

Business Cases – Really Learn from Learnings

In previous articles, I concentrated on benefits and selecting the right mix of interventions to make up several options and then how to select the right option. This article deals with how to learn from Business Cases and Project Reviews.

In this article, I will share my experience of how organisations have learned lessons from projects, business cases, post implementation reviews etc.

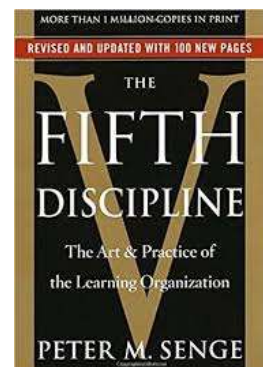
Most project and business case methodologies have a learning stage. They would be formal Post Implementation Reviews (PIR), Gateway Review etc.

What I have experienced is a range of different ways reviews are conducted, including:

- Reviews being very formal and comprehensive with very low-level improvements being captured
- Reviews that are very general in nature
- Use of external organisations who have their own methodology, templates and processes
- Reviews being completed on failed projects but not successful projects
- Reviews concentrating on the project but not the benefits
- Reviews being completed at the end of the project but not during

In “The Fifth Discipline”, Peter Senge defines a learning organisation as one “that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future.” While every company must grapple with what is to come, the ones that learn have the ability to do much more.

In our experience, learning is both a formal process and importantly a cultural process. The best way is to understand the culture of your organisation and align activities around this culture.



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- Strategy and Planning
- Business Case Development
- Mentoring
- Project Management
- Change Management

Areas to focus on include

Leadership

Leadership (which everyone possesses) is essential in becoming a learning organisation.

Some of the tasks that are required by leaders include:

- Setting the learning vision
- Supporting people through the changes
- Making change happen and following through to ensure benefits of the change are being delivered
- Supplying resources to make the change happen
- Being open and accepting peoples' views
- Encouraging diversity of views



Benefits

Focus on benefits – a project may not have been successful e.g. over budget and time. However, the benefits will remain long after the project has been delivered. Focus on the benefits that have been delivered, why were they delivered, what were the enablers and disablers etc.

Culture

What is the learning culture of your organisation? Does your organisation support an open mindset, an independent quest for knowledge and shared learning directed toward the mission and goals of the organisation? Are learning opportunities the exception rather than the norm?



Research by [Bersin](#) examined the issue of a learning culture in great detail and found that companies who effectively nurture their workforce's desire to learn are at least 30% more likely to be market leaders in their industries over an extended period of time.

Continuous Improvement

In our view, learning should not just be confined to PIR or Business Case Reviews but be a part of everyone's responsibility. Creating a culture and the space to continually improve is an essential element is an organisation's maturity.

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|------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| ➤ Benefits Realisation | ➤ Strategy and Planning | ➤ Project Management |
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| ➤ Process Management | | |

Continuous improvement is an integral part of the Lean methodology:

Kaizen means

improvement. Moreover, it means continuing improvement in personal

life, home life, social life and working life. When applied to the workplace Kaizen means continuing improvement involving everyone – managers and workers alike.



Having formal learning activities are just as important as informal activities. A learning culture is one where everyone is continually asking – how can I improve things today?

Do it now

Try to implement improvements as soon as possible. This will depend on the nature of the improvement, for example a substantial change may require a separate project whilst small changes could be implemented straight away. It is important to do them as soon as possible before the learnings are lost in a document stored away in some project folder.



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Change Management

Implementing changes is often the missing step. Documenting improvements does not mean they will actually happen. Change management is a critical element to successfully implement learnings. Regardless of the size of the improvement, change management will be required.

This step turns a learning from someone's idea to an actual improvement that can be measured.

For more information or discussion please contact me at Equal Bytes.



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