



The Transition from Strategic Decision to Implementation

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Have you ever done an excellent job aligning individuals with a corporate strategic decision only to find several months later that implementation of the decision has unraveled?

- What are the failure modes in transitioning from decision to implementation?
- What needs to be done to successfully transition from decision-making to implementation?
- What is the breadth of thought that must be covered when considering implementation?
- How can we get all the key individuals on board with the overall work of implementation and the changes required?

Several failure modes are common in transitioning from decision-making to implementation.

- The decision process concludes with a decision-making meeting.
 - True commitment of resources rarely occurs.
 - People don't understand the specific resource implications.
- Implementation tasks are assigned rather than negotiated.
 - Often causes a significant increase in work load
 - Implementers rarely relieved of work
- No single person is accountable for completing decision implementation.
- Implementers were not part of the decision-making process.
 - No continuity in staffing from decision to implementation
 - Need to participate throughout the decision-making process
 - Provides necessary sanity checks

The disconnect between making a strategic decision and implementing it is often very large.

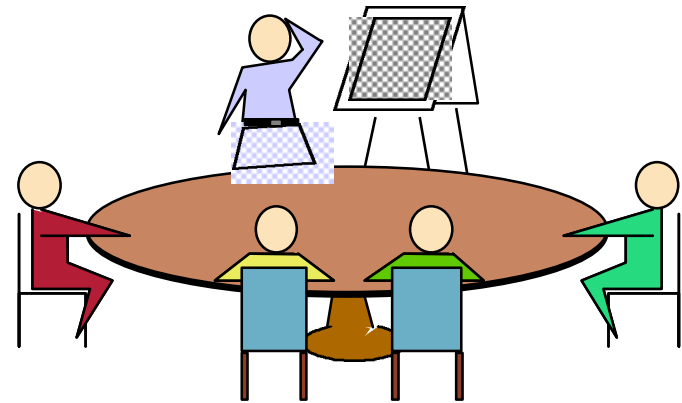


Decision-Makers

The Disconnect

- Organizationally, the decision-makers are often far removed from the personnel who will be asked to implement and be held accountable for implementing the decision.

- The implementers generally have not participated in the debate, discussion, analysis, and intellectual formulation of the decision.
- Yet these people will be expected to accept the decision and enthusiastically support and implement it when they are asked to do so.



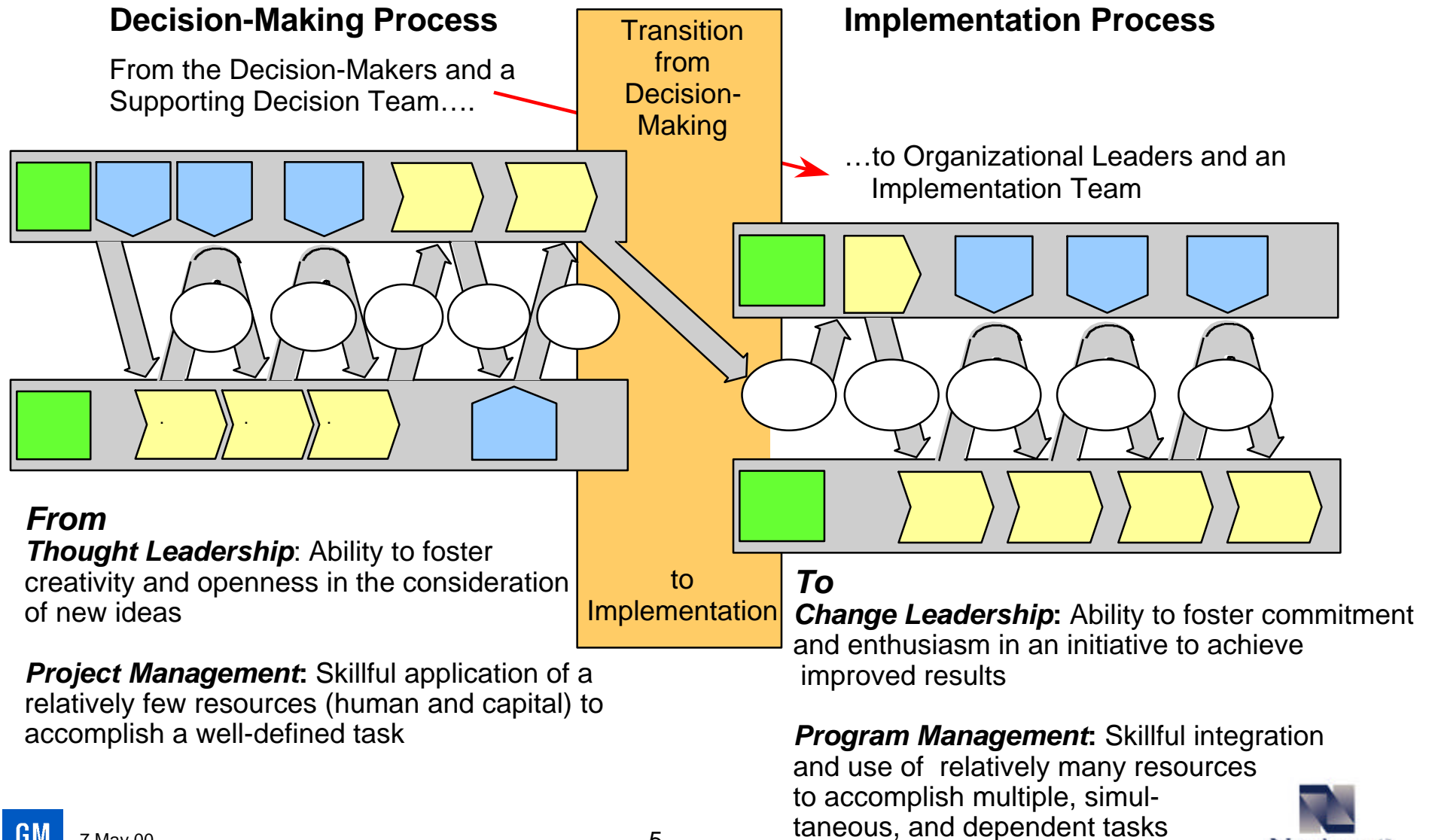
Implementers

Making a strategic decision involves determining and committing to the requirements for implementing it.

Implementation requirements include:

- Strategic decisions regarding the implementation program (possibly lower level decisions not considered in the strategy decision-making process)
- Identification of who is specifically accountable for leading implementation
- Negotiated accountabilities of the implementation leaders relative to the overall implementation program
- Financial resources and associated budget
- High-level implementation program requirements and objectives
 - The organizational scope of the implementation program
 - The overall timing for accomplishing results
 - The performance metrics that should be most affected and by what order of magnitude
 - Any “sacred cows” that are to be kept out of the scope
 - The level of human resources appropriate for the effort
 - The appropriateness of using external resources to assist in the effort
 - The communication plan between the implementation leaders and the decision- makers

Changes in both leadership and management are required in the transition from decisions to implementation.



Thought leadership and change leadership have different behavioral requirements.

Thought Leadership— Decision-Making

- Creativity/knowledge/analysis
- Willingness to consider new ideas
- Keeping one's self open to new possibilities
- Dialog rather than advocacy
- Talking the thought
- Continuous vocal support of process tasks to project team
- Tough-minded analysis
- Accountability for creating value potential
- Drive to a decision

Change Leadership— Implementation

- Focus/practicality/action
- Willingness to try new ideas
- Keeping others open to new possibilities
- Advocacy rather than dialog
- Walking the talk
- Continuous vocal support of implementation tasks to entire organization
- Hard-nosed action
- Accountability for achieving measurable milestones and results
- Drive to results

Using the appropriate management mode is also critical for success.

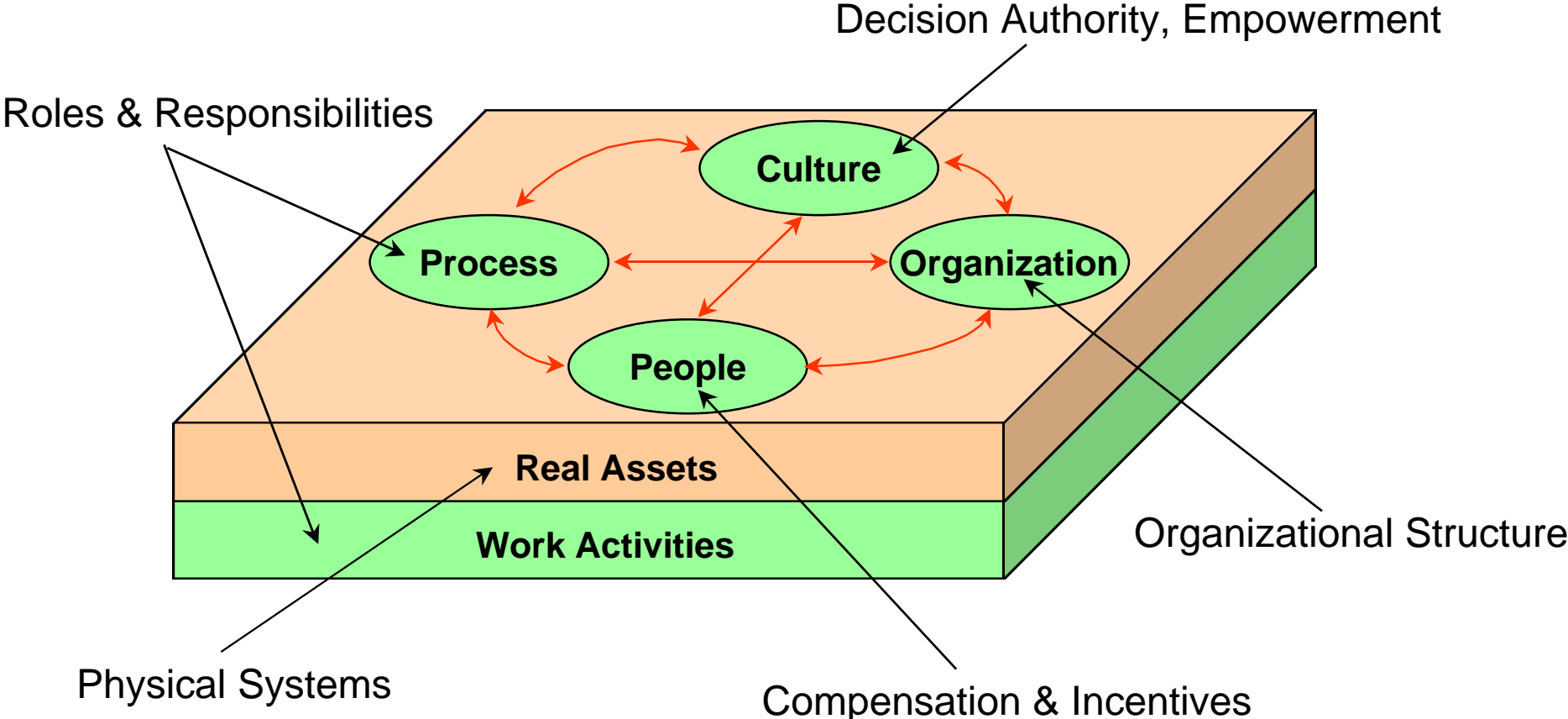
Project Management— Decision-Making

- Low visibility and responsiveness to few
- Smaller team working on tasks in series
- 6 months or less schedule
- Ability to adjust assumptions and boundaries
- Low requirement for broad organizational ownership
- Production of commitment to a decision
- Cost management by schedule management
- Quality of deliverable of no immediate financial impact

Program Management— Implementation

- Visibility and responsiveness to many
- Large team with multiple subteams working on tasks in parallel
- Often over 1 year
- Boundaries well-defined at the onset and firm
- Broad organizational ownership a critical success factor
- Delivery of tangible, measurable results
- Management of cost as well as schedule
- Quality of deliverable of immediate financial impact

For strategic decisions, the implications of change must be considered from several perspectives to ensure complete implementation.



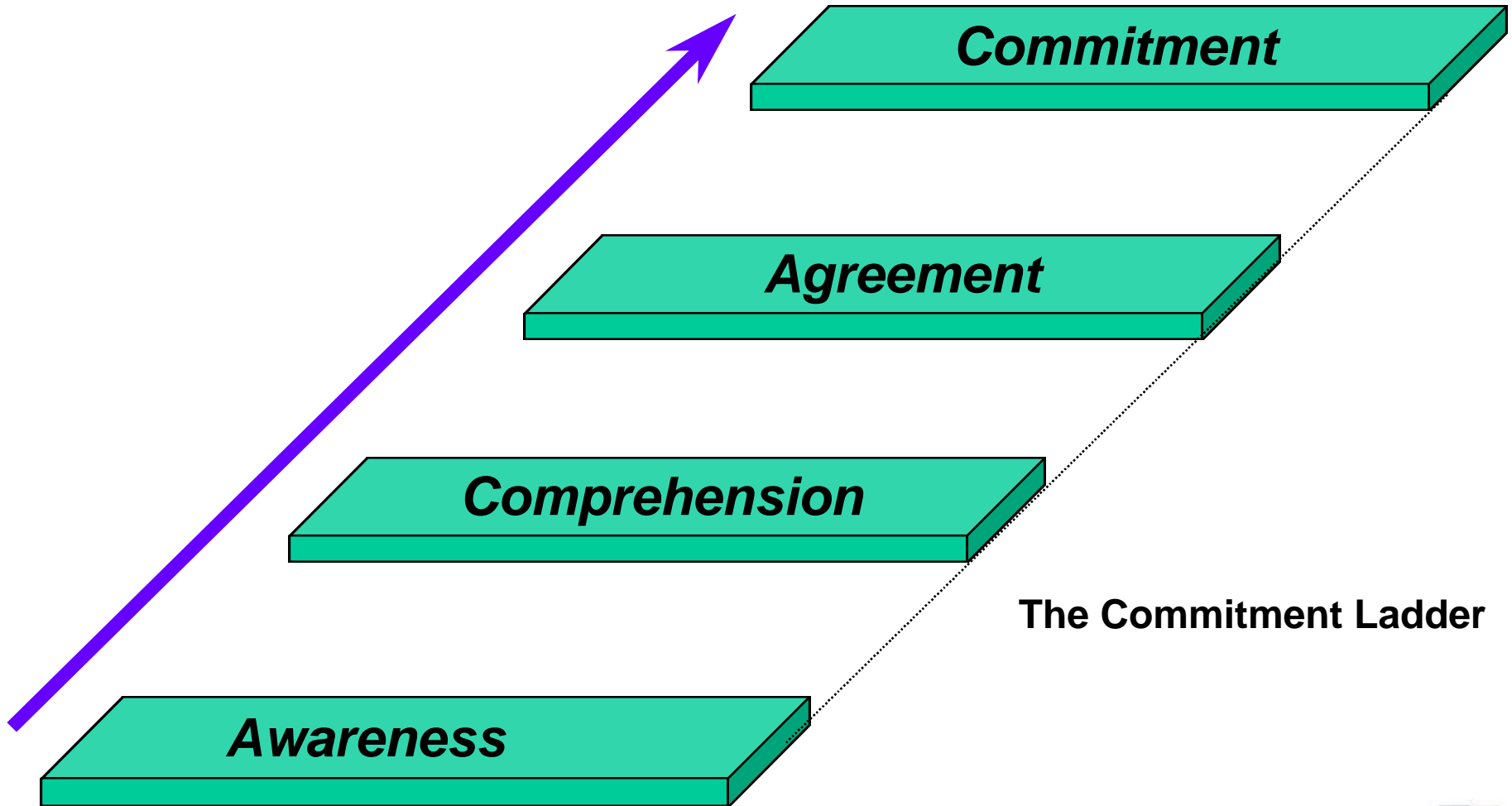
How to proceed into implementation depends on two factors: the mandate for change and integration complexity.

Integration Complexity	High	<p style="text-align: center;">Fix the Problem</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Major Effort on "As Is"</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Minor Effort on Ideal Vision</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Reconstructive Change</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Major Effort on "As Is"</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Major Effort on Ideal Vision</p>
	Low	<p style="text-align: center;">Fix the Problem</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Minor Effort on "As Is"</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Minor Effort on Ideal Vision</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Transformative Change</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Minor Effort on "As Is"</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Major Effort on Ideal Vision</p>
		Low	High
		Mandate for Change	

Individuals and organizations must move through distinct alignment stages before committing to specific changes.

- Awareness
 - The individual or group recognizes the need and urgency for some as-yet-unclear change or action to pursue but has little personal stake or identification with the change or action.
- Comprehension
 - The individual or group understands what the end state should be after the change or action occurs but is still unsure what personal stake or role s/he or it has in achieving the changed state.
- Agreement
 - The individual or group agrees with all other key stakeholders on the end state and on the actions and timing required to achieve it.
- Commitment
 - The individual or group accepts a personal role in the process of achieving the end state with the risks, responsibilities, accountabilities, and consequences of that acceptance.

Consequently, for major changes you need to create and execute a plan to ensure the key stakeholders are committed to specific changes required.



The Commitment Ladder

The alignment plan should be focused on the key stakeholders, those who can truly influence the successful implementation of the strategic decision.

Key stakeholders include individuals who:

- Have the leverage in the affected organization to make change happen
- Are respected in the affected organizations and are viewed as leaders
 - Not necessarily the individual with the “top” position
- Are likely to push back on the changes or attempt to derail the changes
- Hold a position that involves tasks or responsibilities that will be significantly changed

Early warning signs for implementation delays or failure are discernible once implementation begins.

- Early warning signs in implementation plans are:
 - No documented structure
 - “Islands of change” proceed without adequate coordination.
 - There is no infrastructure on which an implementation team can lead change.
 - Insufficient detail
 - Sufficient detail has to be defined during implementation.
 - Critical work steps or interdependencies are overlooked.
 - Inaccurate resource estimates
 - Missed milestone dates
 - Overtasked individuals
 - A lack of accountabilities
 - No commitment to achieving results