11.958 Getting Things Implemented: Strategy, People, Performance, and Leadership
IAP 2009

SOLUTION SET

Your answers were thoughtful and creative. Here are mine, for your reference and further learning.

1. Your organization might need a new strategy, but that prescription could be premature. From what you've told me so far, the organization is showing classic signs of "stove-piping," such as poor cooperation and a lack of integrated work across departments. It's no surprise that veterans rely on favor trading to get things done. In general, re-organizing around core operational processes would be one way to address these problems, i.e. figuring out what the organization needs to excel at, process-wise, and then structuring around those processes. There are a few things one would need to know more about, though: What's the organization's environment demanding, and does the organization have a mission, or overall proposition for the value it exists to create, to guide it? Is its operating capacity, which includes a viable structure and smart processes, aligned with that mission? Are the people (human resources) suited to the mission and needed capacity, or do we need to replace, retrain, re-motivate, or otherwise enhance those human resources?

2. Water and sanitation are challenging areas of service delivery, in both technical and political dimensions. In general, the potential rewards in partnering are a gain in legitimacy or operating capacity or both. That is, the partners may bring legitimacy and support from the public, and they may also bring local knowledge, innovative practices, or other things to enhance capacity to create value in the infrastructure arena. But the risks are very real: a lack of reliable operating capacity, failed services, financial mismanagement or corruption, public outcry, even illness and other dangers from poor delivery. In partnering, we surrender some of the control of a "make" (do it ourselves) strategy or a "buy" (contract out) strategy. Government should do that only if the potential upsides are great enough *and* there are mechanisms in place—financial controls, quality controls, etc., which could be part of a performance management system—to manage the risks.

3. In operating capacity terms, the firm is not able to diagnose and improve its processes (output is poor and slow), let alone learn and grow in broader ways (do we have the right strategy in the marketplace, etc.?). Also, it is not able to retain the human resources it needs, and this could be for a number of reasons: the wrong people were hired, good people were given the wrong compensation and benefits relative to what the labor market (external to the firm) is offering, they were mis-trained, and/or they were stuck in bad processes that led to frustration and exit (leaving). Some of the needed fixes might be in the human resources arena: shift recruitment, compensation, development, and so on. But some may be in the nature of the work or the organization's climate or culture. The organization's vision may be noble and the strategy timely, but it may be a "poisonous" workplace.

4. Minimally, two processes could be improved here: how customers are *informed* about weather-related delays or cancellations; and how they *pursue alternatives* when the airline simply can't transport them. On the first score, all sorts of information and communication technology could be applied (email, IM, automated voice mail, etc.), but the story captures a familiar problem: sometimes, all the high technology fails to reach the right eyes and ears on time. Some old-fashioned "low" technology would help a great deal: A sign for major announcements, such as those at train stations, would update passengers and take much of the anxiety out (yes, loudspeakers could be improved too, plus those kiosks could be re-purposed to provide useful info). When all else fails, agents need to be prepared to get really low-tech: Write up a large sign that says, "THERE ARE NO MORE SHUTTLE FLIGHTS TODAY," and display it prominently. Next, there's helping the customer make and pursue some "Plan B" (travel alternative) as quickly, painlessly, and economically as possible. Specific weather emergencies are hard to predict, but they happen every year. The airline might, at a minimum improve its *referral* service to bus, train, and rental car companies (using its own kiosks to help customers make bookings online, for example, instead of flashing the airline logo uselessly). Handing out old and probably outdated schedules and contact information sheets is a poor excuse for service. Beyond referral, the airline might partner with ground transportation companies to assist with bookings on the spot. The weather emergency is a boon for those other companies, so they have an incentive to partner, and this would create real value for customers. Finally, thinking *way* outside the box, the airline might help customers avoid travel, during blizzards and other weather emergencies, that isn't absolutely necessary. This is probably beyond a healthy, competitive airline value proposition, but it's worth thinking through what it means to help customers *accomplish* what they would have accomplished (by going from point A to point B) without actually having to travel. That's one way that new businesses and public services, and powerful extensions to well-established ones, are born.

5. It turns out that even scorecards can be scored (rated against their functions as performance enhancers). The DC performance management system does not score as high as Charlotte's at aligning agency targets with citywide goals. DC is the "alongside" rather than the "linking" scenario. From the standpoint of citywide strategy, the DC system is fragmented and encourages no coordination across departments; and some agency measures have dubious links to larger strategies. Beyond grouping agency targets around citywide goals grouped in strategic ways, the Charlotte system has another strength that DC might learn from: Because Charlotte applied a "balanced" scorecard, the "customer perspective" is just one of several important perspectives that was used to generate measures and incentive systems. Not every important performance measure for a public (or other) organization is something the external customer experiences. There's also the financial perspective, for example. On the other hand, Mayor Williams' priority was to change the public experience of government services, so directing agencies, albeit one by one, to start with

dramatically enhancing performance in visible ways—the horrible DMV wait times, for example—was not a bad place to start.

6. As a general matter, when a public-interest organization falls out of "strategic alignment," its impact can suffer directly (it creates less value than it should or could) and also indirectly (needed support erodes, leading to less value creation). Concretely, these problems may take the form of outdated or low-quality goods or services, a loss of funding support, political opposition from the public or political "bosses" or other "authorizers," and more. The general approaches to mis-alignment cover each of the elements that should be aligned: checking what the external environment is demanding or ready to support, as well as where and how the operational work (tasks) needs to be done; making sure the mission captures something of real value; and making sure that the operating capacity of the organization is appropriate to the mission.

7. "One Church, One Child" illustrates skillful political management in all three directions that Mark Moore outlines for strategic manager's "attention": upward, outward, and downward. Furthermore, Coler skillfully sequences his moves in all three directions in ways that shift the way his agency works and how much support it receives. Moore notes that the *functions* of political management are mobilizing support, legitimacy and co-production. Looking outward, Coler seeks a partner (co-producer) in the network of black churches, which can provide needed legitimacy and more. But to win their trust and collaboration, he tackles needed changes in his agency ("downward") and appoints senior staff to act as responsive liaisons. He turns upward to the governor for needed funding and to the legislature for vital legislative reforms. He shapes opinion through the media. He helps lead his agency through the adaptive challenges demanded by the collaboration with black churches—when he could have backed away from the pressure and fallen back on the status quo way of doing things (determining what makes a "good" parent, for example). Along the way, he employs advocacy, negotiation, and leadership—what Moore calls the *techniques* of political management—to accomplish specific things in a helpful sequence.