

How about U?

A successful change project to implement a better use of SAP in a large-scale organisation... who doesn't want that? With this article we aim to emphasize the importance of focussing on the people that are involved, instead of on the output desired. Based on the results of an action-research that was conducted in 2006, we show that this people-minded approach works best if the interest shown is genuine and if all team members of the change-project are consistent in their approach. In short: a consistent team-authenticity.

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Together with some main respondents of the research we have reflected upon the meaning of these words. What does 'consistent team-authenticity' actually mean and what, in experience of the former team members, contributes to it? We found four main elements that are crucial to reach authenticity in this case:

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- **making it personal**, 'it's about you and me': in every project you have a choice in to what extent you want to be personally involved. Making it personal for yourself and the others involved affects the quality of work: feeling truly committed, you will more easily stay focused and enthusiastic to finish the job at best. Therefore authenticity and making it personal are closely interlinked: the more personal involved you get, the greater the authenticity of your actions.
- **self-consciousness** and considering yourself as a whole: it also appears to be crucial to bring in all the aspects of yourself. Your vision, your feelings, your earlier experiences: being conscious of this and using it in a project helps to increase the making-it-personal. Furthermore it shows that by bringing in your whole self, stimulates others to do so as well: authenticity rewarded

with authenticity!

- following your **personal point of view** in life, reaching your goals: the first two elements lead up to this third one. By making it personal and bringing in your entire 'package', you are also allowed to state your own goals. What is it you want to reach in this project, this job or this life and how does this specific project contribute to that? It helps to stay focused and prevents the hidden agendas.
- **contamination**: the last element of creating authenticity is making others enthusiastic and become enthused yourself. This is crucial to create the team-consistency and link the personal goals to one and other. Find ways to enthuse others for your ideas and let yourself be inspired by their ideas: it strengthens the team and contaminates others involved.

Being able to formulate these elements in retrospective, doesn't mean it's now just a matter of copy and paste. When you are working on a change-project and you want to focus on the people, it's also about focussing on the people within the team. These four elements might be helpful in identifying the degree of authenticity in your team or might help to find some leads to increase it.



Introduction

After having successfully finished the Den Helder Showcase – a change project to implement a better use of the SAP-system and implement the deliverables of the SAP Optimisation team (see textbox 1) – many stakeholders were interested in the critical factors that had helped gain this success. The project manager decided to thoroughly evaluate the project. Almost everyone engaged was interviewed and after analysing their thoughts on the success factors, the evaluation showed the following results:

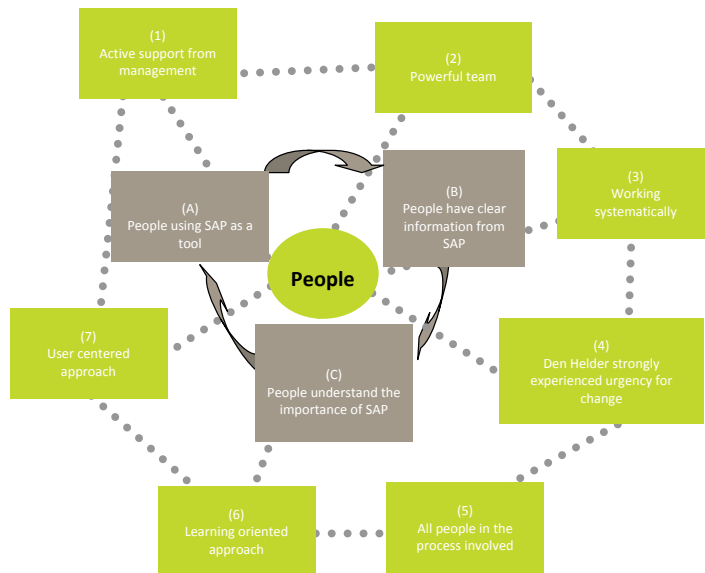


Figure 1: Reinforcing success factors of the Den Helder showcase

Core finding was that there was a fundamental understanding throughout the whole process, that it's all about people and people working together better. Interviews have revealed that this people-focused approach has led to the important reinforcing factors:

- A) People using SAP as a tool
- B) People having clear information from SAP
- C) People understanding the importance of SAP

These reinforcing factors do not stand on their own. They are surrounded by interconnected context factors (number 1 to 7), which on their turn again are connected to underlying

elements (not shown in the graph). The dynamics found will be explained below by describing the Den Helder Showcase process.

Description of the process

In the end, the evaluation indicated that Den Helder strongly experienced urgency for change (factor 4). This was established by a motivated group that created the pull and a team that was willing to change and had the discipline not to organise anything outside SAP anymore.

In the past, lots of informal connections were made to get things done 'quickly' often even outside SAP. In other words, there was no structured process used to work together. In the 'Where I fit in' workshop, all different roles to be played came together. From that point onwards, all people in the process were involved (factor 5), and the people realised that it was not just about using the system, it was about them working together.

Furthermore, the user centered approach (factor 7) has contributed largely to the reinforcing loop. This approach was an extension of the belief that improving a SAP implementation is all about people. The real user centered approach was realised through involving everyone, and take everyone seriously including requesting individual feedback and was supported by the belief that behaviours and beliefs are key. Lots of effort has been taken to connect to the users both in their content and in their process. For example by having workshops not last longer than one hour and organising the workshops for the night shift at night.

However, a user centered approach is not the only key factor for the reinforcing loop to develop. Also the fact that people were allowed to experiment, make mistakes and to learn from that has been very important. A learning oriented approach (factor 6) has enabled learning by discovery both on the job and through formal training. The atmosphere of appreciation has shaped a fruitful context and content of ambition, possibilities and quick wins.

Making it personal for yourself and the others involved affects the quality of work

Such a learning oriented approach is quite unique in an environment which is often result driven. The active support from management (factor 1) has played a crucial role in this. The management has given trust and created space for the team and the staff at Den Helder to learn and improve even during a temporary decrease of performance. Despite the drive of the organisation to move on and outroll results, the management has protected the Den Helder Showcase until the end among others to keep time and resources available.

At the same time it took a powerful and diverse team (factor 2) to realise it all. For example the time and resources were not automatically kept available by management until the end. This sometimes took strong efforts of the team leader. As time went on it became more and more clear to both the organisation and it's management that the project team was a strong team with competent members which had a shared confidence in success and showed commitment and had an inspiring enthusiasm. A systematic way of working (factor 3) has been a supporting factor for success. For example, a good preparation, investing in visibility of results and impact (PR of the process) and enabling the people of Den Helder to start to work from a real workflow process paid off in the end.

Why did the reinforcing success factors build up?

Most striking result was the almost impossible congruency in the causes and effects of the wheel (figure 1). The researchers had never before seen such a firm connection between the principles or beliefs of the team members and their way of acting. Everything fit together and all clichés were right: practice what you preach, do what your heart is at and walk the talk.

The conclusions helped translate the crucial factors that were experienced into a congruent and attracting story. But it turned out to be insufficient: just telling the story simply wasn't enough to show people how the showcase-approach had worked. It explained how it was done, and what was needed to get it done, but not how and why it actually worked. Words like 'authenticity', 'management support' and 'belief' provoked an understanding that left too much space for people to interpret it their own way. Most heard response: "Great to know, now let's roll it out and synchronise!". And that was exactly the key-problem: this approach was not something to simply copy-paste. And further more: it's not an approach that can be specified into ten 'to do's', which you just have to carry out. Just putting the tick in the box doesn't do it when it's about congruency, belief and authenticity!

Not only the people involved got curious to know more about their own approach; the researcher who had conducted the evaluation also wanted to know more about the underlying truths, beliefs and principles of this successful approach. Not to answer to the need of rolling out and synchronising, but to learn from the interconnected mechanisms that lie underneath. And so we sat down to augment the conclusions so far.

The power of authenticity

What we knew so far is that the core of the success was the belief of the showcase-team that it was about people understanding SAP. That shared belief was what made them authentic, a quality that appeared to be crucial for the success.

But what does authenticity mean? What's it about and how do you get it? And... who do you need for it?

Discussing this team-quality we found out that it actually doesn't concern a team-thing. Authenticity is a personal thing, which goes much further than believing in the effects of your job or being happy in your company. It's about the individual attitude in life, the goals or vision one has. An intrinsic motivation to do things a certain way. In further deepening the understanding of sources of authenticity in this specific team ,

we discovered four criticalities:

- making it personal, 'it's about you and me'
- self-consciousness and considering yourself as a whole
- following your personal point of view in life, reaching your goals
- contamination: making others enthusiastic enthusing and become enthusiastic

Let's have a look at these four elements one by one.

Making it personal, it's about you and me

What links all five elements together is the personal aspect. That personal part interrelates with authenticity: we consider both terms to be closely interlinked. Authenticity is about being similar to 'the original', therefore being true and reliable. The personal aspect concerns having a specific, own character. We state that someone operating from his true character (partly formed by beliefs) will treat others in a way he feels is the best way to act within life. In that way of acting, he stays true to his own 'original' and does not act upon hidden agenda's or implicit expectations. Subsequently, making things personal and being authentic can't go without each other: by doing the one, you enhance the other. Within cooperation people partly choose to what extent they are willing to be personal, which results in a degree of authenticity. Once the authenticity is maximal, the extent of making it personal is maximal as well: then it just is personal.

Coming from this point of view, the 100% authenticity of the team members made us curious to know how they got to choose to be so personally connected and involved in this project. We discovered that the extent to what people are willing to be personal, or – in that sense – are able to act authentically, parallels with a defining moment in someone's life. Whether it's a positive one (like the birth of a child or finding your perfect match) or a sad one (like the loss of one's parents), often these events make a difference in one's life. Experiences like that influence the way you look at the world and encourage a form of pureness: if something defining like that happens, lots of other things become less relevant. It shifts

It also appears to be crucial to bring in all the aspects of yourself

out those things that truly matter to you, which stimulates openness and straightforwardness. One of the team members put this as follows: "The effect of a defining moment is like: 'who cares?' It helps to put things in perspective and let go of some hidden agendas." With that extent of personal approach, the degree of authenticity grows.

The effect of making things personal partly affects the quality of work: when things truly matter to you, commitment, involvement and ownership will appear naturally and will help you to stay focused, work hard and stay enthusiastic.

The downside of this element is that things will also personally affect you when it doesn't work out the way you wanted it to. For instance when management doesn't seem to understand your point of view and chooses another direction. Or when the results of your plan are less successful than you expected. "Those things hurt me personally, it might keep me awake at night", one of the team members says.

Self-consciousness and considering yourself as a whole

Linked to the element of making it personal, is the consideration that it's YOU who is part of a project or a team. It's not just a part of you, or you representing a specific function. It's you, with all your own aspects: your character, your experiences, your humour, your fears: "I stand there as a whole, there are no distinctions left between work and private, the person or the function, because it is ME." A striking aspect of this self-consciousness is that it grows, once it's there. People will recognize your authenticity and feed it, for instance by compliments or handing their own personal ideas. Here it becomes an interactive process in which authenticity is being rewarded with authenticity, which entices you to be authentic later on as well.

Following your personal point of view in life, reaching your goals

Of course, making things personal and considering yourself as a whole in your actions, automatically connects to one's personal beliefs and principles. That is also a strongly showing element of authenticity in this case: "The strong belief that this is about people, I want to help them to better fulfil their daily job.", say almost all of the team members at different moments in time. It's the power of the second sentence that underlines this element: I want to achieve that, it's my personal goal.

Contamination: enthusing others and being enthused

But if it's all about personal goals of the people involved, how can there be a team? That's where the element of contamination comes in, which consists of two aspects in this case: the enthusiasm of that specific person and the factual effects of the approach taken. "I got contaminated by the team members: they were all radiating an energy of fun and joy. And I noticed things were working: there were quite some successes already achieved.", one team member analyses. Other team members agree on this: seeing the approach work out successfully is a huge stimulus. And simultaneously it's about the feedback from the people involved, and their enthusiasm. In short: it's about being able to enthuse others and being enthused yourself. Therefore, in terms of authenticity and belief, in the Den Helder Showcase, the team should be seen as a bigger group than the core-team. The inspiring enthusiasm has spread like a virus. It has both strengthened the team and also contaminated the other people involved.

Team consistency

If authenticity is such a personal thing, where does team-authenticity come from? We already noticed that in this case there was a shared belief in the approach coming from the same principles, which has lead to the striking congruency. But how is that established?

We find this shared belief in the core of the circle (see introduction): the element of people. There was a shared vision real change is about people and their beliefs. That one

By making it personal and bringing in your entire 'package', you are also allowed to state your own goals

yellow card hadn't been identified by the researchers, it was added by the team members during a validation session and covers a whole world of other beliefs and convictions about life and human beings. One other belief that the team members – implicitly – all agree upon, is the thought that performance and achievements can't be improved by management alone. Just steering and controlling won't work, it's about facilitating, helping and listening, all team members think.

Everybody agreed upon these explicit and implicit beliefs, no discussion was necessary. Looking closer to that event, we see the profoundness of the conviction. It isn't something that was trained, drilled by the company or copied as an approach, but a core belief of every team member from which the entire approach was designed. Building on individual authenticity from different sources, each person involved in the team has applied his own skills from that belief. Having congruency and diversity at the same time has been an important strength.

This design might not even be that explicit or conscious. Without consciously knowing what you're doing you end up with the same approach over and over again. And only after several of those experiences, you'll be able to recognize it and say: 'of course that's where we ended up again!'. That's a cycle of doing, reflecting upon it and only then being able to express it in words. . It states that sometimes people just do things because it's compliant with who they are. And only by reflecting (i.e.: looking back) on those events and behaviours, one can find words to describe the whats, hows and why's.

The outroll: copying authenticity...?

In the longer term, the Den Helder Showcase has proven to have

significant impact on both soft and hard factors. The motivation of individuals and pleasure in their work has increased. They now come to a point that they are really proud of doing a good job and have 'their' facilities operating reliably. Furthermore, also the key performance indicators increased sustainable and the project has won an award for 'best managed project 2006'. Knowing what the potential of a successful change journey is, the demand for replication grew.

With the above we find some elements that explain and elaborate upon the power of a consistent and authentic team. Obviously, that is only one part of the whole story: The evaluation has gathered reinforcing success factors of the Den Helder Showcase. Other parts can be found in the wheel (figure 1), such as active support from the management, a perceived urgency to change and a learning oriented approach. What we found is that the team-authenticity can contribute to realising those other factors. By being conscious of how to enforce your team-strengths, you become better in finding (management) support or in working with the people involved. To organise that, a strong approach is necessary, with the space, time and budget to really work with each other, the SAP-users, the managers and other stakeholders.

7 What we try to show here is that team-consistency is not something that just happens to you, it is a way of working and connecting with all people involved. On the other hand, topics like authenticity, trust en making things personal aren't easy to explain and design. Even more, presentation or summaries about these topics has its pitfall. We found that in using the wheel: reading the words, people easily concluded that all ingredients were (still) there which made it clear what to do and therefore encouraged to continue and accelerate, using the 'checklist' that the evaluation delivered. Not only the wheel was perceived as a checklist, as was the approach itself. For example the 'Where I fit in' workshop was simply copied by others without really understanding the intent and embracing the entire methodology.

The team was – because of the success of the showcase – invited to show their skills again with another department of

Making others enthusiastic and become enthused yourself is crucial to create the team-consistency

people who were having trouble with the use of SAP. Then lots of things happened in a short amount of time: management considered the Den Helder-approach as a pilot, meaning that the next time it would be used it could be done faster and more efficiently. The project team felt the demands would have an effect on the success, but continued anyway. Because of the size of the next project, some new team members joined in. And this time, the approach wouldn't be used on an onshore but an offshore context, with a more international character and operating in another culture. Things happened fast: time and budget were limited down, support of the management was therefore less felt (or given less attention by the project team), the composition of the team changed, the external factors like culture, language and working rhythm were totally different. And the showcase-approach just didn't do as well as earlier...

In this article we show why that doesn't work: copying a success is not as easy as it seems. First of all there are the characteristics of a context: although the wheel has proven to be right for the Den Helder-situations, this doesn't mean the success factors work in the same way or sequence in a different culture. And besides that: you can't just copy or multiply something intangible as authenticity. How about the elements of having experienced a defining moment as a person, finding a team of individuals that implicitly have the same beliefs, having team members that are able to enthuse and be enthused. We now know what success factors played a role and why they worked that way. Within that understanding we again found four criticalities that influence the working of the underlying

mechanism. Which leaves us with another question. The elements of the wheel can be arranged and organised, but can we copy the authenticity of the core-team and the people involved as easily as that ? Knowing the elements might not be enough to truly conduct them...

Conclusion

With this article we discuss four elements that appear to be crucial in the authenticity of a team:

- making it personal, 'it's about you and me'
- self-consciousness and considering yourself as a whole
- following your personal point of view in life, reaching your goals
- contamination: making others enthusiastic and becoming enthusiastic

In retrospect we can identify these four as the underlying mechanisms that enhance the authenticity which in this case has shown to be very effective to implement a change of behavior. That doesn't automatically mean that these elements can also be used as a prescription: you can't just organize self-consciousness or arrange for everyone to feel personally involved. Authenticity simply can't be arranged formally: just knowing the elements is insufficient. A copy-paste approach doesn't do, once it's about people...

What you can do in a change project where you are willing to focus on the people is be aware of the importance of these elements. Ask your team members and yourself what makes this project interesting for them, talk about the personal points of view and stay in touch with the person that is 'behind' the team role. Focussing on people also means focussing on the people in the team and taking care of each other by continuously linking to everyone's personal interest. This doesn't always have to happen explicitly by talking about it in the group or by making it the opening agenda-topic; you can also use more informal ways, like the coffee-machine talks, your intuition, being each other's sparring-partner or reading someone's body language.

Research methodology and approach

This article has been developed by combining insights gathered during two ranges of interviews. The first round of interviews was held with Den Helder staff, team members and management and has resulted in figure 1 (reinforcing success factors of the Den Helder showcase). This was the initial action-research that is referred to in the article. It was conducted on request of the project leader of the showcase-project, to evaluate and define the success factors, as a way to gain insights for further SAP change projects within the organizations.

Based on these findings, the case has been further studied through an in-depth interview with some of the team members, Jurry Swart (team leader), Harm-Jan Smit, Elmer Koene and Lars Rengersen and was conducted by Marloes van Rooij, the researcher also involved in the initiate action-research. Analyzing this in-depth group interview has resulted in the insights regarding consistent team-authenticity: it explores several reasons and factors that make the reinforcing factors of figure 1 build up and what authenticity has got to do with that.

Organisational change at Shell

One of the projects of organizational change at Shell is installing SAP (Systems

Applications and Products) technology in Shell Exploration and Production (EP) under the name SAP Blueprint. SAP is supposed to integrate all business functions into one globally standardized system. In January 2005, in NAM the new ERP system was installed and went live. In this first stage, a company may experience a 3- to 6-month productivity decline, because of the need for redefining jobs and establishing new procedures. People need to get used to new roles and adjusted user interfaces, therefore, before enhanced use can pay off, the use of SAP Blueprint will have to stabilize to reach the previous performance level: the so-called 'valley of despair'.

Overcome the valley of despair

In the implementation-project within Shell, there were similar phases. After a couple of months the management realized that something sustainable had to be done to improve performance. The use of SAP Blueprint was expected to have a key role. Therefore the management team created time and budget to organize a focused operation to improve performance and set an example.

The target for this business improvement project was to implement the deliverables of the SAP optimization team, which can be summarized as:

1. Standardized use of SAP
2. Efficient use of SAP integrated in the ways of working
3. Improved compliance with integrity standard of Shell

Within NAM, the Den Helder gas plant was chosen to perform a showcase. The reasons to choose for this location and installation were:

- Easy access
- Ring fenced operation
- Several years of legacy SAP experience
- Committed Asset Leader and Operations Manager

- Asset based resources to support the showcase effort (business driven)

The Den Helder showcase

The approach that was taken for the Den Helder showcase was to focus on creating an understanding of the intent rather than only on the skills, to move away from 'SAP Blueprint as a burden' to 'SAP Blueprint as an enabler', and to focus at people: it is about people working together.

A project team was put up to facilitate the change process within the showcase, building on specific individual skills and competences with very different backgrounds. In the end, the team was a mixture of people working for Shell, Accenture, Stork (AJS) and Monito.

At that stage, the approach was known, but the question "How to create the pull?" remained especially with an organization still struggling to improve. The project team started with unstructured interviews with a wide variety of Den Helder staff to get insight about; what is going on. how do people feel, where is the pain, what kind of discussions are taking place, and how is the communication between individuals? Some remarkable findings came out. The interviews revealed that the people believed that SAP Blueprint was an administrative system which was not part of their job since it was a finance system. Furthermore they believed there were no benefits of the system and if you did not send e-mails, nothing gets done. As a result of this, the behavior observed was that there was no interest, people did send e-mails to get action, and there was irritation and a 'throw it over the fence'-pattern. After the interviews and observations, the project team started preparing the showcase knowing exactly what the beliefs and behaviors of the people concerned were.

The approach taken

To turn these behaviors around, the underlying beliefs had to be challenged and addressed. Therefore the first

sessions were only about users to build user involvement and had nothing to do with SAP tasks and -skills.

Proposition workshop

For the Den Helder Showcase, an important phase in building user involvement has been the proposition workshop. This session mainly focused on listening to the people in Den Helder and their issues and problems with SAP and using the system. Later on, based on their comments the facilitators formulated a respond. Other ways of looking at working with SAP were presented, like:

"It's madness - not using SAP is like doing the dishes when you have got a dishwasher."

The people in Den Helder choose a theme that best reflected the situation they were in.

"Know more - The more you use SAP, the more rewarding it becomes."

By choosing the theme that reflected their situation and needs, they had 'boarded' and the pull was created.

Individual success measures

On top of the general targets to implement the deliverables of the SAP optimization team, each individual of the organization in Den Helder was involved by asking what their individual success criteria were. During the entire project the project team was working on solving these issues. Once solved (according to the project team), the owner of the issue was asked whether it was solved indeed. Only after approval of the person that brought up the issue it was marked as a success. All success measures including their status were publicly presented using posters continuously.

Process and content workshops

After that a number of workshops was conducted. First of all, the 'where I fit in workshop' was held. This workshop still had nothing to do with SAP tasks, but was about people working together. In this workshop, the people realised that it was all about them working together and not just about

using SAP. From that point on, they perceived SAP as a tool to work together, and a number of content workshops was held where tasks and skills were treated. Each of these workshops were focused on the needs of their audience and were designed and organised in such way that they matched their working pattern. For example, none of the workshops took more than two hours, not to disturb the regular work too much. Furthermore, the workshop for the nightshift was held in the evening, etcetera.

On top of that thorough project communication and the development of process performance indicators took place.