Brainstorming— real world problem solving

Mapping Process Documentation

Before you even begin to work on the problem, have all participants describe the process in words and map the process graphically.

Do not let anyone collaborate on the mapping and keep everyone's finished work product. You are testing to see what different people think is the process.

A huge percentage of problems will be solved by this simple mapping exercise as it will become abundantly clear that there is a simple misunderstanding as to the process.

The deliverables are the process maps or graphics. Keep them.

Before you go on, double check with folks in the field and see if they recognize any of the processes that have been submitted. Are they real? Very quick reality check.

Root Cause Analysis

Looking at the process maps, identify all the choke points or reasons the process is not working correctly.

They are likely to be confused process intersections, communications failures, training inadequacies.

Find the problems and circle them or otherwise describe them.

Known Performance Indicators

Identify what success would look like and what measurements you would employ to identify and verify that your process is successful.

These are your KPIs, Known Performance Indicators.

Make a little dashboard which can be used to catalog the KPIs —- set standards as to satisfactory v unsatisfactory performance.

Again, you are looking to identify what a successful process performance would look like.

Force Field Analysis

Now, describe what things in the current process are working and which ones are not and why. Keep the strong features and plan to improve or modify the weak ones.

Your action plan is going to entail capitalizing upon the strong elements and fixing, removing, modifying the weak elements.

You may have to re-design parts or all of the process but you want to build on the strengths and fix the weaknesses.

Action Plan

Now, you can re-draw the process taking into account the conflicts among the original submissions from the original mapping exercise. Get the process documentation graphic right. This is a group effort. Whiteboard it until you have a consensus.

Eliminate, re-design or otherwise fix the root causes with an eye toward achieving superlative performance on the KPIs and building upon the strengths and weaknesses identified in the force field analysis.

Review it all and develop a communication plan and a training plan to teach, implement and use the re-designed process.