

REMOVING THE WORLDWIDE BAND AID

Disruption is uncomfortable and COVID-19 has added stress. Stress can shine a light on operations and highlight processes to streamline. Clients are facing new challenges and rethinking business during and after the pandemic. Contact with clients during disruptions should be increased. A general communication can be helpful, but personal calls and emails are more important.

Clients will remember kindly those who reach out and make them feel secure. According to a survey by ElliotScott, sixty five percent of clients are mildly to strongly worried.

1. How are they coping with COVID-19?
Personally and professionally. Do they know anyone impacted?
2. Have you reprioritized your goals?
3. What has changed due to COVID-19?
4. What would you like to improve?

The best discussions during disruptions are facilitating and listening. Clients may feel vulnerable, so be patient, and empathetic. While they may be looking for answers, if you do not have an answer, it is ok to say that. Being heard is more relevant than providing an answer, this is a time to find opportunities to discover. Have you had a process that is too complicated, drags on longer than it should?

COVID-19 disruptions are requiring us to find ways to streamline. We all have processes where requirements changed or importance inflated during planning. I was implementing a new HRIS tool for a client. The tool was first class for tracking approvals and managing workflows. Previously, this had been managed through emails and an antiquated tool designed for managing new hires. We had been tasked with improving the process while adding it to the new HRIS system. However, the CEO wanted visibility and made it clear he will be the final approval.

Shortly after the additional approval requirement the demand for approvals jumped to twenty one. This was a significant increase, and we set off making the case to reduce the approvals but unfortunately only a few were convinced they added marginal value. The previous process had buried inefficiencies. Leadership just wanted transparency during the initial roll out. It was not until the transparent system was stressed that changes could be made.

It was go-live, and seventeen was the best we could do. In planning we suspected getting that number of approvals from high level executives was doomed. Reality was worse. Those who followed the approvals faced months of delays, those who ignored the process tempted the wrath of the executive suite if caught.

The new system provided the analytics and reporting to show the time and cost associated with chasing twenty one approvals, which was over half a million US dollars annually. We had successfully made the case for removing the CEO approval. It took less than a day for word to get out CEO approval was not required and resulted in eleven other approvals dropping off.

Stressful times and disruptions can demonstrate where value is added, and where a process is going through the motions which is what COVID-19 is highlighting. These stresses can show places to improve and shine. Companies that succeed will be able to increase productivity and demonstrate value added and empower teams to simplify and streamline.

Leadership must be strategic about rewarding those who increase productivity. Stories should be shared of successes, and those who comply should be retained. The financial impacts will be significant. Leaders that empower their employees to find improvements will succeed. When your leadership and teams see struggling processes, do they look how to improve it for the long term, or do they apply a band-aid to get to the next band-aid?

COVID-19 is teaching us there are no band-aids and we must fix the problem permanently versus temporarily!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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