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Flury, Morgan M. ***Streamlining Private Class and University Program Creation Processes***

Abstract

Company XYZ needed to streamline processes for private class and university partnership program creation after a merger. Before the merger, the two processes were very different and after consolidating the teams, two employees were doing the same type of work but with very different processes. In order to streamline the processes, a project team was formed to meet weekly over six weeks to determine a final process. To create the final process maps, the project team used lean standards. Once the final processes were created, they were documented and then the two employees split the duties in half. One coordinator took ownership of private classes and the other took ownership of university partnerships, and then both cross-trained and trained other stakeholders, including but not limited to sales and support.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter I: Introduction

Company XYZ, name has been withheld to protect confidentiality, is an educational provider for a variety of product lines and professions, including financial services, real estate, and wealth management. The main focus of the company is exam prep materials sold to consumers, businesses, and universities. Although the business to consumer portion of the organization historically was the largest contribution to sales, Company XYZ has begun to rely on partnerships with corporations and more specifically, universities, to grow the business. Over the past few years, Company XYZ has seen tremendous amounts of growth through mergers and acquisitions. Additionally, the industries Company XYZ serves have also seen exponential growth in the last seven years after the recession, which increased the demand for exam-based test preparation materials provided by the company. As a result of a recent acquisition, Company XYZ has streamlined and consolidated many roles and responsibilities. The recent acquisition of a previous competitor meant there was duplicates in almost every role, but there was not standard work for either groups.

Prior to the acquisition, Company XYZ provided programs in the wealth management product line for clients that could provide a guaranteed number of students for the program. The program had different program types that were customizable to the client. The customizations determined if the program was run in person traditional classes or online classes, as well as program structure. Company XYZ offered two different traditional class structures – four classes per module or eight classes per module. The acquired company offered a similar set up, but only to clients that presented a certain amount of revenue per year and a guaranteed number of students with less customization.

The program coordinator role from the acquired company was responsible for discounting products, marketing programs, and sending reports to client stakeholders. The existing program coordinator for Company XYZ was responsible for the entire program from start to finish. This included planning, scheduling, executing, creating the end product in the learning management system, and reporting for every private client traditional class and every traditional university program. Company XYZ's program coordinator dealt with more idiosyncrasies due to more customizable options and less restrictions on the needs from the client. Furthermore, both coordinators had similar programs with university partners, but different work between the two organizations.

As part of the merger, a business decision was made to keep both suites of products as they were set up for different paths for the student. Company XYZ offered a certificate path of education required to prepare for a financial services exam and the acquired company offered a graduate level education which would transfer into a master's program also offered by the organization. This meant that corporate partners interested in sending employees through the education had two program choices, but two very different processes and deliverables from their program choice. One program was more customizable and had more reporting capabilities, and one was more straightforward and allowed for graduate credit, with less customization and reporting.

As Company XYZ focused on streamlining content, it was important for the program coordinators to standardize their work and processes to best suit corporate and university partners. This would not only set up the corporate and university partner programs up for success but would also benefit Company XYZ's lean journey and make training easier for future hires.

Statement of the Problem

After a merger, Company XYZ found that there was not standard work for the corporate private class and university program coordinators. The duplicate roles for similar products did not follow the same processes and were cumbersome to cross-train on. To streamline the two companies, standard work was needed and created for the program coordinator role.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to create standard work for the program coordinator role. The goal of consolidating the two coordinator's roles was to have one point of contact for all corporate client programs and one contact for all university partner programs. In order to reach that goal, Company XYZ needed to create standard work across the two product versions of certificate versus graduate. Once the standard work was created, the two coordinators were able to cross-train and begin implementing the new changes across the newly-merged organization. The success of this integration was important to the success of Company XYZ's merger, and to the revenue for the wealth management product line.

The main purpose of the study was to create standard work for the program coordinator role. This step was crucial to the success of Company XYZ's partnerships. This step was completed in February 2019. After the first step was completed, the next step was to cross-train the two coordinators. This step was completed in March 2019. In order to remain successful and provide excellent service to all partners as a result of the merger, the step was to divide duties by corporate partners and university partners. This step allowed the coordinators to give more detailed and specialized focus to a smaller set of clients. This step was completed in April 2019.

Key stakeholders that assisted with creating the standard work included the current coordinators, sales managers, product set up, learning management system coordinators, delivery and supply chain specialists, and marketing specialists. Input from all sides was just as important as research on standard work as this was a new step in the lean journey for Company XYZ.

Assumptions of the Study

For this study, it was assumed that all parties were aware of the process to create standard work. All employees of Company XYZ undergo lean training as part of onboarding, and managers are required to have monthly meetings with the continuous improvement team on lean goals. There was not a refresher training prior to completing objective one. It is also assumed that the key contributors to the project were available for weekly facilitated meetings in order to succeed. The company's senior leadership team understood the importance of prioritizing this project, which also allowed for these employees to work overtime if needed in order to complete the project on time. Lastly, it is assumed that not all tasks could be planned for as part of this process and that new work may need to be completed as necessary.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are company specific terms.

Designations. Single-course offerings specialized in content. Includes designations on retirement, investment, and financial planning offered by Company XYZ.

Wealth management. Product line which includes financial services education and exam review packages and designation courses.

Limitations of the Study

Time was a limitation with this study. The coordinators were pressured to have the standard work completed before the end of quarter one 2019. This deadline was set from the extended leadership team, the merger go-team, and the continuous improvement team and was not very flexible. Due to this limitation, the senior leadership team approved overtime as necessary to meet these goals.

Another limitation was the loss of a key employee. In the process of completing objective one, the coordinator from the acquired company resigned, meaning the knowledge from the employee was lost. The remaining coordinator was left to create standard work procedures on the minimal cross training that was completed prior to the resignation. However, the work that had been completed was successful enough to allow for a smooth onboarding of the replacement.

Methodology

After review of existing literature and based on training provided by Company XYZ for company specific expectations, the team began work to create standard work. It began with cross-training between the two organizations. After both sides understood the day to day work of the other side, the team then worked to figure out which process would be kept, and which would no longer work in the new model. Once a decision on a process was made, it was mapped out to see what opportunities existed to make the process more lean. For processes that were not possible to improve because development work would be needed, the team submitted a development ticket. For processes that maximized lean concepts, the process was kept as is. This continued until all day to day tasks were completed.

Once all of the tasks were completed, the team worked with managers to schedule trainings. The sales representatives needed to be trained on the new processes, so they were aware of each step, what was required, and who to go to for help. The teams that would support the students also needed to be made aware of the processes should any questions arise from students. Additionally, other teams within the process needed to cross-train in case of employee turnover or vacations. Since so much emphasis went into creating the standard work process for private classes and university programs, it was essential that all teams understood what went into the process.

Finally, once the processes were created and the teams were trained, the coordinator roles were divided up. Looking at the processes and tasks, the newly hired coordinator and the existing coordinator worked with the manager to determine who would continue working with the private classes, or the corporate partnerships, and who would continue with the university partnerships moving forward. This was the final step of the project to ensure that both partners received the care and attention deserved for the revenue they provide to Company XYZ. Since the coordinators were now working with two full product lines for wealth management, Company XYZ could offer more to the partners to be successful. This also set up the wealth management product line up to move beyond exam and begin to foster the corporate and university relationships to grow revenue, which was a company goal for 2019.

Summary

As a result of a large merger, Company XYZ found duplicate processes which required standardization. Specifically, the program coordinator role for corporate and university partnerships had two employees previously doing similar work in different ways. These roles were responsible for working with partnerships that provided approximately one quarter of total

revenue for Company XYZ. It was necessary to combine the two roles and standardize the work in order to complete cross-training and provide adequate service to the company's important partners. The key contributors in the process worked diligently to make all processes as lean as possible before determining where the final processes and duties would end up. Unfortunately, through this process, one of the coordinators left Company XYZ so important knowledge and an extra resource was lost as part of this project. In the end, a new hire was able to be trained on newly improved processes. Additionally, after project completion, it allowed the team to provide proper backup and sustain daily support when part of the team was not in the office.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Companies face challenges in competition and customer attraction and retention. The rising cost of operations and staffing coupled with competitive industries has made mergers and acquisitions more common in the past five years. The process of going through a merger and acquisition can be lengthy and costly, but the final outcome determines the long-term success of the business.

Mergers and Acquisitions

Mergers and acquisitions are common business practices that require many decisions to be made. In the past seven years, American technology companies have seen large acquisitions, including Facebook buying Instagram for $1 Billion in 2012 and Apple buying Dr. Dre Beats for $3 Billion in 2016 (Rebner & Yeganeh, 2019). Rebner and Yeganeh (2019) predict that mergers and acquisitions will only be more common in the future as companies try to find similarities and new growth opportunities as technology expands. However, approximately half of all mergers and acquisitions are successful (Rebner & Yeganeh, 2019).

Rebner and Yeganeh (2019) split the process into three phases: pre-combination, legal combination, and post-combination. The analysis that happens in the pre-combination phase can be time consuming as it looks specifically at finances, operations, and culture of the company being acquired and how it will fit into the buying company (Rebner and Yeganeh, 2019). This step is where companies determine if this is a smart buying decision based on all of the information presented (Rebner & Yeganeh, 2019). Additionally, Rebner and Yeganeh (2019) state that one of the biggest reasons mergers fail is because of misalignment of cultural values. They recommend that executives, decision makers, and other types of employees dive deep into both sides of the deal and ensure there is a cultural fit holistically (Rebner & Yeganeh, 2019). In

post-combination phases is where most organizations find they are not aligned as well as it was hoped, and executives tend to react impulsively (Rebner & Yeganeh, 2019). However, following the ideals of getting deep into the ins and outs of both sides of the business early on in the process will lead to a more successful outcome.

Challenges. Outlined above, there can be many challenges in the process of mergers and acquisitions. Ahmadvand, Heidari, Hosseini, and Majdzadeh (2012) wrote about challenges three Iranian universities merged in 2010, stating that cultural and geographical differences were the biggest challenges faced. The three campuses ranged from 20 to 180 kilometers apart, and the physical separation caused stress across the three universities (Ahmadvand et al., 2012). To overcome this challenge, it was important to implement technology to allow for an intranet and videoconferencing (Ahmadvand et al., 2012). While challenges can arise, finding ways to diffuse the stressor and overcome it is critical to the overall success of the merger.

Success factors. Ahmadvand et al. (2012) also touched on success factors in the merger of the three universities, stating that integration allowed for the best scenario for students. As part of the merger outcome, all three universities integrated their programs and staff to create one entity. While the process was lengthy, it allowed for everyone, specifically students, to be successful in their studies (Ahmadvand et al., 2012).

Post-Merger Integration

While mergers themselves are stressful, the steps that are taken to make two organizations become one are crucial. Weber, Rachman-Moore, and Tarba (2012) talk about the transfer of knowledge from both sides, the acquired and acquiring companies, as part of merger integration. Essentially, both sides get together to learn and understand every process the other has (Weber et al., 2012). For example, if there are two separate teams working on similar work,

it is important for both teams to get together and cross-train on both processes. Once that step is completed, the teams can then work on streamlining and creating a new process that works for the benefit of the newly consolidated team (Weber et al., 2012). The knowledge transfer looks at technology, resources, and current capabilities as part of the initial process and usually is time consuming as there is team buy in needed in order to be successful (Weber et al., 2012).

Another key step in post-merger integration is working through staffing changes. Training is needed not only to transfer knowledge, but to train through staffing changes as a result of the merger (Weber et al., 2012). Sometimes in a merger, there is a reduction in workforce due to redundancies. There may also be promotions or demotions as new departments and positions are formed, or as old ones are eliminated. Furthermore, some staff members may choose to exit the organization as a result. All of these staffing change types are common in mergers, and organizations should plan for them (Weber et al., 2012). A good practice to follow is to have written training documents and have several experts in certain processes to be known as the go-to coworker for questions (Weber et al., 2012).

Standard Operating Procedures

Lean operations have been important to many organizations and industries in the past and are continually front of mind for many executives and managers. The principles used to make process improvements have saved organizations time and money and have grown in importance as technology has made advancements. Specifically, creating standard work, or standard operating procedures, companies are able to find and eliminate waste.

One step in lean operations is creating, perfecting, and following standard operating procedures. Standard operating procedures (SOPs) are usually step-by-step instructions on completing a task or process. They usually have enough detail that any person could pick up the

document and be able to complete the task with minimal training. According to Dowdy (2016), SOPs should be written logically, with background information, definitions, and then the procedure. However, it is important to not over-complicate the document.

When writing an SOP, it is best to use plain English rather than complicated terms, and us an easy to read font on a standard template (Barbé et al., 2016). Small and hard to read fonts make it more difficult for the person to quickly read the steps and complete the task or process, which defeats the purpose of lean operations. Some other tips to writing successful SOPs include writing in an active voice, use examples, use drawings as applicable, and using bulleted or numbered lists (Barbé et al., 2016). It is also important to test the document after it is written by having someone else go through it step-by-step to ensure the end result is what is expected (Barbé et al., 2016). When companies use standard operating procedures, they typically see less process malfunctions and increased production (Barbé et al., 2016).

SOPs have been key to reducing errors in processes. Most of the time, error comes from small variances in how the work is completed. For example, if an auto manufacturer is supposed to complete five rotations of a screw, and the employee only does four, there is a risk for error. While this can cause big issues in quality, the employee may not know they are impacting the final product (Grindrod, 2012). Creating SOPs, and training on them, do lessen risk of error and defects because they detail exactly what should happen at each step of the process, and it is consistent throughout each variation (Grindrod, 2012).

Examples of SOP Implementation and Impacts

Khatun et al. (2016) completed a study for a laboratory on a process for urine tests documented before and after implementing standard work. The team wanted to see if implementing SOPs would increase quality and decrease errors in the collection and examination

of urine samples. Before the SOPs were implemented, different laboratories had different processes, which means that results could differ on urine tests from facility to facility (Khatun et al., 2016). For this specific study, the team looked at testing and examination for those with urinary tract infections and how each lab would go through the microscopic examination. After outlining the process, which included collection, preservation, transportation, and examination, discrepancies of results found between labs dropped by over 10% (Khatun et al., 2016). In the end, the study found that this implementation was allowing for more reliable test results (Khatun et al., 2016).

Another example of a study was done for retail stores to see how standard work impacted turnover impacts. Ton and Huckman (2008) looked at over 250 stores over a four-year period and looked at turnover and store performance trends. The researchers also looked at which of the stores standardized processes and which did not as part of the evaluation (Ton & Huckman, 2008). Turnover, especially in retail, is inevitable, but companies can lessen the risk of employee turnover by having and following standard work. For the stores that had implemented and followed SOPs, they were less impacted by the turnover than those that did not (Ton & Huckman, 2008). Ton and Huckman (2008) found that since knowledge was easy to transfer because of the standard work, the stores with SOPs fared better in the long run as employees left the company.

Another good example was the creation of an SOP for researchers collecting informed consent from participants. Parikh et al. (2014) were working on a clinical trial in India, and since ethics were of utmost concern, the team wanted to ensure they were complying to ethical standards in their study. The team was collecting audio visual recordings for informed consent submissions for the clinical study participants, and there were new laws that were recently

passed that impacted the collection and storage of these files (Parikh et al., 2014). For legal and ethical compliance reasons, the team thought it would be best to create an SOP for retrieving, storing, and archiving the audio-visual informed consents (Parikh et al., 2014). In the process of creating the SOP, the team took feedback from users of the SOP as well as trying to find past precedence, but since this was new after legal changes, the team worked diligently to create precedence (Parikh et al., 2014). The end product of the study included guidelines, a checklist, and step-by-step instructions on the full process. The researchers hoped that the SOP would be sufficient for use around the world but emphasized that it may need revisions based on laws and regulations as well as language differences (Parikh et al., 2014).

Streamlining Processes

Another important step in standard work and lean operations is streamlining processes. As mentioned, some companies allow processes in several departments have too many variations, which allows for error and makes it more difficult to train employees. Nuances within a department's processes are unnecessary waste that can be eliminated through streamlining. Sometimes streamlining processes is an improvement to old processes that are made possible from new capabilities or technologies.

An example of streamlining a process is the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) review process. Since the FDA reviews an abundance of products every day, there is always opportunity to make the process better as technology advances. Desai, Maji, Walavalkar, and Mehta (2018) wrote about implementing a question-based review for part of the FDA's pharmaceutical drug approval process. The team that worked on this implementation felt it was necessary because the old process would be slowed down and felt that successful implementation would create consistent evaluation for all applications (Desai et al., 2018). While the

implementation of this process was actually adding more steps, it allowed for the process to improve quality and be more robust in the approval process (Desai et al., 2018).

Another example of streamlined process was used for doping disputes at the Olympics. Every Olympics, it seems doping accusations become more and more widespread, because of this the World Sports Organization needed to improve and streamline the arbitration process for doping scandals as it pertains to the Olympics (Chin, 2018). The 2016 Olympics in Rio included scandals of Russian athletes that were associated with a state-sponsored doping program. In several cases, athletes were sanctioned for violations of the anti-doping policy for a drug that was added to the list of banned substances in early 2016 (Chin, 2018). The athletes this impacted argued that they did not use the substance after it was added, but that it remained in their bloodstream and was the result of their failing drug test and appealed their sanctions (Chin, 2018). However, the issue was created because the governing body that initially ordered the sanction did not collaborate with other governing bodies before determining final decisions (Chin, 2018). The goal of the streamlined process was the ensure that all agencies were transparent and willing to collaborate when a future issue arises (Chin, 2018). Chin (2018) suggested three steps to improve this process: create one standard for all bodies, change the arbitrator selection process, and allow athletes a final appeal to a court. Implementing these changes takes the guesswork out of the equation for the many different agencies involved in the World Sports Organization as it pertains to the Olympics.

Summary

For a multitude of reasons, companies may enter into mergers and acquisitions. These processes are usually lengthy, stressful, and expensive. How a company's executive team reacts to unexpected changes as a result of a merger set the tone for how all levels of employees will

also react. Finding ways to work out compromised solutions without creating or adding to tensions is key to the overall success of the merger. Once the merger is completed, the post-merger integration steps for training is essential. Each side needs to understand the other as best as possible before improvements can be made.

Once processes are able to be improved upon, that is when companies can turn to standard work. Once the final process is determined, it should be documents through a written standard operating procedure (SOP). Once the document is completed, it should be reviewed and tested by several people to ensure there are no questions and it can easily be duplicated. This should be revised and retested as much as needed until the final document is agreed upon, or until there is a version update. The SOPs will help streamline processes that are duplicate efforts or improve on existing processes and are crucial for continuous improvement in any organization.

Chapter III: Methodology

As a result of an acquisition, Company XYZ had undergone immense change. It was determined that numerous departments were duplicating work tasks but followed different processes to get to the end product or service. Company XYZ's operational goal was always to focus on continuous improvement and operating in that fashion did not meet the goal. It was imperative to use lean principles to standardize the work and implement new processes to meet company goals. In the process of consolidating roles and departments post-merger, it became clear that the class coordinator role needed to be examined to improve and streamline processes.

Subject Selection and Description

The class coordinators department was the focus of the lean project. Immediately after the close of the acquisition, the two sales departments merged duties and re-assigned company account leadership. As the sales department restructured, it became apparent that the process for private corporate classes and university programs were similar, but the responsibilities were not. Company XYZ's sales department's primary focus was on increasing sales revenue, not on support activities such as managing corporate classes. Before the merger, the class coordinator from the acquired company was a jack of all trades and was often the first liaison for troubleshooting issues and other tasks that could not be completed within student support and marketing. Since the acquired company had less than 50 employees, the sales team stepped in on administrative tasks to lessen the workload of the class coordinator.

The project team had representation from both sides of the merger. The team included the two coordinators, their new manager, and two members of sales leadership. One month into the project, the coordinator from the acquired company left the organization. Additionally, the sales team was hiring for two new positions in business development. The final project team

included the existing coordinator, newly hired coordinator, coordinator manager, two existing sales leaders, and two new hire sales development specialists.

Instrumentation

The first deliverable was for the coordinators to determine their previous processes for creation, execution and reporting of private corporate programs and university partnership programs and provide the extended team with documentation. The process maps and were detailed enough that an employee with a general understanding of the operational systems and products could follow the steps and complete the process from start to finish. In order to create them, the coordinator and manager documented steps as the process was discussed. This was done during a weekly one-hour meeting until all processes were documented. For the most part, the process maps were already created, but needed updating to reflect changes because of the merger. The manager decided it was not the best use of time to visually watch the process, but to discuss the current state in a meeting to create and update documentation. In the meeting, undocumented processes were discussed, and each step identified. The workflow, timing, and teams involved in the process were mapped out until all steps and processes were documented. Once the coordinators finalized their process maps from before the project and supplied the team with a copy, the next step was to set a full team meeting which included a member of the continuous improvement team. This was the meeting which began the creation of the new process map.

During the initial meeting, the team discussed which version of the process map was going to be used moving forward based on company goals. At this point, the team looked at which process was the best practice and most effective in terms of time and money. This was done by talking through both processes and also looking at lead times before making final

decisions. Decisions that needed to be made included which department would own which portion of the process and which process made the most sense based on processes of other departments included. Once this step was completed, a new process map was created, see Figure 1 for sample of the process map. Each step needed to be detailed and explained at a desired state.

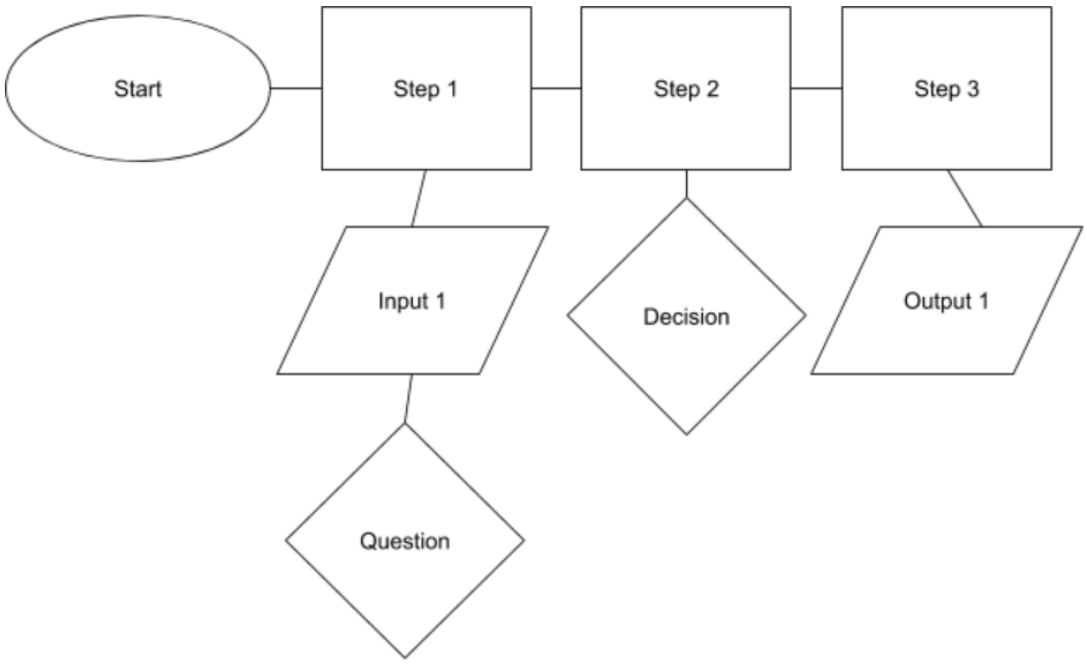

Figure 1. Sample process map.

After the first draft of the process map, the team was tasked to look at ways to automate any of the steps, or generally implement lean principles to ensure the process was the best it could be. When the team found a solution for automation that required development work, a development ticket was entered. Tasks that were repetitive and mundane in nature have the ability of automation in Company XYZ's internal systems. Therefore, these tickets needed to be explained in step by step detail for developers to duplicate within the system and create automations. There was not room for error as any missed detail would result in the task not

being automated correctly. These steps continued until all steps in the process were reviewed. The team meetings continued weekly for one hour over five weeks to review the process map. At any point if a step needed to be revised, it was reviewed for automation and lean opportunities.

Implementation

Once the final draft of the process map was created and reviewed for automation and lean initiatives, the next step of the project was to implement the process. It was important to cross-train on the two processes, private corporate classes and university programs, to allow for necessary duplication between the coordinators. It was decided that one coordinator would take primary lead on private corporate classes, and champion that process, and the other would take lead on university programs and champion that process.

Each process was well documented by writing detailed standard operating procedures (SOPs) for each activity. Before the meetings, there were some existing SOPs that required revision before completing the full SOP folder. The SOPs were then placed into a shared drive and a training directory was created. All of the SOPs were updated to reflect the new process maps that were created for efficiency and shortest lead time.

Lastly, once all steps were completed and ready for implementation with the coordinators and their manager, the sales department was trained on the steps. Half of the sales department was used to owning the full process, or at least being heavily involved, so it was crucial to the success of the coordinators that the team understood where they would be involved. It was important to stress the ownership of the tasks, so the right teams would be held accountable throughout the entire process.

Assumptions

It was assumed that everyone on the project team had a high understanding of lean principles. While our lean expert was the continuous improvement representative, all team members had been trained on how to create process maps, SOPs, and other lean principles. It is also assumed that teams were able to dedicate up to ten hours per week towards this project over the course of three months. The time and knowledge required of project members was crucial to the success of the project. In order for the class coordinators to meet operational goals and expectations, the processes of the department needed to be streamlined after the merger. Additionally, to prevent loss of knowledge in turnover, the department needed to document the final processes in detail in the SOP library with process maps.

Limitations

One limitation was working with three new-hire employees. Without prior knowledge, their input was beneficial in challenging how lean the process was. However, their limited knowledge made it difficult to make decisions that both sides of the merger would agree to. Another limitation included the timing. Senior leadership was applying pressure to the managers involved to speed up the process in order to report out on the merger integration. While the senior leadership team understood the challenges faced by this team, especially as it pertained to turnover, the team still was rushed to implement the final process.

Summary

The process to streamline the coordinator roles began by cross training on product offerings. From there, the full project team met and discussed the process that was previously in place for private corporate classes and university programs. After many meetings, the team decided on a final process map that made sense for the future of the programs. In the meetings,

the teams reviewed each step and searched for any opportunity to make it more lean or automated. Where development work was needed, a ticket was entered for developers. Once the final process map was completed, it was documented, and the coordinators began to work on creating SOPs. Once all SOPs were created, it was then determined which coordinator would work with private corporate classes and which would work on university programs. After those decisions were made, training began with the sales department so it all parties understood the new process.

In Chapter IV, the results of the meetings, drafts of the process maps, and final process map is shared. The final draft, along with the drafted SOPs helped Company XYZ to consolidate two separate processes into one. By implementing lean processes, the company has a shorter lead time in producing private classes and university programs. Furthermore, this allowed Company XYZ to streamline the process and put ownership where it belonged for the entire process. The final process was crucial to the last stages of the merger and allowed Company XYZ to truly operate and function as an industry leader.

Chapter IV: Results

Company XYZ was focused on continuous improvement and lean processes, but the class coordinator position for private classes and university partnerships were not meeting company standards due to a merger. The processes were similar, but ownership differed, and there were duplicated efforts between both coordinators. It was obvious in the early stages of the merger integration that this team required their processes to be reviewed, consolidated, and revised in order to be efficient. The processes were closely examined by the project team to decide on the best steps for the company. This allowed the class coordinators to split responsibilities and have enough resources to create necessary backups. This would also allow the team to implement these efficiencies in other company product lines as needed. The success of the project was critical for the successful merger integration.

In order to create the final processes, both coordinators started by documenting their current processes and presented them to the larger project team. The project team was comprised of the two coordinators, their manager, two sales managers, two sales development leaders, and occasionally a member of the continuous improvement team. The initial team meeting was a two-hour meeting, and all subsequent meetings were weekly for one hour over five weeks for a total of six weeks. Each week the team worked on determining the best process for each step and identifying teams included at each step. In the end, the team created a final process map which described all steps, teams, and timeline agreements for the process of creating and launching private classes and university programs. The documentation was crucial after one of the coordinators left the organization and the new hire was brought in halfway through the project. The documentation was used for training the new hire, as well as for cross training other team members.

Instrumentation

The first meeting took place in February 2019. Both class coordinators already had process maps for the current state, but they both were tasked with updating and verifying accuracy of each step to prepare for the first meeting. Figure 2 shows the private class creation process from Company XYZ pre-merger. In this process map, the average time to complete the process after approval from the client was five business days. After sales received the lead, the sales representative passed the process off to the class coordinator until the end of step four when the program is ready for enrollments. Each step in between happens based on outputs of the class coordinator.

The class coordinator created a schedule to send to the client for approval, the client would send back any changes and give final approval before moving to step two. In step two, the class coordinator created and sent the client the special class operations agreement (SCOA), which essentially is a contract between the client and Company XYZ that explained the requirements and expectations on both sides. Once the signed SCOA is received from the client, the five business day turnaround begins on the product build. The class coordinator emailed the product team, which included product setup, Learning Management System (LMS) Setup/Admin, and Classroom Operations.

The email with the signed SCOA would indicate what product needs to be associated and would trigger Classroom Operations to submit a JIRA ticket to create product ids for the order processing system. Once the product ids are created, product setup creates offering ids and sends any class documents to the class coordinator. From there, the LMS Admin would build the LMS and the class coordinator would review the ordering process and student access for accuracy.

Once all was approved, product setup would fulfill the product and sales was able to place enrollments.

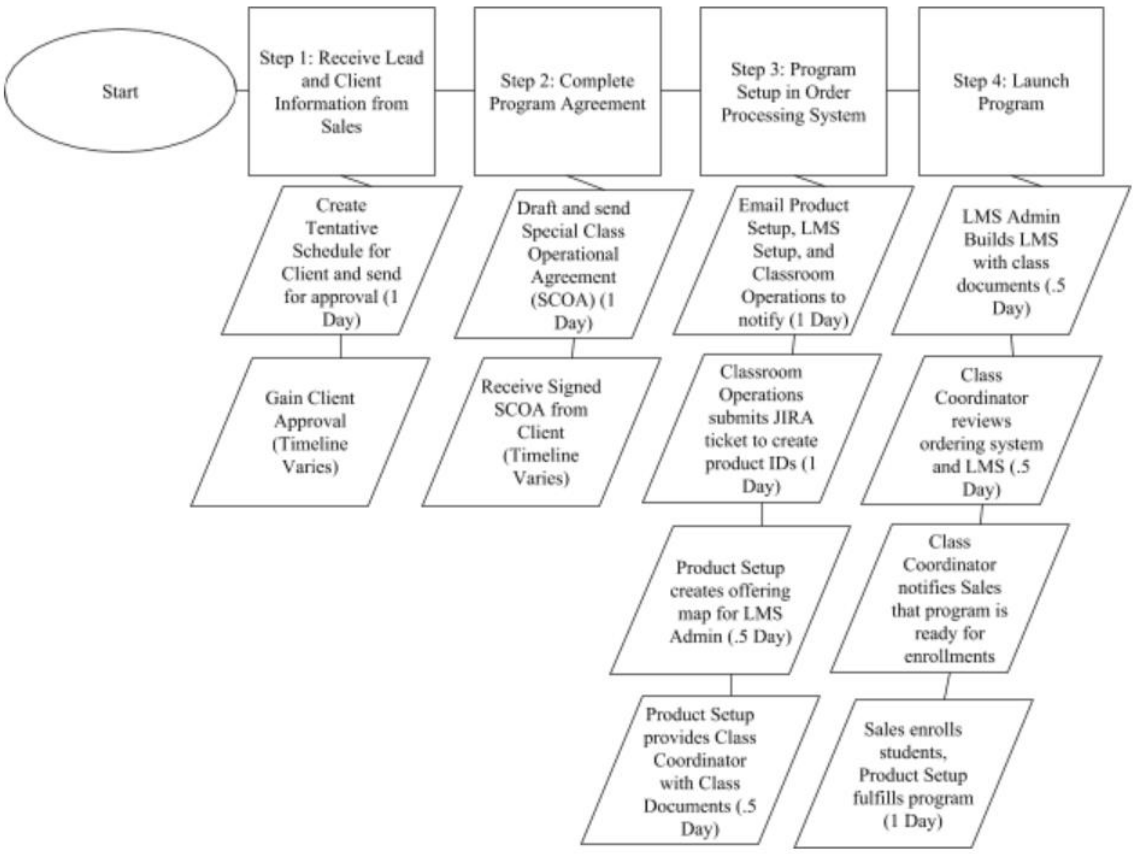

Figure 2. Company XYZ's pre-merger private class creation process map.

The process pre-merger was streamlined and efficient. The process ownership was within operations, which allowed sales reps to focus on attaining more sales. On the flipside, Figure 3 displays the pre-merger process map for private class creation from the acquired company. In this process, the students do not receive online access as the package offerings have not been consolidated yet. Not having online access removes several steps, but the timeline for launching a private class from the acquired company was fourteen business days. The process prior to the merger started when sales received a request from a client. Sales then sent the request form to product setup and the faculty manager. Product setup would create the product

in the ordering system, and the faculty manager would create a schedule based on faculty availability. Once this was completed, sales would gather a spreadsheet of student data and send it to the class coordinator. At this point, the class coordinator would disperse the student leads to the enrollment specialists who were then given five business days to enroll the students. Once all students were enrolled, the initial sales representative would send an email notification for release, and product set up would add the program to fulfillment. In this process, sales reps were primarily responsible for the launch of the program and timeline was much longer than Company XYZ. There was also no contract or agreement between the company and the client.

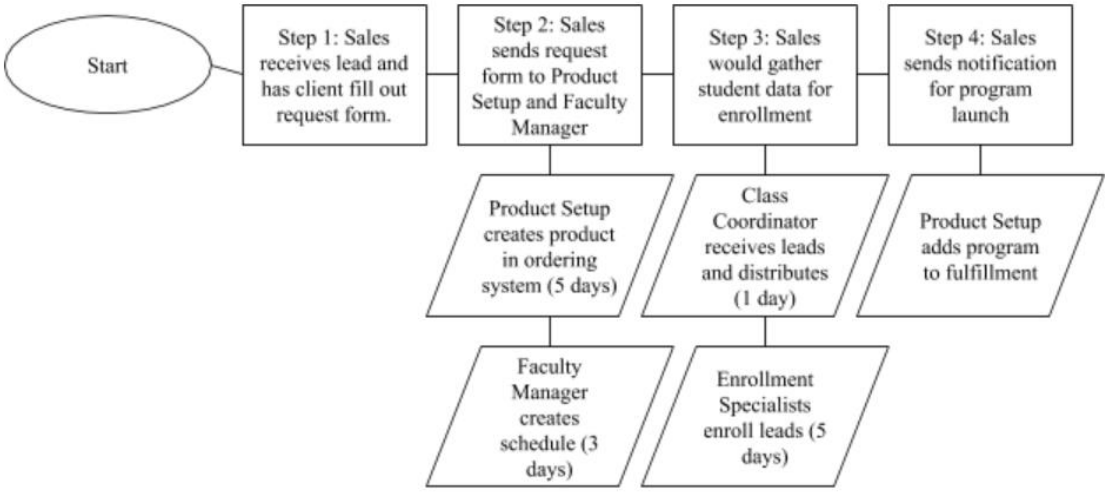

Figure 3. Acquired company's pre-merger private class creation process map.

Additionally, both class coordinators supplied the project team with their process maps pre-merger for university partner programs. Figure 4 displays the process map from Company XYZ's coordinator. The initiation of the process pre-merger was triggered by contract execution by the sales rep. From there, sales handed off the process to the class coordinator to build the program. Similar to the private class build, the class coordinator emailed product setup and LMS admin to create the product and trigger classroom operations to create product ids. Once the

product was created, the class coordinator would submit a case for the IT team to create a student ordering portal. Once the portal was built, the coordinator would review the portal for accuracy and then host a portal release call with the university and the IT team. Then, the class coordinator would create the schedule and profit splits which required the university to provide enrollment data. Lastly, the class coordinator would initiate program release via email and product set up would add the program to fulfillment. This process was completed in seven and a half business days.

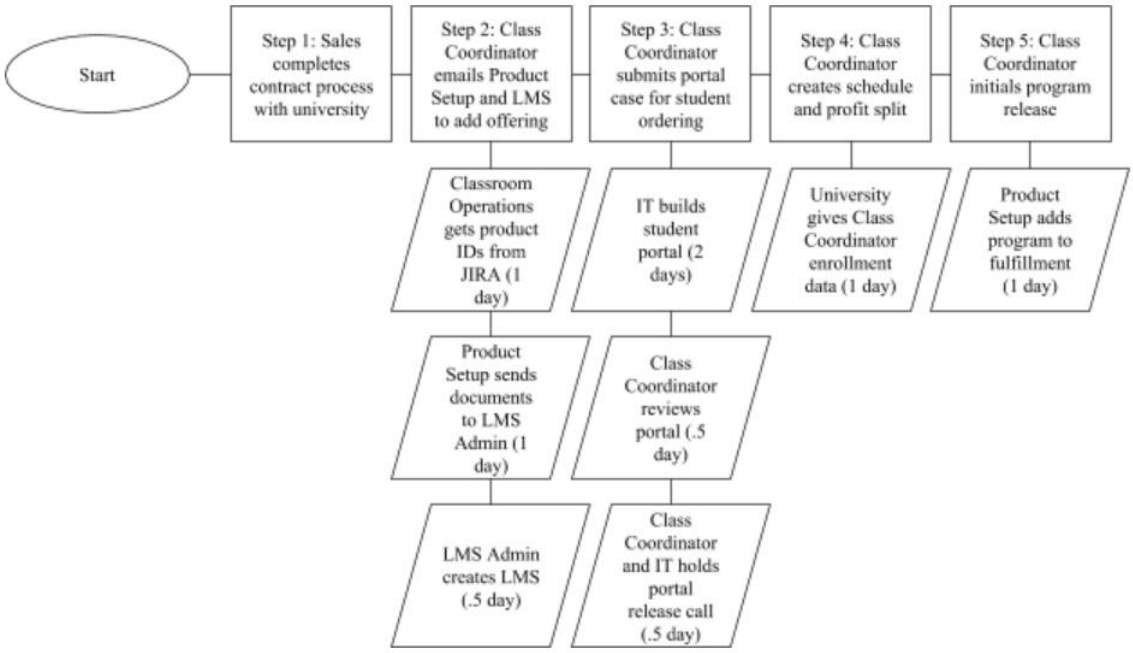

Figure 4. Company XYZ's pre-merger university partnership program creation process map.

The process for the acquired company was similar, but again ownership fell on the sales reps. Pictured in Figure 5 is the process map pre-merger for university partnership program creation of the acquired company. Sales initiated the process after completing the contract process and then emailed product set up to begin building the package. Product setup created the package and set it up to order. Then, the class coordinator would set up the discount that was

outlined in the contract. The faculty manager then created the schedule based on faculty availability. The next step was for the sales rep to communicate with the university to instruct students to call in to order the packages. Once all enrollments were completed, the class coordinator created the profit split. After the profit split was created, sales initiated the program release and product setup added the program to fulfillment.

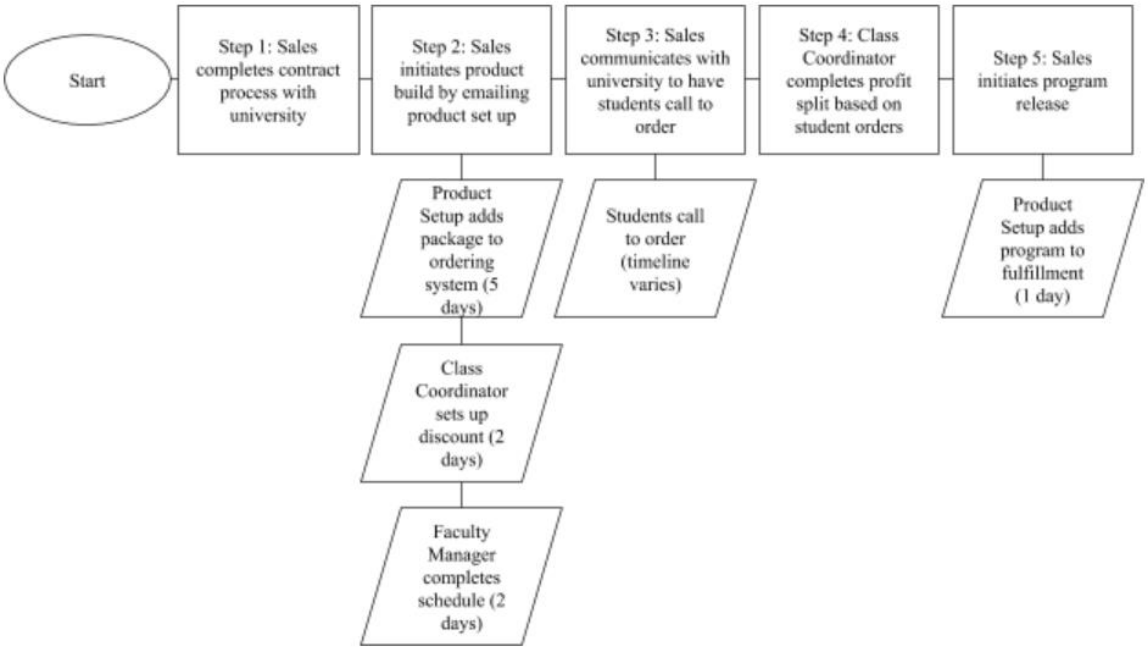

Figure 5. Acquired company's pre-merger university partnership program creation process map.

The project team looked at these documented processes and discussed several topics throughout the six meetings, including costs, task ownership, lead times, and effectiveness. It was important to consolidate both private class and university partnership program creation processes in a way that made sense to all parties and was based on best practices. During the first meeting, the two coordinators described the private class process maps to the full project team. Since new programs were scheduled to launch in March, that process was streamlined first. Once both sides explained the process maps, the managers involved expressed thoughts

and feelings regarding having the process flow through the value stream in order to be added to the organizations master build plan for tracking and accountability purposes. It was also decided quickly in the meeting that the SCOA would be used as an agreement between Company XYZ and the client. Additionally, all of the members of the project team felt the process should be owned by the class coordinator, and not by sales. Since the new process would flow through the value stream managers, the project team set a follow up meeting with the value stream managers before the final process map was completed.

The second meeting included the project team and the value stream managers. To ensure that the value stream managers were prepared for the meeting, they were supplied the process maps before the meeting to be able to provide input on the final process map. The main change of adding the value stream was getting the programs added to the master build plan for accountability and tracking efforts. The sales managers did not want the sales reps involved in the creation and testing of the program. Since leads were generated by sales development and enrollments were taken by enrollment specialists, it was decided that once the lead was handed off the sales development rep would not be included in any future steps. In Figure 6, the final process map is displayed with timeline and ownership.

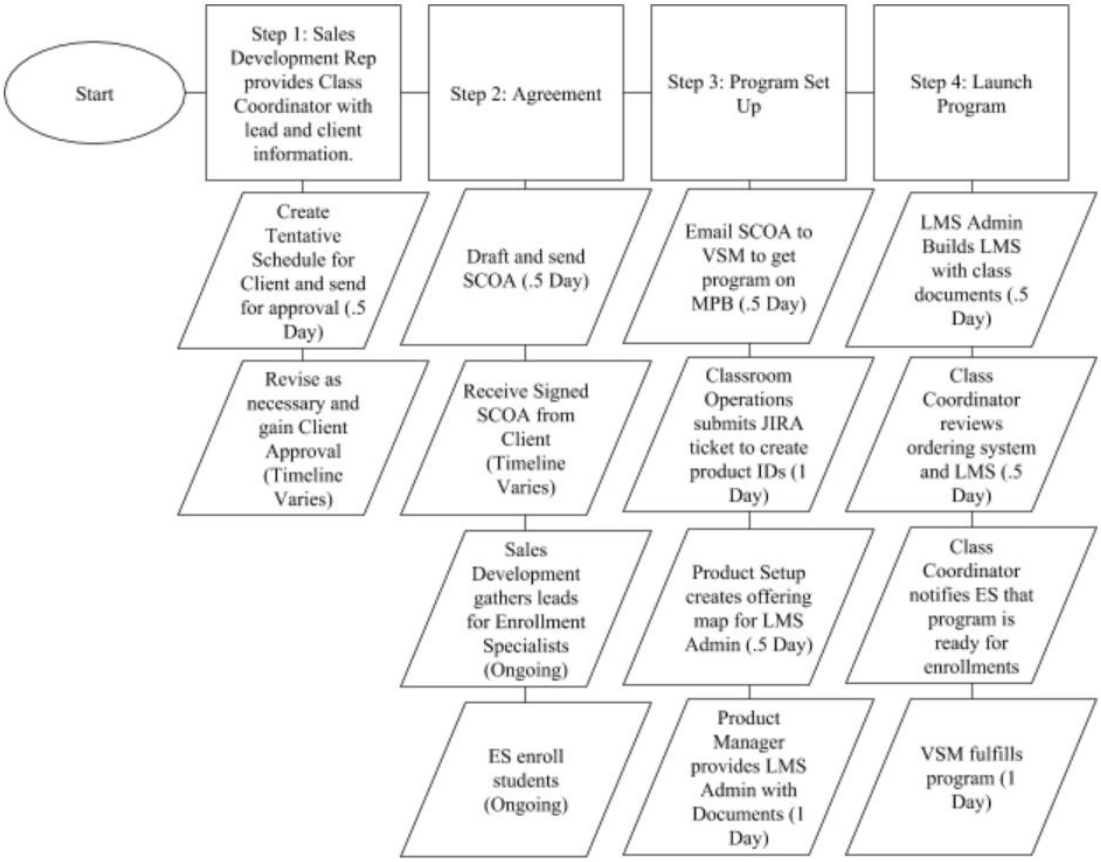

Figure 6. Finalized private class creation process map.

The final version of the process is initiated by the sales development rep handing the lead and contact information over to the class coordinator. Then, a schedule is created and revised based on client preference and a SCOA is created, signed by the client and sent back to the class coordinator. The SCOA included what program is delivered, what dates, times and locations, and any instructor preference. It also included how many students the client would enroll and at what price. At this point, the class coordinator notified the value stream manager, product manager, LMS admin, product setup, classroom operations, and the faculty manager. The value stream manager added the program to the master build plan and triggered classroom operations to enter a JIRA ticket to create product ids for the program. Then, product set up, with guidance

from the product manager, created offering ids for the entire program. At the same time, the product manager provided the LMS Admin with program and class documents in order to build the LMS platform. Next, the class coordinator completed functionality review of ordering and LMS system for accuracy. Once all steps at this point have been completed, the class coordinator notifies all groups that the product is ready for release. At this point, the sales development rep provided the enrollment specialists with a list of leads for the program and the enrollment specialists enrolled students. The leads were no longer uploaded and distributed by the class coordinator, but by the sales enablement team. Finally, the value stream manager added the program to fulfillment.

This process was easily streamlined as all leaders agreed that Company XYZ had a stronger process with more appropriate ownership and lead times. The final process map also followed similar processes from other product lines within Company XYZ. Upon completion of the process map, the coordinators worked with the product manager and the value stream manager to create SOPs for each step before implementing with the greater team. For the third meeting, the class coordinators presented the SOPs for final review of the project team. Of the six meetings, three were used for streamlining the private class process map and reviewing SOPs.

The team looked for more efficiencies with the university process. Figure 7 outlined the final process. Again, the first meeting focused on the university process discussed current process maps and the main concern was to remove ownership from sales. Since the acquired company did not have portal ordering in previous state, it was decided that the portal process would be unchanged. The first step was for sales to complete the contract process with the university partner. From there, it was decided the class coordinator would email the value

stream manager, classroom operations, LMS admin, product manager, and product set up to have the program added to the master build plan. This step was added to be streamlined with the private class process and other product lines for efficiency and tracking purposes. Then, classroom operations completed the JIRA upload to get product ids and triggered product set up to create offering ids. Then the product manager sent documents to the LMS admin to have the LMS created. The next step was unique to universities as students need a private portal to order packages with the negotiated discount. The class coordinator entered a ticket to have the portal created, then reviewed the portal before a portal release call with the university was hosted. Then a class schedule and profit split were created based off enrollment data provided, followed instructors being scheduled. Finally, the value stream manager added the program to fulfillment.

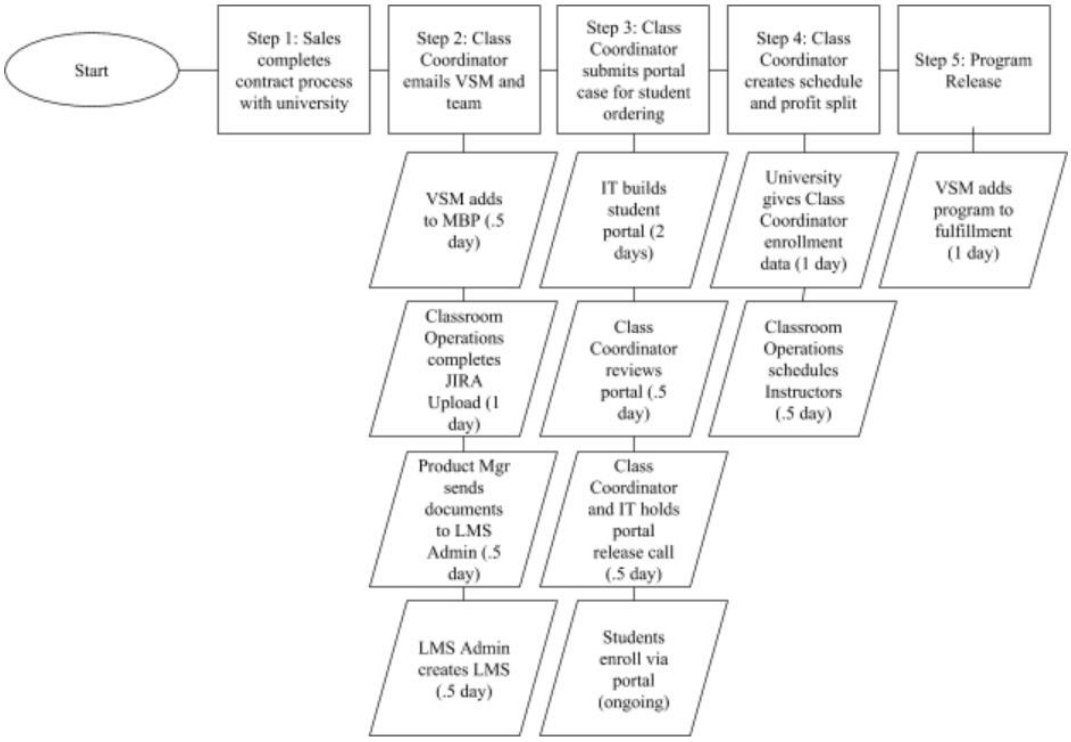

Figure 7. Finalized university partnership program creation process map.

The final process map was decided on in the fifth meeting. The class coordinators were tasked with creating SOPs for the final meeting. Once both process maps and SOPs were approved by the project team, the implementation plan was decided on. The final process maps were both simplified in ownership and included the shortest lead times. In addition, they aligned with how other product lines handled similar offerings in process and lead times. At each step, the team looked at automation possibilities and the decision to send the process through the value stream allowed for automation capabilities to be added wherever possible. In this case, automation was added in getting product and offering ids and LMS builds by triggered notifications. The use of a robot was also used for creating and verifying product and offering ids to take off manual work and lead time in those steps.

Implementation

During the final project team meeting, the implementation process was determined. Both class coordinators were well versed and trained in both processes as they helped create the process. At this point, the existing coordinator from Company XYZ took complete ownership for private classes and the new hire coordinator took ownership of university partners. The two coordinators then created trainings and distributed the process maps to all teams involved.

The first training session included the value stream manager, product manager, product setup, LMS admin, and classroom operations. These team members were already comfortable in the process, but the review and explanation of ownership was important for moving forward. This was also key for describing how the automated pieces worked and how to troubleshoot malfunctions.

The second training session included the development sales reps and the enrollment specialists. It was important that the development sales reps from the acquired company

understood the process in order to trust each step would be completed as described moving forward. It was difficult for several of the sales reps from the acquired company to relinquish the ownership, but all involved understood the role of sales was to sell, not complete administrative tasks. The enrollment team was included to ensure the team understood the overall process and their involvement as well. Each team member was provided a paper and electronic copy of the process map and electronic access to the SOPs related to their individual involvement.

After all of the training, the new processes were launched. This happened at the end of quarter one in 2019. The class coordinators launched one March private class program using the new process as a pilot and will have completely implemented both processes for the next program starts in quarter two. All of the created SOPs were placed into the class coordinator shared drive so all team members, not just those focused on wealth management, could access them at any time.

Assumptions

Again, it was assumed that all employees had a general understanding of lean processes, SOPs, and process maps. Furthermore, it was assumed that the value stream manager, classroom operations, product setup, and product manager were fully trained and understood the processes and steps related to those positions. There was not a separate training for these members on their existing processes.

Limitations

The biggest limitation throughout the process was the loss of the original class coordinator from the acquired company. The loss of knowledge meant that the project team generally gravitated towards the existing process of Company XYZ because of familiarity. An additional limitation was time. The leadership team from Company XYZ were constantly

pressuring this team to finish the process as quickly as possible. Some meetings were delayed due to unforeseen circumstances and business closures, but the teams continued to meet whenever possible to complete the process. The entire project required the class coordinators to spend a significant amount of time weekly working on documenting processes in addition to their day to day duties, which created stress between the team.

Summary

In the end, the finalized process maps and documented SOPs were the most detailed documents the role had ever had. This allowed the department to proactively combat knowledge gaps in the event of turnover in the role. Additionally, the processes were consolidated and created efficiencies that did not exist prior to consolidation. The work put in by the entire project team set up Company XYZ to be timely and less manual in the process to produce private classes and university programs which ultimately increased the company's competitiveness. Finally, the department was able to align with other product lines to meet the organization's operational lean goals.

Chapter V: Discussion

Company XYZ was operating with unnecessary duplication as a result of a merger. The company had high expectations of all departments to have lean processes and to always find ways to improve on efficiencies. The class coordinator role was not operating in a way that met the operational guidelines. The two coordinators worked on the same offerings but had two very different processes with very different turnaround times. In order to work towards complete integration of the merger, it was necessary that the class coordinator role created standard work and streamlined the processes to create private classes and university partnership programs.

In Chapter I, the acquisition and its impacts were discussed. Two leading providers in the wealth management education industry became one, and a lot of focus was directed to integrating systems in the first six months. After consolidating systems and departments, it was then left up to each manager to determine processes moving forward. In the class coordinator role, it was specific to how the organization would handle requests for corporate clients that want to host a live onsite educational program and universities that wish to partner with Company XYZ's education program. In order to remain competitive, and also differentiate the offerings from competition, it became critical to determine the most efficient process with the least amount of manual work, and then document it. The timeline was short, and overtime was necessary for the day to day tasks to be completed and to push out new processes in under six weeks.

Chapter II reviewed literature on best practices for mergers and lean processes. It was important to note that mergers and acquisitions are becoming increasingly more popular, but that does not mean they will always be successful. Integrating two, or more in some cases, organizations needs to be handled systematically. For successful post-merger integration, teams needed to cross-train and streamline processes in order to be successful long term. In this

section, staffing changes were discussed as well. Turnover is a part of all businesses, but is more prevalent in mergers, so it was very important to plan ahead and document as many processes as possible through all stages of the merger. Furthermore, best practices for lean processes, specifically on standard work, were discussed. Standard operating procedures (SOPs) are documented step-by-step processes of an organization. Several examples of organizations that implemented SOPs were discussed throughout Chapter II. SOPs were critical to Company XYZ's lean journey, especially after the class coordinator roles were streamlined.

Chapter III discussed how Company XYZ was going to streamline, document, and continue operating in the class coordinator role post-merger. A project team was formed which included the class coordinators, their manager, the product manager, two sales managers, two sales development representatives, and a member of the continuous improvement team. Right before the first meeting, the class coordinator from the acquired company left the organization. The position was backfilled but did cause a small delay in the process. The team met once per week for one hour. The first meeting was two hours in length to discuss previous state and expectations of the group. Between each meeting, the class coordinators worked on documenting items that were decided on in the previous meeting and providing them to the group at the next meeting. New process maps were created after discussions and decisions made during the weekly meetings. Once all processes were completed and SOPs documented, the class coordinators trained the sales teams on the new processes and discussed expectations and timelines.

Chapter IV highlighted the initial process maps, which were very different in terms of process ownership and turnaround timelines. Throughout the meetings, it was determined the new processes needed to go through Company XYZ's value stream managers for accountability

and tracking purposes. At this point, the value stream manager for wealth management was added to the project team for discussion. The final process maps were displayed, and both class coordinators completed the SOPs before training the teams on the newly created processes.

Lastly, Chapter V revisited all of the items discussed, specifically the limitations and the impacts of the limitations. The entire project team was dedicated to working through all of the obstacles faced throughout the project and were successful. Chapter V also discussed how the process used in the project can be used in future projects.

Limitations

One of the biggest limitations of the project was the loss of knowledge after the coordinator from the acquired company left the organization. The coordinator did leave documentation behind as best as possible, but throughout the meetings the project team gravitated towards Company XYZ's processes because of familiarity and how close the processes resembled what other product lines were doing as well.

The other limitation was time. The acquisition happened in July of 2018 and the final processes were not rolled out officially until April 2019. Senior leadership wanted all processes implemented by the end of the first quarter in 2019, so the pressure was on and the timeline was limited. The project team was aware of this and adjusted schedules as much as possible to make this project happen successfully but both coordinators worked overtime over the six weeks to complete documentation and normal work duties.

Conclusion

The main changes from the streamlining of processes were efficiency and ownership. In previous state, the class coordinator from the acquired organization did not manage the creation of programs, it was mainly initiated and managed by the sales representative. The process also

took longer than the process that Company XYZ had in place. The process that Company XYZ had in place had included more team members, but only because the programs utilized online access for students that was not offered by the acquired company. After many discussions and input from stakeholders, it was decided to use the value stream manager to add the programs to the master build plan for accountability and tracking purposes.

For private classes, the final process began by sales handing the lead to the class coordinator. The class coordinator would send the special class operations agreement (SCOA) so all parties understood what was expected and delivered. Once the SCOA was signed, the class coordinator emailed the process stakeholders to trigger the value stream manager to add the program to the master build plan. This was a change that was implemented on both sides. From there, the product was built in the ordering system and the student LMS. The sales development representative would gather student leads and hand off to the enrollment specialists to enroll the students, which was also a change from the previous processes. The value stream manager would initiate the program release once all steps were completed. Throughout the meetings, the value stream manager and the continuous improvement representative identified areas where other project stakeholders could use automation and more streamlined processes and separate meetings were held to implement those changes to shorten lead times. In the end, the ownership of the program moved from sales to the class coordinator and lead times were shortened from a maximum of fourteen business days to six. On the university side, the same outcomes were present. The timeline changed from ten business days to eight.

Recommendations

In the future, the class coordinators have the opportunity to continue streamlining and automating the process by using automation where available. As a result of all the

documentation, the company was also able to cross-train other team members as backups to the class coordinators, which was something Company XYZ always lacked. Since the product is slated to be consolidated in quarter three of 2019, there is opportunity for the class coordinators to re-evaluate the processes at that time to ensure the best process is being used. However, the new process allows sales to do what is expected of them, sell. It moves the management of the programs to the class coordinators and the addition of the value stream and master build plan allows it to be trackable and quantifiable at any given moment.

The processes used in this project can be applied throughout Company XYZ and elsewhere to streamline duplicate processes. The project team used lean principles to eliminate unnecessary waste in processes and place ownership where it belonged. The processes that were followed throughout this project can also be used when the same team looks at streamlining reporting processes for private classes and university partners. That project will take more time and more stakeholders, including developers, as it will require development to consolidate the reporting systems into one.

The support from senior leadership and the understanding of leaning processes were key contributors to the success of this project. When the class coordinator from the acquired company left the organization the project team did not think this project would be completed on time, but all teams remained focused and were able to be successful in the end. It is important that the overall organization understood the value of lean processes and continuous improvement, without it this project would not have been completed on time.

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