



Are we over-designed?

Clive Wilson, Managing Director

It has been a joy to work closely with the team at Horstmann Controls in Bristol since their MBO in the summer of 2001. The PrimeMovers initiative at Horstmann has helped to shape strategic direction and has involved key players at all levels in rolling out the changes.

On a recent visit to Bristol, one of the Horstmann engineers was telling me how important it is to revisit the fundamental design of their metering products as customer-needs evolve. Apparently, too often manufacturers are tempted to take a previous design, add in new functionality and make do. This may be quick to deliver but the down-side is that it leaves unnecessary components in the design – and with them, unnecessary costs and a higher probability for failure.

It may be useful to make the connection to the way some leaders tinker with their businesses. New ideas are added to and around existing workstreams in such a way that the business is left with unnecessarily complex processes and a great deal of redundancy that hasn't been eliminated.

We could all learn from those nice people at Horstmann by asking the question, "What exactly is the purpose of our business? And, if we were starting from scratch, what would we do differently?"

We might be surprised how many of the ideas we get are perfectly feasible right now!



Primeast has been helping clients to make the most of a changing world since 1986.

In introducing our feature column by Ben Jeffs this month, I perhaps need to say a few words about business transformation, where it fits in the management of change and how it differs from the growing and vital discipline of turnaround management.

In a nutshell, business transformation refers to the radical end of the change management spectrum where tinkering at the edges of the business will not deliver the rapid return demanded by investors and sponsors in a highly competitive marketplace. It differs from turnaround in that it is not primarily aimed at rescuing the organisation from the brink of insolvency. However, transformation as an art form encompasses many techniques that usefully supplement the reconstruction of businesses in a turnaround situation.

Business Transformation

Ben Jeffs, Associate in Business Transformation

Today, executives are under increasing pressure to deliver enhanced returns to their investors. This often requires them to transform their businesses together with its component processes. And whilst being able to effectively manage change is at the heart of the business transformation process, the way forward does not have to be as resource-heavy and complex as is often claimed. Indeed, successful transformation depends less on methodology and heavy resource and more about developing (or transforming) the capability of the people within the organisation to deliver in a new context.

The solution therefore may not be about taking an army of "bright young things" from your rank and file and putting them with scores of external contractors who are unfamiliar with your business and who will leave as soon as the programme finishes. Such an approach may make a high-profile initial impact, especially in the budget, but it will not create a durable legacy unless the hearts and minds of those involved are won over and their capability is enhanced in a lasting way.

An alternative, project-light way of making radical change a success requires vision, leadership and the buy-in of employees. Key elements are:

- visibility of measured delivery against outcomes defined within the organisation;
- encouragement of employees to take responsibility for solving problems;
- professional support for everyone involved through individual and team coaching.

The support may come from an in-house resource but there are merits in the judicious use of "content rich" interim managers or facilitators. These "catalysts for change" can usefully be incentivised to deliver the required business outcome through the ongoing measurement of the benefits being delivered by those receiving their support. This places significant pressure on the catalysts to play a high impact role, walking the talk, coaching the in-house team and modelling the required leadership behaviours to effect change. It is aimed specifically at generating a sustainable legacy of self-sufficiency.

Ben Jeffs joins the Primeast associate team in July having led strategic transformation projects in utilities. If you would like to know more about his work, please contact the Primeast office.

