



WHERE THE MAGIC HAPPENS

“Transformation Follow-Up”

by Bettina Trautmann | September 30, 2004 |

10 Glenlake Parkway, Suite 130 | Atlanta, GA 30328 | tel. (678) 353-3378

Executive Insights
Gordian Transformation Partners Inc.
Copyright © 2004, All Rights Reserved

Where do things go wrong ?

I have seen it many times: a great idea; perfectly planned; assigned to the best people for execution; and shortly after implementation, the results never materialize. When your company is going through a major transformation, you cannot afford to drop the ball, if you want to maximize your returns.

Many times, follow-up is just an afterthought. Everyone is caught up in the excitement of the new direction the company is taking, but no one is paying attention to some of the basic details necessary for long-term success. The transformation usually includes system upgrades or entirely new systems, which are seen as an automatic fix of what is broken. Since implementation of all the elements of a transformation require flexibility, and happen over a long timeframe, some of the basics of project handling fall by the wayside.

The most common mistake is that no one is assigned to the task of following up. The people involved in planning and execution of a great idea often rely on the results to surface somewhat 'magically.' The belief being, with a great plan and superb execution, the results will be self-evident. Well, we all know there is no magic in a transformation.

Another common error is that result measurements or milestones are not defined during the transformation planning. The transformation project is usually so focused on the mechanics of implementing all required changes, that establishing metrics throughout the organization is overlooked. Therefore, the opportunity to assess the direction of the changes and correct problem areas is lost.

How can these mistakes be avoided?

First and foremost, the transformation results need to be clearly identified at the very beginning of the planning process, and must be in sync with the company's vision. One person (or group) should be assigned responsibility for measuring the results. He/she must embrace the responsibility for establishing measurements and communicating results and/or issues each step of the way. He/ she needs to know how success will be measured and ensure that the necessary data is available for analysis at each milestone of the transformation process.

The process of milestone data collection may include system data, but more often than not, that will not be available until after the transformation. The follow-up owner therefore needs to plan on collecting the data via all currently available methods. This may mean side-by-side observation, tally sheets, or relational data. The same data collection methods must also be used at the very beginning of the transformation process to establish a base for comparison.

Additionally, the follow-up owner needs to develop a plan in the event that results do not meet expectations. It is much easier to make adjustments during the transformation process, than to

discover after months of hard work, that the transformation has gone in the wrong direction. Answers to key questions should be agreed upon in advance:

- ◆ How will adverse findings affect the rest of the transformation?
- ◆ Who will review the results?
- ◆ Who will be responsible for making adjustments to the transformation plan to get it back on the right path?

A transformation is never easy to endure, but following these guidelines will avoid a great deal of unnecessary pain during, and following the process. It has been said that: "*The greatest plan is only as good as the people who implement it.*" I would add, "***And follow up on it!***"

