

Rummler-Brache Group

SHIFT SHIFT PERSPECTIVE 90°

Managing in a process-centered organization calls for a new mindset. We're dealing with work from a different slant. It's no longer simply a vertical, top-down, task-specific exercise. Management now involves broad-spectrum responsibility for facilitating the flow of work from left to right. The old north to south style of management is too one-dimensional. Too localized. A process focus means our perspective must swing around such that we're mainly thinking west to east...*all the way across the company.*



Now you're managing sideways. And it's a *very* different drill.

Just as a 90° shift in wind direction announces the arrival of a new weather pattern, this quarter-circle turn on the management dial tells us we're changing the way we deal with work. Fundamentally. When we make the simple shift in focus from tasks to processes, it profoundly affects our perspective on how we do business. The different departments or functions stop operating as silos. We quit thinking of individual tasks in a singular and disconnected manner. Instead, we consider the overall collection of tasks—that is, the *process*—that's involved in producing an end result.

The old approach had us looking at our duties in a narrow-banded way, like a snapshot focused purely on our particular department or function. The rest of the organization was left out of the picture. People just paid attention to what they personally did. They didn't concentrate on process outcomes. As a result, there was a disconnect with the customer.

Not any more. We now must perceive the job like a photo taken with a wide-angle lens, one which cuts across company boundaries and reveals the full panorama of a complete work process. And the customer should always be included in this picture.

Managers—in fact, everyone—simply must pay attention to the whole. We have to concern ourselves with more than our own limited range of responsibilities. It's not enough to shine in our own small sphere. We have to look beyond, and consider ourselves personally accountable for cross-functional results. The idea is to optimize the overall process outcome, not our individual performance per se. That's especially true if we only become individual heroes at the expense of the whole. Our job is to align with others to work toward a common goal. So local agendas must be synchronized and made fully supportive of the *process*.

In this new scheme of things, people can't just do their own thing. Not even if they have a reputation for doing it exceptionally well. They have to do the *customer's* thing...the whole thing...the complete process that's in place to serve the customer. The only way we can pull this off is to think horizontally. To look laterally at how work travels across the organization. To refocus our efforts from “small and local” to “large and system-wide.”

We need to make sure that all our people are mentally reoriented. That they've made this 90° shift. That they're thinking and working west to east. It's the first step toward improving the quality of process outcomes.

Concepts in this paper are from the *Process Improvement Training Program*.

