

PROCEDURALIZATION OR PROFESSIONALIZATION

The underpinnings that make the difference

By Carol Sanford

There is rapid rush to get a set of programs in place that focus on making the manufacturing process more predictable and reducing the variances that can occur. The primary route for this processes is what might be called proceduralization of the process. It has many names—ISO, process reliability, work flow analysis, reengineering and standard operating procedures. All of these are initiated out of high hopes and even good intentions, but as the primary focus leave too much on the table to be the option of choice for a competitively effective organization.

A difference in philosophy

The developmental approach came about from working with scientific processes regarding how to research for fundamental principles of ‘how things work’ and engineering principles that are used to design technologies using scientific principles. It is amazing and surprising to discover that there were no parallel set of principles for human science. It is apparent how

much the world of manufacturing has gained from having a cohesive whole science based on universal laws of the working of the physical world—e.g. as in Physics. Science gave us a conceptual base that works to explain all—not just one thing—from a cohesive whole of some particular phenomena. Everything relates back to a wholistic framework and all behavior can be tested with this framework.

On reflection and study one can see that the human science approaches that lead to proceduralization were drawn from the sciences of the physical world that explains and deals with the things that run down in the universe. There tended to be numerous techniques available to work with human processes but no cohesive, whole science and technology. The science that has been used to develop the popular techniques has been coming off the only science that was unified, which was the physical sciences. In fact as a society we have come to know a lot about “run down” and entropic processes in the physical world as a result of that focus and study. But science there has been no cohesive science and technology that related to non-entropic phenomena, we have been a great deal less knowledgeable about these phenomena. Many things do run down. This is very true in the physical

world, but it is not true of human behavior and thinking. Energy disperses and goes toward disorder in the physical world, but value-adding processes can coalesce energies and bring order to them.

The developmental approach is drawn from a technology that is focused on creating designs for non-entropic processes—value-adding processes. Rather than run down overtime, these are processes that bring increasingly higher order to things. The human science and technology, as do all technologies, start with energies (human energies here) and with thinking in regard to the behavior of energies in a value-adding process. The development of the Human Sciences technology has been based on developing the same type of first or Primary principles of value-adding processes that can be understood as a unified and cohesive whole, as exist in the physical sciences. By understanding these we can understand what drives human action. We feel it is important to learn to manage the energies in value-adding process with the same level of cohesive science that we had been applying to physical energies. This would enable us to get the outcomes we desire, but in the context of a set of greater whole values. If we can not understand behavior as well we can not deal with it as astutely.

Our modern education and socialization processes train us to focus on one half of the managing processes and leave out another half of the processes vital to a successful business processes. We work on the stabilizing or homeostatic processes but not the regenerative or heterostatic processes, both of which are necessary for a system to evolve in a globally competitive world. The homeostatic processes are those necessary to overcome the inevitable rundown of unattended work processes—the ones that proceduralization and standardization are designed to attack. These include the repairing of breakdowns, the erosion of sales, the reduction of waste, safety incidents, and other such entropic phenomena. They also include the disorder that just creeps into operations and customer relationships after they exist for sometime, as attention wanes, or as variations on product designs, materials, people, or customer requests are introduced. It even includes the routine maintenance on equipment and the responses we make to competitive interventions. Although of these are designed to prevent us from losing ground and to ensure we maintain the state of our people, our

products, services, skills and relationships as close to their original state as they were the day we hired, made, or formulated them.

All this is a focus on one half of the equation. The remaining one to ten percent of our energy goes to the second half which is the half that determines the long term survivors in the game, the leaders in race, and the ones who have the most fun in the process. That is the half that is focused on the future, the defining of the new territory in terms of product offerings, technologies, and relationships. This is the half that takes the business beyond anything that current exist and into the unknown and uncharted territory that ensures the returns necessary for earnings, the creativity necessary for margins, and the quality necessary for steadiness in cash flow.

A proceduralization approach seeks to make work something that is standardized and proceduralized in an attempt to ensure adherence to specifications. But this leads to routinization, which taken alone or as primary tends to invite, over time, a loss of meaning and creativity. In a procedural model, the ordering emerges from structuring of the organization

that is imposed on the individuals. In a developmental model, the order continually emerges from individuals by their living connection to a dynamic and evolving environment. One is a closed system, that pauses every so often to allow in new information and from that to restructure the standards, procedures and classification. The other is a living system with a constant and immediate lifeline between a value sought and the work of the employees who are the source of those values being realized.

From a developmental philosophy, order is maintained by connecting everyone in the organization to the marketplace and to the stakeholders who seek to have a reciprocal relationship with the company—e.g. investment dollars for a return, public services for a tax base. A system where each individual is connected in an intimate way with these parameters and in the designing of work from the best possible way it can be done to achieve the collective effect sought by stakeholders is a very powerful organizer of work and one which every entrepreneur understands well. It can also be built into the work design if the designers are working from a developmental philosophy.

This achieved by a professionalization of the organization. This does not mean training people to “act like” professionals or to be disciplined and thoughtful in doing a good job as it is often defined. It means defining a “profession” with which each member of the organization can align that is focused on the qualities and characteristics that are possible for the customer to achieve in the use of our products and services. This means developing the capabilities and knowledge base that allows continuous innovation and regenerative processes in the organization to emerge. It means learning the science and technology in the discipline and other supporting fields that enrich the discipline.

For example, if we are make diaper stock or raw material basis, we may be in the professions of “softness scientists/engineering” or “or product purity and safety” it these are the qualities that are deemed as primary to the consumer. Some may also be “adsorption scientists/engineers” in the work of the product conversion process. An yet others may be specialist in “environmental protection and restoration” all within a factory that makes fluff pulp for converting into diapers. Each operating person is studying how to imbed these qualities into the product by studying the science and

technology from earth to earth as the quality is embedded or impeding. They feel responsible for the entire value-adding processes all the way through to the consumer and are seeking constant and continuous evolution and development of the qualities within their profession. They are also able to understand the processes from a scientific standpoint that work against these qualities being imbedded or where non-essential value-absorbing processes are occurring. But the base from which this is understood is not from the process of learning and adhering to a procedure purely which came from a fix point in time by a set group of people, but from as living understanding of what we are trying to create and the relevance of any specific step in the manufacturing context. It gives something we are going toward, not just to avoid.

I might be compared to being very good cook when you are at home—maybe a chef in your own mind. We are able to know the importance of not mixing the wrong ingredients together in the wrong sequence or in over or under baking a cake. But they are seen in the context of a Grand Marnier Chocolate Torte being created for a special dinner. We would hold ourselves to the highest standards and know the procedures that would

necessary. On the contrary another person could be taught the standards and procedures of baking and now be able to bring an increasingly set of unique and distinctive set of bakery goods into existence that tempted our palate and teased our imagination. The use of proceduralization as the primary mode is similar to building a business full of technicians who can make the exact same cake each time but can not imbed any new spirit or uniqueness in it without calling together all the cooks for approval, writing a new recipe out for all to follow, and in some cases clearing it with the cake eaters. The spirit is lost for the creator and the consumer. A bakery could not maintain its business with this procedures, nor a home baker exhibit their creativity. We tend to take the meaning and source of creativity out.

If we instead create an organization of professionals—externally focused, they will have more relevant standards and procedures and have a living process that can keep pace with the evolving market. In addition it is the place where the very best people will be drawn and maintained because all of us want to be a professional, a craftsperson in our field, and a contributor to the satisfaction of others.

What is left out?

In most programs we shift the patterns from an old form of work process to a new form of work process, but we do not have a renewing pattern generator built in. We clarify the new desired set of patterns and even train for and make available in print the new guidelines for behaviors and work practices for managers and operating people. Then as the world moves again and flexibility of behavior is needed, we must institute a new design since an evolutionary system is not part of the design. This new structuring will be very disruptive to the organization and good again only for a limited time requiring yet another new design. We cloak ourselves in the idea of “evergreen designs” when what we mean is repeated redesigning when the need arises or out of a scheduled review. Only a handful of approaches to work designers know how to do this and as a result they have been continuously evolving the work designs for 15-30 years without business or personal disruption and with business results that set them far beyond their class of competitors. There have been many good ideas to work redesign that have put in practice and have then themselves become rigid with little adaptability in the way work is approached. They are generally based on

structural approach to design—teams put in place without direct supervision, and assignment of whole tasks to teams—without the accompany focus on design of work evolution. The processes are not adequate for individuals to realize their full potential and so individuals become lost in the organization of teams. This occurs in two primary arenas:

Design:

- Procedures that specify the method and measures of each task so as to reduce or eliminate variance
- training design for skills and knowledge but not for development that evokes potential of a person
- design of work around roles (which is an improvement over jobs) but not for professional fields
- design that build in exclusivity of work even though the boundaries are broader than before, frequently out of fear of loss of control of focus

Strategic Focus:

- on customer demands without an integrated set of stakeholder values taken into account or even customer potential beyond current expectations or potential customers
- *Use* of potential that has been untapped without taken the next step to *development* the full potential of each individual
- Accountability for a whole task instead of a holographic whole business accountability.

Many of the popular proposals for what it takes to have successful teams are based on research that excludes these elements. So instead of building in what it takes to have teams appropriate to the evolving business environments, we design organizations that can function in the current culture, with current infrastructure limitation, based on existing or some extension of capability and current business needs. Most of the team designs that are currently in place, even though recently adopted, are not sufficient for the rapid changing globally competitive environment and have or will begin to erode as the next organization redesign is faced. This is of great concern to North American industry since it must face an even greater challenge with the European Economic Union and the emerging as well as

very powerful existing Asia trading consortiums and South American consortiums that loom on the horizon.