

Building an agile culture of excellence to address the unstable business environments of the XXI century

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Abstract

The pursuit of quality and excellence drives the efforts of companies wishing to improve and gain competitive advantage. Operational excellence programs are thus used as one of the most common approaches to promote structured change, with organizations implementing them in search for consistent strategies that match their customers' requirements. However, while being undeniably successful approaches in achieving organizational improvement, truth is that engaging in operational excellence programs has also proven to not be enough to ensure the long-term success, and companies do not develop the ability to quickly adapt to the demands of quickly changing markets.

Economic, social and political transformations are hitting the world, adding to a fast-technological evolution and creating deeply unstable business environments. The development of agile capabilities becomes essential for organizations to stay competitive and address the changing demands of its stakeholders. Accordingly, we believe that developing an enduring capacity to change must be considered as one of the desired outputs of the implementation of any quality and operational excellence programs.

However, being agile demands transversal support from the entire organization, under the risk of finding resistance to its implementation. It is necessary to work and transform the culture of organization to allow a closer fit to the strategic choices made to face the marketplace.

Our proposal is to bring together organizational culture, operational excellence and organizational agility, structuring the pursuit of adaptability in a strong social and technical framework. We present a conceptual model interrelating the three concepts and the methodology in use for identifying the elements and enablers that help acquire the necessary capabilities for an organization to become adaptable.

Keywords

Operational Excellence, Organizational Culture, Organizational Agility, Total Quality Management, Quality Engineering and Management

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Biography

André M. Carvalho is a PhD Candidate of the MIT Portugal Program, an educational consortium bringing together Portuguese higher education institutions and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in the United States. He holds a Masters' Degree in Industrial Engineering from the University of Minho, Portugal and has worked in the automotive and in the packaging industries before starting to pursue his PhD title. He is currently chair of the Portugal Student Branch of the American Society for Quality.

Paulo Sampaio is Assistant Professor of Quality Engineering and Management at the University of Minho and holds a PhD from the same University. He is since 2015 visiting Scholar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and collaborates with several universities and quality researchers and practitioners worldwide. In 2011 he was nominated as one of the "40 New Voices of Quality" by Quality Progress Magazine; in 2012 he was awarded with the Feigenbaum Medal by the American Society for Quality for outstanding quality practitioners under the age of 35. He is the Country Counselor for Portugal and member of several committees of the American Society for Quality.

Eric Rebentisch, is research associate at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Sociotechnical Systems Research Center. There he leads the MIT Consortium for Engineering Program Excellence (<http://cepe.mit.edu>) focusing research on improving engineering program outcomes, as well as other research projects at MIT. His research has addressed the development and management of enterprise technical competencies, including knowledge management and knowledge transfer, intellectual capital management, long-term institutional change, and the "fuzzy front end" of product development. He is co-author of the book *Lean Enterprise Value*, the Shingo Prize-winning "Guide to Lean Enablers for Managing Engineering Programs", and numerous other publications. At MIT he has taught courses in research methods and Lean/Six-sigma processes. He has advised dozens of graduate student theses at MIT on a range of topics.