The Business Coach's FAQ for Organizations

You've tried everything, and yet your IT organization isn't healthy - too many meetings yet not enough communication, lots of effort yet poor execution.

Is it time to re-organize?

Probably _not_, and here's why.

➢ There are several good reasons to re-organize: alignment with new business initiatives, merger/acquisition readiness, or a sudden gain/loss of key contributors.

However, if the organization is sluggish, unresponsive, or conflict-ridden, re-organizing may simply shuffle operations, and suppress the symptoms without resolving the core issues. If the organizational constraints are not addressed, they will re-emerge.

➢ To ensure that your re-organization truly optimizes your operations, you must ensure that the old problems are remediated _before_ a new structure is designed.

➢ An organizational assessment by an experienced outside party can identify those core issues and recommend steps to resolve them. An in-depth assessment could include:

- o Interviews w/key contributors, management, and stakeholders
- o Anonymous surveys to capture any "unspoken" trends or concerns
- o An assessment "echo" (with visual map of issues) w/management to report and confirm
- o Recommendations for remediation/improvement (roadmap for change)
- o Measurement of progress to "take the pulse" of transformational goals
- o Individual coaching sessions to reinforce key behaviors

➢ When your existing team begins to reflect a turnaround, then a dialogue can begin (within the department and select stakeholders) about optimizing the department's performance with a structural re-alignment.

If the goal is re-organization, why delay the inevitable? Isn't it just as useful to "shake things up" to get that process going?

A re-organization should never be a departmental goal, but rather a means to an end: improved communication, teamwork, and productivity.

Once the initial organizational constraints have been resolved, your team will be able to better articulate their vision of an ideal organizational structure, one that allows them to take full advantage of their transformational momentum.

What kind of results can be expected, and how long will it take?

Of course, the best-case scenario is that your executives recognize the improvements, and your employees are re-engaged. In the end, these are the only two metrics that truly matter: customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction.

Each case is unique, therefore, objectives and target milestones are agreed upon in advance. Surveys (both within the organization, and beyond) can be used to reflect the improvements and also identify problem areas that need additional attention and, perhaps, a customized response.

For example, a transformed organization might be positively acknowledged by the CEO and CFO, yet the Sales organization continues to complain (about systems, priorities, requests for data). In such a situation, when you're confident that the fundamental organizational issues have been resolved, a special Sales-IT Task Force can be launched with an agenda to address the Sales-specific issues in a focused manner.

How much does it cost?

This is not project management, but neither is it rocket science. Therefore, a sliding scale with clear deliverables is recommended. The fee for services rendered during the first phase of the engagement (key meetings and a draft Statement of Work for review) is modest. If all parties agree upon the consultant's proposed "next steps," the remaining portion of the engagement is invoiced bi-weekly at an hourly fee equivalent to the salary (pro-rated) of the sponsor's direct reporting staff.

In most organizations, a 30-60-90 day schedule is a useful guide: 30 days for organization review (interviews, etc.), 30 days for drafting the assessment document and reviewing it with key staff, and 30 days to implement the initial stages of the roadmap. Your re-organization may, indeed, be part of the proposed strategy, in which case, a second phase consultancy would be recommended to facilitate and enable the new organizational structure.

Shouldn't our Human Resources team be responsible for this?

Collaboration with the HR department is critical. Given their workload, however, it often makes sense to "outsource" specialized tasks. In fact, your HR representative should be one of the stakeholders included from Day One.

Is there a real methodology involved, or is it all improvisation?

I have personally been involved (as an employee) in 19 re-organizations during my career. An honest assessment: 17 of them were failures (as defined above, by either the customers or the employees).

However, the two successful re-organizations I have experienced (Synopsys IT in 1996 and TriNet in 2009) were based upon principles articulated in Dean Meyer's *Structural Cybernetics*. The book is based upon his research at Stanford, and offers useful guidelines and a framework for re-organizations in technology-based departments, many of which serve as the basis for the concepts noted above.

For more information about this program, or any other questions, contact me at:
srobbins@ix.netcom.com