

PURPOSE OF THE TOOL

EoT often identifies that performance remains unsatisfactory and needs further improvement. Several reasons could be responsible, organisational inertia, lack of management commitment, lack of expertise in identifying stakeholders, and barriers to change and ability to project manage.

However, evidence has been gathered about the importance of forming effective improvement teams. This requires using an improvement process that is rigorous and user-friendly.

DESCRIPTION

Improvement is the process of making organisational performance better than it is even if it is good already.

Successful learning organisations never say “*that’s good enough*” or “*that’ll do*”. They follow the aims of continuous or never ending improvement by saying “*how could we make our performance even better?*”

Improvement in terms of the training and development function could apply to any activity from improving feedback from learners to improving the organisation’s performance in the market place.

It has been proved that however it is more effective to tackle one problem at a time than to try and improve everything at once.

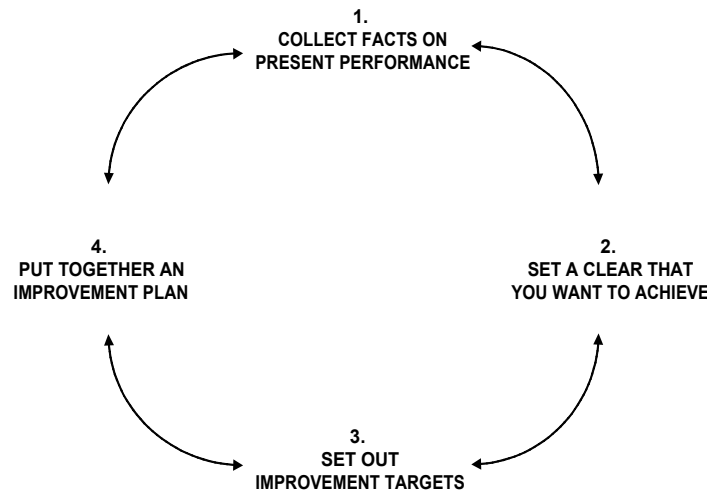
Most improvement is made little by little, as each problem is identified, qualified and then tackled. Many problems do not require huge investments of money. What they do demand is systematic analysis by people who know the jobs well and can use some straightforward improvement techniques.

Improvement teams are an effective way to tackle the improvement process. They usually involve people with good practical experience from different functions - a different perspective can often do wonders to help unravel the complex causes of things that go wrong.

Senior officers must help to identify problems to be tackled provide training and support to the teams and listen attentively to their recommendations when solutions have been worked out.

HOW TO USE

Firstly the improvement process / flow chart can be illustrated generically:



One example of how this could be used is the improvement needed to test skill acquisition, which is not happening very well on a training programme.

1. Collect facts on present performance

On investigation through interviews and data collection it is evident that on the present courses lecturers are used to giving knowledge but no skill development is formally undertaken through role plays / case studies. This obviously results in no objective measures of skill development being possible.

2. Set a clear standard that you want to achieve

This could be a pilot on one course to introduce:

Briefed role play.

Use of process checklist to measure skills.

Both formative and summative feedback of results within the course.

Development of trainers with requirement skill to administer.

3. Set out improvement targets

Briefed role play - three page document within three weeks.

Design process checklist - in-house pro forma within 1 month.

Redesign course to allow time for role play and feedback - 2 months.

Three trainers to be trained to use checklist - 2 months.

4. Put together an improvement plan

External consultancies to be engaged with the task to develop with master trainer a three page briefed task. To be agreed with centre manager.

Research an effective process checklist design with TVU, pilot with at least two role players to ensure validity and reliability.

Committee to form of three centre managers, master trainer, original designer of course to redesign objectives, timings to allow feedback on role plays.

Internal training of trainers to practice feedback using checklist.

IMPROVEMENT TEAMS

Whilst individuals can implement improvement processes it is undoubtedly best if a team approach is used. Some of the features of improvement teams are listed below:

- Teams can be from 3-7 people hopefully with a range of technical and interpersonal skills together with experience of training issues.
- The team leader is always a manager but could be someone who has maturity, experience and respect from colleagues and management.
- One member should be someone who has decision-making abilities at a strategic level, and an interest in the team.
- Team members need to have training in basic improvement techniques and working in a group.
- The team ideally works on one problem at a time.
- The team leader keeps the organisations senior officers informed of progress and any difficulties.
- The team analyses the problem, collects additional data, considers alternative solutions and finally puts forward recommendations to management.

The team must be allowed adequate time to work on the problem and a realistic time for completing it. Presenting a case to management is a critical phase of the teamwork. Recommendations must be carefully justified preferably on cost grounds.

Teams may be set up to tackle just one evaluation problem or work on a series of problems.

The team's success must be publicised so that others in the organisation recognise their contribution to improvement and co-operate as much as possible.