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Escaping the Tower of Babble

Implementing Organizational Change

By John Conbere and Alla Heorhiadi

All know the way; few actually walk it.
—Bodhidharma

Between the saying and doing many pairs of shoes are worn out.
—Italian proverb

For the last decade or so, there have been debates about the failure of organizational change and business initiatives. The opinions differ. Some claim that somewhere between 60% and 90% of change efforts and business initiatives fail (Raelin & Cataldo, 2011; Oakland & Tanner, 2007). Others argue that this is the myth that does not live up to testing (Leeman, 2014). As researchers, we agree that before measuring failure or success of any initiative, one should agree first on a definition of what the failure and/or success entails. Perhaps all those numbers come from measuring apples and oranges and combining them as fruit. Whatever the number of failed efforts and initiatives are, as practitioners we have seen in our consulting practice some things that lead to failed initiatives. Observing and exploring these examples helped expand our understanding of reasons behind failures, which has become our recent research focus.

Numerous business articles, books, and online blogs have been written that describe six, ten, or many “Main reasons” why strategic plans or change initiatives fail. Most of those reasons are common sense, at least for practitioners who work in organization development and change management. In no way do we want to compete with those articles and pretend that we have discovered some silver bullet. On the contrary, in this article, we try to show how the most common things that everyone knows and experiences continue to prevent many organizations from succeeding in implementing and sustaining change.

Being OD practitioners by training, we have been working with the Socio-Economic Approach to Management (SEAM) for the last decade, and SEAM became the lens through which we view organizations, management, and consulting. We want to be clear upfront that there are other successful consulting and management approaches to increase organizational effectiveness. However, we want to disclose our lens and framework that we use in working with organizations, so the reader can understand our point better. We do believe that all successful approaches will have the same core principles, thus it does not matter which approach is used if it is implemented well.

We have written about the Socio-Economic Approach to Management before (see Conbere & Heorhiadi, 2011; Conbere & Heorhiadi, 2015) and do not want to repeat ourselves. However, for those who hear about SEAM for the first time, and to save the readers’ time on digging out the previous articles, we will mention some important concepts that are pertinent to the point we want to convey.

Henri Savall and his colleagues in Lyon, France, developed the Socio-Economic Approach to Management in response to management practices that did not work effectively. Based on 42 years of applied research, the French concluded that most managers operate from a flawed mental model of management. This flawed mental model is a set of beliefs and assumptions about the natures of humans, work, workplace, and management, all of which (assumptions) have descended from the teachings of Frederick Taylor, Henri Fayol, and Max Weber. (For more on the flawed mental model see Heorhiadi, Conbere, & Hazelbaker, 2014). Therefore, the intention of SEAM is to change the way people manage organizations.

In our earlier writing, we made a statement that SEAM is one of the most highly successful methods to improve organizational effectiveness. We provided the numbers to prove this—out of 1835 interventions in the last 42 years only 2 failed (Henri Savall, personal communication, October 14, 2016). We credited the method for its effectiveness, systemic approach, organic, and sustainable culture change process (Conbere & Heorhiadi, 2015). After socio-economic consulting for the last 6 years, we realized that the method alone is not the key, it is the way the method is implemented. The implementation is the key to success of any initiative, be it a change effort or strategic planning. So, when people talk about failure of initiatives, what they usually talk about is failure of implementation. Thus, let us explore reasons why implementation may fail, and how to create a structure for successful implementation and sustaining change.

Leaders' Ideas are not Translated into Strategy

The first problem of failed implementation is when top leaders cannot translate ideas into strategy. The leaders have a great idea of an initiative and they talk about it a lot, yet the initiative remains to live at the level of ideas. There are several possible causes for the leaders' inability to transform ideas into strategy.

Inability to focus. The result of inability to translate thoughts into action is babble, ongoing talk about improvement that never leads to any outcomes. We call a dysfunctional organization a Tower of "Babble" (pun intended) for two reasons. One is that people at different organizational levels rarely talk the same language and have a different understanding about organizational mission, strategy, and tactics. Second, is that a lot of energy is spent on talking. This is ironic because to our question about the biggest problem in the organizations, employees often respond that there is not enough communication. So, people talk a lot, but they neither hear, nor act. As in the old saying about railroad locomotives, all the steam goes into the whistle. None of the steam produces movement.

Short lifespan of an idea. We have worked with some leadership teams who could easily generate new ideas. After several months of talking about how to implement an idea, they dropped the idea and moved on to another idea. Sometimes, the ideas would get to the phase of implementation and, not getting any support, they died. This approach is common in some business environments and has a name—the Shiny Object Syndrome. Chasing a new shiny object may cost organizations thousands, or hundreds of thousands, dollars in wasted time, resources, and missed productivity. In addition to hidden costs in the form of wasted resources and time, chasing a new shiny object has the risk of lowering morale and reducing employee engagement. In another organization, when we spoke to employees about how they understood the organizational strategy and how they align their work with it, one worker said, "The organizational strategy changes all the time. The leadership constantly chases a new shiny object. I do not know where we are going any more. So why bother?" Employees lose trust in leadership and believe that nothing can improve the organization. The ideas for the leadership come and go, the reality for employees remains as before. They are hopeless that their work will ever improve.

Inability to make decisions effectively. One of the signs of effective leadership teams is the ability to make sound decisions (based on data) in a timely manner. Yet, in some leadership teams, the members are not able to disagree; the members fear the leader or others in the group, so hold back their thoughts. As result, the business discussions in those groups turn into a politically correct dance without talking about the real issues. We worked with one executive group, in which the CEO dominated every meeting and was notorious for retaliating against anyone who did not agree with him. As a result, the group learned to defer to the CEO, watched carefully for his opinions and reactions, and withheld any information that would displease him. Therefore, the CEO never had full and accurate information about what was happening in the organization. The team members had to talk in private about what was troublesome or important and often tried to filter any information for the leader in order not to upset him.

In some leadership teams, even if the members could talk about the real issues, they simply could not make sound decisions in a timely manner. We have seen teams of good, caring, smart leaders, who talked, and talked, and talked, but were not able to reach actual decisions. When we asked them why this happens, the leaders had different excuses, such as the need to collect more information or test the ideas, fear to make the wrong decision, or desire to make a perfect decision. Yet the perfect decision is the one that is made with all the information available at the time and communicated in a timely manner to everyone involved in the decision. As time goes by, the decision should be revisited and adjusted if needed, based on new information.

Not knowing or ignoring the difference of personal styles may also lead to poor decision making. We worked with teams, in which the leader, who was highly "Perceiving" in the Myers-Briggs typology, preferred gathering ideas rather than making decisions, and so was continually tempted to wait for more information. While collecting more information to make a sound decision is not a problem in itself, it may be very frustrating for those who are ready to decide. Inability to decide in a timely manner, or at least talk openly about this issue, may lead to the loss of a momentum needed for implementation.

Too many initiatives. Another reason for leaders' inability to translate ideas into strategy is that other tasks often overwhelm them. These leaders have been caught by "Magical Thinking," the delusional belief that they can keep adding tasks to their work to-do lists without lowering the quality of their work (Conbere & Heorhiadi, 2016). There are different causes and forms of magical thinking, but being unrealistic about the relationship between time and work amount is one of the most common work place problems we see, which inevitably leads to hidden costs.

Strategy is not Translated into Effective Action

When leaders manage to translate their ideas into strategy, there are still several barriers to successful implementation, at both top and middle management levels.

Not enough time for implementation. Even the best initiative needs enough time to be properly implemented. It is similar to planting a seed—the seed needs to root, sprout, and grow to be a viable plant. SEAM research shows that (a) the first significant improvements and results can be achieved within the first three months of the intervention, (b) the major sustainable changes in culture and reduction of hidden costs are beginning to be achieved by the end of the first year, and (c) the changes strengthen steadily over time. Each year, the organization's return on investment grows. This time line is in accord with Likert's research on implementing participative management. (See *Figure 3*, How the shift toward System 4 management improves performance and reduces costs, in *The Human Organization*, 1967, p. 92). Likert's point was that implementation of participative management (as the most effective type of management) would produce the best results after 3 years, but many organizations gave up before that time. Most organizations are not patient and tend to be short-term oriented.

Failure to give clear instructions. Sometimes leaders are not able to give clear instructions to those who are supposed to implement the plan, usually the middle managers. Talking about an idea is different from giving instructions about its implementation. Talking and giving instructions can be compared to a reading light and laser. Talking may serve a purpose of crystalizing ideas, socializing, venting, processing, etc. Giving directions implies a purpose, audience, and the need to complete a task in a timely manner. We spoke to one person who complained, "I get this email from my boss who says I have to implement [an initiative], but I have no idea how to do this, and I do not know whom to ask." Even a clear instruction may be misunderstood due to various reasons, and that can weaken implementation. Yet, when there are no instructions, there is a high probability that the implementation fails.

Not enough authority. Sometimes implementation is impaired because the person, who is supposed to lead the implementation, does not have the authority to act. This might be due to micro-management from a higher leader, or it might simply be that nobody thought through what kind of authority the person in charge of implementation needs. We have seen many examples of asking people to complete tasks without giving them proper authority to do so. For example, recently we spoke with a newly appointed project manager, who was supposed to manage numerous projects without any authority over the people who worked on the projects. He could not bring the necessary people together, nor keep people accountable for failing to meet the project deadlines. For successful implementation, the person in charge needs authority to bring people together, make decisions, and get the desired changes to take root.

Not having managerial skills. Over the years, we have seen a common problem, which is promoting people to management roles without training them how to supervise employees. These newly promoted managers do not know how to manage, nor do they invest enough time in their new role. In many organizations, supervision is just an add-on task without changing expectations about continuing to do the work that the person had been doing. Often there is more incentive to be good at technical tasks than to be a good manager. The result is managers who do not know how to organize and guide people who report to them. Because of lack of training, such managers may not know how to design tactical steps needed to implement the initiative. When managers are unable to plan, and then to steer their department, they cannot successfully implement any initiatives.

Being overwhelmed. Like top leaders, many mid-level managers and supervisors are overwhelmed by work, although being overwhelmed for them may take more severe forms. Some of overwork is a result of their magical thinking and loyalty to the boss or organization. Sometimes, they are overwhelmed due to dysfunctions in their organization. New tasks are being continuously delegated to the mid-level managers and supervisors from top levels of the organization. Or, people leave the organization and are not replaced and the managers and supervisors add to their own workload the tasks of those who left. We see more and more employees who do two or three jobs. As one supervisor said, "They keep adding more tasks to my plate and when I complain - they say, 'Work smarter not harder.' Now I am doing also a job of someone who was laid off. This is a pattern in our organization. They lay off people and then redistribute their work among us." These people are at the end of their rope, already failing to do the work they know is needed. So, when implementing a new initiative is added to their plate, and nothing is taken away, there is no time nor energy to work on a new initiative.

In addition to the outcomes of failed initiatives, reduced morale and employee engagement, too much overwork can lead to burnout, which can cause significant emotional and physical damage to the person, and tremendous cost to the organization. As an example, in working with a rural healthcare organization, we estimated that when a physician burns out, the hidden cost (lost revenue and expenses for replacing the physician) is between $500,000 and $1,000,000.

Failure scenarios. Whatever the cause of the failure to implement a new initiative, there are two possible unfortunate outcomes. One possible outcome is the initiative dies after trying to pave its path through the tangle of organizational dysfunctions. Along the way, the initiative creates havoc in people's busy lives, adds stress, and leads to more dysfunctions and hidden costs. The resources used during the short life span of the idea turn into hidden costs in the form of wasted time, wasted money, missed productivity and reduced morale. The lost time and money could have been used more effectively in the areas that needed them most. People may gossip a bit about inept leadership and move on with their daily tasks. The leadership group shifts their attention to a new shiny object. The status quo, however dysfunctional, is restored for the time being, until the vicious cycle begins again.

Another form of failure is when the initiative does get implemented, but the results are not what the organization originally intended to achieve. This often happens when the initiative is treated as a stand-alone event, and not as a part of a larger organizational system. Over and over, we see situations when the implementation of the initiative in one organizational silo does not consider possible consequences in another silo, or the whole organization, which leads to more hidden costs. We call this approach a "Peep-hole vision." Imagine looking through an old-fashioned peep hole after somebody rang a door bell. Recollect how distorted the person behind the door looks, and how little perspective is available when looking out. Many organizations have this limited view of how a new initiative interrelates and interacts with other organizational elements, such as vision, mission, and strategic directions.

Here is an example of a peep-hole vision. A college decided to recruit more international students. The marketing department received the task of producing a new marketing campaign to attract an international population. Several recruiters were sent abroad, mostly to countries of Eastern Europe, Asia, and the Middle East to recruit students. The college leaders were excited when more international students began to enroll. Initially, it looked like the college successfully implemented the strategic initiative of being international. Then some problems started popping up. The college, looking at the initiative through a peep-hole, did not recognize the need to provide a structure to support the implementation of the idea. Among the new international student population, there were many Muslim students, who needed prayer rooms, pre-prayer ablution facilities, and even instructors who could understand the different cultural assumptions and values of the new student population. Muslim students tried to resolve their needs on their own by using classrooms as the prayer rooms, washing feet before prayers in sinks and toilet bowls, and leaving class sessions at the hour of prayer, all of which caused frustration for other students and faculty. Conflict was escalated when some Muslim students went home and spread the word of mouth to not apply to the college. The college began to lose its international student population. This example illustrates the importance of looking at any initiative not as a single event, but something that should be integrated into the whole system, and then to be supported and maintained by the whole system.

What Structures are Needed for Implementing Change?

Because we work with SEAM, we will use examples from our SEAM practice. However, as we said earlier, other consulting methods can provide similar structures. The SEAM method is threefold: the change intervention, teaching managers to use the socio-economic management tools, and coaching managers through the change efforts. All of these together set the structure for successful implementation of changes and are designed to sustain themselves, so that when consultants leave, the organizations do not slip back into old ways of operating.

The SEAM intervention. The SEAM intervention is rigorous, data-driven and theory-based. It is designed to reduce organizational dysfunctions and hidden costs associated with them, and increase human potential and engagement. The SEAM intervention begins with the leadership group, and then cascades down through all silos through the organization. In each group, employees are interviewed about which functions are not working as well as they might, or dysfunctions. The dysfunctions are categorized, and the amount of hidden costs associated with the dysfunctions are calculated. Analysis of the data helps identify the root causes of the dysfunctions, which serves as a starting point for suggesting areas of improvement and possible projects. The information is reported to all employees in each silo. Members of all levels of the organization are invited to take on projects, which results in improved operations and reduced hidden costs. (For more on the SEAM intervention process see Conbere & Heorhiadi, 2011; Conbere & Heorhiadi, 2015).

The process of an intervention is designed to provide leaders in every silo with accurate information of what is not working well, and how much time and money the organization loses as a result. SEAM is good in gathering data from all levels of the organization, synthesizing data into specific categories, attaching a dollar amount to dysfunctions (hidden costs), and identifying the root causes of dysfunctions. Hidden costs information (which can range between $20,000 and $80,000 per employee per year) provide clear indicators of where the most effective change efforts will have the most lasting impact.

Tools. The socio-economic management tools provide a disciplined way to successfully implement change. The tools do not seem unique to anyone who has any business education. What is different about them is that they do not have a punitive feel. They serve as data gathering and negotiation tools. The thing that originally attracted us to SEAM that we keep reinforcing in our work and teaching, is that SEAM does not blame people, it focuses only on changing the system. Thus, all socio-economic tools, if used correctly, help to redirect the focus of intervention from people's fault to problems within the system. At first, people tend to be skeptical about tools, they may be even timid and assume that the tools will be used to reduce their freedom or, even worse, to jeopardize their work. However, later, when they discover all the benefits of the tools, they realize how their life gets saner. The use of these management tools helps to rebuild a healthier and more effective system.

The **Internal-External Strategic Plan** is usually designed for three years and it deliberately sets out two categories for the planning. The internal goals are to reduce dysfunctions, making the organization healthier. The reduction of hidden costs (both wasted time and wasted money) is intended to free up the organization to invest in the external goals—the development of the organization. Having both categories is essential. For instance, in one organization, poor communication across the silos was creating havoc for employees. Improving communication was a necessary goal that needed to be achieved before any development goals were attempted.

The Internal-External Strategic Plan is very organic. It lists all the new activities that an organization is planning to do in the next three years, including internal work on reducing organizational dysfunctions as well as the strategic goals of development: growth, increasing market share and profits, and developing new products. This tool is a good remedy against the shiny object syndrome, as it keeps the organizational focus on initiatives that are listed in the plan. Steps of each element of the plan are divided into six month segments.

The **Priority Action Plan** is the more detailed document to spell out the strategic goals that are listed in the Internal-External Strategic Plan. The plan is a simple table, in which the manager, the owner of the plan, lists all the priorities, based on strategic goals, in which the manager will be involved for the next six-months. In addition to strategic plan goals and actions to be taken, the table includes the manager's own normal management tasks, time for emergencies, and vacations. Then the owner of the plan adds up the hours for each month. Most often, people see that they have scheduled more activities than they can possibly do. In the old days, this magical thinking would lead to missed deadlines, work not getting done, and much frustration. With SEAM, the person meets with the manager and negotiates: What are the priorities? What should be dropped or moved to the next six-month period? This negotiation informs both manager and employee, and if necessary the strategic plan time table is amended.

In the end, the Priority Action Plan leads to alignment of all efforts throughout the organization. The CEO makes her Priority Action Plan first and then shares it with each of her direct reports. The direct reports write their Priority Action Plans, negotiate their priorities with the CEO, and share their Priority Action Plans with their reports. Thus, the right priorities cascade down through the organization, creating synergy and keeping everyone focused on the same strategic goals.

Using Priority Action Plans changes the way people plan their work. The shock of seeing the unreasonable number of hours that are needed to do all listed goals triggers a process of internal reassessment. Not only do people see the extent of their magical thinking, they learn to make healthy decisions about tasks and time in collaboration with their managers. We have consulted using other OD approaches, but only in the SEAM process have we seen people collectively begin to behave differently and healthier as a result of intervention.

In using the **Time Assessment tool**, managers list the tasks they do and the amount of time each takes over a few days. What makes the tool different is the analysis of how time is spent. How much of a manager's activities is routine management, responding to dysfunctions, or steering one's direct reports? (By steering we mean leading and managing.) Then there is a section for analyzing how many of the tasks could be delegated, discontinued, or kept as priorities. In working with managers on implementing the time assessment tool, we were told how shocked they were to see the amount of time, spent on dysfunctions, and how little time is spent steering their direct reports. Yet the time of steering is very important, especially when the organization intends to implement initiatives. Aligning people's efforts to get the intended results from implementing change require a lot of work with employees—explaining, giving instructions, providing feedback, requesting feedback and results. This time assessment tool supports the SEAM theoretical concept that the primary job of a manager is steering, as without steering it is impossible to keep the organization headed in the same direction. This tool is very important when it comes to implementing initiatives. By looking at the use of time, one can see whether there will be enough time for working on a new initiative. If there is not enough time, or a lot of time is spent on dealing with dysfunctions, it is a high probability that a new initiative will be put aside or abandoned.

The **Competency Grid** is an analysis of all of the competencies that are needed in a department. The tool is a table with two axes. The skills go on one axis of a chart; they include all technical skills, interpersonal skills, supervisory/management skills, and skills needed for future development. The other axis lists all the members of the department. The purpose of the tool is two-fold: (a) to indicate the degree to which each member of the department has mastered each of the skills, and (b) to see the gaps in skills for the whole department. The information about missing skills helps managers to make decisions about hiring the right people, outsourcing the tasks, training employees in needed skills within the department, as well as succession planning.

The tool also helps to plan strategic development of the department. Perhaps not all skills will be needed in the future, so rather than replacing skills (not people!), managers try to think what skills will be needed in the future to stay competitive.

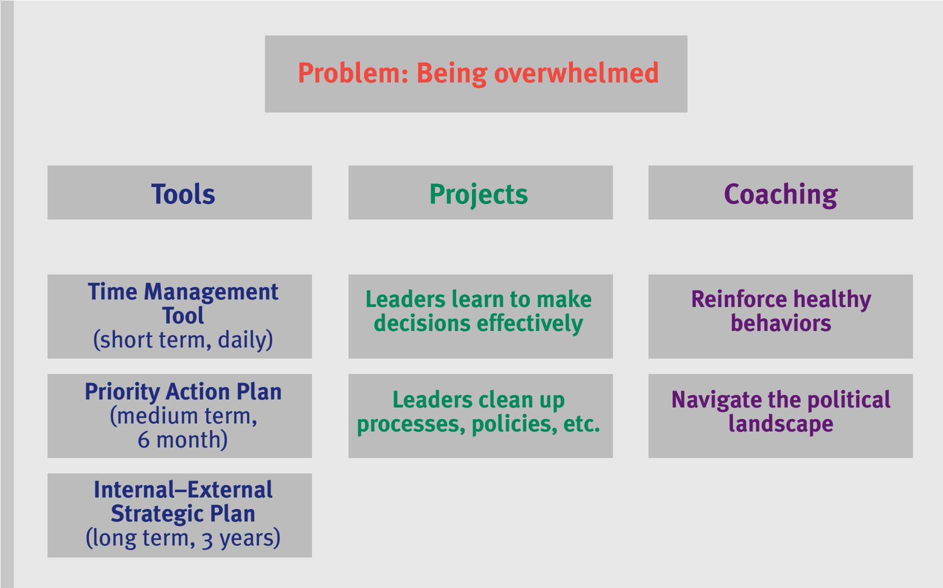

Figure 1. Elements of the SEAM process that worked together to reduce the problem of being overwhelmed

Many managers told us that they wish they had filled out a Competency Grid before they made their last hire, because they had not realized the skills they needed at that time. They were hiring a person with good skills, rather than acquiring the skills needed for the department to achieve strategic goals.

How does this tool link to implementation? When implementing an initiative, it is important to think whether an organization has the right competencies to implement and maintain the initiative. In one university, the administration decided to roll out a new automated system. The initiative failed miserably. After diagnosing the problem, the cause of failure became obvious—many users did not know how to properly use computers and nobody trained them in a new system. Had the Competency Grid been used, the need for training would have been obvious. Making computer training a tactical step during the implementation of the new system would have made the implementation successful.

Coaching. Organizational change can be hard, as it upsets the strategic and political environment of the organization. We have been told by many leaders and managers that during the change process they have been extremely appreciative of individual coaching. One aspect of the coaching is helping leaders to deal with the political repercussions from the intervention process. As people engage in reducing dysfunctions and creating a more collaborative workplace, they are inevitably changing "the rules of the game," i.e., the assumptions that people have about what is and is not acceptable at work. For instance, in an executive leadership team, in which people held back information, for whatever reason, the new rule has become that withholding information is professionally unacceptable. In the organization, where the magical thinking was rampant, now managers and employees negotiate the priorities, and collectively decide what tasks can wait and which cannot. (When we began working with this organizations, these managers were convinced that nothing would change and they could not safely argue with their bosses.) As simple as these changes look, they still require courage, willingness, and support to change old habits. On-going coaching is extremely helpful for getting employees to live up to the new "rules."

Business Case

To show how these tools work together, we will use one example of organizational dysfunctions from our practice—people being overwhelmed with work. In this organization, most managers and supervisors had more tasks than could be achieved, and they despaired of ever catching up. We were told, "Everyone is trying to work fast, so some things get missed. We work on the surface, which creates issues. We need to decide on what we do not do. But how do we decide on what not to do?" The leadership group was unable to make decisions that lasted, so they wasted a tremendous amount of time by continually revisiting decisions. E-mail had become a crisis, and could eat up 1 to 4 hours a day for managers and supervisors. People recognized that they could not handle any more initiatives. "We have too many initiatives, without supporting, or educating people how to do them. We do not support, we just assign those projects to people." People became hopeless about ever changing anything; they accepted their fate.

The interventions began with a leadership group and the first step was helping the group to learn how to manage their time. The time assessment tool led leaders to reflect on how much time they spent responding to dysfunctions, and how little time they spent steering the organization. As the leaders developed an internal-external strategic plan, they faced the task of examining priorities that needed their attention for the next three years, as well as estimating how they would use their time over the long term. As a result, some projects had to be delayed—this was a big step towards reversing their magical thinking that they could do everything at once. The priority action plans led to negotiating the realistic time allocated to these priorities for the next six months.

Leaders recognized the need to limit babble about operational issues during their meetings and to focus more on strategic thinking and steering. One project they undertook was to improve their meeting time and decision-making. The group members learned how to facilitate and manage the flow of the meetings and this became part of the solution. During individual coaching, members were encouraged to explore some dysfunctional behaviors and factors that prevented them from being more effective as leaders. The insights from those coaching sessions were shared with the large group in order to collectively wrestle with the issues and find resolutions.

The problems the leaders tackled were long standing; on numerous occasions in the past years, they tried to implement new ways of working but failed to sustain new behaviors. It is like in the saying above, everyone knew the way, but no one really walked it. Using the SEAM tools helped them become more disciplined. As a result, the leaders altered their priorities, freed themselves from unnecessary tasks, and found time and opportunities for more strategic work. Altogether, having the data about dysfunctions and hidden costs, the deliberate use of tools, and regular coaching helped leaders to develop the new behaviors. The new behaviors were sustained for a longer time, until they became habits. The leaders were able to model and help mid-level managers to do the same. The new way of working started cascading down throughout the organization.

Figure 1 is the visual representation of socio-economic elements that addressed only one problem—being overwhelmed. Similar approaches were undertaken to deal with every cost-intensive problem, identified during the diagnostic stage of the intervention.

Conclusion

There are many causes of failed initiatives and only a few basic principles of successful implementation. While we used SEAM as a lens to look at one method for implementing organizational change, there are other ways to implement change successfully. We believe the underlying principles of all successful implementation processes are the same.

First, for an initiative or organizational change effort to be sustained, the implementation needs to include consideration of the impact on the whole system. If an initiative is implemented only in one silo, the other silos will have to support or maintain the change. This means that for successful implementation, the support structures have to be built throughout the whole system, regardless of what part of the system in which the initiative takes roots. By the support structure for implementation we mean procedures, polices, training, and feedback loops.

Second, every implementation needs to be grounded in sound data. The data should come from all levels of the organization to provide a holistic picture of the state of things. The data should include not only official numbers on financial sheets and other formal records, but also hidden costs that often are ignored by traditional accounting. Usually the hidden costs give a better picture of where implementation may stumble.

Third, implementing a serious change in an organization often involves changing managers' behaviors, which may include changing their mental model of what management entails. The primary task of managers is steering (getting all people and departments aligned) and setting the strategic direction for the organization. To set strategic direction and steer employees towards the strategic goals successfully, managers need to learn how to manage their time effectively.

And the common denominator for all the above is time. Time is needed to think through the details of implementing the change, to collect the right information, to train people and change their behavior. Giving a serious change initiative enough time to take root is essential. We suggest three years ought to be the norm for a time frame for making serious organizational changes. Referring to the Italian proverb above, between the idea and its implementation many pairs of shoes will be worn out.

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