



## Magus Networker and improving productivity

### Efficiency, effectiveness or productivity?

The Magus Networker productivity application has a specific focus, and it is neither efficiency nor effectiveness. Loosely, efficiency can be defined as the ratio of output to input. Effectiveness is where the output has appropriate value. In Magus Networker terms, productivity is about delivering high needed value for minimum input. In short, productivity is about getting more value for less. Even more specifically, Magus Networker is concerned with the productivity of people doing tasks within an organisation.

Creating high productivity organisations has three dimensions – changing process design and practice; ongoing incremental changes in work practices; and a culture that enables the other two to happen.

#### Process performance

Developing highly productive processes is relatively straightforward. Key rules are about linking process outputs to a sound strategy; having appropriate functions within the process design; having good linkages between different functions; having clear goals for all functions; having few interfaces between functions and managing them well; and defining clear standards throughout to maximise quality and minimise rework.

Nothing new in that – the list is really just a quick summary of the business process re-engineering model. But there is a snag. It was eloquently expressed by Thomas H Davenport, one of the original proponents of BPR, as “The fad that forgot people”. In other words, if all the design elements of a good process are in place, will the people have the physical, intellectual and emotional capacity to achieve their job goals? Because if the answer is NO, then success will not follow. The Magus Networker application deals with the challenge of engaging people, across organisational boundaries, in process design and management.

#### Continuous productivity improvement

Dramatic changes can lead to dramatic improvements in performance, subject to the caveat noted above, but perfect new solutions seldom arise first time, every time. There is a need for ongoing, incremental change in process design and work practices. Without this, new process designs will never achieve their full potential.

In other words, while BPR might represent the opportunity to 'win by miles', there is still a need to continue to 'win by inches'. Both need existing designs and practices to be challenged, and both need people to be able to innovate, and that leads on to the third dimension, and means that the 'fad that forgot people' trap will be avoided. The Magus Networker productivity application covers this dimension.

#### An enabling culture

Challenging existing designs and work practices, in effect, means challenging earlier management decisions. Thinking up original ways of working, and implementing them – innovating – is by definition risky. If either the challenge or the innovation are perceived as leading to 'having your card marked' - as career threatening, then the idea of serious productivity gains is just wishful thinking.

*“... if the workforce were guaranteed that any improvements they made would not lead to redundancies, most British firms, at least, could probably become between 25% and 50% more effective without spending any money.” Joynson and Forrester + Keith Grint*

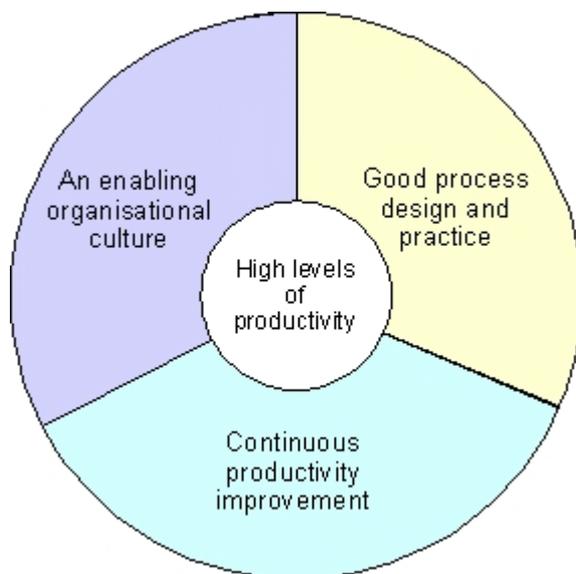
So the challenge is to develop an organisational culture in which people are empowered to challenge and make changes – which is a fundamental part of the Magus Networker intervention design.

## Magus Networker

An overarching goal of Magus Networker is to provide very good information to people that enables them to interpret the information, develop key insights into the nature of the performance problems being experienced, and to work out solutions to those problems in a safe environment. It is all about stimulating an organic change process that continues long after the formal part of the intervention. High levels of engagement are achieved through the front end design, that captures hidden issues that limit peoples' ability to be more productive. This continues through carefully focused briefing sessions, and onto interactive workshops involving all participants in the exercise. The specific focus of the workshops is to generate actions, through an informed review of the issues and causes. Latent energy and talent are released and directed towards the resolution of priority organisational performance problems.

*"... the solutions to most organisational problems are already known to the workers – but their bosses prevent them from implementing them."*  
Joynson and Forrester (1995) + Grint  
(Fuzzy Management - 2001)

Conventionally, Magus Networker is custom-configured by the user for each problem resolution / organisational development application. Now the developers of Magus Networker have designed an application specifically targeting the issue of developing improved productivity. This is in the form of a template that can, however, still be adapted to the specific needs of each organisation. The Magus Networker process uses the front-end analysis to enable this adaptation, and the design of the group.



The design of the 'improving productivity' application uses extensive research into the three dimensions of productivity gains. It deals with both systemic and cultural drivers of emergent order, with the question set focused very specifically on productivity improvements.

As with all Magus Networker applications, the information generated is self-validating – it is beyond challenge. Faced with a 'real-world' description of the current state, people develop insights that enable hidden heroes to be identified; gaps in information and communication networks to be located; blockages to productivity gains to be actioned. As organisational constraints on productivity gains are identified by a process of cross-functional review, the conditions needed for innovative problem resolution are automatically in place.

Magus Networker is part of a complete methodology for resolving organisational problems and developing greater performance. It handles complex data sets with ease, providing powerful insights into the nature of the problem, and its causes. It does this through graphical reports presented as network charts, that illuminate all the complex working relationships, formal and informal, that actually drive organisational performance. The Magus Networker process enables many people to be engaged, through open dialogue, with their attention focused on the issues, causes and actions illuminated through the network charts.

As with all Magus Networker applications, the process is fast, requiring weeks, not months. Developmental action flows automatically from the analyses for cause. These actions include those taken by delegates to the Magus Networker workshops, and by the people in management roles who sponsored the process. By default, priorities are determined according to the goals agreed at the start of the process.

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