



Escape the Improvement Trap: Five Ingredients Missing in Most Improvement Recipes

By Michael Bremer, Brian McKibben

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Written by two experts who have dedicated their careers to quality improvement, *Escape the Improvement Trap: Five Ingredients Missing in Most Improvement Recipes* separates itself from other improvement books by looking at why most companies rarely achieve anything more than an average level of improvement maturity. They identify five critical ingredients required for successful improvement:

1. A meaningful business value proposition and strategy that drives key improvement actions
2. An engaging environment where people can do their best work
3. A focus on meaningful metrics while avoiding irrelevant details
4. Process improvement efforts that maximize cross-functional process performance and foster deeper process understanding, innovation, and execution of best work practices
5. An executive mindset that focuses on customer value, people development, process performance, and business improvement outcomes, not solely on savings

The authors consider a variety of situations at Independence Enterprise, a fictional company, based on their own very real experiences. They elaborate on the principles that should come into play, look at what Independence Enterprise is doing right and wrong, and suggest deployment actions to help you apply the principles to your own organization.

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Editorial Review

Review

... a must read book for all senior executives seeking to change the culture of their organization and drive it to a level 4 or 5 on the Improvement Maturity Curve. We have all suffered from the difficulty of sustaining improvement ... this book lays out the sustaining process in a simple, common sense way that is easy to read.
?Basem Hishmeh, Chairman, Sigma-Netics, Inc.

We are entering into a Reset global economy, where a New Normal has clearly been established, filled with much peril and much opportunity, yet with an uncertain path forward for all. Now along comes a book focused on Improvement that can help you avoid the Trap, and develop a path that avoids peril, takes advantage of opportunity, and drives Twenty First century success.

?Dan McDonnell, Lean Initiative manager, General Electric Transportation

My cynicism of the quality field is based on hundreds of theoretical books on the subject. They seem to serve little purpose other than the author's pontification of what they think they know, or perhaps serve as a platform for the speaking circuit. Mr. Bremer brings an exception to this otherwise commoditized quality industry. He provides a practical, how-to guide for the organization's improvement all the way to the all important bottom line. His concepts, told through the parable of a real life situation, Independence Enterprise, Inc., give it a feel of a modern day The Goal, the epoch bible of efficiency by Eliyahu M. Goldratt. Mr. Bremer elaborates on RELATIVE gains whereby one compares oneself to their competitors, industry, and even global economy vs. the all too popular ABSOLUTE measure where one measures oneself against oneself. Finally, an author that gets it

?Donald R. McNeeley, Ph.D., President & COO, Chicago Tube and Iron Company

Providing methods and metrics for effecting true change, Escape the Improvement Trap highlights how to avoid common improvement traps that inhibit many organizations from rising above the rest. Written by two experts who have dedicated their careers to quality improvement ... separates itself from other improvement books by looking at why most companies rarely achieve anything more than an average level of improvement maturity. ... Bremer and McKibben consider a variety of situations at Independence Enterprise, a fictional company, based on their own real experiences. They elaborate on the principles that should come into play, look at what Independence Enterprise is doing right and wrong, and suggest deployment actions to help readers apply the principles to their own organization. Bremer, who lead the creation of a company-wide improvement initiative for Beatrice Companies, has served as a Senior Engagement Manager for Motorola University and McKibben, a founding partner of the Cumberland Group-Chicago, has held management roles at several manufacturing companies. ... Escape the Improvement Trap is a practical, how-to guide to performance improvement for senior management. ... easy to read, explains concepts simply, and provides concrete examples.

?Sirreadalot.org, December 2010

About the Author

Michael Bremer has worked in the world of business process improvement since 1980. He led the creation of a company-wide improvement initiative for Beatrice Companies, a Fortune 30 Company at the time, where he had the opportunity to study under the tutelage of Dr. W. Edwards Deming and Dr. Joseph Juran.

The Beatrice Improvement initiative was one of the models studied in creating the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award. Michael is currently the president of the Cumberland Group. In recent years he has served as a Senior Engagement Manager for Motorola University, is a past Chief Financial Officer for the Association of Manufacturing Excellence and has held a variety of other positions in industrial and service businesses.

Michael currently teaches a class on innovation and process improvement for the University of Chicago's Graham School. He co-authored *Six Sigma Black Belt Handbook* (McGraw-Hill, 2004) and *Six Sigma Financial Tracking and Reporting* (McGraw-Hill, 2005), aka: I had a million dollars in savings, but my P&L did not change. Michael earned a BS in accounting, from the University of Missouri – St. Louis. He is a CPA, certified MBB, certified Lean Bronze expert and a CMC. He has worked with organizations in many countries to improve the way they go about the business of improvement.

Brian McKibben is a founding partner of The Cumberland Group–Chicago. He has thirty years' experience in operations planning and management, helping business teams reduce waste, improve quality, smooth production flows, shorten order cycle times, and reduce inventories. His approach to business performance improvement includes four elements:

- Clear definition of customer requirements, especially their loyalty factors
- Lean business processes; add only value to products and services; no waste
- Team-based methods for broad workforce involvement in improvement efforts
- Measurement = the springboard to Continuous Improvement

Before joining Cumberland in 1991, Brian held management roles in several manufacturing companies. That experience and the insights he gained from them contribute to his effectiveness in a consulting role. Managing the manufacturing planning functions for 140 Beatrice U.S. Food plants and warehouses provided perspective on optimization of a large-scale enterprise while providing for autonomy and job satisfaction of local operating teams. Directing product design, manufacturing engineering, industrial engineering and manufacturing services for The HON Company, Wesco Manufacturing, and All-Steel proved that even complex processes like product and manufacturing process development can be streamlined (made Lean) to achieve results in a fraction of "expected" times. His experience in a turnaround situation confirmed the saying that "the impossible is often the untried," and that the technical issues in business are less important than the people issues. Business successes are the result of carefully nurtured teamwork; not the rah-rah fluff type, but rather the practical nuts-and-bolts approach that is focused on the team's common goals and the mechanics of how they work together effectively to achieve those goals quickly.

Brian holds a BS in business and economics/industrial management from the Stuart School of Management and Finance at the Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago. He is past president of the Chicago chapter of the Institute of Industrial Engineers, a speaker on operations planning and performance improvement to other professional organizations, and co-author of *Six Sigma Financial Tracking and Reporting* (McGraw-Hill, 2005).

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Timothy McCormack:

Spent a free time and energy to be fun activity to do! A lot of people spent their down time with their family, or their friends. Usually they doing activity like watching television, gonna beach, or picnic within the park.

They actually doing same thing every week. Do you feel it? Will you something different to fill your own personal free time/ holiday? May be reading a book can be option to fill your free of charge time/ holiday. The first thing you ask may be what kinds of guide that you should read. If you want to try out look for book, may be the book untitled Escape the Improvement Trap: Five Ingredients Missing in Most Improvement Recipes can be good book to read. May be it may be best activity to you.

Joseph Williams:

This Escape the Improvement Trap: Five Ingredients Missing in Most Improvement Recipes is great reserve for you because the content and that is full of information for you who else always deal with world and have to make decision every minute. This kind of book reveal it details accurately using great coordinate word or we can state no rambling sentences in it. So if you are read that hurriedly you can have whole info in it. Doesn't mean it only will give you straight forward sentences but tricky core information with beautiful delivering sentences. Having Escape the Improvement Trap: Five Ingredients Missing in Most Improvement Recipes in your hand like getting the world in your arm, data in it is not ridiculous one particular. We can say that no reserve that offer you world inside ten or fifteen second right but this e-book already do that. So , this really is good reading book. Hey Mr. and Mrs. occupied do you still doubt this?

Thelma Olivares:

The book untitled Escape the Improvement Trap: Five Ingredients Missing in Most Improvement Recipes contain a lot of information on it. The writer explains her idea with easy means. The language is very clear and understandable all the people, so do not worry, you can easy to read this. The book was authored by famous author. The author gives you in the new era of literary works. You can read this book because you can read more your smart phone, or gadget, so you can read the book throughout anywhere and anytime. In a situation you wish to purchase the e-book, you can open up their official web-site in addition to order it. Have a nice study.

Ernesto Harrell:

As a pupil exactly feel bored for you to reading. If their teacher requested them to go to the library in order to make summary for some book, they are complained. Just minor students that has reading's heart and soul or real their passion. They just do what the teacher want, like asked to go to the library. They go to at this time there but nothing reading significantly. Any students feel that studying is not important, boring and can't see colorful pictures on there. Yeah, it is for being complicated. Book is very important for you personally. As we know that on this era, many ways to get whatever we would like. Likewise word says, many ways to reach Chinese's country. Therefore this Escape the Improvement Trap: Five Ingredients Missing in Most Improvement Recipes can make you really feel more interested to read.

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