



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.

Clarify Roles with Responsibility Charting

A client recently approached me about their difficulty with decision making. Their concerns represent the typical questions that many of our clients have had. For example, if several departments are working together to complete a project, who gets to make the final decisions on project direction and solutions to pursue? In addition, who needs to be "kept in the loop" on project progress? When not clearly defined, people found themselves getting massive amounts of email concerning projects that don't involve them. So what's the answer to this dilemma? A Responsibility Chart is one example of a simple and practical tool that can eliminate or simplify these types of problems.

A Responsibility Chart is a chart which clarifies each individual's role on a project. The chart is set up using the following steps:

1. **Create a blank grid on paper or in a spreadsheet.**
2. **List all of the major tasks and decisions that must be made for a particular project. This information goes on each row of the chart.**
3. **List all of the people that will be involved in the project. This information goes in each column of the chart.**
4. **Fill out the grid by assigning one role for each person for completing each task. You can create any role "categories" that you want, but some common roles are as follows:**
 - **Responsible (R)** - This is the person who is ultimately responsible (accountable) for making sure a task is completed or making sure that the final decision is carried out. Assign only one person to be responsible for each task.
 - **Approval Required (A)** - This is the person or people who must review and approve a specific decision. Consider limiting the number of people that have this role for one task since it is often difficult to get consensus with a larger group.
 - **Support (S)** - This is a person who provides logistical support and resources for completing a project. They are extremely important because they complete the work of the project. Their assignments, therefore, need to be

- very clear, specific and measurable.
 - **Inform (I)** - This is a person who must be kept "in the loop" on the project status and direction, but they do not have any influence on the task or decisions being made.
5. **If a particular person is not to be involved in a task, then you can either leave their space blank or put a "---" in the space.**

Example Grid for a Problem Solving Project

Actions and Decisions	People					
	Tom	Chris	Beth	Greg	Paul	Phil
Create problem solving team	A	--	--	--	R	I
Describe the problem	R	A	A	A	--	I
Implement containment actions	R	S	S	S	A	I
Define and verify root causes	R	A	A	A	--	I
Choose and verify permanent corrective actions	R	A	A	A	--	I
Implement permanent corrective actions	R	S	S	S	A	I
Modify systems to prevent recurrence of the problem	--	S	S	S	R	I
Project debrief/celebration	R	--	--	--	--	I

- **Tom** is the project leader and is responsible for getting team activities complete
- **Chris, Beth** and **Greg** are team members and are involved in completing the project steps and implementation.
- **Paul** is the project sponsor and must approve all containment and permanent corrective actions. He also is responsible for modifying the company's systems to prevent recurrence of the problem in the future.
- **Phil** is the company president. He is not involved in this project but would like to be kept "in the loop" on the project status.

Final Thoughts: It is important that there are clear roles and responsibilities whenever doing a group project or activity. A Responsibility Chart is one tool that can be helpful in defining and communicating this information. It is simple, easy to understand and can later be used to evaluate projects that are "stuck" or decisions that are not being followed. For this reason, consider putting a responsibility chart in your tool kit on your next project.

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 sales@epicentergroup.com.

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.

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