

Use *Strike Teams* To Improve Processes¹

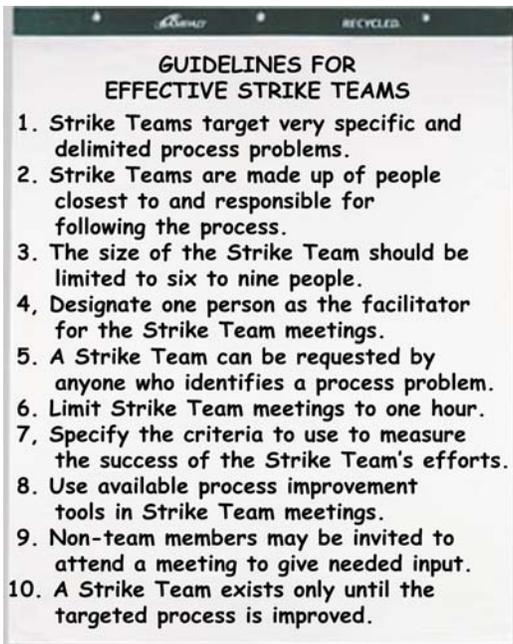
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Successful organizations are constantly improving their processes for getting things done. Frequently, they accomplish this by forming a process improvement committee. The job of that committee is to constantly search for ways to improve the efficiency and quality of products and services offered by the organization.

The problem with the committee approach is that over time it often becomes more bureaucratic. As a result, committee members lose their initial enthusiasm for the task and become bored. In addition, employees frequently fail to follow the new processes devised, even those processes that have been translated into standard operating procedures.

The committee approach ignores an important fact: *process are best improved and owned when reshaped by the people who are responsible for carrying them out.*



I use *Strike Teams* as a strategy for improving processes.

Essentially, a *Strike Team* is a small, short-lived process improvement team, formed solely to look at problems with one specific process.

I deliberately call it a *Strike Team* because I want to emphasize that it strikes quickly—it is not a standing committee meeting over a long period of time. Rather, it is a team of people who get together to attack a specific problem, continue meeting together until they have solved it, and then disband.

Unlike a process improvement committee that generally meets according to a set schedule, several *Strike Teams* could be meeting any given time.

Different teams are made up of different mixes of people throughout the company.

Further, they don't just meet weekly. They meet frequently over varying lengths of time, depending on the problem. Some find they can solve a process problem in just a few meetings, while others may meet many times.

¹ From: http://www.arniedahlke.com/100731_Use_Strike_Teams_To_Improve_Processes.pdf
Please take a moment to look at Arnie's site: www.arniedahlke.com

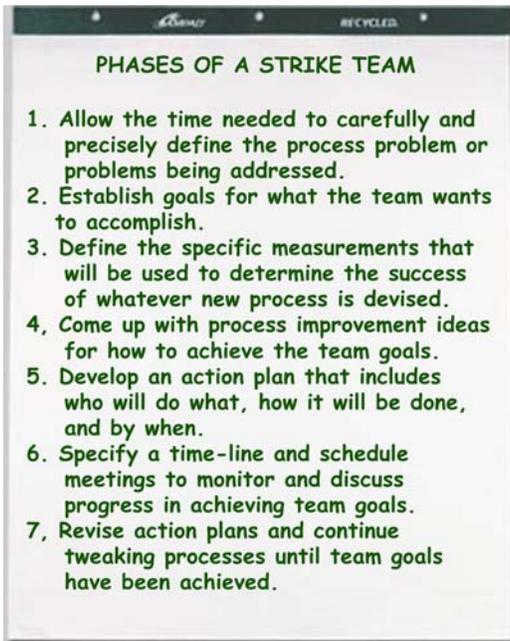
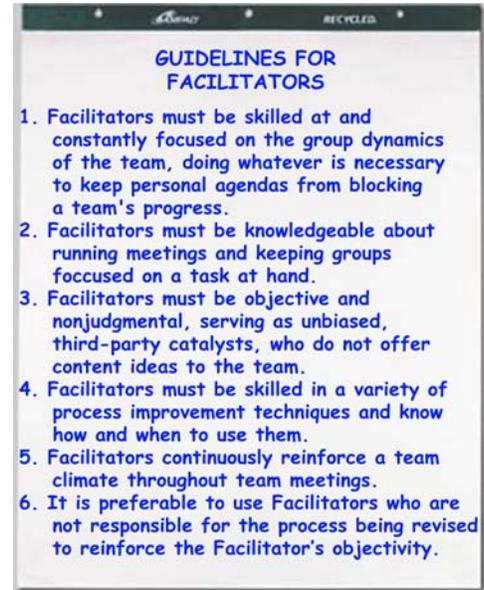
Most important of all, they are made up of people who are actually involved on a daily basis in the process being examined, sometimes from several departments. In other words, they are made up of the very people who are responsible for making the process work. The result is, they end up *owning* the process they devise, and therefore are much more likely to follow it.

To start the *Strike Team* strategy, circulate a brief description of the characteristics of a *Strike Team* (as shown on the last page) and ask for volunteers to be trained as *Strike Team* facilitators. Train those who volunteer how to facilitate a meeting according to the guidelines at the right.

Train them how to effectively communicate, relate to, and resolve conflicts with others.

Teach them all about process improvement, including the numerous process improvement tools available to them, such as brainstorming, flow charts, force-field analysis, mind-mapping, cause & effect diagrams, Pareto analysis, and so on. Numerous books are available to people describing process improvement techniques. Make those books available to them. Tell them to use whatever tool will help them arrive at good solutions to problems.

Once the facilitators are trained, make them available to anyone in the organization who calls for a *Strike Team*.



Over time, after many *Strike Teams* have been formed, people throughout the organization gain a lot of experiential knowledge about how a *Strike Team* functions. As team members, they become familiar with the techniques and tools used by facilitators. Ideally, at that point, they become capable of facilitating themselves

An example of a productive *Strike Team* comes from an automobile dealership in which I was teaching people about the *Strike Team* strategy, people in the Business Office were unhappy with the sales staff who would often send them incomplete paper work after a sale. This forced them to have to track down the sales person (who might be on his or her day off) to supply the missing information, thereby wasting hours of time. To solve this problem, three people from the Business Office got together with three salespeople and formed a *Strike Team*. In just three meetings, they were able to redesign the process of paper exchange between them.

The result over the next few months: no more incomplete paper-work.

I have found that the more employees get involved in *Strike Teams* throughout an organization, the more others learn about and them and become interested in participating.

By the time this strategy is fully implemented, people develop a problem-solving mindset throughout the organization.

