

Our source of new business is referrals from friends and clients. If you know a company -- customer, supplier, friend, or even your own -- that could benefit from improved operations, please send them a link to this site or ask us to call.

Your best interest is our best interest.

The Finish Strong™ monthly e-newsletter helps business leaders examine issues important to taking operational performance to world-class levels. Do your Operations deliver your company's espoused brand promise to every client on every order?

Finish Strong™ is about developing an appropriate Operations strategy, and effective execution, dotting operational i's and crossing operational t's as you go.

Your company cannot afford to be sloppy if you want it to be great.

THE SPEED OF CHANGE

Mechanical stress is fairly well understood. From aircraft to the handle on a laptop carrying bag to the foundation of a home, we know to calculate expected stress and design accordingly. The speed of flight has increased as we have learned to design systems capable of withstanding greater levels of mechanical stress.

How much stress an organization can handle is not well understood, nor easily calculated. One clear lesson, however, is that regardless of how hard it might be pushed, a company can only change as fast as it currently can. Employees pushed faster than they can assimilate new thinking easily become overwhelmed. Transaction systems designed for 100's per day can crack and fail at 1,000's per day. But to move too slowly also invites failure.

Trial and error managed with a close eye on acceptable risk can determine the speed at which a company can effectively improve. Few complaints about the ongoing changes, you're not moving fast enough. If more than a few employees have regressed at the basics while you work to implement more sophisticated processes, you have found your organization's current limits. It's all for naught if you don't sustain the last improvement while making the next one.

While working to increase organizational capacity for fast successful improvement, be careful not to exceed it. You can move the organizational capacity for improvement from the Wright Flyer to the SR-71 Blackbird to rocket-powered spacecraft, but crashing the organization just because you want to go faster is senseless.

REPEAT PROBLEMS

If the same problem occurs multiple times, it's fairly clear that you haven't really solved it. Too many of us get sucked in by the quick hit "problem-solution" and confuse it with effective permanent countermeasure to a root cause.

If you continue to experience invoicing errors, the root cause has not been fixed. Repeated quality rejects means the real problem still exists. Employee turnover at unacceptably high levels indicates a problem without effective countermeasure.

It may not be exciting to follow a disciplined process of question-based reasoning in identifying root cause and developing permanent countermeasures, but living in a company without repeat problems is rewarding in, oh, so many ways.