

The People Side Of Improvement Success Factors for Sustainable Change

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How Do You Measure Project Success?

I live in Phoenix and recently saw the new light rail train go by overhead when driving on the interstate. The light rail has been under construction for several years and was just put into production at the end of December. It cost about \$70,000,000 per mile to build and only 20 miles of it are in place, a total investment of \$1.4B. As you may know, the Phoenix metropolitan area is a sprawling city. The local calling area is over 90 miles across and encompasses several cities. Only time will tell if Phoenicians will abandon their cars to take the train, especially given the limited area that the rail line serves and the fact that people will have to wait in +100 degree heat to catch the train for six months of the year. But...the local politicians said that Phoenix needed a light rail system, so now we have one.

This story illustrates a point about how the success of a project is measured and how we can mislead ourselves about the success we achieve. In this example, the tracks are laid, the train cars are installed and the system is operational, all measures of success to the politicians. Usage by the people will be the real test of success for the community.

In the mining and aggregates business, it is also easy to measure project success by installation date. I have met engineers, plant managers and tech services managers that considered a project complete when the equipment was turned on, tested and put into production. Their view of success mirrored the Phoenix politicians - the project was complete when the equipment was operational. However, when improving a production process at your mines or plants, it is important to understand other factors that will deliver and sustain the projected benefits.

Processes that link people to equipment (operator training, shift-to-shift communications, maintenance requirements, etc.) must be included in the project scope to optimize equipment performance and tap into additional capacity. In other words, the project should not be marked complete until you **“change the way you work”** to maximize the performance of new equipment. If you ignore this step, you may scratch your head a few months after start-up, wondering why the equipment is under-performing and never fully understanding the reasons for the shortfall.

“Changing the way you work” involves changing what you fix, measure and talk about. It should be the last step in every project and is the step that ensures sustainable change. It helps people focus on optimizing equipment performance, even the people in support roles (maintenance, purchasing, etc.). As the role of people in equipment optimization becomes more recognized and understood,

- Communications during shift and between shifts will change,
- Cooperation between departments will change,
- Key measures will change, and
- Projects identified to improve performance will change.

The value assigned to this final step in almost every project cannot be underestimated - it may be nearly equal to the entire value of the project. If behavior change could be worth thousands or millions of dollars, why wouldn't we want to include it in every project's scope of work?

**“Changing the Way You Work” changes the way you manage projects
and changes the way you work together to optimize equipment performance.**

Kay Sever, CMC, CQIA implements improvement programs and management development programs for mines, plants and service organizations. Her approach balances commonly used tools and methods with a focus on value creation and the "people side of improvement". Kay works with every organizational level and department to find the highest dollar opportunities and remove barriers that prevent sustainable change. She helps management teams lead improvement and better execute the budget, capital approvals, incentive plans, communications, etc. See **MiningOpportunity.com** for details on her services and contact information. Look for the mining edition of her first book "Building An Opportunity Culture – Addressing the Barriers That Steal Profits and Prevent Sustainable Change", available on her website under Products/Books.