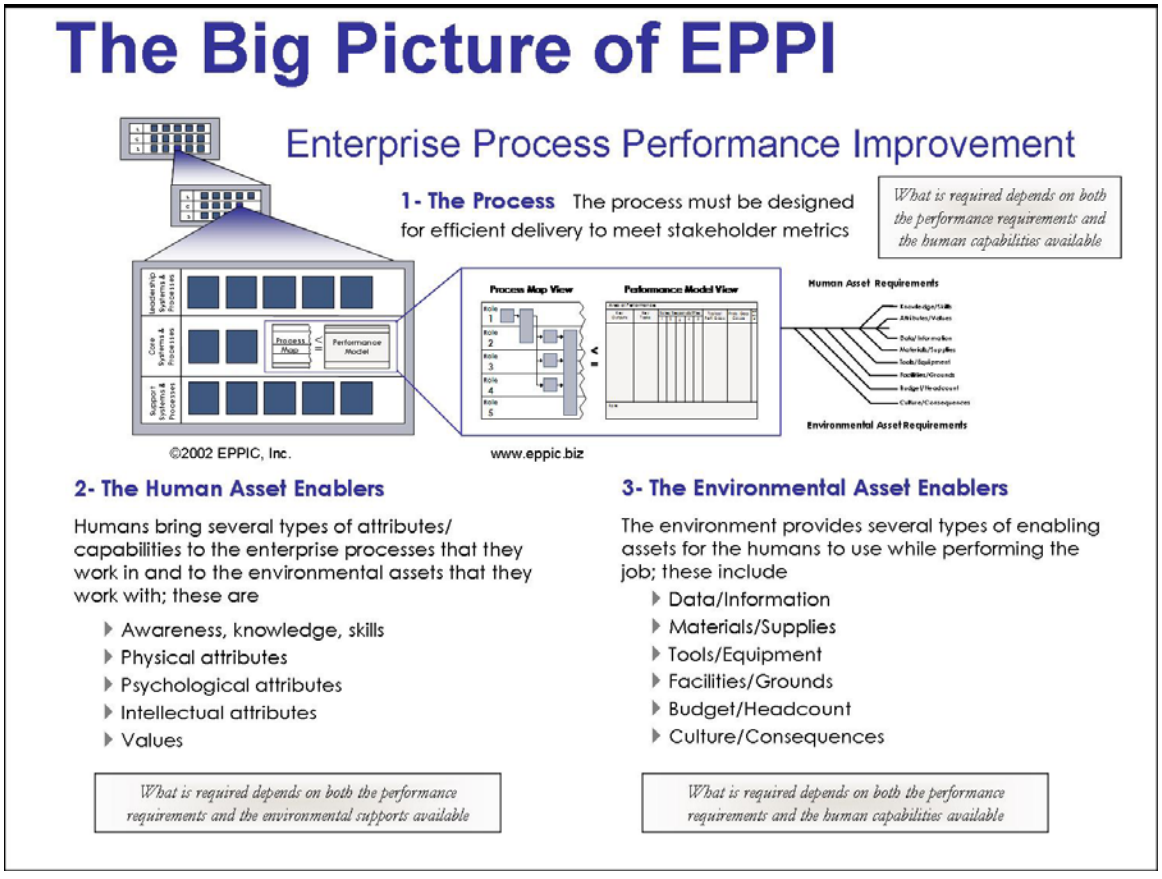
The Enterprise Process Performance Improvement Model

By Guy W. Wallace, CPT

The Death of Six Sigma?

A recent online article in the Canadian "Report On Business" (**The Big Idea: Six Stigma** By KEN HUNT - On-line 27/09/07) suggests that Six Sigma fanaticism among executives may be waning. A quote: "A recent study from QualPro, a consulting firm that advocates an alternative quality process, points out that 53 of 58 large companies that use Six Sigma have trailed the S&P 500 ever since they implemented it."

Just as TQM – Total Quality Management zealots saw the demise of their star in the 1990s, Six Sigma may be loosing some its advocates. It is too bad because both had something of real value to offer.



As a fan of both I feared that the myopia around each would eventually kill them off. TQM is for all practical purposes, now dead. And perhaps Six Sigma is beginning to slowly die - but I hope not. For it does have something of value to

offer – but not for every situation. They are not the be-all, end-all that many practitioners believe and tout.

The adaptation by some of "Lean" into the "Six Sigma" mix was a good sign. For one would not want to drive process performance to a Six Sigma level – 3.4 defects per one million opportunities – for a fat and sloppy process with all sorts of unnecessary redo-loops. Lean efforts should precede Six Sigma efforts.

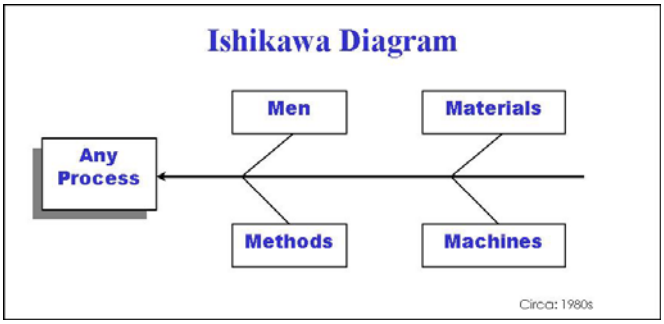
But not every process performance issue (problem/opportunity) will be improved by either methodology. What if the process was lean and in-enough statistical control – but the performers were under-performing due to their disenchantment with certain managers, or with pay or promotion opportunity equity?

I see little in the Six Sigma bag of tricks/tools that would adequately address those root causes, just as I thought the TQM tools and techniques of the 1970s-1990s were inadequate for the people factor in the performance equation. That is where HPT – Human Performance Technology comes into play.

My Approach

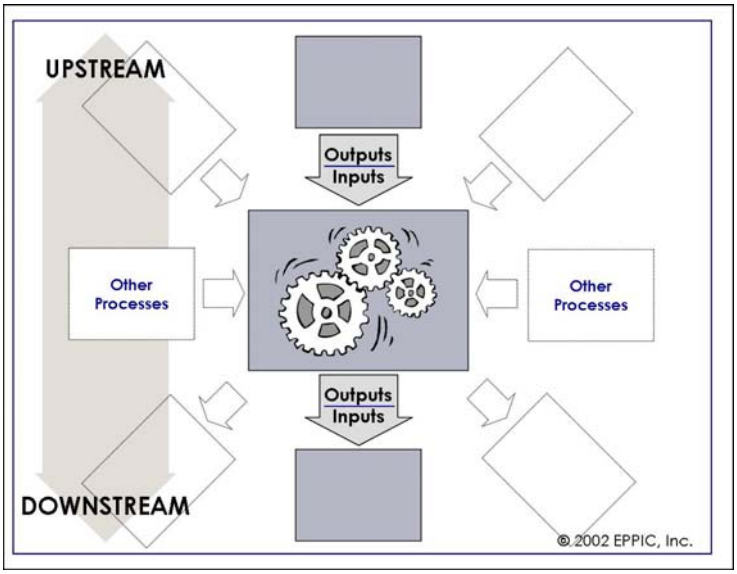
First focus on performance and then enable that. By that I mean look *first* to your process or processes. Then *secondly* and *thirdly* look at the two sets of enablers and the enterprise systems that provision those enablers. My model (on page 1) is another three legged stool. And while some have suggested that it is simply a revamp of Gilbert's six boxes circa 1970s – it is not. It is a revamp of the Ishikawa Diagram circa 1950s.

The diagram below is an example of the "non-politically correct" fishbone/cause-and-effect versions of the Ishikawa Diagram from the early 1980s when I first learned about it while working at Motorola.

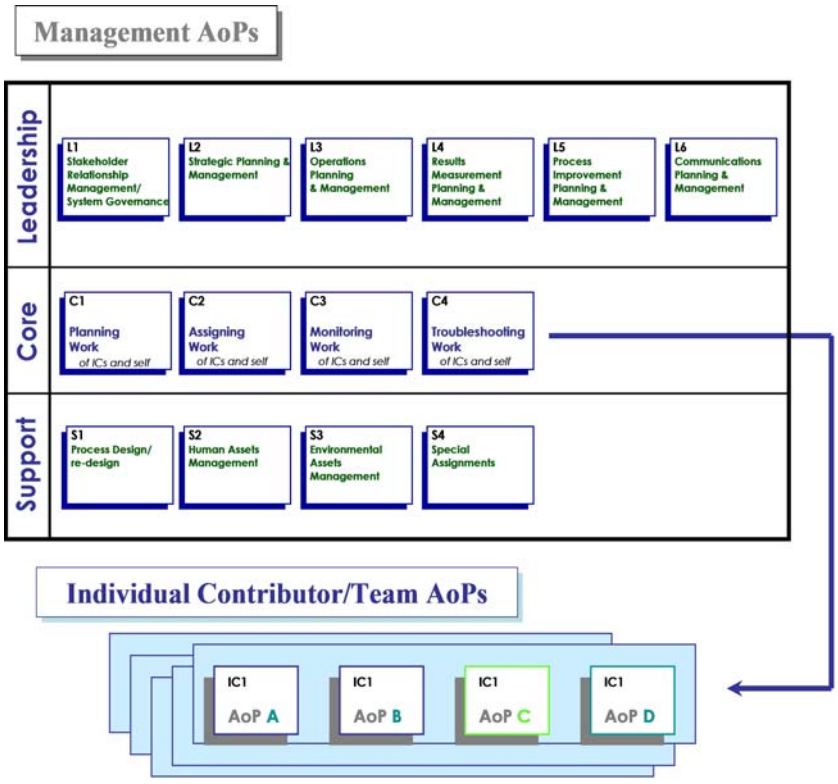


The Process

Processes are messy. Many are routine but plenty more are on-demand. Some are straight-line but many more are branched, intertwined, convoluted and hard to tease out diagrammatically.



Some processes are Core but many more are not Core – many are more *Leadership* or *Support* in nature and just as necessary. Next is my model for organizing the processes of any department adapted to look at the Areas of Performance (Major Duties, Accomplishments, etc.) for both Management and Individual Contributors. The first graphic in this article suggests the scalability of the model.



In this approach each department has its own Core processes. Isn't the Payroll process core too? It is to the HR group responsible for compensation and benefits. And how long could the enterprise operate its other Core Processes if this particular one went awry for any length of time?

Some processes need to be in very tight control, others not so. Does the process for "script development" for Saturday Night Live need the tightest of control – or looser control?

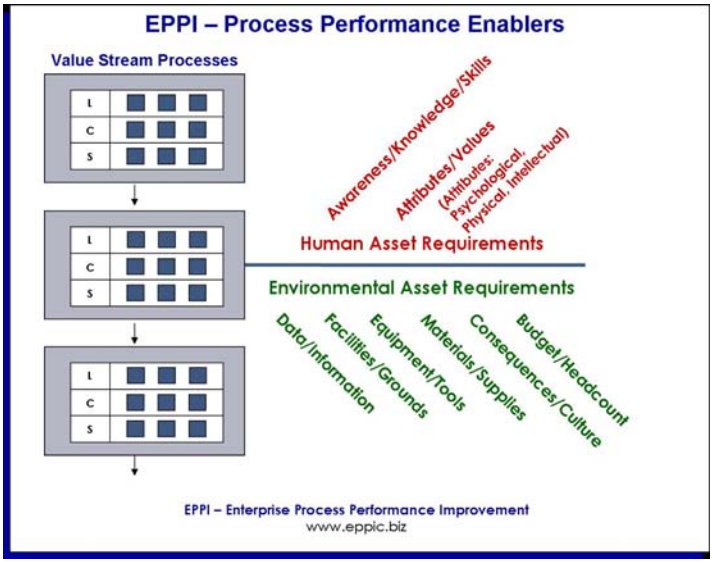
All processes have customers and other stakeholders with requirements and desires – and all stakeholders' requirements are hierarchical. The next diagram presents my version of such a hierarchy.

If this hierarchy does not fit your situation, adapt it to do so. One size for all is most often the wrong fit.

The "Customer is Not King" although their requirements often *lead* to the development of new and/or improved products and services or changes in how those are developed and delivered – process-wise. But if they violate the requirements of management and executives with fiduciary responsibilities to the owners – game over.

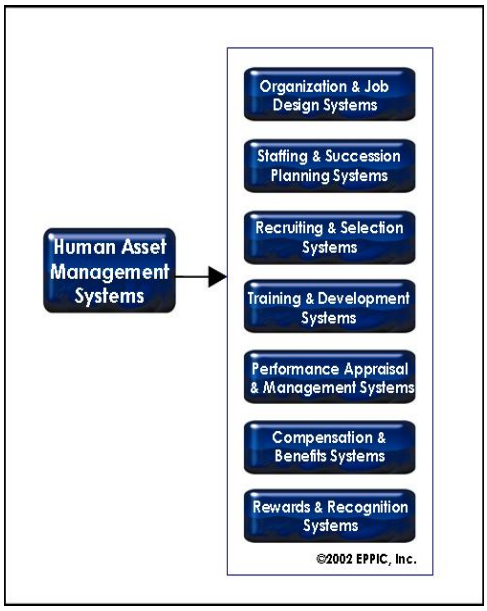
And of course it doesn't really matter what the owners or management or customers want IF that would violate the laws of the land, for the Government stakeholder wins all conflicts. Do not pass GO, do not collect $200, go directly to jail the game of Monopoly taught many of us.

An ideal process and its "paper design" – one that will meet or beat the balanced stakeholder requirements - isn't anything at all without the people and non-people asset enablers that are necessary to bring it to life.



The Human Asset Enablers

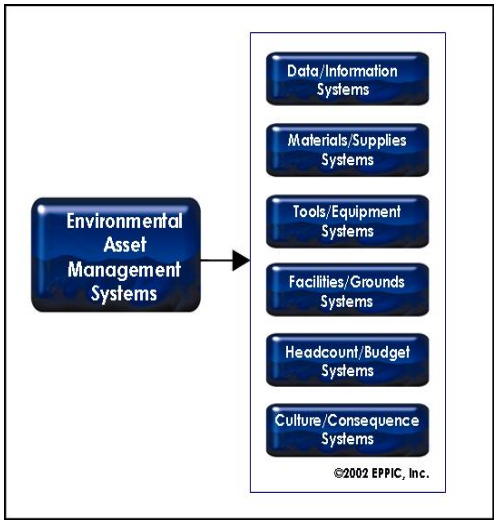
The Human Assets required to bring the process to life are found in the graphic above. The enterprise systems that provision and/or enhance those assets, albeit known most likely by other names, are depicted in the graphic below. Again, adapt as necessary.



Use this model to help structure your assessments of missing or inadequate enablers from the people factor of process performance.

The Environmental Asset Enablers

The Environmental Assets required to bring the process to life are found in the graphic two up. These are what the human factor uses to bring that well designed paper process to life. The enterprise systems that provision and/or enhance those assets, again known by other names, are depicted in the graphic below. Again, adapt as necessary.



Use this to help structure your assessments of the missing or inadequate enablers necessary.

Summary

As Human Performance Technology and/or Instructional Systems Design practitioners, I suggest that you add these models, adapted as needed, to your analysis and design toolkits. Partner with those conducting Lean-Six Sigma efforts to augment whatever is missing for their toolkits. And change any language that will get in the way of six-sigma level communications.

Please feel free to re-use the content and graphics of this article, or adapted derivatives, with appropriate attributions of course!

Guy W. Wallace, CPT, has been an external ISD and HPT consultant since 1982, is the president of EPPIC Inc., has been a member of ISPI since 1979, is a past president of ISPI, is the author of *lean-ISD*, and is a recipient of an ISPI 2002 Award of Excellence. He may be reached via guy.wallace@eppic.biz, and related resources may be obtained at his website, www.eppic.biz, including his three most recent books available as free PDFs: *lean-ISD*, *T&D Systems View*, and new in 2007, *Management Areas of Performance*. He also publishes regularly on his Blog at: http://pursuingperformanceblog.blogspot.com/