Maintaining Momentum

Quite often teams start off with great strides, but then soon fizzle out. The real challenge, then, is to keep a team focused on its purpose and not the dynamics between members, or barriers or past interactions that have been less than pleasant.

Important point #1:   Agree on the Improvement Model to Use

- Standard steps – use your organization's standard step-by-step improvement process or choose from the many published options.
- Data – gather relevant data to analyze the current situation. Define what you know, and what you need to know, but know when to stop gathering data and get to the improvement. Learn, as a team, to say when your work is good enough to proceed to the next step in the process.
- Develop a plan – use your organization's standard improvement model to provide the overall structure of a project plan. Estimate times for each step and for the overall project. Monitor and revise the plan as needed.

Important Point #2:   Use proven methods based on both data and knowledge.

- Data-based methods – use consistent data collection methods and standard analysis approaches such as SPC tools, such as Pareto chart, run chart, etc. that reveal patterns within data.
- Knowledge-based methods – Use methods like affinity diagram, interrelationship digraph, cause & effect diagram etc., to help generate and analyze ideas to reveal the important information within. These tools help create consensus among members of the team.

Important Point #3: Manage Team Dynamics

- Use Facilitators – A facilitator is a person who monitors and assists team members in order to keep their interactions positive, productive and moving forward toward the goal. In this way, the team can stay focused on its primary purpose while improving its working relationship.
- Manage Conflict – As teams grow, so do the conflicts. This is part of the natural order of things that occur as communication becomes more open. The entire team can learn techniques for conflict resolution and use the facilitator as a resource.
- Recognize Agreement – Managing agreement is sometimes a difficult endeavor. You should test for agreement often and writing down the points that everyone agrees upon as they occur.
- Encourage Fair Participation – Each team member must eventually take responsibility for participating consistently in all discussions. Likewise, the entire team should be constantly working to slow down the dominant members and "pull-in" the more quiet members.

Source: http://thequalityweb.com/teams.html