps in their leadership teams.

- The first gap is systemic and involves how management systems and processes support overall results. Are your management system and processes getting you the results you want? If not, this may be an area to focus on first.
- The second gap is found in whether leadership team skills and behaviors are supporting overall results. Do your leaders have skills that need to be further developed and expanded upon? Are your managers demonstrating the right skills or proficiencies to get results? If not, then this should perhaps be a primary focus for improvement.

According to our research study, leadership development is a focus at all levels within the operations organization—with more emphasis on “internal” training at the lower and mid-levels; all are supported by lean systems thinking. Survey responders indicated that the top priorities are to provide leadership development for shop floor associates, supervisors and mid-level managers.

**Addressing Systemic Gaps in Operational Leadership**

If you find that your organizational leadership gap is systemic, it is often a question of making your metrics work better for you, finding alignment, and setting clearer expectations and outcomes for the entire team.

Here are some questions to ask about your management system and process so that you can begin to understand your particular areas of weakness:

1. Have we identified the right metrics and are we cascading metrics properly with clear alignment up and down the organization?
2. Does everyone understand the metrics and what impact they have on helping us to achieve our corporate and operational objectives?
3. Are our outcomes clear and are those expectations communicated effectively?
4. Are roles and responsibilities clearly understood and deployed to the entire team?
5. Does everyone have a sufficient understanding of problem-solving, do they have the tools they need and
do they know which tools to apply – and when – in order to solve problems and keep them fixed?

A structured management process or system gets the organization focused on the right objectives, instilling disciplined execution through focus, alignment, and accountability at all levels of the organization. It also creates a strong problem-solving culture.

**Addressing Management Gaps.**

Once you have honed in on and addressed your systemic concerns, you can move on to addressing leadership gaps. We found in our 2015 survey that 41% of their critical operational agenda priority was to align talent and skills with the changing skillsets required to achieve organizational goals. We also learned that leadership gaps are most optimally addressed through cross-functional rotations and hands-on experiential learning.

**Learn-and-Do Training.**

You must approach operational leadership training in ways that suit the highly diverse and versatile needs of operational leaders. This can be done by using a mix of internally and externally-delivered training and following up with hands-on experiential training. Effective training for leaders must include a hands-on portion. This gives the trainee a chance to start living what they learn. At TBM, we call this “learn—do.” This “Learn-and-Do” approach involves teaching something, and then coaching the person through actually doing it. In some cases, this process can be bolstered by assigning mentors to show others the way as they practice doing. The most successful leaders have usually had mentors, either within or outside of their organization.

**Rotational Job Experiences.**

There is no better way to gain knowledge than through experience. Sometimes a leader has skills in one dimension of your business, but needs a broader view and experience in other parts of the operation in order to expand their skills. Rotational job experience is a helpful way to address this issue. Job rotation can be done through diversity in assignments, either through project assignments or positional moves. This develops well-rounded leaders who gain a 360 view of the business and a thorough understanding of its operations. We have worked with a number of large, global clients to become high performance organizations by successfully implementing and embedding the TBM Management System.

Key aspects of our approach include:

- Starting with diagnostics and assessment, we identify and prioritize key areas for improvement and get right to work helping you implement change while achieving results.
- Deploying a multi-level approach to encourage employee engagement, daily measurement of improvement initiatives, immediate feedback and real-time course corrections.
- Creating a culture that teaches business leaders how to operate on two interrelated levels: working “on” the business (daily management) and “in” the business (Strategy deployment, Hoshin Kanri or Hoshin Planning).
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