The Janus Role: A Facile Requirement for Today's Leaders

Within organizations that use teams for enhanced performance, the manager's role is evolving. It's evolving in support of teams and an empowered work environment. We choose to use the sponsor role to differentiate the evolution. We define the Sponsor as the manager to whom a team reports. The Sponsor (the Manager accountable for team success) is not on the team. This is in contrast to the team leader and team members, who are on the team, and who receive their accountability from the Sponsor.

Do You Have What It Takes?
Teams require attention. Project teams are constantly being started anew to address unique business needs, and dissolved as the need for them is fulfilled. Work teams are permanent entities within the organization which are assigned outcomes to be achieved over time. These different types of teams require flexibility on the part of the manager/sponsor to structure, orient, support and celebrate success in abbreviated cycles. Cycles of work in which many employees participate and contribute to the accomplishments of the organization. To maximize the team contribution, and to support the individual employees need for structure, direction, feeling valued and appropriately rewarded is a new skill (or set of skills) which many managers/sponsors are still learning.

And, it doesn't stop there! The manager/sponsor still has direct reports to manage as well as the teams. The span of control has actually increased with the advent of teams. Although teams may be able to deal with broader, more complex issues in the organization, the individual employees are still the mainstays who do the day-to-day work and participate on teams. When viewed from an organizational entity standpoint managers/sponsors have dramatically increased the number of entities they must manage if they choose to use teams.

On top of all this, managers/sponsors who choose to use teams increase their exposure to conflict dramatically. First, there's the conflict between team members and/or with the manager/sponsor during the start-up phases of team norming and storming. Then comes the cross-functional conflict created when teams attempt to operate in an autonomous manner that is in direct opposition to functional (silo) policies, practices and/or priorities. Third, is the conflict which arises when the manager/sponsor attempts to break down the existing policies and procedures defining how resources will be allocated, communications will occur, performance will be measured, recognition will be provided, planning will be accomplished, etc. to accommodate for team needs. Last, but not least, are the executive barriers that must be overcome when teams seek cross-functional accountability to serve the customer. And, all the conflicts listed above assume the individual has no internal conflicts to struggle through, but is totally committed to the change, and willing to face the barriers.

The need for new skills and a flexible attitude doesn't stop with just the above issues; there is also the need to learn skills, which are unique to teams. Depending on the level of team being managed (project, process, or functional), the skills vary in depth of understanding and application, but some of the more obvious are listed below.*

• Structuring	• Strategic Planning
• Resource Allocation	• Operational Planning
• Strategies	• Roles & Responsibilities
• Team Descriptions	• Decision Making
• Problem Solving	• Group Dynamics
• Performance Measures	• Meeting Skills
• Communication	• Managing complexity
• Delegation	• Recognition/Reinforcement

* *Many of these skills are used when managing individual employees, but not to the depth of understanding and application which are required for sponsoring teams.*

What Exactly Is A Sponsor?
Defining the role in a linear comparison to management doesn't suggest much of a difference. Sponsors create plans, provide direction, monitor performance, deliver feedback, allocate resources, make decisions, organize people and things, purchase materials, etc. just as do managers. The differences arise in the subtle complexities of dealing with a number of individuals as a single entity. What is appropriate information to communicate with the team versus, the individual member? How do I measure the teams' performance and the individual team members? How do I provide direction for the team and for each member? What resources is the team held accountable for, versus the individuals? You get the idea.

Other than the types of questions listed above, the sponsorship portion of the manager's role with teams is to:
·   Decide if a team is the best option.
·   Structure the team.
·   Allocate Resources to the team.
·   Provide feedback/reinforcement to the team.
·   Support team learning.
·   Break down barriers to team success.
·   Monitor/evaluate team performance.
·   Model/integrate team tools and processes.
·   Validate and support team plans.
·   Support team growth.
·   Determine team rewards.

To differentiate the manager versus sponsor skills is difficult, but there are obvious differences in three key areas:

1. **Teaming Skills:**
    · Facilitation
    · Managing Group Dynamics
    · Managing Complexity
    · Consensus Decision Making
    · Team Structuring
    · Team Building
    · Team Development
    · Cross-functional Negotiating

2. **Empowering Skills:**
    · Enabling Others
    · Supporting Performance
    · Developing Others
    · Respecting Others
    · Trust Building
    · Delegating
    · Valuing Others
    · Sharing Credit
    · Planning Together
    · Openness and Sharing
    · Understanding of Leadership and Followership

3. **Mindset Change:**
    · "I" to "We"
    · Function to Process.

But, if you take a less linear look at the same competencies the differences begin to become more substantial:

Traditional Management Characteristics	Manager/Sponsor Characteristics
· One-to-one relationship with employees linked to performance (manager to direct report)	· One-to-one relationship with team members, and one-to-many relationship linked to team performance (manager to report and/or team)
· All resources flow down in the functional silo (information, budget, people, assets, priorities)	· Most, but not all resources flow down. Some come from other departments, some flow laterally based on processes, and some come from higher levels in the organization

Traditional Management Characteristics	Manager/Sponsor Characteristics
· Job or position descriptions exist for each component of structure (defining purpose, accountabilities, responsibilities, competencies, climate, etc.)	· Job, position, and/or team descriptions exist for each structure component
· Very top-down, linear way of getting work accomplished	· Both linear, top-down and non-linear ways of getting work accomplished are applied
· Position authority is critical to performance capability	· Influence and knowledge authority surpass position authority in determining performance capabilities
· Simplistic models for assigning tasks, priorities, resource allocation, information, etc.	· Complexity abounds in managing relationships, task accountability assignments, multiple priorities for single individuals, resource allocation by project and by process, direct communication from customers, suppliers and management, etc.
· Leadership change initiatives come from the top down	· Leadership change initiatives originate from top, side, bottom, externally, etc.
· Manager involved and understands day-to-day transactions of department employees	· Managers stays at strategic level and coaches, but is not involved in day-to-day transactions of performers
· Customer needs are identified at top of organization and flow down	· Customer needs are directly communicated to the point-of-performance
· Manager controls measures of performance	· Performance measures are controlled by performers

The Organization Sandwich

You'll notice the above list seems to emphasize the empowered nature of teams and the process focus that places them in a matrixed environment sandwiched between the functional silos and the processes which serve the ultimate customer. This is because; barring the presence of project teams, the application of teams in the work environment tends to focus on one or both of the following: Process Improvement, or Ownership of a "Whole" work process.

These two issues demand re-alignment of the responsibility and accountability assignment process for teams to assure they can achieve the outcomes expected of them by the organization.

In practice this means, if teams keep having to ask for approval from functional management for budget, people, supplies, business decision approvals, maintenance, etc. they will get nothing accomplished due to conflicting priorities between functional managers. Secondly, if teams are in control of no sustainable, repeatable process they become temporary work entities that deal with incidents of work, not continuous processes (project teams).
The use of work teams (self-directed, business, cell teams) in the work environment creates the need for matrixed organizational structures.

The Janus Role
The first forays with teams in most organizations begins with project teams, which are groups of existing associates being assigned to work on an incident of improvement. Once the project is done the team either dissolves, or is assigned a new project.
This team structure fits well in most traditional organizations which are functionally driven. This is true due to the fact that a functional manager can limit the boundaries of a project team to areas and resources within his or her control, or can negotiate with other functional managers for the team to temporarily invade their turf for the sake of a project. The organizations policies, practices, and behaviors don't have to change in any substantial or lasting manner.

Work teams don't fit this mold. Their assignments are permanent and less confining. They frequently need to cross-functional boundaries to deal with internal suppliers and customers of their processes. They require authority to carry-out the accountabilities for results which they have been assigned. They need resources assigned to them that don't require approvals that delay the work processes they are held accountable for.

Initially the cross-functional nature of work teams creates conflict among functional leaders who feel invaded, and that things are getting out of their control. The instability they feel is actually the death knoll for the all-powerful functional leadership silos which have inadvertently blocked the organization from truly serving the customer.

Evolution of the Company, from a perpendicular organizational structure focused on functional expertise, to a horizontal one focusing on work processes, is where the sponsor has his or her greatest headaches. The battles required to support this shift in locus of control are many. And, the sponsor is not immune from the outcomes of the battles. He or she is also eroding his or her own positional power base within the functional arena by empowering teams to "own" the work processes they are being held accountable for. It's an interesting split in roles. As the sponsor is feeling a loss of positional power due to the delegation of

portions of it to teams, he or she is gaining in influencing power and outcome assurance (political power) through the resource leverage provided via the teams.

The Sponsor role can be seen as two-faced, hence our reference to the Roman deity Janus. Janus was known as the guardian deity of gates, on which account he is commonly represented with two heads or faces, because every door works two ways. This two faced nature was a weakness because of its' duplicity of views. However, it was also a strength due to the dual perspectives it offered when faced with any situation. The relevance comes clear as we consider the requirement for a manager of teams to have two faces: managing individuals and managing teams; managing the traditional hierarchy and the matrixed organization.

The sponsor has to assume the Janus Role when balancing the accountabilities and responsibilities he or she has relative to managing the functional organization and the team organization. These two work structures demand different priorities, and resource allocation conflicts for the manager which must be resolved without discouraging, or alienating workers toward either of the two entities. If the traditional worker feels the team is taking all the resources, or getting all the attention, etc. he or she will resist supporting the teams and may even undermine them. On the other hand, the teams tend to have strength and security in numbers and will attempt to "bully" those who get in their way unless otherwise cautioned regarding the need for maintaining productive relationships with others.

What a dilemma! It takes great knowledge, trust, and belief in the power of teams to manage in both worlds. It also requires tremendous perseverance on the part of the manager who is leading and supporting this change. But, in the end the organization and the individuals win because the customer is served better.

Evolution of a Sponsor

The initial sponsors in an organization are the leaders of change at a tactical level. They are the point people who forge the way and have to work the hardest to be successful. The jungle of the workplace is facing them in all directions, so they have to have a vision of where they are going, or they'll never get there.

How can an aspiring sponsor develop a vision? Vision is created through dreaming about a potential future. The dream is actually an extrapolation based on knowledge in this case. Such knowledge can be gained by reading current articles and books about teams, team leadership and team sponsorship, or attending conferences or exploring the topic with peers or visiting organizations that are leading the field in applying teams within their work environment.

To create a vision also means benchmarking with other organizations which have successfully integrated teams in their organizations. Sometimes the sponsor role is called a facilitator, sometimes a champion, and sometimes a team manager or leader. Whatever the name, the role is the same when it comes to the manner in which they support teams in the workplace.

The vision will need to be shared with others who are the decision-makers in the organization. It means talking with executives and educating them about what it will take to integrate teams in the work environment. Formal presentations, roughed-out organization charts, role specifications, Team Descriptions, accountability and responsibility charts, organizational outcome or benefits clarification, justification for investing the time, effort and resources in making the change. This is tough work that must be done over and above the regular job requirements expected. It also means the neophyte sponsor is risking his or her credibility, and future career within the Company on the belief that this way is the wave of the future for the Company. And that he or she is the pioneer who will help the Company evolve to the next higher level of performance.

Next, the sponsor has to initiate a pilot, or prototype model team (or teams) for the organization to experiment with. This is tough since the organization already has an environment which precludes the application of teams; it is set-up to support the hierarchical functional structure. Talk about barriers! Unless the sponsor is able to separate the team(s) from this traditional structure, or at least insulate it somewhat, the teams will struggle to survive. Here's where a lot of negotiating, calling in favors, and political influence come in handy.

Then a lot of experimentation is applied to determine what the most appropriate team structure, policies, procedures, and relationships are in the organization for successful outcomes to be achieved. Team members become frustrated with all these changes and will require constant communication to aid with their understanding. Their involvement in the decision to make the changes will expedite the process and reduce the burden on the sponsor. It may take a year, or two in this phase before the organization feels it has enough data to make a decision to move forward or dissolve the experiment. Bold sponsorship is necessary to deal with the questions and doubts generated during this phase.

Once the decision is made to move forward with teams in the work environment, the initial team members and sponsor become models for the organization. They will be expected to train others, host internal benchmarking visits, create templates, recommend improvements, etc. It's tough to get work done when you are assigned two roles.

Frequently the sponsor becomes the guru for the organization and travels to educate and implement teams in appropriate locations throughout the organization. This can lead to problems for the original team(s) since they end

up with a new sponsor who frequently has no understanding or knowledge of the role required, but is assigned the task. Great care in helping this new sponsor to be successful must be taken by the initial sponsor.

This step is critical. It results in the creation of new sponsors in the organization. New sponsor development helps the process grow and is in fact crucial to the success of the process. As a critical mass of managers understanding the nature of the Janus Role develops, the total process can grow. This will enable learning throughout the organization.

At this point changes in the organization to support the ongoing growth and maintenance of work teams are more likely to be defined and take hold. Sometimes this shifts the mantle of change leadership to a maintainer rather than a creator. That is a topic for further exploration in another article on leading change. Suffice it to say that the vision is now much closer to reality as a result of our initial sponsor's work.

Results From the Janus Role

It is working. Many organizations are finding far greater success with new structures that include frequent or ongoing teaming by engaging the Sponsor role. At Rubbermaid where we began looking at this critical role almost ten years ago we have discovered that most team failures are frequently caused by the lack of effective sponsorship. One of our early process leaders referred to these failures as "train wrecks." He felt that the demands of a failing team, with the strewn resources and frustrated members was analogous to a cataclysmic event that attracted great attention, and required an inordinate amount of organizational resources to repair.

The advent of the Sponsor role saved Rubbermaid and many other organizations from further train wrecks. Teams became more effective. Managers became better leaders. The organization became stronger and achieved more. And in many ways it stimulates the fundamentals of the learning environment that fosters yet a stronger organizational community.