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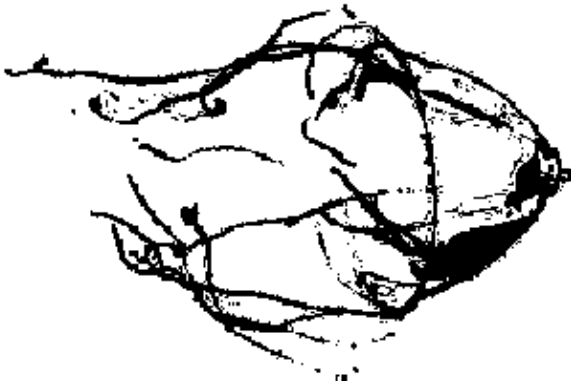
# TIGERTEAM ™:

# HIGH-SPEED, LOW-DRAG PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

# A WHITE PAPER




**PREPARED BY:**

**MARK LEFCOWITZ, CMBB, PMP**

**MCL & ASSOCIATES, INC.**
**FREDERICKSBURG, VA 22405**

**http://www.mcl-associates.com/**



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**WHITE PAPER**
**TigerTeam ™: High Speed, Low Drag Process Improvement**

By Mark Lefcowitz, CMBB, PMP
Chief Operating Officer
MCL & Associates, Inc.
Fredericksburg, VA 22405
Phone: (540) 374-1551
Fax: (540) 374-5578
http://www.mcl-associates.com

*"A problem is defined as, 'a conflict that prevents the system from reaching its objective'."*

**- Eliyahu Goldratt (2005)**[1]

## INTRODUCTION:

Not so long ago, a large organization - who had just committed to a significant, multi-year Lean-Six Sigma effort with a well-known and nationally respected management consulting company - convened an initial meeting of one of its Six Sigma team. The members were all senior functional managers, with a single Six Sigma Black Belt consultant leading the group. Discussion focused on a specific process, heretofore undocumented, identified as a likely candidate for applying the Six Sigma methodology.

Very quickly, it became painfully clear that 80 percent of the process solution lay in merely publishing a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) document. Moreover, a significant portion of the process was outside the control of their organization. No matter what the team measured, no matter how much effort they exerted, nothing was going to improve the process in question without the outside organization's active cooperation and participation. Six months later, production of the SOP began, with letters prepared for the senior official to pass to the various other organizations - who did control the process - requesting exceptions to policy. After seven months of considerable effort, the conclusion of the Six Sigma study, now quickly approaching the end of its tenure, remained unchanged from the group's initial conclusion on that first day: 1) a SOP was needed, and 2) nothing was going to improve the process in question without somehow first bringing the outside organizations into the process.

One can hardly imagine a more frustrating experience. Here was an identified problem that needed fixing. A room full of highly motivated and experienced individuals poised ready to tackle the job. A process blindly applied that inevitably leads the group back to the exact same spot from which it had begun its journey seven months before. The results: the organization wasted precious time and resources, the problem that needed fixing remained unattended, and a consultant received seven months worth of paydays. Apparently, another project failure is added to a long and growing list of previous project failures.

And so it goes, on…and on…and on.

Biologists tell us that Jellyfish, quite literally, are organisms made up of many cooperating individual cells…not a bad analogy for a large organization or bureaucracy.

There is a species of jellyfish (Colobonema Sericeum) that relies on its ability to feel the sea currents around it to survive. It uses this sense to orient itself in the wild so it can feed on the sea life carried by the flow of the seawater. When placed into an aquarium, it is necessary to create an artificial current to prevent the animal from perpetually attempting to swim against the walls of the aquarium - going nowhere and catching nothing - and thus starving to death.

[1] Goldratt, Eliyahu M. (2005). Beyond the Goal: eliyahu goldratt speaks on the theory of constraints. Coach Series.

It is much the same with organizations. All too often, they just keep going-and-going, with a great deal of effort, existing; taking no notice of unanticipated obstacles in their way.

Like a large jellyfish, many - if not most -organizations seem to swim against unknown impediments that cause them go nowhere and accomplish considerably less than had originally been hoped. The problem is that organizations - of all kinds - are not getting smaller and less complex, but quite the reverse. With an increase in size and an increase in complexity comes a corresponding decrease in project coordination, a decrease in internal and external communication, and an alarming increase in organizational entropy. Increasingly, the environments within which these organizations operate, too, are becoming more difficult and more complicated to navigate in their own rights. All of this has the cumulative effect of making an organization's response to unanticipated events lethargic and cumbersome. By the time an organization recognizes one set of unanticipated events, the time for decisive action is long past, and a brand new crisis is already swiftly approaching from another unanticipated direction.

As the father of Theory of Constraints, Eliyahu Goldratt, has noted, failure to examine assumptions is a major cause of constraints.[2]

Something is missing. The complex process models and enterprise management software developed over the past three decades are too elaborate for dynamic business environments. They take too long and are too costly to implement; they give back too little return on investment. We are not approaching problem solving realistically. We are not applying process efficiently. We are not flexibly approaching problems. We are not learning to do it better; we are only learning to do it differently. We need a new outlook and a new approach, based - not upon an artificial classification of process - but upon our realistic understanding of human behavior and group dynamics. This new approach must allow us to start problem solving when the need arises. It must be one that provides agility in an ever-changing business environment; one that allows definitive application of identified solution sets. It must be cost effective and efficient. It must be a high-speed, low-drag approach.

TigerTeam™ is that solution, because it is based on human dynamics that have already been well established. We are not reinventing the wheel; we are merely putting all of the pieces together.

The concept of tiger teams has its genesis within the United States' military: teams of "sneakers" whose purpose was to test security measures by means of the physical penetration of secure military bases and industrial sites. As the computer age came into its own, this activity also included the penetration of data and other electronic systems. It has also come to describe a small team of "experts" brought together to work on a specific technical or business problem, and the authority to find a solution.

This paper will discuss tiger teams within the context of its more recent meaning.

## 1.0 ECONOMIES OF SCALE

Economies of scale are a primary differentiator in the dynamics of a small organization versus that of a large organization. Larger organizations typically have more resources - both more people and more money; smaller organizations have less. With "more" comes greater buying power and the ability to decrease costs, a portion of which - in turn - can be passed on to customers through decreased costs and value added.

However, the economies of scale have a limit; very quickly, the diseconomies of scale kick in. Some notable causes of diseconomies of scale are:

- Cost of communication
- Duplication of effort
- Top-heavy companies
- "Office politics"
- Isolation of decision makers from results of their decisions

[2] Goldratt, Eliyahu M. (2005).

- Slow response time
- Inertia (unwillingness to change)
- Cannibalization
- Large market share / portfolio
- Public and government opposition
- Other effects related to size

The 2004 Standish Group's "Chaos Report," a bi-annual study based on more than 50,000 Information Technology (IT) projects, estimates that only 29 percent of all projects succeed, with 53 percent of all projects failing to attain their specified cost, schedule, or performance goals. An additional 18 percent of projects are cancelled prior to completion or delivered and never used: cumulatively a 71 percent failure rate.[3] This author has suggested elsewhere that the success rate for Six Sigma (6σ) projects is no better than any other project.[4] This failure rate is assumed a rough indicator of the industry's current effectiveness at producing results. In a separate white paper, the author has suggested that management consulting services generally, and process improvement services specifically, that provide professional assistance without results is unacceptable.[5]

Many methodologies have been developed to ensure project and management success; all have failed to address the constraints resulting from diseconomies of scale.

Brian R. Epperson has suggested the use of a "brain trust" model (BTM) that:

> "…consists of a small team of individuals (e.g. internal consultants) that will provide expertise to the CEO and Board of Directors in the areas of problem framing, idea generation, problem solving, devising innovative solutions to organizational problems, and researching and spanning the environment for changes outside the organization that may adversely affect the organization. The BTM membership constitutes a wide variety of abilities and competency sets. These individuals possess qualities such as creativity, critical thinking, and innovation and individual and cognitive characteristics conducive to creativity and innovation."[6]
>
> "The primary goals of the BTM are to standardize and develop a structure to enhance the change management skills of leaders and utilize the quality of decision making that group synergy can generate in an organization. The proposition of supporting the senior most leadership to accomplish tasks or make quality decisions is not a new concept."[7]

The Brain Trust Model envisions a permanent group established within the organization. Epperson's studies employed a three-round Delphi methodology to interview and then elicit feedback from a group of the 10 individuals with extensive business and/or administrative experience.[8] Despite the resulting model produced by Epperson's "expert" group, it is not clear that many of the same diseconomies of scale issues, already enumerated above, would not affect a permanent decision making group within any large organization. There numerous examples - both documented and anecdotal - of business units that had their beginnings as a small adjunct to a larger business unit, only to take on all the trappings of diseconomies of scale. In any event, it is the assumption of this paper that this is the major flaw in Epperson's model.

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[3] Retrieved 7/12/2004, from: http://www.standishgroup.com/sample_research/ PDFpages/q3-spotlight.pdf.
[4] Lefcowitz, M. (2007). Implementing six sigma: exploring issues of suboptimization. U.S. Army Journal of Installation Management, Volume 2, Winter, 18-28. Retrieved from the Web at: http://www.mclassociates.com/Index_files/ImplementingSixSigma.htm.
[5] MCL & Associates, Inc. (September 2007) "Results, Not Service: optimizing management and information consulting". Retrieved from: http://www.mcl-associates.com/index_files/PublishedArticlesand WhitePapers.htm.
[6] Epperson, Brian R. (2006). The Brain Trust Model: a proposed change to modern change management. A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty, the University Of Oklahoma, p. 81.
[7] Epperson (2006), p. 84.
[8] Epperson (2006), p. 114.

Alex Pavlak has suggested the use of tiger teams for project troubleshooting, based upon his case study of TB-23B, a $35 Million firm fixed-price full-scale engineering development contract for the U. S. Navy, won by Martin Marietta in 1988.[9] Pavlak's trouble-shooting hypothesis is, "There is always something that can be done to improve a disrupted program. The challenge is to find it."[10] He enumerates the main elements of project troubleshooting, as follows:

- The first task is for the project manager to establish clear goals.
  - The goal provides the basis for selecting Tiger Team participants.
  - All problem facets and stakeholder interests must be represented.
- Test for Groupthink and tunnel vision.
  - These results will guide you in setting up the Tiger Team.
- Keep the Tiger Team size to 7-10.
  - Most problem-solving and decision groups are too big for effective discussion.
- Sequester offsite to focus the group and avoid distractions.
- The Tiger Team meeting is organized around the two problem-solving tasks:
  - First explicitly define the problem: present state goal, state obstructions.
  - Then conduct a disciplined search for solutions.
- Search, explore and develop all potential solutions before judging and selecting.
  - Do not latch onto a solution without thoroughly exploring all options.
- Manage an open, honest, high- intensity discussion - no politics.
  - Everybody participates - no slackers.
- The goal is honest consensus. The whole group integrates and makes decisions.
  - The group should not be an extension of the leader's opinion.
- Use problem-solving heuristics as appropriate.
  - Consider a content neutral referee/facilitator to manage process and map heuristics to the problem.[11]

Pavlak's approach, however, is limited to problem solving within the circumscribed bounds of the project. It fails to take into account how the numerous diseconomies of scale that would constrain its ability to take definitive and effective action.

As Hammer and Champy (2001)[12] have pointed out:

> Part of the industrial revolution model is the notion of hierarchical decision making. A worker performing a task is expected only to do the job, not to think or make decisions about it. These prerogatives are reserved for management…The costs of hierarchical decision making are now too high to bear. Referring everything up the ladder means that decisions get made too slowly for a fast-paced market."[13]

It is not suggested, here, to throw out the baby with the bath water. Both Epperson and Pavlak synthesize a number of important concepts. What seems to be needed, instead, is a problem solving model that meets all of the criteria attributed to the both the Epperson and the Pavlak models, which also in turn minimizes diseconomies of scale.

[9] Pavlak, Alex (December 2004). Project Troubleshooting: tiger teams for reactive risk management. *Project Management Journal*, December 2004, pp. 5 - 14.
[10] Pavlak, Alex (2004), p. 13.
[11] Pavlak, Alex (2004).
[12] Hammer, Michael and Champy, James (2001). Reengineering the Corporation: a manifesto for business revolution. HarperBusiness: New York.
[13] Hammer and Champy (2001), p. 100.

## 2.0 TIGER TEAM BASICS: THE SIX A'S

Perhaps the most famous tiger team is the "White Team" lead by Eugene F. "Gene" Kranz during the Apollo 13 space mission. Dubbed the "Tiger Team" by members of the press, Kranz' team was on duty when the Apollo 13 Service Module exploded. It had the initial responsibility for responding to the accident as the events surrounding the Apollo 13 incident unfolded.

A tiger team should have the following characteristics:

- Agility
- Authority
- Access
- Acumen
- Adaptability
- Attitude

Much of TigerTeam™ owes a debt to the principles of small-unit operations, as well as the practice of Extreme Programming (XP), particularly as they relate to team building and simplicity of approach. In effect, all process improvement is computer programming, without the code; instead of programming machines we are modifying the actions of business units. This would appear to make process improvement child's play in comparison to the inscrutable syntax of computer language, and the huge number of coded lines that are required for all but the simplest programs. However, human behavior - in all its infinite glory - has some challenges of its own. In truth, neither is simple. In the place of finicky machines, we have even more finicky humans. In place of power surges, memory freezes, and interface incompatibilities, we find a whole host of comparable human frailties. The point is that similar approaches to problem solving can be used efficiently and effectively in both the business process world as well as in the programming world.

### 2.1 Agility

One of the more interesting ideas to spring forth concerning the problem on agility is H.T. Goranson's book, *The Agile Virtual Enterprise* [14], substantively reporting on and building upon the work of the Agility Forum, initiated in the early 1990s. Sponsored by the Department of Defense (DoD)'s Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), and managed by the National Science Foundation, the effort was specifically interested in how organizations can successfully thrive in shifting environmental constraints and unanticipated possibilities.

Goranson has provided us with an exquisitely straightforward definition of agility: "the ability to respond to unexpected change."[15] As he explains:

> "…[A]gility is largely independent of other best management approaches that a business can practice. Your ability to make things better, faster, and cheaper today says nothing about your ability to change (in a fast and cheap way) to make something else better, faster, and cheaper (or to respond in other respects to unanticipated changes)."[16]
>
> "Agility is insurance, and investment decisions need to be made accordingly. It is possible too much insurance (or the wrong kind). The ability to accommodate a change that is unimportant or unlikely to occur represents the wasting of resources. So where quality mavens can say that there is never too much quality, we cannot say the same for agility."[17]

[14] Goranson, H. T. (1999). The Agile Virtual Enterprise: cases, metrics, tools. Westport, CT: Quorum Books.
[15] Goranson, H. T. (1999), p. 3.
[16] Goranson, H. T. (1999).
[17] Goranson, H. T. (1999), p. 77.

The definition of organizational agility therefore is an approach to problem solving that allows an organization the ability to both quickly and astutely take advantage of what circumstances and the environment have to offer. While Goranson has many salient points to make, his model stresses the organizing methodology of a collective enterprise group - a collection of organizations and/or businesses - and it assumes the presence of a rational motivation for profit. It does not help us to understand how the individual organizations operate in an agile fashion internally. It does not help us when the condition rationality is not present, or when groups are motivated to action and/or inaction by goals other than profit.

The characteristic of "smallness" is an often-cited component of agility. The image frequently used is the great ocean-going vessel, at all back full, whose forward inertia prevents it from coming to a dead stop for ten nautical miles. As the number of individuals in the group grows larger, the ability of the group to reach a consensus and to coordinate action among themselves and the outside world decreases. Therefore - for a host of practical reasons (some of which we will discuss, below) – "small" is often the realistic choice over "large" when organizational agility is the goal.

It should be noted, however, that the Kranz' tiger team - which in reality also included the other mission control shift, Glynn Lunney's "Black Team" - numbered in the thousands. There were literally hundreds of smaller tiger teams - virtually everyone involved in the Apollo Program - working on some specific aspects of the same problem: how to get Apollo 13 safely home, with the crew alive. Long established procedures and checklists were abandoned. Customer-contractor protocol was abandoned. Red tape was ignored. Saving the lives of the Apollo 13 crew was given absolute priority over all else.

As the Apollo 13 experience illustrates, organizations make mistakes and are confronted by unanticipated and excruciating events and problems for which they are unprepared. How they react to those events and make-do with the resources at hand can make all the difference.

## 2.2 Authority

Special task units are not new. As in the Epperson model, they have the authority to investigate, to analyze, and to recommend. Only the executive-level may act. The TigerTeam™ model collapses all into one.

To get things done within a large group, ultimately, there needs to be a single person or group to organize collective action and to arbitrate issues in conflict. Someone needs to make judgments based upon experience and the best available information. More important, they need to care about the outcome of that judgment, both to the extent that it is in-line with the objectives and goals of the group, as well as the affect their decisions may have on the group's ability to solve problems in the future. There must be someone who is actively promoting, supporting, and advocating the benefits of the tiger team. There must be someone advocating the benefits of pursuing organizational goals, and justifying the organization's investment of resources in the tiger team. This is the role of Champion.

Leadership is universally recognized as a critical factor for all organizations, although sadly not consistently implemented. Leadership is more than inspiring others to action, politicians do that professionally but few politicians are leaders. Nor is leadership the deft administration of available resources; many managers do that well, and few can accurately deem themselves to be leaders. Nor is leadership the taking of definitive action so often portrayed in the many guides and handbooks. Leadership is all of that, and more. More often than not, leadership is consistently mentoring others and allowing them to take-on roles of responsibility, even to the extent of biting one's tongue until it bleeds.[18] Ultimately, the true purpose of leadership is to cultivate and nurture new competent leaders.

Again, Hammer and Champy (2001):

[18] Nonaka, Ikujiro and Takeuchi, Hirotaka (1995). The Knowledge-Creating Company: how Japanese companies create the dynamics of innovation. Oxford University Press: New York, p. 139.

> "Not the least of the changes set off by reengineering is the opportunity and necessity for a shift in the role of a company's senior executives."[19]

Within this context, the concept of the champion comes from the Information Technology (IT) project world. There are generally three levels of project leadership at the executive-level:

- The project champion who sponsors the project.
- The business owner; the individual or group for whom the IT project serves.
- The steering committee; the people in the organization who evaluate, determine and prioritize IT projects.[20]

This is far too many levels of leadership. Such an organizational structure obviously constrains an agile response to any problem, because it requires time to either gain consensus, or time for a particular point of view to win over competing points-of-views, or time to negotiate a compromise. However, this is merely the symptom. We must look more deeply if we are to begin to understand what is really going on. Why do we use hierarchical organizational structures in the first place?

Without going into too much detail, the answer is stability. In large groups, hierarchical organizational structures are the best way yet invented to ensure that the wishes of the primary decision-maker are carried out. Best does not imply perfect. It assumes the pre-existence of perfect communication, unqualified obedience, sufficient resources, timeliness, and performance. Instructions as to what must be done come from the top. Each successive layer in the organization will understand perfectly the intent and the goal of the instructions. Each successive layer in the organization will obey the instructions. Each successive layer in the organization will have sufficient resources to implement the instructions. Each successive layer in the organization will have the necessary time to act. Finally, the resulting performance outcome will be consistent with the intent of the instructions. This is a great number of assumptions to have. As the size or the organization increases, the probability exponentially increases that the actual performance outcome will diverge greatly from the intended outcome goal: the traditionally inflexible bureaucracy.

To counter problems associated with the traditional hierarchical organizational structures, management theorists have come up with various hybrid alternatives to mitigate the negative affects of the tradition bureaucratic structure:

- Decentralized organizations attempt to deemphasize central control of all organizational decisions, in favor of "local" control, based on either similarities of output, similarities in function, or geographic and political boundaries. It assumes that similar things will have share common "local" problems that will require common "local" solutions.
- Flat organizations (also known as horizontal organization**s**) decrease the organizational structure to a few and sometimes no levels of intervening management between staff and managers. It assumes that a well-trained and engaged workforce increases the reliability of communication, likelihood of obedience, increased timeliness and work performance, and ultimately a decreased need for management resources.
- Matrix organizations are a synthesis of two or more decentralized business units, typically using a flat organizational structure within each. Its goal is to combine the best attributes of each, often ending up with the worst attributes instead. At issue is control. The worker ends up with multiple bosses, invariably with functional responsibilities that conflict, with the worker caught in the middle.

In the end, none of these efforts to fix traditional hierarchical organizational structures has proved successful over the long haul. The reason is straightforward: all assume both internal and external stability. If the goal of the

[19] Hammer and Champy (2001), p. 84.
[20] Weider, Will (November 2006). Project Champion Agreement: the key to a successful IT project is ensuring that the business purpose is clear. Retrieved September 14, 2007 from http://www.biztechmagazine.com/print_ friendly.asp ?item_id=192

organizational structure is stability, based on the pre-existence of stability, we end up with circular reasoning: a fallacious argument.

Some executives have attempted to mitigate the forces of bureaucracy and group dysfunctionality through personal intervention and attention to the minutest detail. The results are usually disastrous, with examples a-plenty, but the one that comes to mind for myself is the Presidency of Jimmy Carter, possibly the most intelligent and most well intentioned of all our modern Presidents.

An exercise in deductive reasoning:

> **There must be an ultimate decision-maker in any group; and**
> **The decision-maker gives instructions to the group how decisions are to be made; and**
> **As the size of the group increases, the greater the likelihood that decentralization of decision-making will occur; and**
> **As the size of the group increases, the decision-maker's ability to personally intervene to ensure fidelity to the intent of their instructions decreases; and**
> **As decentralization of decision-making occurs, fidelity to the intent of the decision-maker's instructions will decrease; and**
> **If the decision-maker's ability to personally intervene leads to organizational dysfunctionality; and**
> **If organizational dysfunctionality is unacceptable; then**
>
> ***Something new must be brought to bear that will change this unacceptable outcome.***

Some maintain that, "[e]xecutive have overall responsibility for reengineered process performance without direct control over the people performing them."[21] All the evidence available, however, strongly suggests that management is part of the problem.[22]

The first step to organizational agility is to assume a coexisting state of both stability and instability - both internally and externally – that is both fluid and unpredictable. We never truly know where one will appear in place of the other, we never truly know how long it will last, and we can never truly be prepared for its consequences. In times of stability, we need some form of hierarchical structure to maintain that stability; in times of instability or impeding instability, we need something else. For that something else to work, the project champion and the business owner must become embodied within a single executive decision-maker, who has total authority to make all decisions within a prescribed functional scope of responsibility. In support - and in place of a permanent steering committee - is a temporary team of "experts" brought together to work on a specific technical or business problem, and the authority to take action on behalf of the champion: a tiger team.

Together, the tiger team and the champion have collective ownership of the problem and its ultimate solution.

## 2.3 Access

The champion is a member of the tiger team, not a visitor; the team must have direct access to their champion. By access, I mean to say total and complete walk-in privileges for the entire duration of the tiger team's tenure. The group must be treated, in effect, as the champion's collective chief of staff for the specified problem to be solved.

In many circles, the champion has been relegated to the role of cheerleader, without real power to make real decisions, without the authority to cross functional boundaries, and without the total and undiluted backing of the

[21] Hammer and Champy (2001), p. 84.
[22] Bergey, John, Dennis Smith, Scott Tilley, Nelson Weiderman, and Steven Woods (April 1999). "Why Reengineering Projects Fail". Carnegie Mellon (Technical Report, CMU/SEI-99-TR-010, RSC-99-TR-010). Retrieved June 10, 2006, from http://www.sei.cmu.edu/pub/documents/99.reports/pdf/99tr010.pdf.

executive. In TigerTeam ™ the champion is the leader; commitment of purpose and fidelity to outcome are both implied and required. Unfettered access to those doing the heavy lifting must be granted, unequivocally, demonstrating that purpose and that fidelity to all. Without it, the tiger team will have no caché within the organization, and their efforts will be wasted.

In TigerTeam ™ the Champion sets the priority, and the various team members estimate the level of effort. That takes communication, and communication in an agile setting is not something that should be done on a weekly basis, and certainly not a monthly basis. A brief daily stand up meeting is held each morning. This is a time saver, not a time waster. Unlike the typical meetings, we have all been forced to attend but not contribute; the purpose of a daily meeting is to bring everyone up to speed with what has transpired in the past workday. It is a brief summing up by each team member of what tasks have been completed, what is still in progress and when it is expected to be completed (in half-day increments), and what problems need to be brought to the attention of the champion for either approval or direct intervention. Not least, it builds team cohesion and confidence of the individual team members in each other.

You would be surprised how quickly a meeting goes when everyone is compelled to stand, rather than lounge around.

At this point, there may be some executives who are mentally balking at the idea of a daily meeting with anyone. They are too important, they are too busy, and they have worked too long to be doing that! Zell Miller has written that lack of responsibility is, "[p]erhaps the greatest single flaw in the fabric of today's society".[23]

There is a general lack of ethical vigor in the world today. We find it in our streets and in our places of business. One only need read the newspapers on almost any given day for corroboration. In the United States alone, the revelations of massive corporate malfeasance over the past two decades are merely the latest chapters in a continuing saga of the attainment of personal aggrandizement by any means necessary.[24] At the present time, estimates of the cost of corporate crime range from $300 Billion to $5 Trillion,[25] annually. These estimates are unattributed. That their range is so broad and the dollar amounts - even at its lowest estimated level - are so staggeringly large, is a rough indicator of the massiveness of the problem.

In fact, the true cost of corporate fraud is unknown. No one has kept consistent or reliable statistics on it. Indeed, the last concerted attempt to describe and quantify the extent and effect of corporate criminal behavior was conducted almost three decades ago by the United States' Department of Justice.[26] No one agrees on the working definition of "corporate fraud". Furthermore, it is difficult to accurately estimate an activity that remains largely undetected among a total of 23,343,821 firms,[27] of which only approximately 14,000[28] are publicly held corporations registered with the Security Exchange Commission.[29]

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[23] Miller, Zell (1996). Corps Values: everything you need to know I learned in the marines. Longstreet Press: Marietta, p. 67.

[24] Corporate fraud is by no means limited to the United States. See: Sun, Peng and Yi Zhang (2006). "Is There Penalty For Crime? Corporate Scandal and Management Turnover in China" (Draft). From: www.baf.cuhk.edu.hk/research /cig/pdf_download/SunZhang.pdf.

[25] See: http://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/index.php/White-collar_crime, http://www.hill-assoc.com/web/Portal?xml=news /news&fid=30&cid=612 and www.angelfire.com/ny5/ pinstripepress /MLBTimeline.htm

[26] Clinard, Marshall B., Peter C. Yeager, et al (1979). Illegal Corporate Behavior; U.S. Dept. of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice.

[27] See: "Statistics about Business Size (including Small Business) from the U.S. Census Bureau". Retrieved from: http://www.census.gov/ epcd/www/smallbus.html.

[28] United States General Accounting Office, "SEC Operations: Increased Workload Creates Challenges" (GAO-02-302), March 2002, p. 3.

[29] Companies with more than $10 million in assets whose securities are held by more than 500 owners must file annual and other periodic reports. These reports are available to the public through the SEC's EDGAR database.

Corporate fraud and corporate irresponsibility is, of course, not the same thing. However, both are symptoms of the same cause: individual irresponsibility. Any executive who expects less from themselves than from their subordinates is forgetting whom he or she really works for: the company, its employees, and its stockholders…or in the case of a government entity, its citizens. An executive unwilling to be a champion, and a champion unwilling to lead from the front – both in word and in deed, is a traitor to their society, to their organization, to their fellow co-workers, to their employees, to their loved ones and friends, and most of all to themselves.

## 2.4 Acumen

Tiger team members must be good at what they do; their expertise is their ultimate bona fides. The exact skill set mix of a tiger team, its size and its composition, however, will depend greatly on the problem the group needs to solve.

Obviously, there needs to be a broad range of skill sets and professional experience, for both tactical and practical reasons. Technical and functional expertise is certainly required for the group, but like any special operations force, each must have a primary role and each must have secondary roles for which it is expected the team may rely on.

Senior managers all too often populate special work groups and task forces. This is a serious mistake; acumen does not necessarily require seniority, and managers often have too much at stake to rock the boat or to ask hard-to-answer questions. It does takes an insider's knowledge and experience to get to the heart-of-the-matter, but outsider's are necessary as well to challenge unexamined assumption and help the tiger team avoid "group think".[30]

Most of all, the tiger team member must have the all important people-handling and analytical skills necessary for success. Ultimately, this comes down to paying attention to what is either said or read, and then figuring out what is not being said or not being written. This will lead to asking pertinent and relevant questions to clear up spoken and unspoken ambiguities. Leffingwell and Widrig have listed a few techniques for "disambiguation", using the playful phrase, "Mary had a little lamb" as an example.[31]

> "Insiders by themselves, however, are incapable of reengineering a process. Their individual perspectives may be too narrow, confined to just one part of the process. Further, insiders can hold a vested interest in the existing process and the organization designed to support it. It would be asking too much to expect them, unaided, to overcome their cognitive and institutional biases and to envision radically new ways of learning. Left to their own devices, a team made up of insiders will tend to re-create what already exists, with perhaps a 10 percent improvement. They will remain within the frame of the existing process, not break it. To understand what is being changed, the team needs insiders; but to change it, the team needs a disruptive element. These are the outsiders."[32]

## 2.5 Adaptability

A few years ago, I worked on a project for a large health insurance company. The CEO was very proactive and process-oriented; modern project management and statistical process improvement methodologies were used throughout the organization. Employees were encouraged to earn both Project Management Professional (PMP) and Six Sigma certifications. The company had an extensive and sophisticated data mining operation that had been functioning for a significant span of time. The purpose of the project was to produce a sizing/viability business case, which included an estimate of effort and an estimate of cost for a multi-year reengineering of an enterprise-wide benefit information system that would integrate its legacy customer relations management system, as well as its claims, utilization management, and actuarial systems.

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[30] Janis, Irving L. (1972). Victims of Groupthink. Houghton-Mifflin: Boston.
[31] Leffingwell, Dean and Widrig, D (2000). Managing Software Requirements: a unified approach. Addison Wesley: Reading, MA, pp. 276 - 277.
[32] Hammer and Champy (2001), p. 114 - 115.

A comprehensive series of group interviews was conducted with the compay's various customer service business units, and the company's historical data was quiried to confirm the substance of these interviews through a statistical analysis of the historical data record. Separate business units were interviewed independently, and were unaware of each other's participation. There was widespread agreement where the process constraints lay, how to correct them, and the level of activity the company could expect if the constraints were not remediated. Without going into specifics, the opertational problems identified by the customer service functionals, and the company's historical data, did not match. Indeed, the picture presented by one was completely out-of-step with the other!

Whenever confronted with a serious conflict between functional frontline reports and historical data, I have a tendency to believe the functionals actually doing the job. My responsibility was clear. I wrote a seven page memorandum to the Project Manager reporting my findings, and my analysis of both the statistical evidence and the functional interviews. My conclussion was that the company - who had invested considerable effort and millions of dollars in their datawarehouse system - had been asking the wrong questions, and collecting the wrong data.

The report was accepted with a deafening silence.

Human beings have two notable cognitive survival traits that often conflict: 1) we recognise patterns, and 2) we forecast the future based upon our personal experiences, as well as on our culture - our collective memory of experiences patterns. These traits are so much a part of being human that we rarely ever consider how they profoundly affect our daily lives. Like the air we breath, we take it for granted. Whether a hunter/gatherer following the herds on the Sarengetti ten thousand years ago, or a commuter weaving their way through a crowded city sidewalk, our ability to recognise similar patterns of behavior, of movement, of place, and of time allow us to make accurate predictions of future events. We rely on these cognitive abilities to keep us safe. When confronted with a sudden change, psychologists tell us that humans have one of three possible responses: fight, flight, or immobility.

Consider two baseball hitters, one who has never seen a curveball, the other who is a very experienced curveball hitter. When the curveball is thrown at the inexperienced hitter he may swing wildly (fight), he may protectively flinch to avoid a baseball that appears to be bearing down on him (flight), but more likely he will not know what to do and will be frozen in inaction. The experienced hitter, however, will pick up the rotation of the ball, recognize it as being a curveball, time the flight of the ball, and hit it where he predicts it will be in the very near future. After continually throwing curveballs to both hitters, day after day after day, the inexperienced hitter will start catching up with the experienced hitter. If you then - without warning - start throwing knuckleballs to both, they will both be frozen in inaction. The ability to hit big league pitches of all types - not knowing what to expect in the future - takes native talent, practice and real world experience.

The uunofficial mantra of the United States' Marine Corps is, "Improvise, Adapt, Overcome". So, too, is it for process improvement. Tiger team members must be individuals who can quickly adjust to changes in their environment. In addition to understanding the anticipated situation, they must also be able to recognize, identify, and react to unanticipated patterns. They must be able to describe these patterns verbally, in writing, and statistically, and adapt their action to the situation-at-hand.

Big league process improvement takes big league skills.

## 2.6 Attitude

You cannot buy attitude. You cannot manufacture it. You cannot fake it. Either you have the right attitude or don't.

When we speak of the right attitude, we are not talking about some sort of high octane, adolescent Zig Ziegler euphoric bravado that seems to be in fashion today. We are talking about a calm confidence in one's own skills and abilities, faith in one's problem solving acumen based upon past problem solving experience, and the determination and willingness to see the task at-hand through until one succeeds or one fails, no matter what.

Hammer and Champy, note:

> "Reengineering involves invention and discovery, creativity and synthesis. A reengineering team must feel comfortable with ambiguity. Team members must expect to make mistakes and to learn from them. People not capable of working this way do not belong on the team.
>
> Conventional organizations are analytic and detail-oriented in their problem solving; they place a high premium on finding the right answer the first time. They enshrine what we call the 'endless planning, flawless execution' model of problem solving, in which a lengthy period of analysis leads to a plan so perfect that any fool could supposedly carry it out. Reengineering, in contracts, requires the team to go through an iterative learning process as it invents a new way of performing work. Reengineering team members will have to unlearn the traditional problem-solving style, a difficult adjustment for some."[33]

Tiger team members aggressively attack the problem, not people. Even when it becomes plain that specific individuals are part of the problem, it is unlikely that they will actively become part of the solution if they feel personally under attack. Process improvement requires that all people get what they need, not necessarily what they want. In effect, a multi-person, high-end sale is taking place.

Neil Rackman's twelve year study[34] of successful selling during the 1970s and 1980s covered over 35,000 interviews. His research revealed that the key to effective selling was a product of discovering customer needs through four different types of questions:

1. Situation Questions: gathering background facts and information, and developing an appreciation of the circumstance of the potential sale;

2. Problem Questions: exploring customer problems, dissatisfactions, difficulties and concerns where the seller's product can help;

3. Implication Questions: linking the problem to the problem's affect or consequences on the prospect's circumstances and their organization; and

4. Need-Payoff Questions: help customers discover the value and communicate the benefits of the solution of the implied need.[35]

It is not enough that the process be improved; those that have the day-to-day responsibility for implementing the process must come along willingly to be part of the improvement.

## THE CHALLENGE

TigerTeam™ is not a panacea; it is a problem solving methodology that is pragmatic, cost effective, and agile.

As noted by Gordon W. Prange, "The unexpected can happen and often does";[36] small comfort if one believes that little can be done to remediate the affects of the unanticipated. Knowing that something needs changing only leads to actual change when a possible path comes into focus.

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[33] Hammer and Champy (2001), p. 116 - 117.
[34] Rackman, Neil (1988). SPIN Selling. McGraw-Hill: New York.
[35] Rackman, Neil (1988), p 17.
[36] Prange, Gordon W (1983). "At Dawn We Slept: the untold story of pearl harbor. Penguin Books: New York, p.738.

Hammer and Champy have called upon executives to change from scorekeepers to leaders.[37] This is correct, as far as it goes. However, their mantra belies reality; it assumes that the role of scorekeeper and the role of leadership are completely compatible with the other. We know that such an assumption is false. Leadership skills and management skills, while they may reside in a single individual, are impossible to implement simultaneously. For example, a special operations team leader in the middle of combat who demands that his troops account for all lost equipment will be viewed as a martinet of the worst sort. Inevitably, it leads to the confusion of all concerned, which leads to fear and to conflict.

Moreover, by giving executives, 'overall responsibility for reengineered process performance without direct control over the people performing them", their approach decreases the likelihood of transforming the manager into a leader. The Hammer and Champy model assumes that a reengineering is, "a fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of business processes to achieve dramatic improvements in critical, contemporary measures of performance, such as cost, quality, service and speed."[38] TigerTeam™ assumes no such radical change. Rather than a draconian restructuring, the path to change is viewed more often requiring incremental adjustments to processes to remove known or undiscovered constraints.

The Hammer and Champy model, too, assumes that the resources for change are available and unconstrained, and that change is wholly in control of those who desire it to take place. Its view of process reengineering is an enterprise-wide application of Pareto's Law.[39] In their book, "Competing Against Time,"[40] Thomas Hout and George Stalk present a compelling argument that speed is the overwhelming consideration over all other considerations.

TigerTeam™ allows organizations to focus on specific and narrowly identified constraints. It allows executives to deliver dramatic process improvement with minimal cost and minimal delay. Most important, it is based upon a model of minimal outside assistance, and thus can be duplicated throughout an organization with little or no advanced warning or ramp-up time required.

For more information:

Public and Media Relations
MCL & Associates, Inc.
(540) 374-1551
info@mcl-associates.com

[37] Hammer and Champy (2001), p. 84.
[38] Hammer and Champy (2001), p. 35.
[39] Hammer and Champy (2001), p. 44.
[40] Hout, Thomas M.and Stalk, George, Jr.(1990). Competing Against Time: how time-based competition is reshaping global markets. Free Press: New York.