

Editors' message

Dear Members,

We BCS Sri Lanka Section published a news letter on behalf of the SL Section as a mark of 20th year of BCS Sri Lanka Section. This is with the intention to communicate with the membership periodically, update the members on the activities carried out by the Section and knowledge update for the membership as part of member benefit.

We are currently releasing the 9th volume of the newsletter. Our releases are targeted towards a specific special interest groups. The volume 1 focused on eCommerce & Internet, Volume 2 focused on Application Development & Management, Volume 3 focused on IT Security & Cyber Law, Volume 4 on Management, Volume 5 on GDPR, Volume 6 on Data Science, Volume 7 on Digital Workforce, Volume 8 on Agile, Volume 9 on Remote Working and Volume 10 on Lean.

Thank you very much for all the encouragement and appreciation extended in this regard through email and in all other means. We hope you will continue to support us on this initiative.

Please send us your feedback to nirmalan@bcssrilanka.org we will try our best to keep up with it.

N Nirmalan
Editor Newsletter, BCS Sri Lanka Section.

Message from the Section Chairman

Dear members,

Hope you are keeping safe and fine there.

The Covid-19 pandemic situation has slowed down all the operations all over the globe. We were able to conduct webinars and discussion sessions for the benefit to our valued members. We started year 2020 with great thoughts in mind. We have progressed very well though the Covid-19 pandemic situation cluttered the initial plan.

We received record breaking number of applications for NBQSA 2020 this year and we have already completed the judging for the tertiary category and about to start the commercial category judging. This year we were able to introduce a state-of-the-art judging system for NBQSA 2020 which is in compliance with the AICTA judging procedure.

We appreciate the tireless effort of all the executive committee members who contributed in the development of the judging system and the organizing committee of NBQSA 2020 in making it a great success, regardless the Covid-19 pandemic situation.

We continually expect your valuable support in delivering the future endeavors of BCS Sri Lanka section.

Wish you all safe and successful year ahead

*Mr K.V. Kuganathan
Chairman – BCS the Chartered Institute for IT Sri Lanka Section*

Articles

Four Simple Ways to Break the Vicious Circle

Article authored by

Quint Wellington Redwood

Lean Gives IT Organizations More Power

INTRODUCTION

The digitalization of the value stream and Internet Technology has unleashed a tsunami of simultaneous changes that have come crashing onto the shores of business. Organizations big and small, in almost every branch and sector of industry, have been dragged out to sea, never to be heard from again. No surprise then that almost everyone is having a close look at their business model. Feeling a need to urgently respond to the market, they burden themselves with high volumes of projects, demanding ever more hours from their middle management and the work floor. There is no time for rationality or a holistic view of the work. As a result of the headlong dash, the processes become ever more muddy, clogged and sluggish, thereby deepening their troubles.

This white paper shows how a simple application of Lean IT techniques can break this vicious downward spiral and place IT departments in a process of continual renewal and innovation with the use of four handy and proven solutions. First, let us examine how it goes wrong.

Five Common Challenges

1. The IT organization or IT chain produces low results

Many IT organizations are aware their output is too low. Projects overrun in terms of time and budget and often change unpredictably in scope. They become ever more complex due to variables from other projects and competing ERP systems. This is usually dealt with by bringing in external IT experts, which sounds like a great solution, but in reality it often just muddies the waters. Why? Because this often leads to unreasonable expectations. It's not uncommon for a company's business arm to prematurely assume the IT

department has gotten its house in order and thinks, "Time to demand quicker delivery!" They also sometimes have the false impression they can buy functionalities like picking desserts off a cafeteria display.

2. Project progress and delivery is opaque

We already indicated that projects often overrun. This, among other things, is due to a lack of progress transparency. The symptoms of this situation are easily recognizable:

- Almost no one, not even the work floor, has a real idea of the project's progress;
- The focus is on project management rather than on the end result;
- Many managers simply don't have the knowhow to manage a portfolio of many competing projects.

As a business grows, so does its IT department. The growth also means other project groups, teams and forums get involved and demand their say, clogging up the decision-making process. Simplifying decision-making structures, and their relevant processes, is as crucial as it is unpopular. Many will inevitably be excluded from taking important decisions. Most people don't want to burn their fingers trying to get this done and turn to outside consultants for support. However, these consultants tend not to be available during the operative phase, leaving everyone confused when unexpected situations arise and the decision making structure isn't clear.

3. There's a lack of satisfaction with the quality of IT Services

- IT service calls take too long;
- Users are sent from pillar to post if 2nd or 3rd line support is needed;
- The implementation of the project deliverables interrupts operations;
- IT fails to be satisfactorily available.

A deeper look reveals the quality of service leaves a lot to be desired. While incidents and errors are inevitable, many IT departments are

stuck in a cycle that lacks a philosophy of self-improvement. Incidents become the norm, rather than the exception. Projects overrun due to a lack of transparency. The poor service and constant overruns inevitably lead to a delayed project delivery.

4. The functionality at delivery is already obsolete

Complexity and delay often means delivering last year's product for this year's market. This happens to most organizations for the same reasons:

- Projects have a long lead time with few interim delivery and key moments;
- The business arm is usually involved at the start and delivery of a project, but not in the middle. This interval is too long.

IT organizations usually deliver what has been asked of them, but much too late. The business arm of a company hands its clearly defined product to the IT department and subsequently moves onto other priorities right up to the point of delivery. In the meantime, the market is dynamic and the product has become obsolete. This is why keeping an eye on market developments should always weigh heavily through the entire production of a project; not incorporating new insights leads to missed chances unnecessary costs.

5. Managers are busy...and they're getting busier

- Running ever more projects simultaneously means there's more to manage;
- Employees aren't given enough responsibility;
- The exponential growth in the number of ongoing projects, exponentially increases the complexity of the decision-making process.

Ever hear a manager say they have plenty of time to get things done? Probably not. Managers work exceptionally long days, meet for many hours and have little time to really keep up with developments on the work floor. This is not out a lack of interest, but rather the result of the vicious cycle. Their schedules are so bursting at the seams with escalated project issues and

urgent decisions that they are forced to prioritize out time to study new ideas.

This raises important questions: if managers have so little time for reflection, to ask questions and to interact directly with the work floor, what does this mean for the quality of decision-making in the short and, if the situation doesn't change, long term? And why is it that fewer decisions are made on the work floor and more decisions fall to management?

Now that we have mapped out the five most common challenges, it's time to look at how we can break this vicious circle.

How Lean IT Breaks the Vicious Circle in Four Simple Steps

In simplicity is truth. We propose a methodology low in complexity that allows all energies to be focused on the end result.

Quint's starting point is the Shingo House of Operational Excellence, a method developed by the Shingo Institute, Utah State University. This method uses four simple Lean IT techniques:

1. Work with simple principles
2. Break the work down into small chunks
3. Reduce the volume of work in progress
4. Reduce the number of silos in the value chain

Lean Technique 1: Work with Simple Principles*

Experience has taught us that the most effective manner to realize genuine improvement lies in the thoughtful creation of simple principles. A principle is a clear agreement based on unambiguous terms for management, the team and the individual employees; each principal shows exactly how one should react to specific situations i.e. if a request is open for longer than 5 days, then it must be dealt with directly. If we need extra time, we'll stay late. (*See principles on the end of article)

Lean Technique 2: Break the Work Down into Small Chunks

This measure is based upon the well-known phenomenon that it's easier to deal with smaller chunks of work. Moving five small stones is much lighter than shifting a big, heavy one. The concept of the assembly line is also based on the idea of continual small additions to the product. Big block work is, for example, made of large programs and sizable projects that, as a result of their complexity, are difficult to plan. There are so many stakeholders involved that creating and translating clear goals into a shared vision within the organization is extremely difficult. This is especially difficult in a situation where goals and outside developments are in constant flux.

Lean way of working allows each chunk to be completed in a shorter period of time. Smaller chunks means greater visibility of the entire project allowing for greater harmonization or "flow" of all the steps in the process. This speed of the work (demand) can be adjusted to fit the available capacity (supply). The result is less waiting time and fewer peaks and troughs in the workload.

"Slicing and dicing" is particularly suited to complex IT projects that have no clear resolution. The needs of the project are spread out into a number of steps, from coarse to fine, which are then iteratively resolved. Think of the way a painting is built layer upon layer, starting first with a sketch, then a rough draft, finishing with a final, refined result.

Lean Technique 3: Reduce the Volume of Work in Progress

Here's a familiar scene: a messy office. There are files piled up all over the desk and floor. The trash bin is overflowing. It looks bad. Time to get organized, but where to start? Which files matter the most? What has priority and what can wait? IT organizations face the same decisions every day. There are too many projects of equal importance running simultaneously.

Attention and manpower is so fragmented that all the projects end up with a delayed overall time to completion. Trying to coordinate is all leads to an explosion in meetings which leads to a portfolio board working on a cross-project basis. Project managers get an additional reporting line giving managers yet another request to meet. A large volume of work in progress leads to complex work controls and decision-

making processes, which in turn creates a further reduction of operational capacity. It spirals on and on.

This happens by closing incidents that have been open too long. Place regular and project-based work on a board. Divide it into two parts: 'Running the Business' and 'Changing the Business'.

Under 'Running the Business' we place daily operations, including all of the regular processes.

'Changing the business' contains all the initiatives, such as programs and projects that innovate the organization. Teams and managers frequently discuss (on a daily and weekly basis) the status with one another and make decisions about problems and bottlenecks. This is the very essence of visual management: effective, short-cycle adjustments.

Lean Technique 4: Reduce the Silos in the Value Chain

We've gone too far slicing the value chain up into numerous departments or specialist groups that deliver little. Each and every department reviewing the incoming plans ask themselves, 'Does this work belong to my department?' 'Is the call complete?'. If the answer is no, and that happens more often than one might think, then this is the beginning of the ever familiar ping pong of work between departments. In the end, the conflicting priorities means no one thinks they're responsible for the end result.

The Lean way of thinking proposes to simplify the organization of the value chain. Reduce the number of departments and concentrate responsibility into fewer hands. Lay responsibilities as far down the organization as possible. Reduce the decision making process in order to clarify who is responsible for what.

The number of managers and coordinators is going to decrease and this won't happen without resistance. Leadership from the top is necessary to get horizontal integration moving. It's also important to restore or enhance vertical integration: that is to say, the manner in which the various layers of management work with one another. The speed and thoroughness with which these layers mutually coordinate is essential for securing flow in the operational process and agility of the organization.

Optimization of the value chain also means improving the management cascade. In practice, this means the meetings change structure to ensure they are optimally planned. Every decision maker on every level comes to the meeting. The purpose of this is a complete weekly “roll up from work floor to the top and then back down”. This is a quick and effective way to exchange information. This makes each meeting more effective and reduces the number of meetings.

SUMMARY

A Lean transformation is created when four core steps are applied in unison. To recapitulate, these are:

- Work with simple principles;
- Break down the work into small chunks;
- Reduce the volume of work in progress;
- Reduce the number of silos in the value chain.

By agreeing to work with hard and fast principles, employees will react in a clear manner to situations that have lost control. They'll break the work into smaller chunks, thereby creating more flow in the processes. They will also work with more purpose and be more productive because there will be less work in progress to maintain. Thirdly, management will spend more time on the work floor as the number of meetings has been reduced. Lastly, in this era of “short time to market”, there will be a reduction in turnaround time in the processes of the value chain. This also means less need for coordination.

Breaking a vicious circle and creating a virtuous circle seems extraordinarily difficult, especially when it's your company caught right in the middle of a downward spiral. Lean IT offers a solution that can return an IT department to a path of efficient, forward thinking renewal, in a market that mercilessly punishes those who fail to do so.

PRINCIPLES

Power

A principle has power when it makes it clear for everyone how to react to specific situations and what result is expected. The applicability of a principle must,

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therefore, be defined simply, to prevent differences of interpretation. The team manager defines the principle together with the team:

- when the principle is applicable
- what the appropriate response should be
- how to determine when the situation is under control

The foundation for the definition is based upon attitude and behavior. For example: 'It is unacceptable that a call can remain open for longer than 5 days. If that happens, we'll fix it immediately.'

It is important for the principle to remain consistent to ensure that it embeds itself in the team culture. Too many changes create a lack of clarity and arguments over its meaning. Discussion over implementation is a small step from dropping the principle altogether."

Customer Value is Central

Lean places customer value at the heart of everything. A good example of this is a telecom provider where the Customer Service Department has agreed the following principle with its employees: 'If a call is open 3 days, it will be dealt with on the fourth day'. The effect of this principle is that nearly all calls are dealt with prior to the three day limit.

Desired Result

These principles are derived by creating a clear culture of customer value that acts as a behavioral compass for all employees and managers. These so-called Guiding and Supporting Principles are aimed at attitude and behavior and need to be deeply anchored in the organizational culture.

The starting point is the acceptance that unexpected things happen. How they are perceived and valued within the organization is extremely important, as are the steps taken and consequent result. That's where the power lies: the desired result.

Failure versus value

Another example: the Service Desk Team has decided to enact two principles. The first is that an incident is never allowed to remain open for longer than 5 work days. The second is that the number of open incidents is never allowed to rise above 35. Even at a maximum

of 35 open incidents at the end of the work day, it is possible– given the available capacity and systems – to still offer optimal service.

There are two ideas behind this: an incident means a disturbance in client value, or a failure in place of value. Secondly, every incident means a rework. By explicitly working towards and using these aspects at every level as a starting point, not only will the daily basic stock of incidents be resolved, but a new consciousness is created in which error-free functionality must be delivered.

This has far reaching consequences for the manner in which employees and management look at incidents. It also gives new meaning to the way the IT organization commits to agreements and the way it manages them. One no longer speaks in terms of actions, but of results.

Team Goals

Simple principles mean concrete team goals i.e. 'Where are we headed as a team and within what time-frame?'

A number of agreements also need to be made, such as: 'how do we determine if we've met our goals?' Agreements about cooperation are equally important.

Team members should learn to give each other constructive feedback on attitude and behavior. Giving good feedback means creating a sense of trust, safety and openness within the team. These are the building blocks for developing the team's sense of mutual ownership.

In Brief:

A principle works optimally when:

- the situation is recognizable and unambiguously defined;
- measurement leads;
- management works until everything functions correctly;
- the reaction to the situation is results-oriented;
- is applied to everyone;
- is applied consistently;

BCS SL Section – We care for you.

Can COVID-19 be spread through coins and banknotes?



17 April 2020

There is currently no evidence to confirm or disprove that COVID-19 virus can be transmitted through coins or banknotes. However, respiratory droplets expelled from an infected person can contaminate and persist on surfaces.

Wash your hands regularly and thoroughly after touching any frequently-touched surface or object, including coins or banknotes. Avoid touching your eyes, mouth and nose, if your hands are not cleaned.

#Coronavirus

#COVID19



No. Regularly washing your bare hands offers more protection against catching COVID-19 than wearing rubber gloves.

You can still pick up COVID-19 contamination on rubber gloves. If you then touch your face, the contamination goes from your glove to your face and can infect you.

Is wearing rubber gloves while out in public effective in preventing the new coronavirus infection?



#Coronavirus #COVID19

9 March 2020

How can I grocery shop safely in the time of COVID-19?



17 April 2020

When grocery shopping, keep at least 1-metre distance from others and avoid touching your eyes, mouth and nose. If possible, sanitize the handles of shopping trolleys or baskets before shopping. Once home, wash your hands thoroughly and also after handling and storing your purchased products.

There is currently no confirmed case of COVID-19 transmitted through food or food packaging.

#Coronavirus

#COVID19



How should I wash fruit and vegetables in the time of COVID-19?



17 April 2020

Wash them the same way you would in any other circumstance.

Before handling them, wash your hands with soap and water.

Then, wash fruit and vegetables thoroughly with clean water, especially if you eat them raw.

#Coronavirus

#COVID19



Source : WHO