Innovation – Projects are different and you have to manage them differently

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Learning Systems: Innovation-Projects are different – and you have to manage them differently

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Abstract: Different to construction projects, innovation projects (e.g. Business Process Re-engineering (BPR), Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Implementation, Merger&Acquisition as well as Outsourcing, EFQM evaluation, Rationalising Company/ Supplier Interface, new personal appraisal system) are critical in their implementation, because the subjects to the projects outcome (employees) fear uncomfortable impacts. They show indirect resistance during implementation phase of the innovation project. This psychological issue makes it difficult for project managers to accomplish their task and lead the project to success. Therefore tools are needed that help to implement the innovation project – despite the employees creeping resistance.
This paper will focus on project preparation (beginning of the project life cycle) and its connections with implementation (mid/end of project life cycle). It *evaluates* the tool *EMS&Facilitator* (electronic meeting support guided by an external moderator) for quick & profound initial information through a series of *three meetings* during project preparation. Building commitment within *all* parties involved in an innovation project, EMS helps to ease the implementation. In addition, *EMS&Facilitator* might be a means of closing the gap of expectations between top management and implementation teams, as top management may also be invited to some EMS-facilitated project meetings.
The paper argues that *EMS&Facilitator* works by 'Integrative Leadership' within the company/administration which chooses to do an innovation project. It analyses which features make EMS a management tool for getting employees involved and drive a change process, for efficiency improvement and for supporting implementation of innovation projects.

Innovation-projects are different

4864 words

Innovation-projects are critical and chaotic projects – as experienced by employees and employers alike, who have undergone a business process re-engineering, or who will face a re-structuring of thier company the upcoming year (Wolff, Melkusch, Broks 1997, 5-7). Target of innovation-projects is to *increase overall performance* and *efficiency* dramatically for to cope with competitors, survive the e-Boom & e-Bust, or tackle economic crisis (collapsed stocks, IT/telecom confusion, trust in top management): Without sufficient notice, employees instantly have to work according to a *new* management/marketing-strategy because of a:

- Business Process Re-engineering (BPR)
- Merger&Aquisition
- Getting-rid-of, Buy-out or Outsourcing for to return to core business – thus rewinding expanding management decisions from the late 90ties
- Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Implementation
- Balanced Scorecard BSC
- new personal appraisal system or EFQM evaluation,
- Rationalising Company/Supplier Interface (Hammer 2002, 42f.).

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These non-routine projects produce emotional turmoil and are often ´muddled trough´. Why? Because an implementation of a *new system* means that *new* procedures and *new methods* have to be adopted in the *entire* company: Consequently every day work routine is to be done in a different way. Besides of moving people along the organisational chart,

- managers are forced to rethink their management style and act and talk in a new wording
- departments must follow a new set of goals
- employees have to abandon their work habits and use new procedures.

The imposed re-design of organising work and employees function is the reason, why innovation-projects are more critical and chaotic then R&D or construction projects (Turner R.1999, 477).

The pitfall is obvious: *All* employees of the company which chooses to do a BPR, ERP, M&A, BSC, Outsourcing or EFQM are *affected* by the new system and its drive to change working procedures and conditions. But, halas! Nobody likes change. Employees know that in today's weak economic situation, organisational change is necessary. But they fear uncomfortable impacts and perceive the *new* system as a worry because it is *new* to them (Mende & Stier, 2002, 96). Horror scenarios are conjured up, walls of resistance built. There are as many irrational fears as there are ways to boycott the *new* system. The innovation-project suffers delay, fails, and may be cancelled. Top management might replace it by a new project. But this will not save the innovation nor increase overall performance the project was aiming at.

Nobody likes change

The key of any innovation-project is the implementation-phase. A successful implementation affords time, physical energy and a decent budget, because it is during this phase where all employees do the turn-around in their everyday work habits. This is the phase:

- where each employee of a company striving for a BPR has to turn abstract re-engineered work processes into daily life – and witness the increased efficiency,
- where the workforce of a company implementing an ERP starts monitoring resources skilfully – and measures and reports the ressources effective exploitation,
- where an enterprise starts managing according to its newly developed BSC guidelines - and keeps updating the score cards (Kaufmann 2002),
- where in a M&A-company many minds have to integrate differing policies and cultures – and get along with each other every day while increasing productivity,
- where a company outsourcing departments has to reduce work loads and really let go – and recognize cost savings,
- where the members of a company acquainting to EFQM finally look at themselves, benchmark – and improve performance steadily.

Innovation-projects is about change of habits, measuring performance and improving results, which altogether employees from top to bottom do not really like. They feel stressed and strained (Schabraq & Cooper 2002, 33). That is normal. That is human. But the more reluctance towards changing work habits there is, the more difficult it is for the manager to complete his/her innovation-project. This is why they need special support during implementation-phase. Managers and top management recognize this special need, but seldom know what support is available.

Weary task: Get employees committed?

Enthusiasm for innovation and commitment towards change cannot be imposed upon employees! Every upcoming generation of managers has to relearn this rule (Van Knippenberg & Schie 2000, 144). Persuasive talks, incentives and attractive presentations will hardly sustain commitment as they are limited in reach (Cialdini 2002, 21, “principles: sympathy, peers influence, specialist”). But there are three management-tools that encourage work force to support an innovation-project (Thielemann & Veil 2002, 45):

1. The most common tool is to *force* the change by authority. It is the superior´s power of dismissal and the subordinate´s anxiety to get fired that makes the employee accept change. But there is no commitment towards the turn-around.
2. A recent mangement-idea is to start an internal competition to get the change done. The slogan is: “If you don´t entirely dedicate yourself to the company

(total dedication), you will not be promoted and may even be down-sized". This tool may *discipline* employees, but not commit them to the innovation-project. Cohesion among employees and between departments will be spoilt.

2. Contrary to both *forced* and *discipline* management-tool stands the liberal *self-integration* into an innovation-project. Precondition to self-integration is that employees are perceived as individuals, not a mass to be manoevered. In particular, knowledge workers and well educated work force will commit themselves to an innovation-project *only* if a). it makes sense to them, b). if they can make some contributions to the innovation-project, c). if they can recognize benefits of the innovation themselves. Weldon (2000, 255) analysis of four innovation-projects comes up with following preconditions: Employees join in an innovation if "a). innovation/improvements are reactions to an immediate problem, if b). development and implementation of ideas-for-change take place as group members pursue their normal work activities, if c). expression and appreciation of individual ideas-for-change and individual follow-through are provided".

Knowledge workers and well educated employees in particular feel hands bound by management tools using force to get change done. They also feel fooled, when they realize that the force is covered by competition slogans (Cialdini 2002, 20 "vice-versa-priciple"). In fact, they rather want to give the best they can for any project that really makes sense to them. They want to integrate themselves into a change process by contributing to its structure (Bleicher 1992[2], 78 "Integration durch 1. Aktivitäten, 2. durch Strukturen, 3. durch Verhalten"), not because of obediance or discipline, but because they consider it sense giving. At this point one might argue that it will take a lot of time to let each employee finally find a sense in an innovation-project. And that it will cost a lot to let each employee contribute actively to a structure. This is not the case. A management-tool is available that speeds up the pull in: *EMS&Facilitator* invites all employees into the change process by offering manyfold possibilities to contribute and thus get emotionally, cognitively and intentionaly engaged (Mossholder et al 2000, 222). This *integration* can take place in meetings set up around the innovation-project (Argyris 1966; Bleicher 1992[2], 437 "Einbindung der Betroffenen", 404 "Stärkung des *integrativen* Denkens und Handelns").

Self-integration: Leadership and management happens in meetings

But traditional meetings (management retreats, department sessions or project meetings) are rarely efficient. It is not easy to contribute in a satisfying way:

- much is said that may never be documented, waste of potential
- information-needs differ greatly
- a few members may dominate the discussion leaving others without an efficient mechanism to contribute; participants may forget or suppress their information because it doesn't seem relevant to the current verbal discussion,
- under time pressure some topics are left over, un-discussed, and quick fixes are made, which later on turn out to be critical.

But for efficient meetings you need (Engeström 2002, 33):

- to keep the red thread visible, allow all participants to contribute directly during meetings,
- allow all participants to contribute ideas, make comments, analyse options and vote for alternatives,
- to be able to say what one thinks without fear or pressure,
- anti-emotionalize disputes to create space for in-depth discussion, speed up consensus,
- allow each contribution to become a commitment towards the issue discussed.

Many attempts have been made to construct supportive tools for managers having to facilitate a meeting: overhead projector, beamer, brainstorming, mind-map, mind-jogger®, Metaplan®, NEULAND® pinboard, external moderators. But today NATO´s Research & Technology Innovation and the US-Airforce design their expert-workshop ´Combating Terrorism´ with electronic meeting support *EMS&Facilitator* (visit www.groupsystems.com, customer success stories). At present the management-tool *EMS&Facilitator* is applied for innovation projects by consultancies such as KPMG, PWC PricewaterhousCooper, Cap Gemini Ernst&Young and by some managers from Nestlé, UBS bank, Leica-Geosystems, Heineken, RaboBank (visit www.meetingsupport.com). DaimlerChrysler´s ServiceCentre "Project- and Process-Management" uses EMS for knowledge management in projects (visit www.itm-consultings.de). (Ackermann & de Vreede 2001, 18)

Info-Box 1:

Efficieny & quality improvement through *EMS&Facilitator*:
Efficiency of project meetings: Empirical research on *EMS&Facilitator* used in face-to-face project meetings at Boeing, IBM Owego, IBM Maryland, reveal impressive savings of labour hours and flowtime. Data were collected by comparison of man-hours using traditional meeting tools (calculation by session initiator; third party estimations) vs. eventually needed man-hours using *EMS&Facilitator*. Evaluation data summary:
64 meetings á 4,7 hours with 10 participants each: savings: 11´678 total labour hours saved (71 %); 1´773 total days of flowtime saved (91%) (Post B. 1992).
11 meetings with 12 participants each: savings: average hours session time saved: 61 %; percentage of flowtime saved: 92 % (Grohowski R., McGoff C. et al 1990).
30 meetings with 10 participants each: average savings across 59 sessions: 51 %; average savings across varying project length 55 % (Vogel D., Nunamaker J. et al 1990).
Participants, meeting initiators and project managers alike are enthusiastic about effectiveness, efficiency and work satisfaction due to *EMS&Facilitator* (e-questionnaires score homogenously high around 4,0 on a 1-5-scale).

Quality of project meetings: Interviews with project managers of innovation projects (implementation of ERP at SAP NL, Baan NL, Rodgers, Adams & Dean 1999) show, that project managers collecting information about what the user wants (requirements for ERP) become very exited about *EMS&Facilitator* as a meeting tool, because they know how hard it is to structure the dialog and organise the inputs of participants. Project managers also know how difficult it is to get information actually recorded so that it can be referred to later in the project cycle. Also, the customer (ERP-user) becomes very exited while working with *EMS&Facilitator*, because he/she can articulate all his/her ideas and concerns abundantly, in almost no time, and realizes that every comment is noted, memorized and appreciated. This results in high meeting satisfaction and acceptance of the task at hand, f.i. the innovation-project.
www.meetingsupport.com

These are some evaluation data on *EMS&Facilitator* and the question arises: How come?

EMS&Facilitator drives the work process

Meetings with EMS are different (Nunamaker et al 1997, 163f). Let us look at a face-to-face meeting: A facilitator gives support to the manager who is responsible for a meeting. The facilitator also brings along 5-30 notebooks/laptops to that each of the meeting´s attendies has a keyboard in front of him/her; all typed comments are shown on a huge screen; 5 up to 150 (!) participants can attend the meeting (1-5 persons per laptop). All laptops are connected by an EMS-software. To be clear: EMS is *not* groupware (f.i. Lotus Notes, Chat, NetMeeting, eRoom, Groove, WebEx, Projectplace, or MS project) that soly enables to retrieve, share and comment text and documents. EMS is a software, that – in the hands of a facilitator trained in groupdynamics – *drives* a work process. In an EMS session it is possible to quickly *gather* relevant data, *systematically* scan areas of disturbance and surface possible problems, *develop several* solutions to the problem area*,* make *sound* decisions following in-dept discussion, aggree on action plans & controlling reviews that are accepted by the meeting´s participants. The drive is provided by the features of EMS:

1. **parallel communication** allows 5 to150 (!) participants to contribute ideas at the same time: Parallelism promotes information exchange efficiency, and participants may add comments while others are talking.
2. an electronic memory **documents all contributions**: Comments typed by participants are recorded by EMS and are available to other participants. This facilitates interaction and creates a perfect record of meeting issues.
3. **frank discussion** of issues is enabled as typing can be done anonymously, thus helping each participant voice needs, concerns, and questions without apprehension (Friedman et al 2000, 33).

0. an **external** facilitator brings along an EMS-laptop-network and guides easily through the meetings, as he/she is free from company politics (Shaw 2001).

Info-Box 2

In an innovation-project, what is initiation ? What is implementation ?
Generic project management methodology focuses on the *management* aspects of a project and separates these aspects from the *specialist* task of delivering products and services. "*Initiating* a project (IP) … is aiming at laying down a firm and accepted foundation for a project: 1. Check that everyone involved understand the scope and objectives of the project. 2. Check that a suitable business case exists for the project. 3.Check that the project has been adequately planned and budgeted. 4. Check that the risks are acceptable. Encourage the Project Board to take ownership of the project. 5. Obtain commitment from the Project Board (steering committee) of the resources for the next stage. *Implementation* = Managing product delivery (MP): 1. Negotiation and accepting work packages from the project manager. 2. Ensuring that the work is done. 3. Reporting on progress and quality work done. 4. Ensuring that completed products meet quality criteria. 5. Obtaining approval for completed products." (Van Onna & Koning 2002, The little Prince2 - Project management methodology). Master or Doctor Degree in PM visit: www.pmoutreach.usyd.edu.au & www.educatis.ch (virtual campus)

EMS & facilitator: A management-tool ?

So if *EMS&facilitator* speeds up routine work to make room for in-dept discussion, consensus-creation, action planning, how can it help to implement turn-around innovation-projects like BPR, ERP, BSC, M&A, EFQM ? First of all, in an innovation-project there is a close link between initiation *and* implementation („Die Gestaltung des Projektstartprozesses (initiation) bestimmt dessen Ergebnis (implementation). Diese beeinflussen wieder die Projektergebnisse und in weiterer Folge den Nutzen der durch das Projekt initiierten Investition" Gareis & Fiedler 1997, 44). The rule is: If you want a successful implementation (turn-around), then invest in a solid initiation (Hohenauer & Veil 2001, 43)! This means to gain commitment of the ´many employees´ which will be *affected* by the new system, and which will have to endure *and* make the turn-around happen. But can all subjects to the outcome of the innovation-project be invited during initiation, so that nobody stays outside (and thus becomes a opponent to the turnaround)? Yes, with *EMS&Facilitator*. The tool provides for sessions with up to 150 participants. In case of more subjects to an innovation-project, several sessions are scheduled. Due to the capacity of EMS manyfold opportunity is given to vast majorities to contribute verbally and substantially. Management *can* supply for liberal self-integration into an innovation-project. Here some details:

How can EMS&Facilitator – applied during initiation - support the implementation of an innovation-project ?
Four examples of Integrative Leadership

1. Part of the initiation of the innovation project are three meetings with *all* subjects to the *new* system, guided by an **external facilitator.** As argued above, it is not easy to make well educated employees committed towards an innovation. But commitment may be build step by step, starting with a simple management-tool like *jointly* building the agenda of each of the three meetings (Wehner et al 2000, 988). With *EMS&Facilitator* this warming up is completed in 15 minutes. While planning, participants can integrate themselves into a structure by contributing to an agenda. Thus commitment occurs not because of obediance or discipline, but because they consider the agenda sense making - it is self-made. The same basic principle of Integrative Leadership occurs when discussing other crucial topics: The facilitator invites the (15-50-150) participants to gather and *work on* issues of concern regarding the innovation-project. The invited get opportunity to integrate themselves into planning, commenting, voting sessions including minor action taking. From 15 up to a 150 and more employees can actively contribute to the flow of the companies change
How do these initial activities support implementation ? With three opportunities to self-integrate into the self-made – and therefore sense-making - structures of small work session, the path is free to self-integrate into the *whole* structure of the innovation-project (Bleicher 1992[2], 78 “Integration durch 1. Aktivitäten, 2. durch Strukturen, 3. durch Verhalten“).
In addition, the mere presence of an external EMS-facilitator reduces competition and power-play known in company-internal meetings. Due to the supportive climate fostered by the facilitator, top management may also be invited to the meetings, as their expectations towards the innovation-project differ from the innovation-project itself. Any differences in understanding rule out during working together in the three information-rich EMS-meeting. Thus commitment and self-integration into self-made structures becomes possible even for top management (Wiesenfeld et al 2000, 22). A streamlined top management can support the innovations implementation better then an uncoordinated lot of managers.
The facilitator is responsible for process and interaction of the meetings while the participants and the steering committee (project board) of the innovation-project are responsible for the content of the meetings. Experiencing easy going, co-operative meetings convinces all invited and makes them feel confident about the innovation-project and its outcomes (Oishi 2000, 466): there is less need for resistance.

2. Non-censorised contributions provides that all subjects to the innovation can voice needs, worries, critique and questions concerning the turn-around caused by a BPR, ERP, BSC, M&A or EFQM. Experience has shown that surfacing these issues is best done face-to-face, not virtually via intranet. The risks of remote info-gathering via intranet are:

- no frankness because no anonymity – any comment can be traced due to the employees email address
- employees enter their comments on their own but will discuss them at the coffee-machine – a downward dynamic might evolve,
- employees chat and interpretations (gossip) are easily out of control, giving rise to resistance towards the innovation – spoil-sports and critiques can hardly be encountered properly.

For these reasons face-to-face EMS-sessions is advisable (Friedman R. et al 2000, 55). Additionally the facilitator will focus on a balanced group dynamic during the meetings and keep the participants attitude positive.
The management-tool *EMS&Facilitator* invites all involved employees to contribute individually and personally in meetings concerning the innovation, thus getting emotionally, cognitively and intentionaly engaged (Mossholder et al 2000, 222).. Each EMS-facilitated session can become an event where self-integration into the innovation-project can occur (Hornsey. & Hogg 2000, 144).

How do the initial mass sessions support implementation? A cycle of three compact sessions allowing all subjects of an innovation-project three times to do some contribution, builds a path into implementation:

0. As every worry can be frankly uttered, hot topics are surfaced too. Thus an innovation-project profits from worries and critiques (Hey et al 2000, 133) instead of forcing them into underground where they turn into indirect resistance and hinder the innovation wherever they can, in particular during implementation.
0. A cylce of three sessions dissolves the boundaries between initiation and implementation: Some first implementation actions will already be completet during initiation (!) when employees work in an EMS-session reviewing the existing situation and visualising the companie´s future situation with BPR, ERP, BSC, M&A, Outsourcing, Rationalising Company/Supplier Interface, EFQM etc.
0. Each employee invited to an EMS-event turns into an innovation-`fan´ when he/she realises that his/her concerns are really wanted and his/her ideas are worked on in a transparent procedure (see EMS´s Topic commentor, Issue organiser, Opinion meter), thus finding a visible way into the innovation-project. EMS´s capacity makes it possible to use each contribution for further discussion – this means taking each employee serious. In particular the implementition needs ´fans´, which are won in the three EMS-faciltated meetings during initiation.

3. Parallel communication

Well educated employees expect *efficient* meetings. In case of in-efficiency they start complaining about time losses and stay away. An innovation-project, however, needs support of all employees and parties involved. Therefore any meeting has to be top performance. The intensity of *parallel* communication fostering exchange of ideas and the visible production of results during EMS -

sessions, meets high expectations, enhances enthusiasm and produces satisfaction.
How does intensive work climate ease implementation of an innovation-project ? It is the informative and solution- focussed atmosphere, to which everybody invited can contribute, that convinces and fosters positivity towards the entire innovation-project (Cogliser & Schriesheim 2000, 499). Due to EMS&Facilitator, employees surface innovation-related problems fast, develop some solutions and agree on a statements or even actions. Getting these issues clear is a crucial task in any innovation-project, but is generally omitted because of time/costs. But with EMS 150 employees can complete the task within 90 minutes.
EMS-events take care that employees of a company planning a BPR, ERP, BSC, M&A, Outsourcing, Rationalising Company/Supplier Interface, or EFQM etc. are efficiently informed and get involved into the innovation-project right from the beginning. Well informed employees understand what the project is about and therefore do not produce irrational horror visions undermining any implementation effort.

4. All contributions are documented
Employees participating in three *EMS&Facilitator*-events witness on the huge screen that each contribution – come it from the boss, the opinion leader or the under dog - is **documented** and treated with respect. An atmosphere of respect in all three meetings makes the participants favour the innovation-project for which these meetings are held. In addition: Each respected contribution builds a link between the person who gave the contribution and the issue discussed. Links and connectedness develop. The management-tool *EMS&Facilitator* asks for manyfold contributions which each can become a commitment towards the innovation-project. Indeed, management of innovation-projects can cater for self-integration of employees facing an innovation.
How does overall documentation in three initial meetings ease implementation ? Proceeding through the cycle of respectful meetings, more and more links to the innovation-project are established (von Bismark et al 2000, 199). Steadily, ties and commitment evolve. Good chance that the ties will hold until implementation is completed and BPR, ERP, BSC, M&A, Outsourcing, Rationalising Company/Supplier Interface, or EFQM is installed and working, increasing overall performance and efficiency.

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Innovation-projects (like BPR, ERP, BSC, M&A, Outsourcing, Rationalising Company/Supplier Interface, EFQM etc.) can be supported by EM*S&Facilitator* (electronic meeting support guided by external moderator). Each employee affected by the innovation – be it 15, 150, 500, 1000 or more - can take part in *EMS&Facilitator*-meetings set up around the project. They are invited to contribute to the innovation-process. This is done

- without hands bound while watching frustrated the innovation, change and turn-around roll up
- without wasting extra time and costs on boring workshops
- without evoking quarrels or company-internal power-play
- but *with* all relevant people on board contributing personally
- with respect towards each employee and manyfold opportunities to integrate oneself into the innovation-project.

Having taken part in initial meetings and having been able to contribute effectively, the subjects to the outcome of an innovation-project are engaged in the flow of the change. Thus there are hardly reasons to spoil the implementation of the BPR, ERP, BSC, M&A, Outsourcing, Rationalising Company/Supplier Interface, or EFQM. The innovation-project may be completed far below planned cost/time, but above quality/satisfaction expectations. Statistical studies on efficiency of EMS&Facilitator at Boeing/USA, Mariott Maryland/USA, IBM/Owego/USA as well as University Hohenheim-Stuttgart/Wirtschaftsinformatik sum up time, cost and flowtime savings of 50-90 %. Innovation-projects in companies, organisations and administrations could gain similar results if accompanied by *EMS&Facilitator*.
The management tool EMS in the hands of a facilitator experienced in group dynamics, fosters ´Integrative Leadership´ as it enables to pull in and get committed all involved employees, parties, stake holders.

Case report:
A meeting-design for initiation of an ERP-implementation at SAP, NL - *EMS&Facilitator* for project managers and their project teams

Invite all subjects to discuss the outcomes of the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) as early as possible ! This can hardly be done in a traditional meeting style. But *EMS&Facilitator* applies to project preparation (beginning of the project life cycle) having a direct impact on implementation efforts (middle and end of project life cycle). A series of three 90-minutes meetings with all employees *affected* by the innovation is sufficient (see above).
However, the project *manager* and his/her project *partners* and *team* also benefit substantially from *EMS&Facilitator* in case of decision making sessions, proof-of-solution and configuration (Huang & Wei 2001). Genuine project meetings with the project partners (IT-specialists, ERP module supplier, in-house-

subcontractors) for the kick-off of the innovation-project may have following agenda (Rodgers, Adams & Dean 1999):

Project managers know how hard it is to *structure* the dialog in a project meeting. They also know how hard it is to get information *actually recorded* so that it can be *referred* to later in the project cycle (implementation). Therefore:

Meeting 1 with *EMS&Facilitator*: Managing initial information & knowledge

1. Gathering information in no time from the project partners about the upcoming innovation.
2. Inviting the 'right' people to this info-meeting. But the 'right' people will only come, if the meeting is short and effective. *EMS&Facilitator* provides efficiency driving the work process.

Project managers know how difficult it is to *lead* a *decision making* session. They are frustrated because much is said during – for instance - the proof of solution workshop that never gets written down. This presents problems after the agreement, because often a different set of people (!) perform the subsequent configuration/customisation than those that ran the proof-of-solution workshop. Therefore:

Meeting 2 with *EMS&Facilitator*: Design & management of a 'proof of solution' workshop

1. The information from Meeting 1 along with some additional consultation with the project partners is used to set the stage for a proof-of-solution workshop.
0. The proof-of-solution workshop is to show the project partners that and how the 'new system' will meet their objectives. In a complex discussion and a scanning process a lot of *module selection* and *configuration* can be done. EMS features – parallel communication, all contributions documented, frank contributions, external facilitator - copes easily with this complexity.

Project managers know how difficult it is to get a *complex* project *started*, and an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) is a complex one indeed. Project managers also know how *critical* it is to discuss the project plan with relevant key people and get their support. This discussion has to:

- surface risks,
- get hold of areas which will have to be managed with care,
- address departments (in-house subcontractors) that will have to co-ordinate and deliver results,
- gather details about the process of *implementation*: Hidden and overt concerns and questions concerning the innovation have to be recorded as well as the answers given by the project partners.
- build a set of action items, which make sense to the project partners, and provide a neat documentation of the set of actions.

This all together is a weary task. Therefore:

Meeting 3 with *EMS&Facilitator*: Project kick-off & co-ordination

1. Project plans as well as project organization are discussed, then streamlined, and agreements made.
2. Elicit risks, areas that need to be managed, departments that have to coordinate efforts, details about implementation. Documentation of Questions & Answers. *EMS&Facilitator* helps that nothing gets lost. Also, a set of actions to be taken is generated.

During the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) implementation, SAP Nederland was confronted with new products and markets, supply-chain-integration and cost-cutting exercises. These unpredicted changes in the ongoing change process of the innovation-project ERP where encountered in strategy meetings supported by *EMS&Facilitator*.

The case report provides managers of innovation-projects a feeling of some specific ways how *EMS&Facilitator* can contribute to successful meetings within the project team and with project partners. The management-tool *EMS&Facilitator* easily meets all key lessons set up for successful implementation of innovation-projects aiming for business process re-engineering (Turner, Grude & Thurloway 1996, Turner R.1999, 478): “1. Define a clear and explicit strategy for the change, to which the improvement projects can easily be linked. This strategy needs to spell out what the organization is moving from and where it is moving to. It also needs to define the main thrusts of the change (quality, simplification, employee involvement, new technology, ect.), which will provide the key elements of the change. 2. Define strategic objectives for each change project, and show how these interrelate. Manage the interdependencies involved. 3. Define the key issues involved: at the strategic level, for each of the main thrusts of change, project-by-project. 4. Use workshops to share the outputs from change projects, and to test options and plans. 5. Use cross-functional teams to collect and analyse data, and to generate and test options. 6. Build ownership for the change projects by soliciting input from a variety of sources. 7. Manage stakeholders explicitly at each stage of the improvement project. 8. Ensure all outputs form projects are defined, and that these mesh with assumed inputs to other improvement projects. 9. Allow for the possibility of emergent projects crystallizing, rather than resisting change in project definition at all costs. 10. Analyse and evaluate the difficulty of change projects in terms of: scope and complexity, duration, ´iceberg issues´ (especially behavioural resistance), fluid outcomes”.

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Appendix:

Maximum publication rate on *EMS&Facilitator* in 1990-1995 with over 30 scientific contributions in mainly IT journals.
Post B. (1992) Building the Business Case for Group Support Technology (EMS). The Boeing Company. Journal of Management Information Systems. Vol 9, Nr. 3, 7-27. Evaluation Data Summary: Session activity are “cognitively complex tasks involving idea organisation & consensus formulation exploiting a combination of face-to-face discussion, computer support, sound facilitation skills”: requirements definition, planning, management strategy, consensus, survey. 64 sessions; 654 participants (10 per session); session length 4,7h; preparation time 16,7h (session initiator 7,8h, facilitators 8,9h); post-session time 4,5h. Researchers: Boeing USA, consulting company, University of Arizona/USA. Research questions: What are the measurable benefits of *EMS&Facilitator*? How does the technology improve group work quality? What is the return on investment? Does *EMS&Facilitator* enhance or detract from current business team practices? Objectives: Get meeting work done by 8 EMS-Tools: idea generation, issue analyser, topic commenter, assumption surfacing, voting, policy formation, e-brainstorming, e-questionnaire/GroupSystems™. Two measures (data collected by pre/post interviews & e-questionnaires): 1. „Efficiency“ = comparison of labor & flowtime using traditional meeting tools (calculation by session initiator; third party estimations by group manager) vs. eventually needed labor & flowtime using *EMS&Facilitator*. Savings: $432´250 total labour$ saved ($8´754 labor$ saved per session = $1´445 labor$ saved per session-hour), **11´678 total labor**

hours saved (71 %), 1´773 total days of flowtime saved (91%). 2. „Participant´s satisfaction with *EMS&Facilitator*-session“ (17 questions) = score homogenously (std.dev. 0.5) around 3,9 on a 1-5 scale. Highest positive responses: willingness to participate in another EMS-facilitated session (4,4); facilitator beneficial to session (4,2).
The management-tool *EMS&Facilitator* is available in Europe since 1992, it was developed in 1988 at University of Arizona, USA (Nunamaker et al 1993). In Europe EMS is lectured at IT-institutes of several universities (for Germany: Hohenheim-Stuttgart, Dresden, Leipzig, Berlin, BW Munich, Koblenz, Muenster, Fraunhofer Institute). But they seem to delay transfer of EMS into everyday project management in companies, non-profit organisations, administrations.