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I am a change agent:

What do I do and how do I learn how?

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The views expressed by Dr. Rifkin are his and do not necessarily represent the views of the US Department of Defense nor its Components.



Our purpose

Ask the community of practitioners:

- What change agent skills we value the most, which skills related best with positive results – and negative.
- How we obtained those skills and how we would prefer to.
- What advice we would give others.



Conducted an on-line survey

- 51 respondents
- Invited via US Software Process Improvement Network (SPIN) points of contact.
- + Announced on SEPG Conference LinkedIn page.
- Open for the first two weeks of this month (March 2010).



Any surprises?

A few:

1. Even among all of the many, many interacting parts, strong evidence for a relationship between effectiveness and skills.
2. Less emphasis on rewards for improvement, ability to deal with disruptions, team work, & generating compelling presentations than we expected.
3. Skills alone do not spell success.
4. Tried many ways to learn, not a clear answer.



Several lenses, ways of making sense

- Key roles:
 - Champion, sponsor, change agent, target
- Timing:
 - Unfreezing, transition, refreezing
- Our backgrounds:
 - Engineering, business, people-oriented
- Our inclinations:
 - Extroversion, introversion
 - Unconscious competence, conscious competence



One more way to make sense

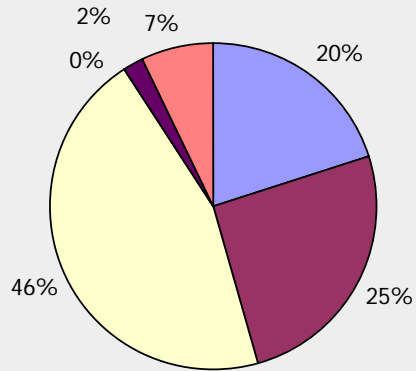
Level of action:

1. Individual
2. Team, group, organization
3. Culture, nation

Listen for this!

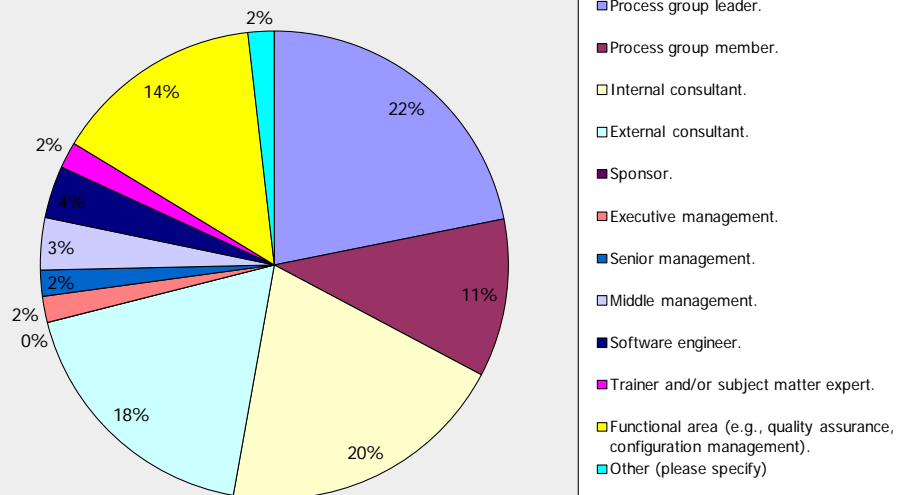
Demographics I

The organization that is seeking to improve is a/an (select the one best answer):



- Government unit.
- Defense contractor.
- Commercial entity.
- Not for profit.
- Educational entity.
- Other (please specify)

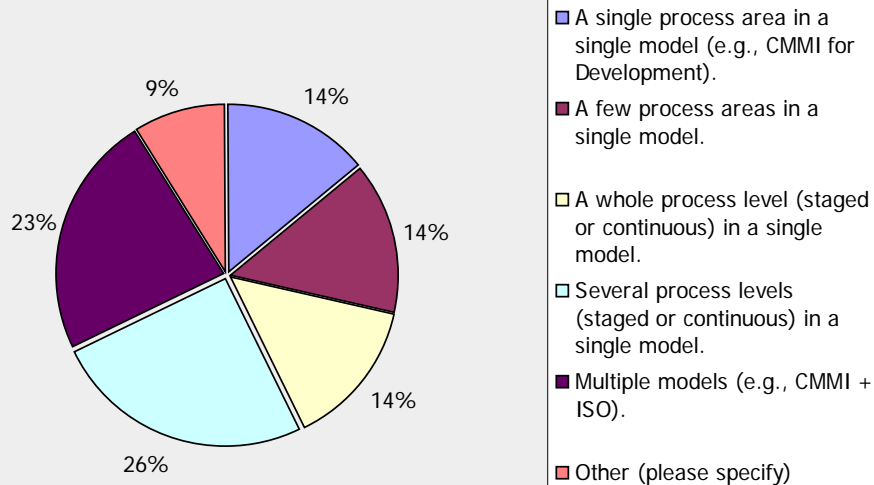
My primary role is/was:



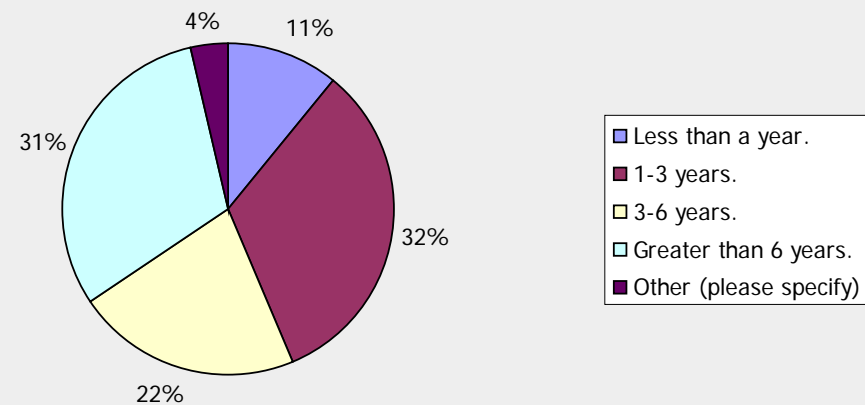
- Process group leader.
- Process group member.
- Internal consultant.
- External consultant.
- Sponsor.
- Executive management.
- Senior management.
- Middle management.
- Software engineer.
- Trainer and/or subject matter expert.
- Functional area (e.g., quality assurance, configuration management).
- Other (please specify)

Demographics II

The scope of the improvement is/was (select the one best answer):

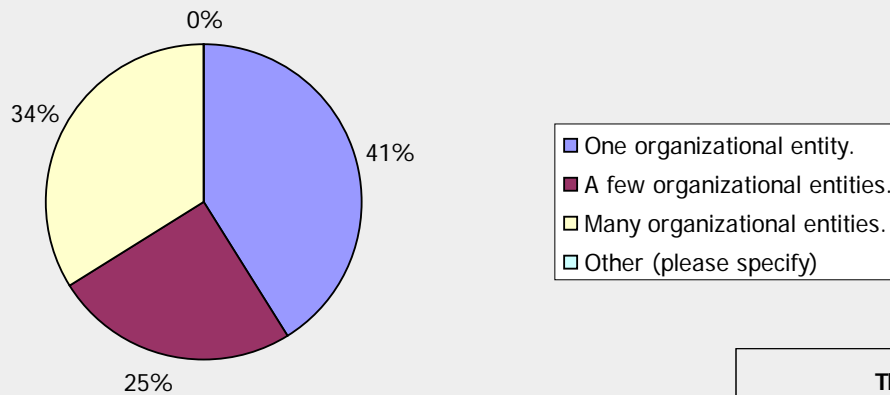


The organization is/has been working on improvement efforts for (select the one best answer):

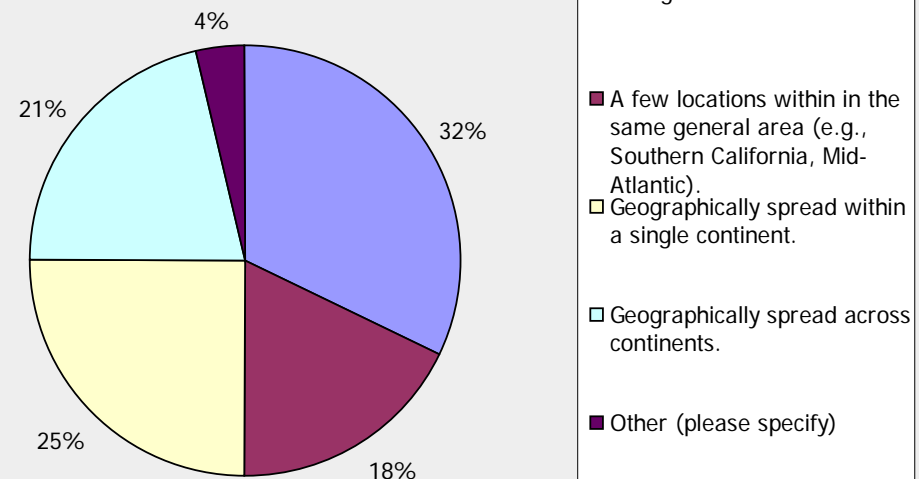


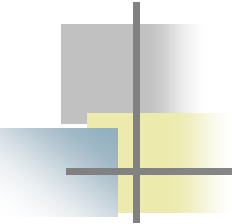
Demographics III

The scale of the improvement is/was (select the one best answer):



The geography of the improvement is/was (select the one best answer):





As a group, how effective does it rate itself at implementation?

1. Very ineffective	2.	3. Neither effective nor ineffective	4.	5. Very effective
4	5	5	32	5

Overall average: 3.6



But, ...

1. "The effort would be effective provided that org mgt would put its money where its mouth is. Real probability of that happening: <0%."
2. "Perfect example: effective (in some key areas, but not everywhere) at first then loses momentum."
3. "VERY effective under strong sponsor. Ineffective under ho-hum sponsor. Expect to be very effective again when new sponsor arrives in a few months. This is a military organization where leaders rotate."
4. "Some welcoming embracers, some continuing rejectors, most are acceptors of process changes (i.e., ~normal distribution)."
5. "Ineffective sponsorship, too many re-orgs and "shiny rocks," lack of ownership, short term focus on cost savings rather than long term focus on improvement, and a dichotomy of incentives (PMs incentivized to cut costs and increase sales, rather than build an infrastructure for improvement)."
6. "Restart with each reorg; typically a reorg prior to "re-freezing" being complete."

Any KSA* really important?

1. Top 3:

- a. Earn credibility of sponsors (4.5).
- b. Earn credibility of targets (4.3).
- c. Understand power & influence (4.2).

2. Bottom 3:

- a. Make compelling presentations (3.6).
- b. Cope with disruption & distraction (3.6).
- c. Reward improvement (3.5).

3. Choice related strongly with self-assessment of effectiveness.

* KSA = knowledge, skills & ability

What was the best way to attain those KSAs?

1. Top 3:

- a. Have a coach or mentor (4.3 on a 5-point scale; 19 tried).
- b. Work on the job (4.2; 24 tried).
- c. Have a model to use (4.1; 19 tried).

2. Bottom 3:

- a. Take an external short course all at once (2.9, 17 tried).
- b. Take a regular course at an institution of higher learning (2.8; 15 tried).
- c. Take an in-house course all at once (2.4; 22 tried).

The most effective pursued the **Top 3** methods instead of the **Bottom 3**.

Which skills enabled the KSAs?

1. Having done this job before (4.2).
2. Knowing which KSAs are the most important (4.1).
3. Early successes (4.0).
4. Having the time to obtain KSAs (4.0).
5. Already knowing the organization (4.0).
6. Knowing how to best obtain the needed KSAs (3.9).

Blue: organizational level; Green: personal level;
Black: in between.



What were the barriers to attaining the KSAs?

1. Not having the time! (3.9)
2. Everything else a bit of muddle:
 - a. Not knowing how to obtain the KSAs (3.6).
 - b. Holding on to some old habits (3.6).
 - c. Not knowing which KSAs are important (3.4).

No wonder not having the time was #1! How do we find a mentor or coach? Is that consistent with our personality?



What are the take-aways?

- There are some valuable change agent skills that are important for effectiveness.
- There are preferred ways (at least one) to obtain those skills. Especially for those of us who do not come by them naturally.
- There are pathways (models) to understand change and when which skills need to be applied.



And, there are levels:

- **Personal traits:**

“I am one of those people who happen to come by the change skills naturally.”

- **Personal experience:**

“Understanding the specific org. is the only way to get street cred.”

- **Learning perspective:**

“Questioning current situation and finding from known and new sources better ways to do it . Understanding [that] others are also good or better than what you think you do better and do not think you know it all and you are right.”



Levels (cont.)

- **Organizational perspective:**
 1. “Leadership interest and support has been the key to success.” “Trying to be a change agent without a sponsor is not productive, and learning to become one on your own is also not productive.”
 2. “Greatest factor is strong organizational support for and commitment to change management. If this is not viewed as integral to the process improvement, then any skills you have or can obtain will be useless.”



Which one is right, correct?

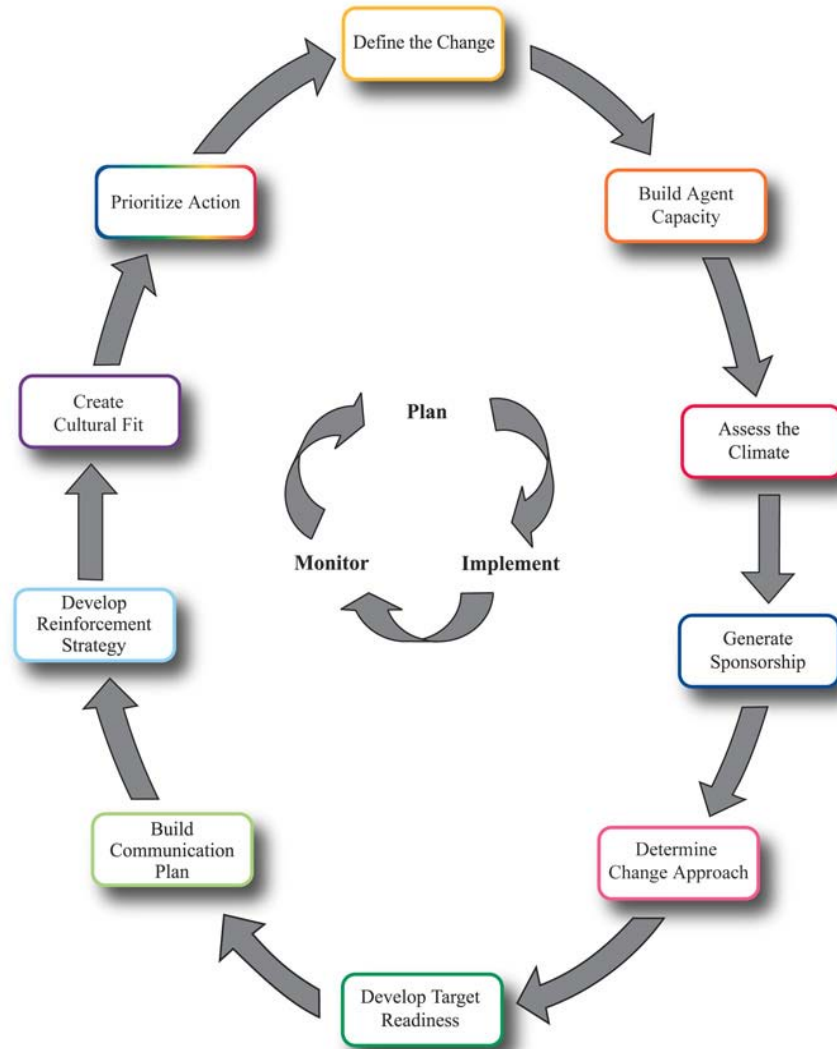
Learning

Organizational perspective
Personal perspective
Personal experience

PERSONAL TRAITS



A framework that recognizes & values all of them!





Questions?

Thank you!

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What else can we get from this survey?

1. Credibility more important than rewards.
 - a. What are the motivations, motivators?
 - b. How do we best earn credibility?
2. Situational: this job, this organization.
 - a. Are the context factors clear? Anything transferrable?
3. Learning by working on the job.
 - a. How do you know if you are performing appropriately, the best way? Is learning deliberate, planned?
 - b. Does learning = practice = on the job?