

WHAT are the practices that need to be in place to move towards Operational Excellence?

In this second article, Suiko continues to discuss what makes operational excellence a way of life and fit your organisation. Suiko considers 'WHAT practices' by asking 3 questions:

- 1.1:** What are the right practices?
- 1.2:** What is the right balance between tools and behaviours?
- 1.3:** What makes it fit with what you do now?

1.1: What are the right practices?

The challenge is to make the link between results and practices - the necessary practices - understand the gap and deliver the targeted results'.

It is critical to get the right balance between results and practices and help people understand why the need to change, what they need to do' and how they do it. Too much focus on results by relying either on a few key individuals or adopting a hit squad approach may get a short term gain. However, without investing in developing capability, the right environment and the appropriate business systems, it will not be sustainable. Equally excessive focus on practices without making the link to results will lead to suboptimal performance'.

It should not be an exercise in 'tooling up' the front line before they are ready. The key is to be able to choose the right tools for the job, applying a few things well to make a real difference. For many, the tools will often have been tried before so it is rarely about reinventing the wheel or introducing a new technique, but instead, it is about getting the wheels back on the bus which is driven by an involved team.

Experience has shown that lasting change requires a stepped

approach; doing things at the right time and in the right order. Success will be seen when the chosen practices deliver the right outputs. The Suiko Levels™ describe the phases an organisation progresses through on its journey to excellence.

It does require a consistent approach starting by ensuring the basics of operations management are in place. As people and processes become more predictable, capable and reliable, it supports the platform that enables people to operate at the right level. Consequently people get the space to think more proactively and once achieved, it is then possible to drive effective and continuous improvement.

Mark Salisbury, MD at Uniq Prepared Foods Evercreech, concurs *"There will always be opportunities to further improve, but it is important to recognise what is already working well and to tap into pockets of knowledge across the organisation."* Salisbury continues, *"Suiko challenged us to think beyond the tools and encouraged us to pull on existing good practices and use appropriate*

enablers to drive the right behaviours. We recognised the need to develop step by step and the levels provided a framework on which to build".

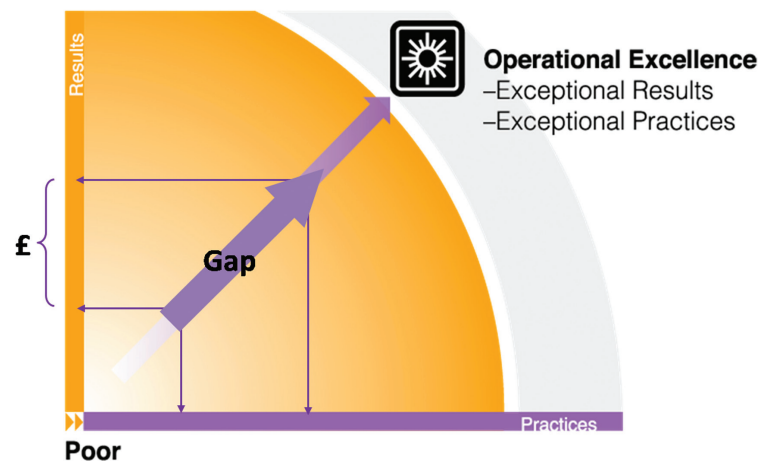
Having established the appropriate tools and necessary practices, it is then important to lock into standard work with the aim of creating a repeatable process and eliminate variation. A standard method will provide the platform on which to drive sustainable improvements.

Maintaining the gains from establishing a continuous improvement culture is a worthwhile goal, but should continue beyond level 3 to develop individuals' aspirations to exceed expectations with all functions seeking to optimise products, processes and people to deliver exceptional customer value'.

1.2: WHAT is the right balance between tools and behaviours?

There must be an appropriate balance between developing tools and the associated behaviours. Process improvement without paying attention to the people

Diagram 1: Suiko Why™ understanding the gap



and organisational culture issues will lead to a robotic adoption of proposed changes; compliance rather than a personal commitment and ownership to the way of working.

Suiko believes that to embed exceptional practices, it is more about changing mindset than tools (80% behaviours: 20% tools), developing a culture which encourages enabling behaviours. Self discipline and ownership are key attributes for everyone, for it is this that maintains the processes' sustainability.

Use of assessments to check and challenge practices is a great way of getting a stake in the ground and enables you to see the gaps and identify where to focus next. It also provides a practical way of calibrating people in what are expected as the standard practices.

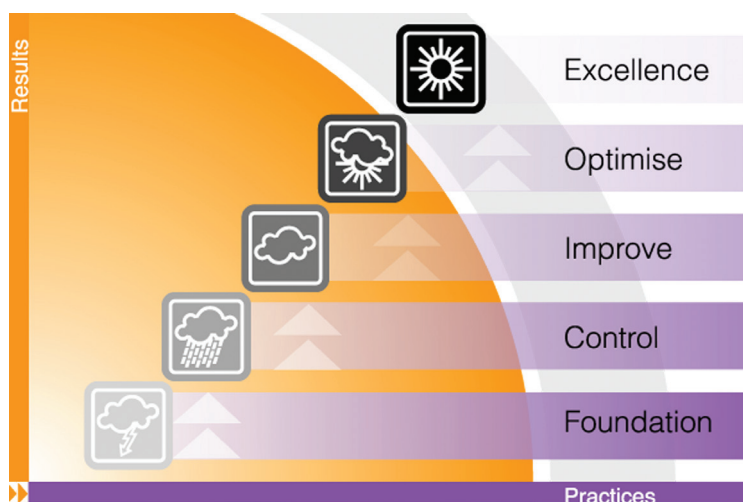
Chris Horton, VP Operations LINPAC Packaging, worked closely with Suiko to develop their way of working "With the help of Suiko we developed our own roadmap and assessment and involved representatives from across the business. It has allowed us to share best practice, calibrate across sites and develop a common language. Most importantly it is our roadmap and has helped our focus on developing the right behaviours not simply deploying more tools."

In most cases the tools are easy to understand, but getting them embedded into 'the way we do things' is more difficult. Most of the change effort will need to go into influencing the behaviour change rather than tool development.

1.3: What makes it fit with what you do now?

It must start with asking "Why?", understanding the compelling reason to start doing something different in the context of both results and practices. Bob Parker, Business Improvement Manager, Akzo Nobel reinforces the point "Choosing the right opportunity is really important; something that is a really important issue for the business. Typically, senior stakeholders are results driven

Diagram 2: Suiko Levels™ 1-5



so getting early wins and tangible benefits are important to getting buy-in and accelerating the pace of improvement".

Parker continues, "The pace at which an organisation can adapt will depend on many factors and starts with leaders getting involved and taking an active interest, 'doing' rather than talking. Engaging and listening to process operators at all levels demonstrates management's commitment to the process and helps demonstrate that operational excellence and continuous improvement is indeed the day job."

Arguably the largest commitment and the most important aspect of a change transformation is 'respect the people'. Without it and if not addressed, it will become a major obstacle leading to a failure to adapt and deliver. You have to engage people and excite them about performance improvement, through practice and application; if you do, they will reach the conclusion themselves.

Salisbury builds "This is one of the biggest challenges for everyone, especially the leaders of the organisation. As Jim Womack emphasises, being able to 'Respect the people' is critical. **It is important for managers to move from having the need to come up with all the answers, to a position where they are able to ask the right questions and support others to get to the root cause of problems and find the answers for themselves.**"

To summarise and consider:

- The right practices – will be dependent on the maturity of your organisation and its strategic direction
- The right balance – must focus on introducing appropriate tools and associated behaviours to enhance your ability to optimise results
- The right fit – will enhance your existing good practices by engaging everyone to close the current gaps and introduce better ways of working

The final article will be published in March and will explore how to deliver profitable growth and implement sustainable change.

If you would like to discuss how to address the issues above, then please call us.



Building Operational Excellence

Our mission is to help major companies achieve sustainable competitive advantage through Operational Excellence

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