



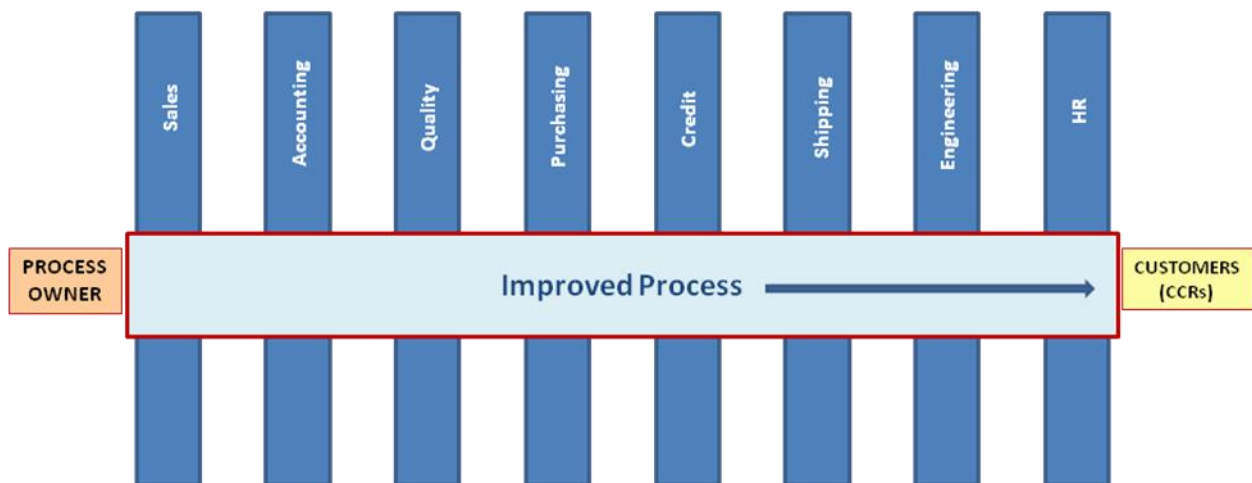
Process Ownership and Accountability

Processes can only have one!

By MICHAEL REAMES AND GABRIEL KEMENY

Organization leaders play a vital role in sustaining Process Improvement success. During process improvement efforts, they provide resources, remove roadblocks, assist in overcoming resistance to change, and role model the process improvement mindset to all organization members.

Effective Lean Six Sigma deployment requires changes in the way the organization manages processes. The concept of the “Process Owner” becomes important to the organization as it attempts to reinforce or regain a customer focus. Leaders recognize that processes move horizontally through the various departments, divisions, or “silos” and ultimately deliver products or services to customers.



Many of our clients have argued that they feel it is appropriate for processes that move between departments or divisions to have more than one Process Owner. Why advocate a single Process Owner for a core process? The answer is simple: Divided ownership leads to sub-optimization of the process. A Process Owner with sole accountability for the consistent, satisfactory outputs of the process is the

embodiment of the cliché “The buck stops here.” Any more than a single Process Owner sets the stage for future finger-pointing when things go wrong in the process, and increases the likelihood of overlapping responsibilities or, even worse, unmonitored areas of the process.

When process owners regularly review their improved processes, (a) they are able to react to changes in the business environment; (b) they recognize areas that require attention; and (c) they are prepared to apply corrective action, as necessary.

In **Process ownership**, senior leaders or executives manage an organization’s core processes. This is because they have the ability to control the resources. Process Owners are accountable for the performance and ongoing improvement of their respective core processes.

Directly subordinate to the core Process Owners, sub-process owners are accountable for non-overlapping portions of the core process. Together, a Process Owner and his/her sub-process owners make up the **Process Management Team**.

Process Owner roles:

(1) **Creating the Process Control System**

A Process Control System begins with a flowchart illustrating the current process as well as individuals or work-groups involved in the process. Additionally, the documentation lays out the measurement system within the process and the parameters for those measures that indicate that the process is operating smoothly.

(2) **Analyzing process performance and results**

A measurement system is only as good as the monitoring that a Process Owners does, and only as good as the measurement analysis and actions taken by the Process Owner. To allow for proper decision-making, the Process Owner identifies critical input/process/output measures.

(3) **Periodic reporting of process indicators and actions needed**

Core Process Owners are accountable to the “Owner” of all organization processes, the senior executive (President, Owner, CEO, etc.). Excellent process-focused organizations set up periodic reviews of process performance, and the Process Owners provide concise reports of the health of their processes, as well as actions taken or needed to keep the process continually improving.

While a Process Owner is ultimately accountable for process performance, he or she delegates problem-solving responsibility to a Project Leader and his/her team. The Project Leader’s responsibility is to turn over an improved process to the Process Owner. To assist Process Owners in accepting accountability for process improvements, the following “Process Owner Transfer” checklist increases the likelihood of effectiveness in managing the process:

Process Owner Transfer Checklist

New/changed work behaviors

- Have I identified whose job will change and how?
- Have I defined the skills required to meet the future performance expectations? Do the individuals involved possess those skills?
- Has the project team conducted work performance analysis, looking systematically at all factors to ensure that the new/changed work behaviors are likely to happen? (includes training, procedures, standards, work tools, job aids, feedback systems, and incentive & reward systems)
- Is there a training strategy, addressing the skills gap and development needs?
- Has the team formulated plans to close any gaps based on the work performance analysis? What needs to happen? Who can/will do it?
- Do I need any other support to sustain the results?

Change Management – General

- Has the team identified the top barriers to a successful implementation?
- Have I identified the existing and desired cultural elements? What elements will change? Who will need to do what to address these?
- Are adequate resources in place for the implementation?
- Are there clear performance measures to evaluate the success or failure of the implementation? Have key stakeholders agreed to these measures? Is there a system to collect that data required to evaluate the implementation?
- Has the team identified and addressed organizational risks of the project?
- Has the team identified implementation risks and developed appropriate contingency plans?

Change Management – Stakeholders

- Has the team identified key stakeholders & conducted stakeholder analysis?
- Has the team incorporated the communication plans?
- Are there mechanisms for continually monitoring stakeholder positioning, capturing feedback, and adjusting change implementation activities accordingly?
- Has the team briefed key stakeholders on the plan and performance measures for implementation?
- Have I demonstrated the benefits of the project to stakeholders?

Change Management – Communication

- Are there mechanisms for monitoring the effectiveness of communications and adjusting actions accordingly?
- Has the team clearly documented the linkage of projected benefits to achievement of strategic performance targets?
- Do feedback and assessment data indicate that all involved understand the key project messages? Do I need to modify any or all of them?
- Has the team communicated the implementation plan broadly to all affected?
- Does project status communication address critical implementation questions such as new performance measures, selection process, and the logistics of any physical relocation?

Change Management – Behavior-based Performance

- Has the team identified key performance measures? Have they derived them from the organization's strategies, goals, and objectives?
- Have I revised the organization unit's existing performance measures to incorporate these new measures?
- Has the team defined future roles, information flows, decision-making processes, and reporting hierarchies? Have they compared these to the existing environment?
- Has the team identified the human resource requirements of the future environment (e.g., resource planning, selection, retention, performance management, personal development)?
- Have I analyzed existing HR policies and systems to determine whether they support the requirements? Who will need to do what?

Tactics for Overcoming Resistance to Change

- Has the team identified any potentially problematic resistance to change and the tactics to mitigate it?

Anticipate Breakdowns in Hand-Off of Process Control System

- What could go wrong with respect to the *continued use* of the control plan?
- How can I detect things going wrong? Does the Process Control System delineate timely, corrective actions to take if variables go out of control?
- What would correct it? What can I do to prevent it?

Transfer Ownership

- Has the team made formal plans with me to transfer ownership?

Monitoring the Process Control System

- Have I made plans for the periodic review of the Process Control System?
- Have I made a plan to monitor improvement projects myself at some level?



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