

Streamlining Business Support Processes

(Case history)

The Challenge

A leading national specialty meats company wanted to streamline the functions that support its core business processes to:

- Improve service quality to users
- Weed out low-value activities
- Improve external customer service
- Increase current staff capacity
- Increase employee involvement
- Reduce overhead expenses

While the organization was well run by most standards, it still had enough complexity to cause bureaucratic inefficiencies and make further improvement actions difficult to accomplish.

Project Approach

The Cumberland IM Process project approach was chosen as a framework for this project.

The two senior executives in charge of operations and administration assumed project co-ownership. A clear project scope and goals were defined to guide the team selection and subsequent project work. Team members included key staff members from production, materials planning, cost accounting, scheduling, human resources, and quality assurance.

Key steps in the IM approach included:

- Functional output evaluations with the internal customers
- Functional activity evaluations with the process doers

- Team development steps to increase their interpersonal effectiveness
- Comprehensive project planning for a quick launch of project work
- Expert project management assistance and work session facilitation
- Specialized consulting as required

The project team worked a 20% to 30% time schedule to complete their assignment over a four month period.

Results

The project team developed twelve specific implementation project charters.

Improvements and benefits were:

- \$760,000 “hard” cost savings
- \$1 million “soft” cost savings for further development that will help avoid near term staff additions
- Created action plans to solve several chronic problems in scheduling, customer service and other areas.
- Outlined a customized Continual Improvement Process to meet the specific business and cultural needs.

The analysis uncovered 600 additional opportunities that carried over for disposition by the departmental teams.

Keys To Success

The project team did a masterful job of collecting data, analyzing the process and asking “tough” questions about outputs and functions with the users and doers. The IM structure added focus and pace to the evaluation work.