**Don’t be a Chicken Little**

One of the best ways for a leader to plot a course for their team is to ensure it has a good understanding of the big picture. Of course, that may be difficult depending on where you reside in the organizational hierarchy. “One of the biggest differences between vertical and horizontal leadership structures is the level of transparency within the organization. Companies that are vertically structured are more likely to share information on a need-to-know basis. Additionally, because vertical companies have so many layers of management, it’s easy for information to get muddled as it’s passed down the corporate ladder.”1 Upheavals are commonplace when it comes to changes whether the company is small, medium, Apple or Google, or even U.S. Army size.

As the Boy Scouts say, “always be prepared.” To that end, perhaps it’s time to do something radical. Perhaps you need to rethink the way in which your team does business altogether. Start with “a blank sheet of paper and rethink existing processes to deliver more value to the customer”2 e.g., your organization. You can do this using business process reengineering (BPR).

According to the Army’s BPR Center of Excellence (CoE), “business process management is the definition, improvement, and management of a firm’s end-to-end enterprise business processes in order to achieve three outcomes crucial to a performance-based, customer-driven firm:

* Clarity of strategic direction
* Alignment of the firm’s resources
* Increased discipline in daily operations”3

Unlike change management, “the discipline that guides how we prepare, equip, and support individuals to successfully adopt change in order to drive organizational success,”4 BPR helps you prepare for changes that seemingly appear out of nowhere e.g., come “out of left field?”5

You know, ‘those’ changes. The ones wherein the organization is impacted by a decision rendered on high then pushed down. Worse yet, the effects of the decision rolls downhill and grows bigger in complexity with every turn, because decisions on high often mean people have to change the way in which they work.

Some managers step deftly out of the way; others are outright flattened. There are also ‘those’ managers who see what’s coming and begin to yell “the sky is falling, the sky is falling!” Choose a scenario. Choose an outcome. Change doesn’t just happen. These days it happens a lot… especially as organizations adapt to changes in their environments as well as the strategic requirements those changes entail. As a manager and leader you manage how your organization responds to changes. As a leader, you plot the course.

“Unplanned process improvement is wishful thinking.”7

— Watts Humphrey

“Change needs to be planned and controlled for it not to lead to confusion and chaos.”6 Get ahead of the change. As a manager, one of the best ways to prepare for the “stuff” that rolls down hill is to ensure your team defines its core processes and that those processes align with the organization’s customers, both internal and external. That’s where BPR comes in…

Business Process Reengineering begins with clearly defined and measureable objectives. As the great Yogi Berra says, “If you don’t know where you are going, you might wind up someplace else.”8 Next, ensure everyone understands those objectives; once the objectives are in place, define current processes. Lastly, get out that blank sheet of paper or white board and detail each step beginning to end. Get everyone involved. You’ll be surprised at what you uncover.

Look at everything… people, processes, policy, and technology. A holistic approach helps ensure you capture all aspects of each within the process. During this exercise the team identifies inputs, outputs, stakeholders, process owners, roles, responsibilities, customers, hardware, software, databases, etc. As you refine the processes, you will see changes in your team as the visibility and transparency of what it does and how it functions is clarified. Team members will offer innovative solutions to problem areas. Ultimately, integration between horizontal *and* vertical groups improves and you are better able to effectively demonstrate your value to upper management.

If you want to be a part of your organization’s success, you need to embrace and appreciate change. If you want to prepare your team for change, get your house in order. If you are not sure where to start, start with the [Army Shared Services Center BPR CoE](https://www.milsuite.mil/book/groups/bpr-coe). The BPR CoE provides BPR training (foundational, intermediate, and advanced), advisory support, and facilitation.

“Leading is more about navigating toward the uncertain future and anticipating possibilities that cannot yet be filled in with details.”9 Gain insight from anywhere or anything. Seek answers. It’s okay to trust. It’s okay to be influenced. Just don’t buy into the hysteria. Don’t be a chicken little. Be a leader.

This article was developed by the OCKO KPPM editorial staff. Want to learn more about organizational PfM? You can respond to this article or access related articles, blogs, media presentations, and more at <https://www.milsuite.mil/book/groups/knowledge-process-performance-management-kppm/content>.

##### Notes

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