

# Eye on the prize

Are you focused on the right priorities? **Interviewed by Steve Trusty**

**W**hat are the most pressing challenges facing your organization today? You want your business to prosper and grow. The more attention you pay to the right details, the better your chances are. How do you determine the most important areas on which to focus the most effort?

“It is important to regularly define what business you are in,” says Chuck Orrico, president and co-founder of Houston-based DYONYX. “Understand the key business drivers that fuel the business. Set your priorities based on these drivers to move the business forward to accomplish what you have set out to do.”

*Smart Business* talked with Orrico for his insight into focusing on the right priorities.

## What are the top business challenges facing executives in today's business environment?

In talking with clients all over the U.S. and the U.K., they consistently identify their top five priorities as the following:

- 1) They want to sustain a steady top-line growth.
- 2) They want to grow their profits.
- 3) They seek speed and flexibility in dealing with customers' needs in today's business environment.
- 4) They want sound managerial talent.
- 5) They seek excellence in execution.

The top two are almost always the same, although they may be reversed from time to time. And, excellence in execution is almost always fifth or sixth.

## Are these challenges prioritized correctly?

Excellence in execution should be the first priority. It is more difficult to achieve growth or increased profits without excellence in execution. It is how you execute your key business processes that determine the speed and flexibility with which key decisions are made.

You also need to know how you are going to gain any efficiencies from any processes you implement. Will these processes increase efficiency or provide more layers that detract from your core business?



**Chuck Orrico**  
President and co-founder  
DYONYX

## What role does IT play in addressing these challenges?

IT should be an enabler to the business and not a disabler. In an effort to increase productivity and efficiency, one of the common mistakes made by most organizations is to allow technology to dictate the business units by focusing on emerging technologies that are advertised to streamline work functions. As a result, the business units are focused to re-engineer key business processes to accommodate the new technology. In many instances, the business unit suffers a productivity downturn, finds the technology difficult to use and views IT as an obstacle in achieving its stated business objectives. IT must have the mindset to understand the key business drivers and how these drivers generate profit and keep the company in business. Then IT must focus on the processes that support these business drivers and how best to optimize them. Once optimization occurs, IT can then implement technologies that will automate these processes, bringing an additional level of productivity improvement and efficiency to the business unit — again, ultimately increasing its ability to properly execute.

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## What about outsourcing certain functions?

Productivity can be further increased by outsourcing commodity-type functions, such as network infrastructure and desktop and help desk support. This allows more time to focus on the key business functions.

## What does continuous improvement (CI) really mean, and how can it help overcome challenges?

As the term implies, CI is a never-ending process. It is much more than specific activities, such as answering the phone by the third ring if you are in the service business. It is reducing variations. It's eliminating situations that do not add value. It's improving customer satisfaction. It is important to determine what causes situations to occur in the first place and focus on the causes rather than just fighting fires. When you engage in process improvement, you seek to learn what causes things to happen in the first place, and then you can use this knowledge to implement the correct solution.

## Please explain process definition.

Building a task and event relationship is called process definition. Being able to define that process has several advantages. If you properly determine how processes and technology affect each other and what your customers are really looking for, you have a much better chance of supplying their needs in a timely, profitable manner. When you define any barriers to customer satisfaction, you can eliminate them. Examining a process can give you more insight into its pros and cons, allowing you to make adjustments that lead to improvement in your overall operation and customer satisfaction. Process accounts for 80 percent of all problems while people account for only 20 percent. If you have the right processes, your people can act more efficiently. <<