

## Have ways of working changed forever?

Whilst reading a great article in Forbes during a recent flight to Portugal, [The Pandemic has changed Business Structures: There's No Going Back.](#)

I was struck by the comment from Brian Chesky, founder, and CEO of Airbnb, who rightly says, "travel will never go back to what it was before the pandemic."

The article also talks about isomorphism; the force that pushes companies into doing things as they were before, because 'that's how they've always been done'.

As a Management Consultant, I am lucky to get to hear from many leaders across all types of organisations, and some of those I've spoken to recently are clinging to the belief that while the pandemic was an exceptional situation, and they are very grateful to have come out of it alive - what they now think they need to do is leave it behind and go back to business as usual.

It's a good business leader that realises that some ways of working have changed forever

As an Operational Improvement Consultancy entering our sixth decade of making businesses better - we find that three overriding requirements to help improve performance are as high on the agenda now as they ever were.



More surprisingly these requirements remain constant irrespective of the business sector:

1. "We need real, tangible business benefits."
2. "We need to engage our people in delivering them."
3. "We must be able to sustain the change long after the initial flush of improvement activity has gone."

In our experience, Business Leaders often settle for one or, at best, two of these objectives but we believe that to count any improvement a success all three must be carefully developed to ensure that real transformation is achieved.

How to do this during these most difficult of times when issues like \*employee shortages are challenging even the best Management Teams requires a committed, radical, and systematic change of thinking throughout any organisation.

[\\*BBC article - Employee Shortages: Where have all the workers gone?](#)

This is difficult to achieve without the help of experts from outside the company

Bourton Group's approach is proven to deliver what Business Leaders want. When it comes to implementing operational performance improvement programmes Bourton Group may not be the most high-profile management consultancy, but our clients tell us that we are one of the best.



Q. How do we work with organisations to deliver benefits, engender people-driven change, and build sustainability?

A. With a unique combination of hands-on consulting support and knowledge transfer of best practice process improvement.

## Delivering benefits

Identifying, realising, and measuring benefits resulting from a transformation programme is prime to ensuring its continuity. If our clients can't quantify improvements as a result of our advisory support, then why continue?

**Benefits are often difficult to measure but they must impact on what people 'care about'.**

These 'care abouts' are highly interdependent and can be:

- Customer-related – some form of cost (price), quality, or time improvement as determined by the voice of the customer analysis
- Business-related – eliminating waste and variation from internal processes to enable better delivery of core process performance by improved efficiency and effectiveness
- Discrete - specific to a particular project or issue
- Early wins - gain credibility and fund the ongoing investment
- Cultural change - underpins longer-term improvement

Working closely with individuals, teams, and leadership stakeholders within our clients' organisations throughout an improvement programme, means that we never lose sight of the overall objective and buy-in from people in the business.

## Engaging with people

We view success as Building Capability for Continuous Improvement within our clients' organisations as a way of life; skills and culture that remains long after our initial programme of support has finished.

By working closely with and transferring process improvement know-how in Lean Sigma and Change Management we help develop people's capability. Whether this is helping top teams to design high-performing organisations, coaching and mentoring individuals to manage through change, or developing project-based and work teams to implement Continuous Improvement thinking as part of their DNA, we deliver the same user-friendly, flexible support from our team of experts.

Engaging with people is not a 'nice to have', it is fundamental to the success of transformation programmes. It builds capability, ensures sustainability, and motivates and mobilises an organisations resources around what management deems important.

## Sustaining the change

Benefits and change that evaporates are not only expensive but damaging to the culture of an organisation - it hardens it to future change requirements.

'Failed change' in the past is the biggest impediment to business transformation. We sometimes have to overcome negativity at the start of a programme because our client employees tell us, "We did improvement once before and it didn't work."

Creating and using best practice CI methodologies and tools in an organisation is only part of the solution. What is really needed is the creation of an internal improvement engine within the organisation. The improvement engine is fuelled by highly capable and motivated people and uses the mechanics of proven CI methodologies, supported by a well-developed deployment programme to direct and govern the change whilst maintaining pace and priority.



## Key factors for success

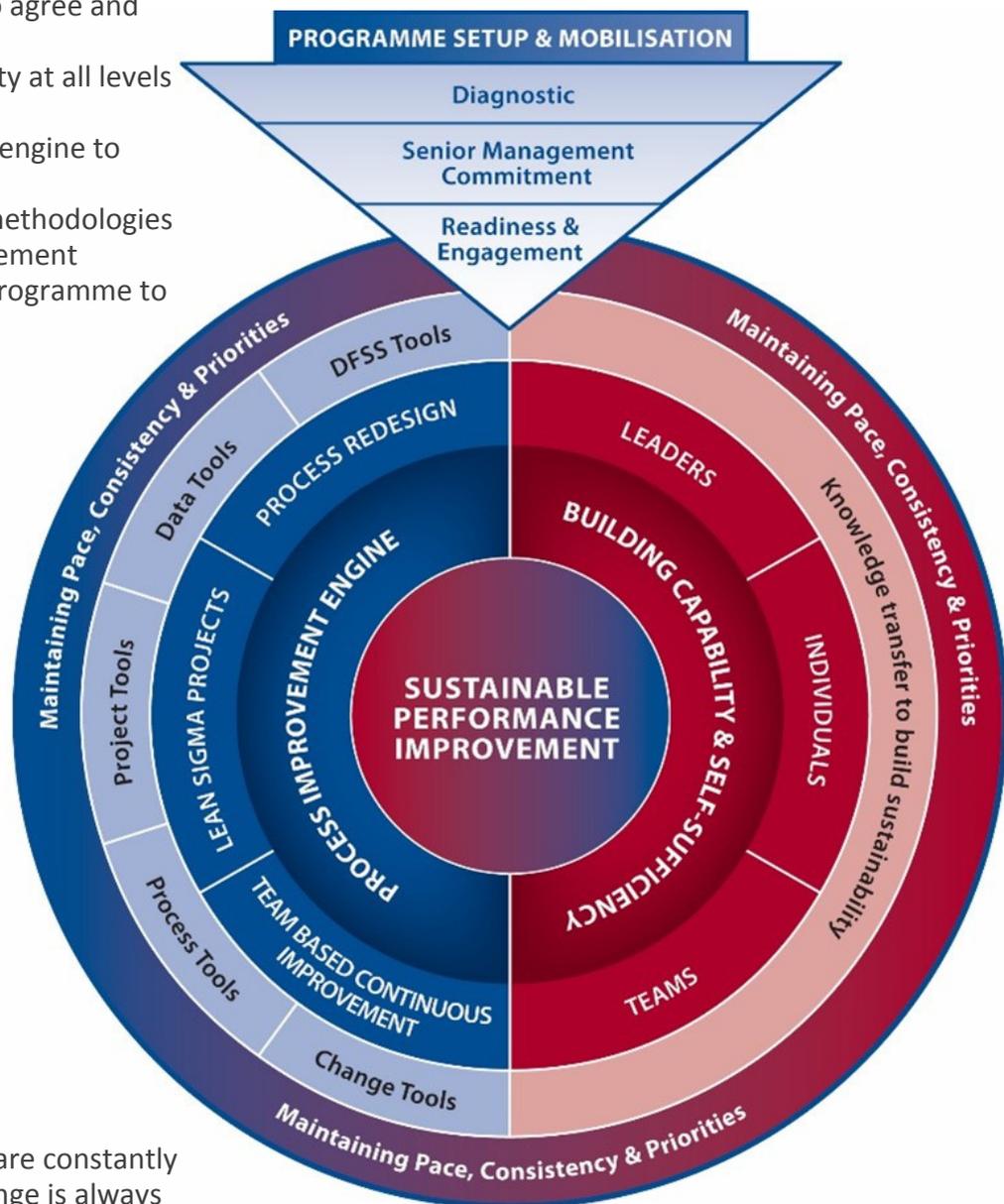
There are no silver bullets, no quick fixes, and no magic formulas to achieve the optimal solution. There are some basic building blocks that will enable your organisation to improve performance in a sustainable way.

Before embarking on such a programme make sure you adopt an approach that ensures you:

- Understand your organisational 'care abouts'
- Work with your stakeholders to agree and capture the benefits
- Build commitment and capability at all levels within your organisation
- Create a process improvement engine to sustain the momentum
- Use best-practice Lean Sigma methodologies and tools to deliver the improvement
- Have a managed deployment programme to maintain pace and priority

Next you need to set up the programme that engages and prepares your organisation for change.

An example of the sort of programme we recommend is illustrated below.



## Looking to the future

Customer needs and expectations are constantly changing, and the pace of that change is always increasing.

However, if you adopt proven tools and techniques, like the ones outlined in this article, and get experienced outside assistance from consultancies that specialise in this area, then we are confident it will be the single most important and successful project you will ever undertake.