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Refining implementation

I have terrible hearing trouble. I have unwittingly helped to invent and refine a type of music that makes its principal proponents deaf.

Pete Townshend, guitarist and songwriter, The Who

Summary

In this chapter we:

- Define what we mean by implementation success
- Explain what we mean by implementation refinement
- Explain how it is different from previous phases
- Explain how to target the most important levers for improved implementation
- Provide some models for understanding the dimensions of refinement
- Define the boundary conditions to complete the implementation journey.

■ Introduction

At this stage of the journey we can see our destination. We have covered 95% of our route and simply need to bring our plan safely home. But we should not be over-confident. A common failure of implementation is declaring victory too soon (Kotter, 1996). Too many change leaders think they have implemented their solution when, unseen by them, little has really changed. New CRM tools may lie unused, new behavior reverts back to the bad old ways, new approaches lie abandoned because new behaviors are not rewarded. Indeed, we should think of this part of the journey as being the most challenging. There are so many things to do in order to get our implementation firmly anchored into the business and often with little time. There will be new risks as we enter the harbor.

We must reach port safely and ensure no navigational errors, submerged objects, adverse currents nor wayward ships will sink us as we steer our plan into port.

Key principles

- Embed the changes
- Final 5%. But it could be the small hole that sinks your ship.
- Recognize what drives embedded, successful implementation
- Use the root cause analysis of Appendix 2
- Focus on the drivers of success
- Adopt a continuous improvement philosophy
- Implementation is a process, not a program.

Case story: refining a global phenomenon

The X-Factor has been a global implementation success story. It was piloted in the UK in 2004 and has now been rolled out (in various versions) to 40 countries worldwide from Albania to the USA. Over the last eight years its format has been continuously tested and refined to maintain its appeal. It may be at the end of its (first) implementation cycle now but it has been an incredibly profitable program. Without this continuous refinement, it would not have lasted long in the competitive world of prime-time TV.

Gareth Rees, from the marketing advice website, www.wearethefreeradicals.com explains why you should admire the X-Factor for its marketing, regardless of what you think about its music!

The X-Factor

It's not for me to judge the X-Factor. Whether you love the X-Factor, don't care about the X-Factor, or would rather glue your head to a wasps' nest than watch it, there's a crucial marketing lesson to be learned. Let me hit you with the facts:

- At its peak on Saturday 11th December 2010, the program was watched by 18.8 million people [in the UK]. That's almost 60% of the total audience watching television across all the channels.
- Advertisers, including Sainsbury's, X-Box and Chanel, spent £25million (\$39m) on slots during the breaks. Marc Mendoza of the Media Planning

group told the BBC Radio 4 Today program that adverts cost over 1 pence per viewer. A record figure.

- The latest series saw 15,488,019 votes cast. Those who used their land-line or the red button on the TV were charged 35p (about 50 US cents). Those who voted by mobile phones paid even more.
- This translates to almost £6m (\$9m) in revenues from votes alone. An undisclosed chunk of this money goes to Simon Cowell's company Syco, a joint venture with Sony. The rest goes to production company Fremantle Media, ITV and Harvest Media – the phone vote operator.
- This year the contestants' performances were made available as paid-for downloads on iTunes which viewers could buy after the show. Again, the money goes to Cowell and ITV. At the time of writing the profits from this are unknown.

That's a lot of money sloshing around. I haven't even included the extra profits raked in by the tabloids when they publish X Factor stories and exclusives.

When it comes down to it, this is the Freemium model in action. It follows 5 classic steps:

1. You offer free, compelling content that gathers a large audience. Yes, okay, television isn't strictly free, but in terms of what you get when you own a television, this show isn't on a subscription channel and on [the main UK commercial channel) ITV, so pretty much everyone and anyone can watch it.
2. You engage with your audience. In the X-Factor's case it creates an emotional human drama to get viewers involved with the personal stories behind the contestants. Scandals and leaks are fed to newspapers, posted on Twitter and other social media outlets to stir up hype and discussion.
3. You charge people who are willing to pay for their deeper involvement with the content. While anyone can watch the show for free, millions decide to pay to vote for the outcome. They choose to pay for downloads of the performances they've just watched. They choose to pay for the Christmas single.
4. You test your content on your audience. X-Factor is essentially one long experiment that allows Cowell to see which sorts of acts the public like this year. The very act of voting gives him valuable feedback on acts