

Building Perspective

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WHY PROCESS COMES FIRST

Exploring why businesses fail to get ROI on their technology efforts

The Solution Trap

Most people I talk to these days are super busy. And I don't mean the "busy right now" variety. I'm talking about the "can't see the light at the end of the tunnel" sort of busy. If you own or run part of a business, you're busy at a whole different level. A never-ending stream of emails keeps your mind permanently distracted as you attempt to tackle the emergencies of the day, all while still reeling from battles the day before. You're in desperate need of solutions that will bring the business back into control and time back in your hands. With no real time to spare, you go to everyone's favorite consultant, the internet. To your great delight, you find a number of suppliers that offer "plug-and-play" solutions that seem to solve the exact problems you're facing. Their unique technologies promise to digitize, automate, and streamline your entire business.

Such is the lure of technology, a solution to your problems with a few mouse clicks.

The Bigger Problem

Your intuition might suggest that the best way to solve a problem is to look for a solution. When you're hungry, you search for food. When you're sleepy, you look for a bed. When you're bored, you look for your cell phone. While all these solutions alleviate the current situation, they don't solve the underlying problem. In fact, over time, the above solutions may actually lead to obesity, lethargy, and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). So, here's my advice. When you have a problem, find a bigger one. Sounds like strange advice, until you actually try it. When you get hungry, ask questions about your diet. When you get sleepy, ask questions about your lifestyle. When you get bored, ask questions about your mental health.

You see where I'm going? Not all problems are real. In fact, the vast majority of problems are simply symptoms of a much bigger problem. They're like bread crumbs leading us in the right direction, if we know how to follow them.

Follow the Breadcrumbs

An active business can be a complicated animal. There are so many functions that need to work together for the business to thrive. You have sales, order management, engineering, production, HR, IT, facilities, and so on and so forth. There are systems common to everyone, like email, but many other systems are unique to specific departments. Some functions work closely with each other, while others live in permanent silos. All this is to say, following the breadcrumbs isn't that easy without a reliable method.

About Building Perspective Inc.

Building Perspective Inc. is a boutique management consulting firm located in Toronto, Canada committed to creating operational excellence at every level of your organization. We have transformed business performance for over 100 clients since 2006 through strategy execution, process re-engineering, and technology adoption using Lean Six Sigma principles.

About the Author

Desi Narayanan is the founder of Building Perspective Inc. and is a recognized leader in the field of Structured Continuous Improvement. He finds and grows early stage companies through a disciplined process of commercialization. He has also facilitated many transformations across a wide range of industries over the last 20+ years. Desi regularly makes business magic by bringing together great ideas, thoughtful people, and powerful execution to create opportunities for all.



“When you have a problem, find a bigger one.”

This is where Lean Six Sigma comes to the rescue. Lean Six Sigma is a body of knowledge designed for solving business problems comprehensively. It's a rigorous method for following each breadcrumb so that you can uncover the true problems slowing your business down. Solving these problems is what will put your business ahead of the competition.

Measure Twice; Cut Once

Anyone who's done their fair share of home renovation has heard this before. They know every cut has two steps. First you measure, then you cut. They also know you can measure as many times as you like, but you can only cut a piece once. Hence the expression, measure twice cut once. Problem solving is very much the same.

Solving a problem involves two major steps. You first understand the problem, then you apply the solution. You can understand the problem in as much detail as you like, and innovate new solutions on paper repeatedly, but you typically only get one crack at implementing the solution.

Process Comes First

Business problems don't occur in isolation. They occur with the business processes that make up the business. Thus, to truly understand a business problem, you need to understand it within the context of the process in which it occurs. This is why the process approach of Lean Six Sigma is so powerful. It's a process improvement methodology that is designed to solve business problems.

It's the thinking process for finding sustainable business solutions.

Role of Technology

I may have given you the impression that I'm against technology. That's really not the case. I think the right technology rolled out properly can make all the difference in the world. I'm simply suggesting we make a mental shift from being solution finders to problem solvers. I know it sounds like semantics, but in truth, it does change your focus. Solve the process problem, and the solution will find you!

Get in Touch

To learn more about how you can get your productivity efforts off to a good start, contact us at info@buildingperspective.com to schedule a discovery conversation.