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Inside MIM

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Inside MIM is a periodic newsletter written by MIM staff. It discusses key topics in management, consulting, auditing and accounting, etc. Since MIM is engaged in the field of management consultancies, our professionals have adequate expertise that they have gained through their years of experience at MIM. They therefore share their expertise and thoughts through this newsletter. Martin Cox & Associates, MIM sister company, is engaged in the field of auditing and accounting. Our professionals, through their experience in auditing and accounting, share updates, insights and information about auditing and accounting to keep you informed and up-to-date.

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Brief About MIM Group

MIM International Consultancies



- MIM is a specialized leading consultancy firm with over 33 years of experience in the field of feasibility studies and management consultancies serving the region's top organizations and governments.
- Our professionals are result-oriented and thrive on achieving clients' satisfaction which is the benchmark that measures our performance and success.

ASEL AL MAAYER Auditing & Consulting



- We offer a wide range of professional services in auditing & assurance, bookkeeping & accounting, and consultation services to small and medium sized organizations.
- Our professionals are highly educated and well trained, and are fully dedicated to serve our clients with due professional care and integrity. We do not just deliver reports; we make sure that our services will be a major contribution to your success and business development.

EBTIKARAT



- Ebtkarat is MIM representative office in Cairo, Egypt. Its core business is management and business consultancies.
- Our Ebtkarat team collaborates with MIM team in order to ensure the best quality services are provided to our clients to achieve our clients' satisfaction and maintain a long term business relationship.

EBTIKARAT Development



- Ebtkarat Development is a leading software house for developing desktop, websites and mobile applications, based in Egypt and Dubai. With the use of the latest information technology and telecommunication tools we achieve targets depending on a strong technical base and carefully selected expert resources.

The Indispensable Linchpin



We are currently going through a period in our history where many of us worry about suddenly finding ourselves outsourced, downsized, or free-lanced into obscurity. Yet, at the same time, a small but growing group of people are increasingly having their pick of exciting workplace opportunities (and the healthy salaries that go along with them).

Linchpins, are the essential building blocks of every great organization. They invent, lead (regardless of title), connect with others and make things happen. They love their work and pour their hearts into every project, behaving almost like artists. In today's world, they're landing the best jobs and enjoying the most workplace freedom.

The End of the "Take-Care-of-You Bargain"

Throughout the latter half of the Twentieth Century, world's largest corporations, and the good men and women who worked for them, had an unspoken bargain. The deal, quite simply, was this: the corporation would take care of its workers and pay them fair living wages if the workers, in turn, followed instructions and were reasonably productive and loyal. For many folks of previous generation, it was a seductive arrangement. To ensure a long and successful career, all one had to do was start out with a basic college degree, find a job with some upward mobility potential, show up on time for work and try reasonably hard. For the most part, no one was expected to be brilliant, or creative. And certainly, no one was asked to take big risks.

So seductive was this bargain that for half a century, everyone embraced it. We set up our school systems and our government to support it. And for a long time, it worked.

But on the face of globalization and new technology, this bargain is quickly falling apart. The middle class is under siege like never before. Corporations are no longer taking care of their most loyal employees. Pensions are gone; and for many workers, the future looks very uncertain. Quite suddenly in the grand scheme of things, it seems like the average worker has bought into a bad deal. The educated, hardworking masses are still showing up on time and doing what they're told, but they're no longer getting what they deserve.

Still, as dire as this situation may be for some, this remarkable transformation of corporates also presents an opportunity for others. An opportunity to actually enjoy what we do, to make a real difference to our colleagues and your clients, and to unlock the genius we've been hiding all these years.

The Myth of the White-Collar Job

Too many of us are still operating under the false assumption that we're too important to be outsourced. We wrongly think that because we wear a well-pressed suit and tie to work, as opposed to a pair of dirty blue overalls, that our jobs are safe. Sadly, while most of us may wear white collars, we're still working in a factory. Sure, we may type on a keyboard instead of operating a drill press. But it's still factory work because a lot of what we do is planned, controlled, and measured in some way.

At one time, the white-collar job was supposed to save the middle class, because it was machine-proof. A machine could replace a guy making widgets, but a machine could never replace someone answering the phone or processing an application. Yet, machines (plus knowledge workers in low wage countries) *have* replaced those workers.

Make no mistake about it, if your company can more or less put what you do into a manual, then it can — and will — one day, outsource your job. The only safeguard you have against this almost inevitable outcome is to become irreplaceable.

Okay, right about now you're probably thinking to yourself, "is there anyone in an organization who is absolutely irreplaceable?" Even a guy like Steve Jobs at Apple is probably replaceable on some level, and he's clearly a linchpin for his organization. So no, the truth is, no one person is absolutely irreplaceable, no matter how great they are. *But* the most essential people are so difficult to replace, so risky to lose, and so valuable that they might as well be irreplaceable. Indeed, entire corporations are often built around a linchpin (or more likely, a scattering of them), and they're incredibly essential.

The Linchpin as "Artist"

A linchpin is a small metal piece that holds the wheel or any rotating part at the end of the axle preventing it from sliding off. It can also be used as a fastener to hold parts of large moving mechanical pieces from falling apart. A linchpin (although a tiny part of the overall device) is an indispensable part, without which the rest of the machinery will fail.

The linchpin metaphor can also be applied to anyone who is so valuable, unique and creative that he or she is indispensable to the operation of a modern corporation or large organization. And if you hope to ever become an indispensable linchpin in your workplace, then you need to start thinking of yourself less as an employee and more as an "artist". Granted, you may not be able to draw or paint but there are other kinds of art. Art can be just about anything that's creative.

"So, what makes someone an artist?" you might ask. Well, for one thing, it means not following the rules. True artists are not people who paint by the numbers. Yes, there may be lots of painters around the world who can still make a decent living by painting clever reproductions of famous works of art. These folks may be highly skilled, but they aren't artists. They're simply copying someone else's work.

On the other hand, Charlie Chaplin was an artist. He was an original. So is Jonathan Ive (the guy who designed the iPod). Moreover, true artists need not be confined to producing strictly decorative things. You can be an artist who works with traditional materials such as oil paints or marble, but there are also brilliant modern artists who work with business models and numbers. Art isn't about materials. Rather it's about intent and creativity. *And artists always take it personally.*

"Real Artists Ship"

To be clear, you are not encouraged to become "flakey" and overly idealistic, like so many real life starving artists seem to be. Yes, we need to embrace our creative selves and act more like artists at work, but we mustn't also forget that "real artists ship."

When Apple's irreverent CEO Steve Jobs first coined that phrase, he was calling the bluff of a recalcitrant engineer who couldn't bring himself to stop tinkering with a bit of code in an effort to totally perfect it. But this three-word mantra goes deeper than that. The real message behind Jobs' catchy little phrase isn't that it's "okay for artists to sell-out," but rather that artists need to be mindful of the fact that they too are bound by certain kinds of rules. This means that real artists should not just "think outside the box," because outside the box there's just a vacuum. There's no market, there's no demand for what you're slaving away trying to produce. If you set out to do something that's too far outside the box, you'll never be able to ship.

Instead, artists think along the extreme edges of the box, because that's where cool work actually gets done. That's where the customers are, that's where the means of production are available, and that's where artists can make a positive real-life impact.

Shipping a product that's not quite ready — one that you've poured your heart and soul into — can feel like an awful compromise. You've set out to create art that matters and to do your best work. Then an artificial deadline arrives and you have to cut it short. Is shipping *that* important?

Yes it is. The discipline of shipping is essential in the long-term path to becoming indispensable.

Of course, shipping is a skill that seems to come naturally. The "secret" to being productive is simply to avoid all of the mundane tasks that are perfect stalling devices. Some tips would be, refuse to go to dumb meetings, don't commute a long way to work and don't check your e-mail two hundred times a day. Basically, just strip away anything that looks productive on the surface, but doesn't involve shipping.

'By forcing yourself to do absolutely no busywork in between your real work, you remove all excuses for not shipping'. This is the hallmark of a productive artist.

How Big Is Your Badge?

One doesn't need to be in a position of formal authority at work (i.e. middle management and above) to become a linchpin. You might ask "They want us to invent a new future and to make a difference, but we don't have any authority. I can't get anything done without authority!"

The fact is a bigger badge (formal authority) isn't going to help at all. People aren't going to follow you because you order them to. The point is that linchpins don't need formal authority to get things done. Sure, it can help. But it's by no means necessary. Real change happens when someone who cares steps up and takes what feels like a risk. People follow because they want to, not because you can order them to.

How to Get Hired

A lot of this discussion begs the question: If you're currently an unemployed linchpin-type (i.e. indispensable, and able to make a difference), how do you get a good job?

Well, you won't often be able to persuade the standardized HR system to make an exception. Firing off resumes blindly and hoping for the best is not going to work for you. The better plan would be to Look for a company that understands the value of the linchpin. Find a company that doesn't use a computer to scan resumes, a company that hires *people*, not paper. Then find a way to network with someone who's in a position of authority within that company. Perhaps by joining an industry association, or a golf club, or by volunteering. Then connect on a human level.

"My Boss Won't Let Me..."

And for those of you who already have a job, it may be time to ask yourself whether you need to leave it. The single biggest obstacle to employees who're seeking to become more linchpin-like is having a fascist boss. Nine times out of ten, people say that their boss is the biggest impediment to their careers, but this often isn't true. But one time out of ten it is true, and you should get a new job.

If you actually work for a man or woman that insists you be mediocre, that enforces conformity in all his or her employees, then why stay? What are you building? The work can't possibly be enjoyable or challenging. Your skills aren't increasing, and your value in the marketplace decreases each day you stay there.

As we mentioned, though, the first case is by far the more common one. You think your boss won't let you freelance more often; at the very same moment that she can't understand why you won't contribute more insight or enthusiasm. In most workplaces, the boss's biggest lament is that her people won't bring any genuine passion to work.

Yes it's entirely true that your boss won't take the fall for you, won't stand up for you when you royally screw up without notice. But that doesn't mean she isn't going to be supportive of you taking more ownership of your work, and being creative. A cornerstone of becoming a linchpin in the workplace is selling your boss on your plans early on, and being 'unpredictable, but in a predictable way'. Also, it's virtually impossible to become a linchpin overnight, so be patient. You can't go from being a junior account exec to suddenly flying the company's biggest client to Paris and expensing it. You don't *start* with the confidence of the company; you earn it.

From an Employer's Perspective

The message to the exalted men and women in the executive boardrooms is simply this: 'If you want your business to be successful in the twenty-first century, don't just focus on becoming more efficient. You need to also find ways to become more creative'. Which means you need to hire *more* linchpins.

Over the last couple of decades, many companies have been slashing prices in an effort to compete with the corporate giants like Wal-Marts and Amazons of the world. Though it's awfully tempting for companies to focus on finding efficiencies and race to the bottom of the price chart in an effort to attract and retain customers, there's not a lot of room for profit there. And, ultimately, this is not going to be a sustainable business strategy for most. It's tough to out-Amazon Amazon.

So, if you lose when you race to the bottom, you lose, then clearly the only way to win is to race to the top. When your company or organization becomes more human, more creative, faster on its feet, and more likely to connect directly with customers, it becomes indispensable. Meaning the very same qualities that can make a given employee a linchpin can also make *your* company a linchpin. A firm that's full of indispensable people doing important work is remarkable, profitable, and indispensable in and of itself. So as an employer, all you need to do is hire more linchpins. Simple!

Conclusion

Now the choice you face at this point is simple: Will you keep on merely following instructions and counting the days until Friday? Or will you start bringing your innate passion and creativity to the workplace with you, much like a true artist would? This is an urgent question, because our increasingly global marketplace is making the role of "follower" more dispensable than ever. The only way to beat the system is to become indispensable. You must become a linchpin.



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Ethical Theories



As human beings, every one of us might have faced some ethical dilemmas whether big or small. An ethical dilemma is a situation that often involves a mental conflict between moral values, in which to obey one would result in avoiding another. An example would be to say that you find a man on top of a very weak tree and a tiger beneath him, you are having a gun and is at a safe distance or height, hurting an animal is not morally good, but if you don't kill the tiger it would hurt the man on top of the tree.

Thinking about ethical theories would help us resolve such dilemmas. An ethical theory is an attempt to explain why actions are good or bad. The two of the major ethical theories are:

1. Utilitarianism – Focus on consequences of an action.
2. Deontology – Focus on Duties and rights of agents.

Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is a consequences based ethical theory which claims that no action themselves has any intrinsic value, rather an action is good only because of its consequences. It claims that our actions are only good if it promotes the inherently good feature of the world. Then it is important to identify the inherently good feature of the world. 19th Century English philosophers claim that pleasure is inherently good and pain is inherently bad. So according to this theory, any action which increases the pleasure and reduces the pain is morally valuable and vice versa. However, it does not specify the agent for which this pleasure and pain is applicable, as such what matters is overall amount of pleasure and pain.

Advantages of Utilitarianism Theory

- Provided adequate information is available, it provides a definite method for evaluating competing ethical claims.
- Agrees with our emotional/ethical concern for the suffering of others.

Disadvantages of Utilitarianism Theory

- Pleasure is not a fit basis for ethical considerations, as it did not specify the kind of pleasure to be weighed.
- Unfair Distribution: Utilitarianism does not emphasis on distribution of the pleasure, but rather only seeks to maximize them overall.
- Utilitarianism does not bother about infringements of a person's rights as long as it is in favor of greater overall happiness.

Deontology

Deontology theory was highly influenced by 19th Century German philosopher Immanuel Kant. He argued that an action is good or bad depending on the intention or will of the person acting and not on its consequences. According to this theory any actions which are motivated by duty are morally valuable and any action which is in agreement with duty is morally neutral and any actions contrary to duty is immoral actions. As Kant claims that actions are good or bad based on the intentions of the agent doing it, he also suggests that intentions has to be universalizable to avoid conflict of personal interest. He believes that some intentions render the actions incoherent, when we try to use them as a system of behavior. Kant also believes that when evaluating moral actions, one should respect each person's humanity. A person's humanity is his ability to employ reason to decide his own actions.

Advantages of Deontology Theory

- Considers other persons rights and humanity.
- Easy to evaluate morality of actions with universalized intentions of the agent.

Disadvantages of Deontology Theory

- Difficult to identify what makes an agent deserving of respect.
- Fails to recognize moral value, if the action is performed on the basis of other motivations such as love, compassion etc.
- Absolutism is also another disadvantage of deontology theory which strains moral inclinations.

Conclusion

Having examined two of the major ethical theories that is Utilitarianism and Deontology, it is hard to say one is better than the other. While the former is based on consequences of the action and emphasis on maximizing the overall pleasure or happiness, the latter claims that an action is good or bad based on the intentions of the acting agent. Both has its own pros and cons. While Utilitarianism theory focus on maximizing the overall happiness or pleasure, it fails to identify the value in the distribution of these pleasure among the ethical agents. It also does not protect a person against infringement of his rights as long as pain of that person outweighs the overall pleasure from such infringement. And moreover, the pleasure in itself might be of different kinds, which the theory fails to distinguish. And although, Deontology claims that an action should be considered good or bad, based on the moral duties of the person and his universalized intentions along with respect for people's humanity rights, it fails to provide a concrete method for evaluating the moral values in an action. Unlike Utilitarian theory it does not recognize any value for actions of love, compassion and etc...

Thus a Utilitarian would argue that we should look to more concrete ways of determining the ethics of a particular act rather than relying on vague moral truths. Instead it is much easier to calculate the benefits and disadvantages of actions. They will also come up with the fact that 'Universal Moral Truths' are difficult to ascertain if not impossible. Thus a utilitarian would always look to the ends rather than the means to determine whether an act is ethical or not.

On the other hand deontologists would criticize the utilitarian approach of its inability to identify a person's humanly rights and their infringements to maximize the overall pleasure/happiness. They would argue that utilitarianism devolves into dangerous moral relativism where human beings are allowed to justify heinous acts on the grounds that their outcomes are beneficial. They would also argue that it is impossible to predict the outcomes of one's actions with absolute certainty. The only thing one can be sure of is whether his or her actions are ethical or not based on the categorical imperative.

So to conclude, it might be advisable to consider both approaches knowing the prospects and consequences of each theory to resolve your particular dilemma rather than absolutely following any of the theories.

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Business Process Improvement

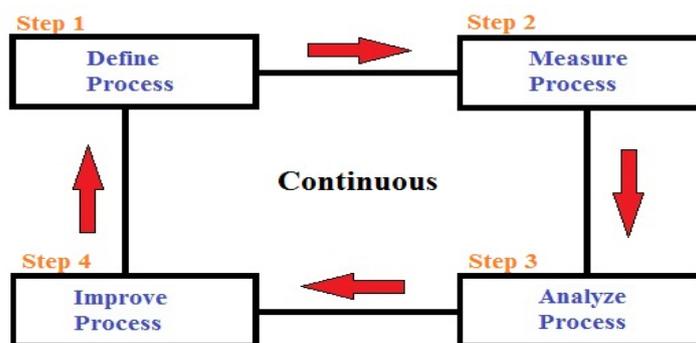


Business process improvement (BPI) is a strategic planning methodology that aims to identify the processes and improve the skills of staff and by following the procedures smoother, more efficient in the work to get to the growth in the business in general. The purpose of business process improvement is to meet customer demands and business goals more effectively. BPI seeks to bring drastic transformation in an organization's performance.

In area of information technology, business process improvement addresses the root causes of the shortcomings of the process and helps to harmonize it with business objectives.

Process mapping, assessing business processes to identify problem areas and adjust workflow.

The initiative for improving business processes can be represented as a model that consists of four consistent steps.



Business Process Improvement Model: Fours Steps

- 1- Define Process:
This step is about the verification of business processes and characteristics to find any disorders, where the business consultants and advisers prepare a description of the process which will be used for measuring the standards process in the next step.
- 2- Measure Process:
The company should adopt a system of performance indicators to measure inputs, outputs and processes for productivity calculation. Once this is done, it

should be practical measures in table mode which can be used for further analysis.

3- Analyze Process:

Performance indicators will show whether the specific process is effective or not. Analysts conduct quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis tools to improve business processes.

The results of all analysis must be listed in table format that summarizes the ways to improve business processes.

4- Improve Process:

After the investigation of both quantitative and qualitative standards, the next step is to improve the process. And managers of commercial operations follow the ways of improvement that have been identified in the previous step to make the process more efficient and reduce the probability of failure of the process.

The steps for enhancing business processes are coherent which means company can use this model continuously as any process can improved further over time.

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