## epicenter

EPICENTRAL

A Newsletter from Epicenter Development Group
highlighting ideas that improve organizations

Welcome to Epicenter Development Group's newsletter, EPICentral. The purpose of this newsletter is to highlight fundamental ideas that have helped organizations develop and maintain great manufacturing and service operations. We hope that you find our EPICentral newsletter helpful, and we would welcome your comments on its content.

Cross-Functional Flow Chart

When working with organizations, one of my mottos has always been "seeing is believing." Once people can clearly see what's going on in their organization, then they can truly start the process of eliminating waste and streamlining their workflow. In a previous newsletter, I introduced the Spaghetti Flow Diagram, a visual tool for showing material or people flow throughout a facility. Another visual tool that I use is called a Cross-Functional Flow Chart (sometimes referred to as a "Swim Lane Process Map"). A Cross-Functional Flow Chart is a great way to show "hand-offs" between departments within an organization which are common places for miscommunication and where process delays occur.
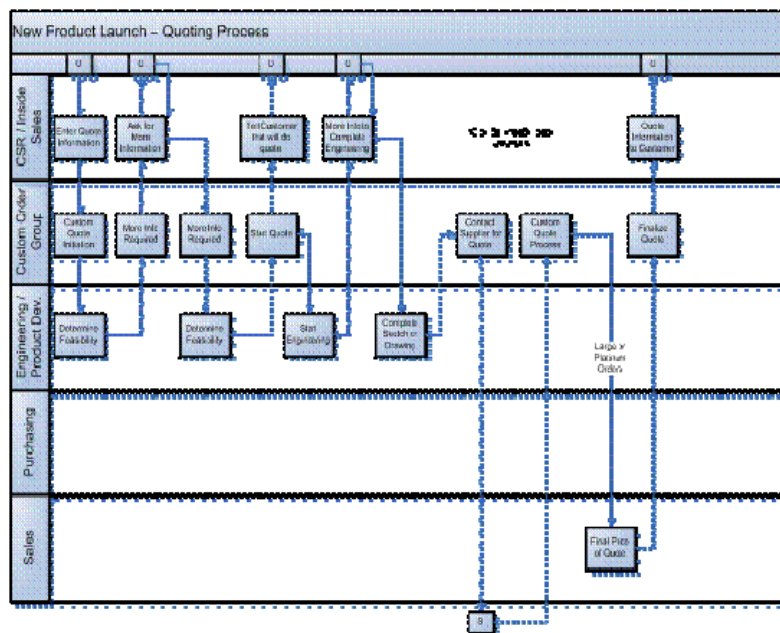
Making the Chart

There are only a few steps for making a Cross-Functional Flow Chart:

1. Create a chart template as shown above, listing along the y-axis each of the departments that are involved in the target process. If you have the Visio software, there is a template for this chart. Otherwise, you will need to manually make the chart in Excel, AutoCAD or another charting package.
2. Starting at the left side of the chart, create a basic flow diagram of the process from start to finish. Each task/operation should be placed in the responsible department's "swim lane." In the sample shown, for example, the process starts with the CRS/Inside Sales Department entering quote information into the system and then passing the information on to the Custom Order Group for the next step of the process.
3. As always, the tool is yours to customize. In this example, I have listed the customer with a "C" and the supplier for tooling as an "S." If desirable, you could also estimate and list the delay time between each of the "hand-offs" to identify waste.

Using the Chart

Once the chart has been created, I typically plan a meeting with the people involved in the process to review the information. At that time, we step through the entire process and discuss each of the "hand-offs" that occur. In some cases, people are shocked by the information. At a minimum, people have a new appreciation for the number of departments and people that are required to complete the overall process.

Using the chart, we can then ask a number of questions:

- Are there activities that could be combined and completed by a single department?

- What departments really need to be involved in the process? When is their involvement most critical?

- Where are the weakest "hand-offs" that may contribute to unnecessary delays or miscommunication? How can we alleviate the situation?

- Who is ultimately responsible (owns) for the entire process?

Next Steps

If you would like more information on this topic or other similar types of tools, please contact Bill Proctor with your request at wproctor@epicentergroup.com or 216-702-0952. You can also find previous issues of EPICentral at Newsletters.

Mr. Proctor also speaks on a variety of problem-solving and system design topics that can help companies significantly increase the success and profitability of their businesses. If you are interested in having Bill speak at one of your upcoming meetings/events or would like more information on any of the speaking topics, please visit Speaker Services or you can email

Epicenter Development Group is a unique consulting firm that seamlessly integrates the disciplines of Systems Engineering and Organizational Analysis & Development to create practical design solutions to your toughest challenges. It is on the cutting edge of problem-solving solutions and the creator of a unique process called GreenRoom Engineering. This process adds greater value and cost savings for clients as compared to traditional engineering methods.

William Proctor, Epicenter's founder and president, has provided services around the country to more than 100 companies consisting of a variety of organizations; and Epicenter continues to grow as a resource for firms of all sizes.

To learn more about Epicenter Development Group, visit our website:

www.epicentergroup.com

Epicenter News

Epicenter congratulates Mark Symington for his team award with our engineering partner, SSOE. Mark is the first person who is not an SSOE employee to receive this award.

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