The Company: Bigelow Inc.

Bigelow Inc. is a leading supplies company, providing consolidated and “Just in Time” deliveries of parts and supplies to their clients. While they have been established for some time as a parts and supplies provider, their new specialty is to do inventory management for their clients. This service entails providing delivery of all parts or supplies needed for a process “Just in Time”. The new service has caused rapid growth over the last five years, as well as an expansion in their manner of operation. Whereas before the new service, they employed an inside sales team (call center and warehouse sales), they now also have a large and growing outside sales force.

As a result of their success, Bigelow has expanded from several hundred employees five years ago, to over three thousand today. The rapid expansion has had an effect on the company’s internal HR processes. During the expansion, things occurred so rapidly that Human Resources was forced to work in “Reaction” mode. People were running hard just to “get things done” and were unable to plan out many of the changes necessary. Now, in the present economy, things have slowed down enough for the HR Department to take a look around. What they see are people working very hard to make things go well, but being up against a system that has them somewhat compartmentalized in their activities, often simply “throwing it over the wall” to the next person, and being frustrated when things don’t happen right. The results are errors and rework. While everyone works very hard to make their HR Department work well, they would like to find a way to make things go better, and their work a little easier.

Their problem is complicated by their Information Systems. At the time that the expansion began, their Human Resources Information Systems were outsourced. The outsourced system was on an older mainframe. They decided to bring the systems in-house, and implemented an up-to-date HR Management System. In general, the system works well, but there are some problems; the original conversion of data from the outsourced system did not go well, so that some of the older data is questionable. As well, some of the present way things get done in Human Resources conflict with the way that the system is designed to work, causing additional data problems. This leads to even more errors and rework in addition to what was mentioned above.

You have been called in as the Project Manager to help Bigelow Inc. solve these problems. They do not have an employee with the time or Project Management experience to lead them through a corrective action. The emphasis of your involvement will be on leading the project, managing both Bigelow employees and vendors (if necessary). Bigelow approach to Project Management has been Fire, Ready, AIM! However, your contact wants to improve on this, so you have been given the go-ahead to employ any and all project management methods and tools as you see necessary, and to expect full cooperation from both employees and vendors.
Business Process Improvement

When a firm wishes to improve or reengineer a series of processes, there is a series of activities that can be used to accomplish the task. The general framework for the process is as follows:

- You need to gain a good understanding of where you are. You cannot improve what you don’t understand. This means documenting the Present State of the processes that you wish to improve.
- You need to know where you want to go. You must create a detailed presentation of what the future processes will look like and how they will operate.
- You must have an implementation plan for change. Change is never easy in an organization; so proper planning for the change is a must. Planning will include how the changes will be implemented, how the communications will be communicated, and any necessary training.

Often, the action plan to complete process improvement involves a series of workshops involving key players in the business processes separated by short periods to incubate ideas, follow-up on data needs, measure and/or benchmark process areas, prepare documentation of decisions and process modifications and begin consensus building:

These meeting may include:

- Objectives meeting(s) to establish and gain consensus on key criteria and priorities for process improvement based on the company and department missions and desired culture, clearly stating which are ‘must haves’.
- Workshop(s) to identify interactions between existing processes, to document existing roles and responsibilities, and to ascertain gaps and specific targets for improvement.
- Workshop(s) to define the desired state, including ideal business process maps, new/modified roles and responsibilities, and specific, measurable goals for the new/modified processes.
- Workshop(s) to re-visit the proposed changes finalize process maps and roles/responsibilities, identify modifications to information systems desired to support the changes, and outline how to implement and manage the business changes.

Other deliverables following the workshops include:

- A full implementation plan.
- A staff skills-assessment and a plan to address any gaps identified.
- A business change management plan, including how to align rewards/incentives to drive the desired behaviors and create incremental goals to demonstrate progress and imbed the changes into the culture. Completing the action plan will improve consistency/alignment with company values and mission, foster reduced process complexity and increased integration between related processes, and improve HRIS Data Processes, especially data quality by improving consistency and understanding.
There is some HR Business Process documentation available. The documentation is not complete, and in some cases, none exists. Several processes are documented more than once by different groups, and contain conflicts.
Bigelow Data Problems

One of the sources of Bigelow’s data problems came from their conversion from a legacy mainframe system that did only payroll, to an integrated HR system that handles all HR processes. At the time the system was implemented, the historical data in the old system (Payroll Maker) was converted to a new format and uploaded to the new system (HRData). At the time, the problems were not detected. More recently, employees began to detect problems in their history data in HRData. In a preliminary study of the situation, IS discovered that there were three distinct set of data in HRData (see illustration below):

1. The original data imported from Payroll Maker.
2. Additional historical data which was collected through the normal use of HRData
3. Current data which exists in HRData

IS also discovered that both layers of historical data have problems. They believe that the data problems occurring in the historical data which has been collected since the conversion to HRData may have two sources: first, incorrect entries that occur during HR Business processes, and secondly, incorrect setting in the HRData System.
Further study will be needed to solve the problem, however, you do have the following resources:

1. The original code for the program that converted the data from Payroll Maker to HRData.
2. The original data from Payroll Maker (which is correct, having been cleaned before the conversion).
3. Approval to use a consulting firm (System, Inc.) which has expertise in the HRData systems and database.
4. Data table maps between Payroll Maker and HRData.