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Getting Key Stakeholders on the Same Page to Improve Video System and Workflow Performance

Establish Responsibilities and Accountability

August 2019

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In today's digital world, it is possible for all aspects of business to be tracked, and through extensive analytics, it is possible for companies to make timely and informed decisions, which can drive improved business results. Unfortunately, it is also possible for companies to be overwhelmed with technology and cumbersome, if not impractical, workflow processes, which can significantly challenge or impede successful operations and negatively impact business results.

It has been ten years since the 2009 digital transformation of local television stations from analog technology was required. It took an act of Congress for the successful transition to digital, resulting in our widespread use of high definition television (HDTV) and mobile communications.

It is in great part due to this digital transformation, that the responsibility for delivering video content in many companies has been assigned to the Information Technology (IT) organizations. This is a logical action, as most IT groups already were responsible for video teleconferencing and telepresence systems as well as the company's telecom and data infrastructure. Further, it is apparent that, as the use of video is being embraced as a must have tool by virtually all employees (including executive leadership and managers), there is value, if not need, in traversing all digital communications and information across the same internal network.

> **Congressional Legislation**
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> The **Digital Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005** is a United Sates Congressional legislation enacted on October 20, 2005. It required all full-powered TV stations in the US to complete their transition from analog to digital technology for free over-the-air programming by 2009. The digital requirement provides a better and more dependable picture, but equally important, it freed up spectrum (airwaves) for wireless communications and emergency notifications.

It has resulted in a successful digital transition for many companies. However, many other companies have encountered challenges with the merging of the video communications systems into the IT infrastructure: Some issues are related to technology and integration, but others are based on processes, the lack of accountability, and the need to get everyone on the same page – working together. Fortunately, all of these challenges are fixable and without the need for an *Act of Congress*.

This is the fourth in a series of Getting Stakeholders on the Same Page regarding the implementation and use of media/video systems for corporate communications and workplace learning. The first three editions covered the need for executives and managers to bend silos and work closely to select the right technology and to communicate the organization's business goals and objectives to all employees throughout the enterprise in an engaging and collaborative manner. This edition addresses the need to implement an approach and processes to hold departments accountable for the functional support services they provide.

Rules of Engagement - Accountability

In the late 2000s, when the digital transformation was in full swing, I was contracted by a number of companies to assist with the upgrade or implementation of many things video, e.g.: production studio upgrades to HD; digital signage implementations; mobile media; and conversions or implementations of a variety of media channels for communications and interactive distance learning (IDL). More often than not, it required working closely with the IT departments and in many instances, the IT group assumed responsibility for the implementation and ongoing management of the network.

Two engagements provide excellent best-in-class examples that have been the foundation for guidance and assistance given to numerous other companies to establish service level requirements and enforce areas of accountability. One included issuing a request for proposal (RFP) for technical support and management services to the IT organization. The second involved the creation of a service level agreement between the audiovisual support group and the IT department.

Request for Proposal – Internal Services

The first use case involves a service company that serves both commercial and residential customers nationwide. The company had a dedicated, IDL video network to about 500 branch offices that was managed by the video department an operated separately from the data network. During the digital transformation period, the company increased its terrestrial bandwidth and wanted to recognize cost efficiencies by migrating the video network into its existing network infrastructure.

Although it was a prudent consideration, many of the key stakeholders were concerned that moving the network internally may jeopardize the performance and support of the network. With the lead from the training and video departments, we modified the RFP that was distributed to the outside vendors to submit to the IT organization. In advance, the heads of the training and video communication departments described the purpose of the RFP with the company's executive committee, with emphasis on:

- The need to ensure that everyone involved clearly understood the work effort required, including:
  - System integrations;
  - Service migration;
  - Service level expectations;
  - Customer/User expectations;
- Vendor relationships that needed to be maintained,
- Roles and responsibilities of the respective groups, including but not limited to:
  - IT;
  - Video Communications;
  - Training.

Leadership embraced the concept of the RFP and provided support throughout the entire process.

Outcome - Key stakeholders, including executives and managers from the IT, video communications and training departments mutually determined it to be in the best interest of the company to leverage its existing bandwidth and integrate the video network with the internal network. The transition from the outside content delivery network (CDN) to the IT groups network services went relatively smooth. There were technical and operational challenges, which were addressed in a timely and business-like manner. The company retained the outside contractor to provide the video equipment and support services.

Results - The company is recognizing significant cost savings. In addition, and as a result of the mutual effort undertaken to address issues and concerns outlined in the RFP, executives and members of the IT group have a clear understanding of, and better appreciation for, the video workflow process and customer expectations.

Internal Service Level Agreement

The second use case is for the design, implementation and support of hundreds of audiovisual and video conferencing systems in an organization's conference rooms for in-room meetings and global communications.

Historically, the media group was responsible for all audio and video systems (AV) throughout the organization's institutional facilities and dedicated meeting rooms for individual departments. This included the design, procurement, implementation, operation, management, maintenance and repair services as well as the scheduling of AV capabilities, in-room technical support and helpdesk services. The IT organization was responsible for the same services and requirements for video conferencing systems that were present in many of the meeting rooms. The difference being that the videoconference systems installed by IT were primarily designed to be self-operated by the user. The media group systems were far more robust, with extensive audiovisual capabilities, and required AV technician support to ensure the users enjoyed an excellent customer experience.

Due to innovation and technology enhancements, leadership believed there were benefits to reorganizing the roles and responsibilities, primarily separating technology and customer services. This approach would require the IT group to take full responsibility for all self-operated videoconference systems. The media group would maintain responsibility for the implementation, management and staffing of the conference rooms with robust AV capabilities, where AV technician support is required and customer service critical. This presented a sea change for everyone involved, including the media group, the IT organization and the users.

Outcome - Leadership and department managers recognized the need to establish guidelines and clearly articulated roles and responsibilities. The media group took the lead and we created the framework for a service level agreement between IT and media. Although it took numerous variations, and at times, challenging negotiations, everyone agreed to a workable structure and process. It included detailed criteria outlining:

- The roles and responsibilities associated with all meeting areas, including equipment types and functional capabilities and staffing requirements to provide the desired user experience.
- Service level expectations for both equipment and customer service.
- Training of users on the self-operated systems and education on how to utilize the rooms with extensive audiovisual capabilities and technical support.

Results – The standardization of technology and widespread implementation of self-operated systems provides cost effective audiovisual services, without jeopardizing the user experience. Users have embraced the self-operated room concept, reducing costs for in-room technician support and minimizing engineering costs to design and implement the build-out of fewer robust audiovisual systems.

Areas of Responsibility – Internal Service Agreements?

Establishing guidelines and assigning areas of responsibility to the appropriate department for functional support services may be difficult for some tasks, but it is necessary to ensure things are done correctly and to completion. In the spirit of cooperation, communication and collaboration the stakeholders need to clearly identify who owns what and establish a thorough list of goals and performance objectives. This ensures, up front, who is accountable for successful implementations and the ongoing management of video-based communications and training systems.

In addition to standard metrics and a service relationship, such as service availability, technical quality, error rates and time to restoration of service, and customer feedback, the stakeholders need to establish roles and responsibilities for each area to be addressed, including, but not limited to:

- Who owns the messaging for communication and training content?
- Who is responsible for researching and purchasing technology?
- Who is responsible for system implementations and integration?
- Who manages the content contributions from various departments and individuals?
- Who approves content and manages brand protection?
- Who owns/manages the relationship with the vendors?
- Who is responsible for system operation and management?
- Who is responsible for maintenance, repair and replacement of systems?
- Who is responsible for customer service and satisfaction?
- Who will track data and measure results?

Using a SLA or RFP for internal services can be less complex to establish than negotiating SLAs and KPIs into a vendor contract. Although, the work effort and expectations may be very similar.

Like any agreement, reports should be provided on a regular basis and all stakeholders should jointly review the services provided to:

- Ensure that expectations are met,
- Identify new technology to implement,
- Confirm that technology upgrades or replacements have been executed,
- Modify workflow processes.

Summary

Whether you need to establish a service level agreement (SLA), identify key performance objectives (KPIs), or a request for proposal (RFP), use a business-like method to address all relevant tools and methods to implement and manage the required service.

Key findings and recommendations:

Get all items on the table and modify/improve the critical items as they are identified.

Top down leadership can make it a cooperative effort, versus an adversarial relationship.

Getting all key stakeholders on the same page to establish and provide internal services across multiple departments or organizations *does not take an act of congress.*

Enliten tracks industry sources to find trends and innovations relevant to the use of video and dynamic media in the enterprise space. Our experience is gained through analysis, establishing desired future states, developing cost models and business justifications and assisting with the selection of solutions and vendors to meet each customer's specific needs.

Enliten's role and value is to provide information and insight about the *what* (technology and solutions) and perspective and guidance about *how* and *why* which technology will best fit with your business objectives and content strategy.

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