

Identifying and Managing Future Shock

All companies identify projects to assist them to become more successful. These projects may be department initiatives, site initiatives or they could come about from a variety of other sources such as corporate directives or changes to government requirements.

Often these projects are evaluated in isolation to other projects outside the boundaries of the initiating department. At the time they are deemed necessary and important to progress. Often they may be linked to personal development appraisals and performance bonuses of the project champion or champions.

Unfortunately what is often not considered is the impact each project has on Frontline Leaders in the future, say 6 or 12 months time, when their involvement in adopting the new initiative becomes critical.

This is often symptomatic of Frontline Leaders being called away from their own normal duties to attend special or urgent meetings to resolve the finer details of a project, learn new processes and procedures or to rectify teething problems with the implementation.



Future Shock is where projects commenced some time back, pervade an organisation to the point where they start to affect the most important people – those directly responsible for the value adding activities of producing the product or service.

The overload of extra meetings etc on key people in the organisation ie Supervisors or First Level Staff and Frontline Leaders or Team Leaders (wages) can lead to the point where they become dysfunctional due to the build up of the frustration of not being able to get their normal tasks completed to the quality level they pride themselves in.

How do we best overcome Future Shock?

Firstly, a review should be conducted to determine whether the effects of Future Shock are already present or whether there is a risk that Future Shock could affect the site. To do this all improvement projects planned for, or progressing at the site should be identified and evaluated to understand the true resource requirements of each project and the magnitude of any potential / future impact on Frontline Leaders.

The review should also try to identify whether the resources allocated to each project are being utilised effectively.

Suggested Actions

Conduct a survey of all Managers (and Supervisors) to identify all current, planned and potential improvement projects documenting such in a simple consistent format (need to keep each project to less than one page). Possible format could include a paragraph or 3 dot points on:

- A. Current Situation – the opportunity
- B. Resources required along with timeframes
- C. Expected Outcome – the tangible benefits under the framework of the site's Key Success Factors and Goal Aligned Performance Measures along with any expected intangible benefits (a suitable template can be helpful here)
- D. Expected impact on the Frontline eg who will need to be trained to do something different

The projects should then be prioritised based on the expected outcome they will have on the site's Key Success Factors and Goal Aligned Performance Measures or statutory requirements (eg change of law requires project to be completed within a certain timeframe).

Reality Check

Have every Manager, Supervisor and Team Leader list the regular meetings, and if appropriate training workshops, they attend each week and month along with planned time and actual time. Also list any unplanned meeting that occurred in the past 1-2 weeks and the time they consumed. Classify the meetings into categories such as:

- Achieving the Production Plan eg Daily Review Meetings
- Communication Briefings
- Project Meetings
- Pro-active Improvement Team Meetings and Activities
- Reactive Improvement Meetings and Activities
- Other

Assessing the Situation

Determine how much time you want Frontline Supervisors and Team Leaders to attend meetings regarding the categories above eg Pro-active improvement meetings and activities might be at a maximum 10% and Reactive Improvement might be 5% per week.

If Frontline Leaders are in Future Shock because the number of improvement project meetings have become out of hand, then we suggest you prioritise all key improvement projects (this should also provide an opportunity to rationalise some of the projects so they fall under a common banner) recognising as a general rule of thumb 5-7 key projects at a site significantly raises the probabilities of creating Future Shock and dysfunctional behaviour within the workplace.

At one site we worked with, when this analysis was conducted they discovered there were 34 projects progressing. When asked how many were completed in the last 6 months the answer was none, however they claimed they had been busy working on them all. The 34 were prioritised with 7 dropped or combined, 7 progressed with greater focus and the remaining 20 put on hold until one of the 7 were completed. The new rule was only 7 running at one time. Over the next 6 months the first 7 were successfully completed and another 7 were well on their way.

To mitigate the impact of Future Shock, there needs to be agreement on the number of key projects to be progressed at any one time. The rest need to be put on hold or deferred until one of the agreed initiatives is completed and time permits the commencement of another project.

Then there is the need to monitor and control all the agreed projects along with their sub activities through the one Site Leadership Team for all Pro-active Improvement activities or projects so that their impact on Frontline resources can be limited to an agreed level.

Managing Improvement Activities and Projects to avoid Future Shock

From an Improvement perspective one of our suggested policies for improvement is all people on site (apart from dedicated improvement support staff such as your Improvement Co-ordinator) should only be a member of one Cross-functional Team and one Area Based Team at any one time so as not to overload your people.

A key aim or goal of Operational Excellence through TPM & Lean / CI is to create an environment where ultimately all personnel at site will be involved in Cross-functional Team improvement activity for 5% of their normal work time (eg one Focused Equipment & Process Improvement Team or one New Equipment Management Team) so as to develop their Problem Solving skills, and Area Based Team improvement activity for 5% of their normal work time (eg for managers a Leadership Team member or for production operators a Work Area Management or Operator Equipment Management team) so as to develop their Visual Workplace and Prevention at Source skills. This is based on our key learning that ***'Unless the focus of your organisation's improvement journey is the on-going development of all your people through both Cross-functional Teams (Vertical Development) and Area Based Teams (Horizontal Development), your quest to achieve and sustain Operational Excellence will become a dream rather than reality'***.

As the Operational Excellence through TPM & Lean / CI journey progresses, possible Cross-functional Team improvement activities will be identified from various sources which should be

captured on the Site Leadership Team's Opportunities Sheet or similar tool so they can be prioritised based on strategic business needs:



It is only by documenting all possible Cross-functional Team improvement activities and any other improvement activities or projects in a standard format and prioritising such on a regular basis through Pre-cycle Strategy Planning Sessions, can the changing needs of the business be incorporated into the resource allocation and prioritisation of the improvement activities.

Obviously, the resource allocation to on-going continuous improvement activities (how many do we initiate at any given time) becomes a key task for the responsible Leadership Team recognising agreed policies on improvement as mentioned earlier to ensure personnel are not overloaded and exposed to Future Shock.

Below is a summary of the sources of information which should be used by each Leadership Team as they prepare their next cycle's improvement schedule.

**Plan and Monitor progress through 3-4 month Cycles
supported by weekly review meetings and Pre-cycle
Strategy Planning Sessions**



For more information about preventing Future Shock or CTPM's approach to Proactive and Reactive Improvement, please contact Ross Kennedy at CTPM Head Office on +61 2 4226 6184 or visit CTPM's web page at www.ctpm.org.au