Perception of Reenergizing Libraries in Today's Environment

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Abstract: Library Science profession today is at a crossroad of diversified factors involving management of several different tasks previously not handled. Quality management concepts and methods have begun to penetrate in the libraries. Reengineering is one of the various quality management techniques that can be used in a library to satisfy and enhance customer services. Reengineering means not only change but dramatic change. What constitutes dramatic change is the overhaul of organizational structures, management systems, employee responsibilities & performance measurements, skills development and the use of information technology. In this paper author elaborates a complete review of reengineering process, its principles and phases. In the end a conclusion is drawn by stating the essentials for a successful reengineering process implementation.

Introduction

In The practice of Quality Management in Library & Information Science sector existed since the evolution of the subject itself, but the terminology used for these varied widely. Performance indicators; performance evaluation; evaluation of reference sources using check-list of criteria; Evaluation of Information Retrieval systems using Precision and Recall rations; Cost-Benefit and cost effectiveness studies; user surveys electing opinions on library services - all these studies make part and parcel of Quality Studies using different mechanisms of assessment and methodologies.

The literature review reveals the use of various quality management techniques in academic libraries across the world. But less evidence have been reported the use of reengineering approach to the libraries.

"Reengineering is the fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of processes to achieve dramatic improvements in critical, contemporary measures of performance, such as cost, quality, service, and speed." (Hammer, 1990)

Davenport (1993) performed research in this area, asking questions, through his work at Ernst & Young's Center for Information Technology and Strategy. By examining companies that were redesigning processes, he gathered information on methods and practices which led to the successful implementation of what he called Process Innovation.

Although slightly different, both Reengineering and Process Innovation address the concept of redesigning that is how organizations perform strategic processes? In fact, both approaches shared a number of core activities. Because processes were at the heart of these management philosophies, the term reengineering was adopted to describe these efforts (Finkelstein, 1994). Since then, a myriad of books, articles, seminars, workshops, and computer tools have been developed by academicians, management consultants, and software developers to help organizations actually perform reengineering.

Today, many organizations have acquired extensive experience in performing reengineering. Many of these experts are still not in agreement on every activity necessary for performing reengineering; yet, the core activities have remained stable during the continuous debate. The disagreements may be due to the uniqueness of each organization or sector i.e. manufacturing or service. Because organizations differ, the activities necessary to successfully perform reengineering may also differ (Grover & Malhotra, 1995).

This paper details the activities identified by experts to be necessary for success in performing reengineering. The methods commonly accepted by most reengineering experts as the core of successful reengineering are illustrated. In addition, optional activities proposed by a variety of library launching firms who have had success assisting their clients with reengineering are also included. These methods, procedures and tasks are identified to help institutes decide how they should perform reengineering to meet the unique needs of their people and culture (Hall, Rosenthal & Wade, 1994).

Reengineering Principles

Listed below are the principles of the reengineering (Harrison & Pratt, 1993).

- Several jobs are combined into one;

- Staff make decisions;

- The steps in a process are performed in a natural order;

- Processes have multiple versions;

- Work is performed where it makes the most sense;

- Checks and controls are reduced;

- Reconciliation is minimized;

- Hybrid centralized/decentralized operations are prevalent.

Seven R's of Reengineering

Reorchestrate

It works as central theme for all the activity of reengineering. Its purpose is to bring about necessary change for reengineering. It includes transferring institute from traditional hierarchical institute to network base organization and reengineering of few or more cross functional organizational process.

Realization

It involves 'why' in the problem. 'Why do we do this the way we are doing it now?' 'What can be done which change the situation'? These questions probably results in the conclusion that radical improvement is needed. It starts with the careful SWOT analysis (strength, weakness, opportunity, threat).

Requirement

It is second phase of reengineering process. It involves realigning vision and few requirements to satisfy and access to customer satisfaction. Reengineering effort must not start without requirement analysis for customer, product, service etc.

Rethink

It involves critical examination of all current and existing condition of an enterprise. It has special focus on process weakness and variation. Critical analysis of an outdated process, procedure, technology and method has to be determined in this step.

Redesign

For any reengineering effort redesign of an enterprise has to be well planned. The redesign should involve breaking conventional rules through rethinking. It should be set around visionary goals for enterprise. Redesign effectiveness can be enhanced through IT and ERP facilities in deciding the framework for redesign (Martin, 1995) & (Petrozzo, Daniel, Stepper & John, 1994).

Retooling

Purpose of retooling is to ensure that the involving enterprise would become more responsive to the reengineering effort necessary to minimize the inflexibility after reengineering project (Andrews & Susan, 1994). It involves the evolution and adaptation of more comparative system such as technology requirement to improve services. It is not casual and quick fit process. It involves care full monitoring and documenting the characteristics of process for new tool such as ERP technology and service.

Reevaluate

It is final phase of reengineering. It involves the reevaluation of enterprises process to ensure that once the redesign and retooling efforts are over the evolved process has attain the requisite objective.

Conclusion

Higher education in Library and Information Science needs to address the issue of teaching students how to learn and implement new ideas, new concepts, and develop an attitude to have a desire to continue to learn throughout the working career. Quality Management is not merely sophistication of equipment but it is managing the change which needs a change in philosophy and developing right attitude. Successful reengineering can result in enormous reductions in customer complaints. It can also potentially create substantial improvements in quality, customer service. The promise of Reengineering is not empty but it can actually produce revolutionary improvements for libraries also.

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