

 **BPTrends ARTICLE****Super Users in Action: bottom-up channel****Laila Māra Pesoa****January 5, 2021**

To have a Continuous Improvement culture, you need everyone to be involved. It is not possible to constantly implement changes if they come all only from some individuals and are imposed on others. All the team needs to feel they can contribute and they are being consulted. It takes a long time to be able to develop this type of mindset in people, and let them know that you can suggest things to be changed and you have space to give your ideas without being criticized.

However, when people have the courage to say their minds, an even bigger challenge is to make sure what they said actually goes somewhere. One of the biggest frustrations employees face is when they want to improve their work and give suggestions, but it stays there. Seeing that your idea got stuck somewhere on the way washes out any willingness to try to do anything to change the status quo. Once this hope is lost, it is just too difficult to convince people that anything is possible.

But why does this happen? From what I have seen, many times the mistake lies in expecting you can have a small team to process and implement the changes for the entire organization. Typically this team could be the Business Process Office or some part of IT, since it directly affects the systems. It is true that you need the Process Owners to go through the proposed changes to make sure they actually can be implemented. However he can't be the first filter to receive the offer and the main implementer of the changes.

The Super User Network is a very important tool that has to be part of the system that enables a Continuous Improvement culture in any company. For

multiple reasons the Super User Network avoids the problem that the Process Owner is implementing changes [1].

The first factor to consider is the size of the company. The bigger the company, the more suggestions the Process Owner might receive to improve the process. The list gets too big, and many of the suggestions stay in line for weeks, months, or even years. Consequently, whoever suggested them gives up on waiting and starts implementing quick fixes by himself or simply gives up suggesting. Instead of having the process improved, you might have local variations being generated and a deviation from the process based on limited information one person has instead of on a greater analysis. So you simply cannot have just one person as sole proprietor of the information.

Another reason is, as I mentioned in my previous article about how the Super Users support IT [2], is the understanding of the issue. Frequently, when people want to offer a suggestion or report an issue, they express it in their own way, which might not be clear or precise enough for others to really grasp the issue. So if a request is received by a person or a team in another location, this team might not understand the precise meaning, because they are not seeing the same reality this person encounters. If this goes through a Super User, he understands the context, thus saving time and energy in trying to understand what is actually meant.

Having a better understanding of the issue, the Super User will be able to determine if the inquirer needs some training, or if indeed this is a real issue. In case the question involves a possible improvement to the process, the Super User might contact other Super Users who are directly involved in the situation and determine if the issue is local or has broader implications that requires a more global response. They discuss how this fix will affect the different functions in the different steps of the process and only then reach out to the Process Owner. At this point, the suggestion is already thoroughly examined , saving many hours of work for the Process Owner.

Additionally, they bring specific day-to-day work expertise which the Process Owner typically does not have. A Process Owner has the overall view of a process and understands what is behind the system and how things are connected. But the longer someone is a Process Owner instead of working on everyday operations, the farther he gets from understanding the details, which are always necessary when proposing an improvement to a process. To give a simple example, when proposing a change he might not know that

the new process requires 10 clicks instead of the 5 initial ones, which might mean the process is actually now heavier for whoever is implementing it.

If organizations use the Super User Network to filter and to refine the request for change, the bottleneck with the process owner and the implementing team will be avoided.

Another aspect that always relates to the Super User Network is trust and peer relationships. When the team sees that its Super User has been involved in implementing a change and it was something that they suggested, they might be more motivated to give more suggestions. Being able to do this within their own team might also help people to feel comfortable because they don't feel as exposed as they would be if they had to send a suggestion to someone in the different department. Additionally, when a suggestion is given inside of the team it can generate a discussion that also involves the other team members, resulting in an improvement that was proposed by a team, not just an individual. This means when the change is being implemented you have already a team who already bought it and they will also be advocates to convince other affected teams that it is a good change. The change isn't anymore simple top-down but it came from the teams who are going to benefit from it, making it easier for them to see this benefit.

A last point that I think should be addressed is the attitude of the Process Owners. Involving a Super User Network, means, in some ways, letting go some of the control over the process. This does not mean changes will be implemented without the approval of the Process Owner. You need his/hers approval, because the local Super Users will not have a total view of the process, so you need someone to pull it together. However the Process Owner must admit and accept that other people might not have his/her knowledge of Process Management but can nonetheless give suggestions that are useful and effective. So, when the role of Super Users includes acting as a filter, it is also important to be attentive to the attitude of each of the Process Owners and the Business Process Office as a whole. Everybody must be open to broadening the team for Continuous Improvement.

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[2] Rizoto-Vidala-Pesoa, L. M., *Super Users in Action: Support IT Support*, BPTrends, November 2nd 2020, <https://www.bptrends.com/super-users-in-action-support-it-support/>

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