

# Performance errors erode company success



**Taking the quick way out to solve company problems is often more expensive in the end. We end up treating symptoms by traditional approaches such as more training that do not result in improved performance. These types of “organization health” errors are common and must be avoided.**

In human life, there are many health problems that resolve themselves quite effectively with simple attention and time. There are other problems that demand testing and analysis, a decision on a treatment plan, follow-through with that plan – and probably a change in life style to support your regained health. Who would approach a doctor or medical specialist with a serious or unknown health problem and demand a specific medicine or surgery without allowing a chance for testing, assessment and identification of the true causes of the pain? Is it wise to embark on a serious treatment plan before you know what you are treating?

Organizations are like that, too. Some productivity issues are simple and easy to address. But most – 80% as determined by a series of research studies over the past ten years – involve solving complex issues. Issues that demand more than just a “bandage” or first aid intervention.

What is increasingly happening in business is the use of simple, superficial ‘fixes’ for issues that require more systemic analysis and actions. The result: money, strength, and success leak out of the organization. A weaker organization results. With problems undiagnosed and untreated, there is a slow decline. And your competitors are there to counter your decline – with their increases! It is a difficult and painful process for corporate management.

Here are five frequent misuses clients make of the analysis and constructive communication that are necessary for health.

First, is the ‘let us get the cheapest price’ attitude. Never mind the quality of the analysis or how you are going to solve it. Just put price first. Even better, just have your procurement department run a project bid keeping the suppliers well away from assessing the true issues. Don’t worry about investment – which would solve problems at their source and improve the capacity of your company to increase revenues. Just focus on the lowest price.

**You have to approach organizational problems systemically and systematically. That means questioning, analyzing, determining the worth of problem and the value of investment to solve it.**

Secondly, if it is a potentially difficult, complex problem, isolate the solution you have selected from the rest of the organization! In other words, just do an emergency, short-term “fix”. Keep other units away from the

effort, no matter how they affect or are impacted by the process. Don’t go back for analysis and decisions on what is the cause. Don’t really solve the systemic problem. Of course, we know that isolated ‘fixes’ are not as strong as the organizational system – so the problem will most certainly reoccur. Never mind, you are probably afraid that it cannot really be solved anyway, so why invest in a serious effort to get to the roots of the ineffective processes.

Third, it is just so much easier for everybody to use the same solution, the same approaches that have always been used. It may not be effective. It may not address the specific unique elements of the problem. It certainly does not solve the issue at its source – and the problem will probably resurface again. But why not just do the same old thing.

Select a topic and get those employees in a classroom! Performance gap measurement? Changes to procedures or motivation or disincentives? Never mind! No time for that. Just keep going. Do more of what does not work, just as long as it does not exceed the budget. All this adds up to speeding up the pace of your decline. And you look as if you know what you are doing...in the short term.

Fourth, use consultants and experts poorly. The interesting thing about consultants is that if they are skilled, they will probably

want to look at the issue with a slightly broader perspective. Don’t let them get engaged in discussing anything with a wider perspective. Keep them away from others in the organization, not immediately involved with the issue. The issue, the problem you have identified, without any systemic analysis. Don’t consider linkages and unintended consequences. Let them come in with something that is cheap and easy. It is too troublesome to address broad issues, and besides, no one really wants to make any substantial changes, anyway.

Complex organizational changes are really quite a challenge. Outcomes are not always assured. Pretty scary stuff. Fear is a powerful deterrent. When fear takes hold, it stifles the ability to think rationally. And solving complex, organizational problems demands rational calculations and analysis.

Lastly, you don’t know what you don’t see. You don’t see what you don’t look for. Think of it as the “iceberg approach”. You have to look below the surface, past the intuitive, past the first “blame”. You have to approach organizational problems systemically and systematically. That means questioning, analyzing, determining the worth of problem and the value of investment to solve it. Then, you have to follow through to support the change.



*M. Mari Novak CPT,  
Partner, KNO  
SLOVENSKO s.r.o.*



*Steven J. Kelly  
CPT, Partner, KNO  
SLOVENSKO s.r.o.*

