

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AS PART OF A LONG TERM STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT/CHANGE EFFORT

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Abstract

This paper shares a multi-year case example where organizational development approaches were used to assess and improve workforce culture and engagement and to deploy process management/improvement, in support of a long term strategic management/change effort in a large government program office. The strategic management/change effort also included strategic planning/implementation, leadership coaching, information and data analyses, and human capital management initiatives.

The process management initiative, led by an enterprise-wide working group, borrowed methods from ISO 9001:2008 and the CMMI for Acquisition v1.3 to produce 60 documented, stabilized processes that proved crucial to program office evolution and transition. The paper provides a high level summary of the approach; details may be found in the references. The workforce culture and engagement initiative used a commercial off-the-shelf culture survey instrument and custom interviews to establish a baseline of the program's culture. The culture survey and interview protocol were repeated two years later. Survey results indicated improvement in 33 out of 43 factors assessed, with post-test levels meeting or exceeding comparative benchmarks in 17 out of 43 factors compared to only 6 factors in the pre-test. Interview results suggest similar levels of improvement with more robust explanations. The paper describes interventions implemented between the pre- and post-tests, additional mitigating factors identified, and their perceived contributions to the assessment results. The paper ends by suggesting questions for further study and thoughts for program managers considering similar efforts.

Keywords

Organizational Development, Culture, Strategic Management, Transformation, Process Management

Introduction

This paper describes the organizational development elements and results within a multi-year strategic management/change effort in a large U.S. Department of Defense program office. The objective is to share a high level description of the strategic management approach and focus on how organizational development was incorporated so engineering managers may learn from the example. The paper begins with a brief background of the organization and context, followed by a description of the elements of the strategic management/change effort. This is followed by a more in-depth description of the workforce culture and engagement and process management efforts, including how organizational development approaches enabled both. The paper ends with questions for further thought and study, intended to encourage researchers and engineering managers to develop and refine tools and approaches that incorporate organizational development within a large scale strategic management/change effort.

For our purposes we have defined organizational development (OD) as a process or effort to enhance effectiveness of an organization and the wellbeing of its members through planned interventions driven by applications of social and behavioral science, based on a synthesis of definitions from Egan (2002). The aim of enhancing both member well being and organizational effectiveness via application of the social and behavioral sciences may give OD a softer or more qualitative feeling than other change approaches applied by engineering managers. For example, the authors have noticed a shortage of OD concepts in the application of more quantitative change initiatives like Six Sigma, Enterprise Resource Planning and Process Reengineering.

Background

The Joint Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) Vehicle Program (JMVP) was established in late 2006 in response to the urgent need for mine resistant vehicles in Iraq. The Joint MRAP Vehicle Program Office (JPO MRAP) quickly grew from a small USMC office to a coalition of Navy, Army, Marine Corps, Air Force and

SOCOM program offices. The program delivered large quantities of this new capability to the Warfighters more rapidly than any vehicle program since World War II. These laudable accomplishments were often the result of extraordinary efforts, collaboration in the face of a mission bigger than the organizations responsible for execution, and support from the highest levels of the Department of Defense (Coleman, 2013). Business was conducted urgently. In this environment, enablers such as strategic management and organizational development were not a top priority, yet leadership knew they had to invest in the organization's future in order to sustain individual and collective capability. Strategic planning and process improvement began in the earliest days of the program on what might be called an "as needed" basis. This case focuses on 2010 and beyond, when the most urgent fielding requirements were largely addressed but much remained to be done. During this time the overall strategic management effort became more systematic and comprehensive, addressing underserved needs from the past and positioning the organization for the future.

The Strategic Management/Change Effort

The change effort was driven by the strategic planning process, used by leadership to set and communicate long-term direction and priorities. A Program Strategic Plan was participatively developed and published in 2008, amidst a demanding operational tempo. This three-year plan was designed to guide the organization at a high level. The subsequent 2011 Strategic Plan was also used to communicate direction, with additional emphasis placed on dedicated teams assigned to each goal to manage implementation for the next three years. The organizational learning curve from 2008 to 2011, further enabled by the slowing of the operational tempo, enabled the organization to make the most of the 2011 plan. The results described below suggest the JMVP was successful in moving its culture in the desired direction. The number one 2011 strategic goal was focused on people, to catch up on the recognition, training, development and mentoring that had been underserved while the urgent need for fielding vehicles dominated. The number two 2011 strategic goal focused on processes, intended to move from heroic expediting and implicit local processes to more systemic widely communicated and connected processes. Out of the five Strategic Goals these two were the primary links between the 2011 Strategic Plan and the cultural aspect of the change effort that took place between 2010 and 2012.

Elements of Workforce Culture and Engagement

In 2010, the Joint Program Manager (JPM) for the JMVP tasked the Strategic Management Support (SMS) team to investigate barriers and resistance to cooperation across Services and to identify and execute initiatives that would promote stronger collaboration in support of the mission. The JPM had observed schedule delays, communication breakdowns, and inefficiencies which he attributed to less than ideal working relationships and non-standard processes among the locations and functions. The SMS team designed and implemented an approach using interviews of JMVP leaders and commercially available workforce surveys, Human Synergetics' Organizational Culture Inventory® (OCI) and Organizational Effectiveness Inventory® (OEI), to explore functional working relationships in particular and overall JMVP culture in general, premised on a correlation between workforce culture and engagement levels and positive mission outcomes. The SMS team presented the data, analyses, and conclusions from this 2010 culture evaluation to the JPM in January 2011. The JPM tasked the SMS team and other groups across the JMVP to identify, prioritize, and implement numerous change initiatives to address and improve behaviors, processes, and outcomes revealed in the 2010 evaluation process. Some change initiatives targeted the specific functions directly, and others targeted the total enterprise. In late 2012, the SMS team re-assessed workforce culture and engagement levels to identify changes from 2010. The same approach was applied: key person interviews and a repeat of the commercially available workforce surveys. The team also documented significant environmental changes that impacted the JMVP from September of 2010 to December of 2012. The results of the 2010 and 2012 assessments are compared and discussed at the end of this paper.

Major interventions and actions taken by the JMVP and environmental factors believed to be likely contributors to the observed changes in culture are listed in Exhibit 1. This is not an exhaustive list. It provides an indication of the range of factors we believe may have impacted JMVP culture between the 2010 and 2012 assessments. Our intent was to support and implement a range of actions likely to move the culture in a more constructive direction and identify other factors beyond our control also influencing culture. It was not our intent to provide evidence of specific causes and effects, rather we wanted to show that in this context and with these actions implemented, this is the result we observed. In Exhibit 1, "Planned and Implemented Interventions" are those that were selected and implemented in support of the JMVP's Strategic Goals and Objectives. "Leadership

Actions” were major actions initiated by leadership, not explicitly linked to a Strategic Goal or Objective. “Environmental Factors” are actions directed from outside the JMVP and largely outside leadership’s control.

Exhibit 1. Interventions, Actions and Environmental Factors Believed to have Influenced JMVP Culture.

Planned and Implemented Interventions

- JMVP 2011-2013 Strategic Plan
- JMVP Transition Plan
- Product Team Effectiveness Initiative
- EIS Processes and Procedures Documentation
- Knowledge Transfer Between Locations
- Product Divestiture Planning
- Instituted a Service-Centric Reorganization with a Product Team Focus
- Implemented a JPO MRAP-Level Award and Recognition Program
- Increased Number of DAU Certifications

Leadership Actions

- Placed cost/schedule/performance responsibility on APMs in the Gate Review Process
- Instituted mini-PMRs as the driver for C/S/P accountability
- Improved COR/government oversight processes
- Placed new JPO Forward in theater with MRAP experience
- Reduced our Footprint in Operation Enduring Freedom
- Increased All Hands Meetings/Town Halls
- Requirements Management Process
- Log Playbook Documentation

Environmental Factors

- New Joint Program Manager Appointed to Oversee Transition
- Change of Joint Program Office Command from USMC to Army
- Execution of Transition Plan
- USMC MRAP Government Staff Moving to Government only Building
- Loss of seasoned personnel in both Stafford and Warren
- High APM and Functional Lead Turnover
- Reduced Contractor Support
- Reduced Funding
- Hiring Freeze of Government Personnel
- Sequestration
- Transition of the RG-33 Product Platform to TACOM
- Mandated product divestiture

The SMS Team and the JMVP leadership employed OD approaches in both the “Planned and Implemented Interventions” and the “Leadership Actions.” For example, the Strategic Plan was developed in a participative fashion, using facilitated meetings and cross-functional teams. The process management initiative was staffed by a cross-section of the enterprise and was conducted transparently in large public forums inviting input by all. The increase in Defense Acquisition University (DAU) certifications was an objective of the Strategic Plan, championed energetically by top leaders, and resulted in professional development for the individuals and moving the program to meet its requirements for certified staff. Targeted OD interventions aimed specifically at workforce culture and engagement included facilitated summits to establish ground rules and collaborative processes among disparate functions, a 100-day performance culture initiative for the International Programs team upon appointment of a new Director, and piloting of a Product Team Effectiveness Guidebook with the Army M-ATV team. These interventions incorporated OD elements such as team-building, roles and responsibilities definition, collective goal-setting, meeting management best practices, and a higher saturation rate for all

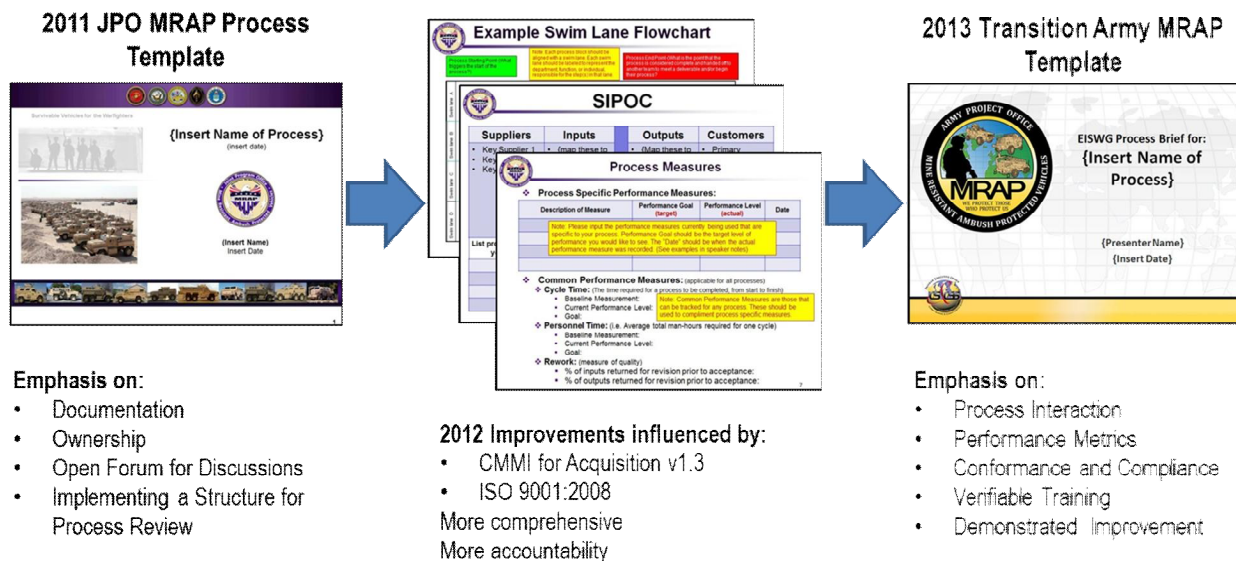
communication types, especially top-down. While the scope of these targeted interventions were limited to a specific team or small set of teams, the interventions were perceived as having program wide impact.

Elements of Enterprise Process Management

The expansive and geographically dispersed JMVP faced many challenges when it came to process management, not the least of which was the interaction of multiple Services, each with different chains of command and different ways of doing business. The challenge to appropriately standardize key processes was accepted in 2010 with the establishment of the Enterprise Integration Strategy (EIS) and its incorporation as part of Strategic Goal 2 in the 2011 Strategic Plan. The EIS organization, comprised of a small 6-10 person Working Group and a large 60+ member Integrated Project Team (IPT), collaborated across traditional organizational stove-pipes and leveraged open communication coupled with one-on-one support for process owners to achieve success. During bi-weekly IPT meetings process owners from throughout the organization were asked to describe their processes, in a standardized format, before the cross-functional and multi-Service audience. The audience was free to ask questions and make suggestions about the process content and documentation. Frequently discussions revealed interdependent relationships between the flow of process inputs and outputs with other areas of the organization. In nearly every review presentation, opportunities for improvement were identified for the process. This peer review of processes enhanced organizational effectiveness by strengthening linkages among processes, identifying process improvements, and providing concise, consistent documentation of key processes. The peer reviews also provided a low risk, constructive forum for process owners to seek input, obtain support and socialize their processes with stakeholders, suppliers and customers of the process. An unexpected benefit occurred when process owners proactively requested to introduce new processes in the EIS IPT forum as a way to get prompt broad feedback and support. This was viewed as a more productive method than mass email distribution of process documentation followed by limited responses. In between IPT meetings, Working Group team members would support process owners and stakeholders by providing process management tools, coaching on appropriate process management concepts, and facilitating process improvement/development projects.

As the EIS matured, Working Group members made incremental improvements to the standardized template process owners used to share their process with the EIS IPT (Exhibit 2). Each increment added more in-depth process management concepts including influences from the ISO 9001:2008 (International Organization for Standardization) and the Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI) for Acquisition v1.3 (Software Engineering Institute, 2010). Additionally, each improvement provided opportunities for training IPT members on

Exhibit 2. Evolution of Process Documentation Template.



use of the template and associated concepts, slowly educating process owners on both the value of process management and the side benefit of intra-organizational collaboration. As the JPO MRAP prepared to dissolve into Service-led MRAP organizations the EIS too had to determine the best approach for transitioning into the Services and handing off the existing repository of process documentation. The result was a hand off of over 60 stabilized processes, validated transfer of process information from JPO MRAP to each of the four Services and SOCOM through data transfer tables and adoption of process management structures within both of the enduring lead program offices. The larger Army Program Office (APO) institutionalized an Army MRAP EIS initiative that maintained many of the tools and methods developed for JPO MRAP, while the smaller Marine Corps Program Office (USMC PM MRAP) dedicated themselves to continuing a similar but customized process management approach, leveraged by the USMC PM MRAP Strategic Plan Goal and Objectives for process management.

Results

JMVP interview and survey data in 2010 described an organization of “Type A” personalities in a competitive, aggressive, and tense culture driven by mission urgency. Having measured and established this baseline, JMVP leaders invested in targeted improvement initiatives in 2011 and 2012, including a collaborative and open approach to process management. Interview and survey data collected in 2012 demonstrated both sustained JMVP mission success and a notably more constructive culture. The data indicated that 8 of 12 gaps between the JPO MRAP Current Culture and the Ideal Culture were smaller in 2012 than in 2010. Also, 33 of the 43 Causal Factors driving culture and Outcomes of current culture showed more favorable results in 2012 than in 2010, with 17 of the 43 above the historical median (results of 1084 organizations who have completed the assessments). (Clark, Limbrick, Olverson, & Coleman, 2014)

In over 50 years of combined consulting experience, the authors have observed that most organizations include communication issues in their top five roadblocks to excellence. JMVP leaders and those involved in the strategic management/change initiatives were pleased to see that survey ratings increased by over 20 percentile points compared to the historical median on each of the three Communication Factors: upward, downward and communication for learning. This is just one of several examples that demonstrate the collective positive impact observed during a long-term dedicated strategic management approach to change. These results are not attributed to any one single intervention or leadership action, but are believed to be the product of a critical mass of targeted interventions and supporting leadership actions mitigated by both positive and negative environmental factors.

Questions for further thought

What evidence supports or contradicts our intuition and experience that strategic management/change efforts are more effective when OD approaches are integrated with engineering management approaches? What are the vital few elements that must be addressed in a strategic management/change effort to improve workforce culture and simultaneously sustain mission success? The case described here addressed Leadership Direction and Priorities, Strategic Planning, Process Management, Communication, and Human Capital Management. Were all of these necessary? What could we have done less of to achieve similar results? How might we better capitalize on the advantages and mitigate the disadvantages of using a commercially available culture survey as part of the assessment? Having a valid and reliable survey with historic norms available for comparison was very useful. Not having access to the raw data limited the statistics calculated and tests performed to those available from the vendor. What are the recommended assessment intervals to efficiently track progress and allow adequate time for a suite of interventions to impact workforce culture? Two years fit the needs and opportunities for the JMVP, but what did we gain or lose from not assessing sooner or waiting longer? As engineering managers, we are often asked to design change programs based on practical rather than technical considerations. Documenting and sharing this case was intended to help readers striving to balance the practical and the technical ideals, and to encourage the study and use of OD techniques as part of a multidisciplinary approach to enterprise improvement.

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