

The Jonah Practitioner

Jonah Practitioners are the people within any Theory of Constraints-based organisation who are responsible for the on-going development of the overall business strategy, its implementation and the application of measurements that determine progress toward the achievement of the goal of the organisation. Their starting point is a clear understanding and definition of the organisation's goal and the key measures that determine progress towards that goal – measures that are global rather than local in context.

OK! So what does a Jonah Practitioner do?

- Attacks the constraints of any business using the full power of the Theory of Constraints (TOC) in combination with the Lean tools and techniques
- Develops the mid-term and long-term strategy of the business and guides the day to day management in line with that strategy
- Continually uses the tools of TOC-Lean to drive improvement to the bottom-line
- Develops others within the business to continue and grow what has been started

The name 'Jonah' practitioner comes from "The Goal", Eli Goldratt's best selling business novel. Here Jonah is the old college professor of Alex Rogo, the plant manager who is faced with closure within three months unless he can turn it around. Jonah asks questions, using a Socratic approach rooted in cause and effect logic to force Alex to think differently about the way in which the plant makes money – i.e. achieves the goal. Jonah has to demonstrate that there is a better way of running a plant than just continuing with the same old ways. More of the same is clearly not going to work, and Jonah's questions force Alex to this understanding.

Alex has to turn to a new direction, a major step-change, and here lies the essential difference of the Jonah Practitioner. He or she thinks differently about problems and their solution; they do not simply accept the norms of running a business, whether it be in manufacturing, service, for-profit or not-for-profit, large or small. It is about thinking 'outside the box' to set the direction of the organisation towards the on-going achievement of the goal, both now and in the future.

So what are the necessary conditions for the development of Jonah Practitioners?

- Excellent intuition about the business and the environment in which it exists and operates. This will include, in the case of for-profit companies, the revenue chain from supply to market and for not-for-profit, the service chain.
- An open mind, ready to challenge their own assumptions first and not conditioned by the whims and fads of the present. The training of the Jonah Practitioner involves the application of a rigorous set of logical tools to determine the effect – cause – effect relationships that are holding the organisation back from achieving the goal. This is not the place to try and force-fit a preferred solution or course of action. An open mind is central to being ready to adopt breakthrough solutions to what appear to be intractable problems.
- The ability to engage the help and support of others throughout the whole of the organisation. This is particularly important when the breakthrough solution is clearly out of line with the dominant paradigm. They must be able to communicate the changes that will be required; this includes both the broad strategy and the day to day tactics.

How many Jonah Practitioners should there be in any organisation?

Clearly this is a task for which one person will be insufficient. Such a person, acting alone, trying to meet the demands of the whole of the business, will soon be overloaded and thus become ineffective and frustrated at precisely the point when the organisation is looking to them to provide leadership and focus. Equally, as they analyse what is happening throughout the supply chain, who can they talk to? Who can they discuss their analysis with? Who can scrutinise their analysis and then the viability of the solution? Our research over the past fifteen years shows clearly that the minimum number of active Jonah Practitioners in any organisation is four and, depending on the size of the organisation, the norm is between eight and ten people.

Training Outline for the Jonah Practitioner

The basic training programme consists of the following aspects.

- Value stream mapping (VSM)
- Data collection tools and techniques
- Analysis and verification of the data collected
- Application of Effect – Cause – Effect (ECE) logic in the creation of what is called the “Current Reality Tree” (Crt)
- The determination of the core problem of the organisation – that which is having the most impact in holding the organisation back from achieving the goal; the answer to the question “what to change?”
- Describing the core conflict that resides within the core problem, this using the “Cloud” technique and thus identifying the starting point for the solution – overcoming the core problem with a step change, what is called in TOC terminology an Injection.
- Developing the solution again through the same logical tools of ECE as used in the development of the Crt – this time it is the Future Reality Tree (Frt) that is being constructed and then validated using the same rigour as for the Crt.
- Developing the implementation plan for the proposed solution based on two distinct aspects – obstacles to the solution and then potential negative outcomes if the solution is implemented. Using two more tools from the TOC toolset, the implementation plan is developed, turned into a project plan and then implemented using the Critical Chain Project Management approach.
- Checking that the solution has been effective in removing the core problem and the issues and problems that arise as a result of that core problem and that a new platform has been created allowing for more growth into the future.

The Jonah Practitioner also needs to be conversant with the key applications relevant to the organisation. These might include the Operations Solution known as Drum – Buffer – Rope; the Project Management/New Product Development solution known as Critical Chain Project Management; the supply chain solution known as Replenishment/Distribution; the measurement solution known as Throughput Accounting; the sales and marketing solution.

TOC-Lean Institute
22, Digby Drive
Melton Mowbray
Leicestershire
LE13 0RQ

Tel: 01664 502860
Fax: 01664 502870

www.toc-lean.com
www.constraintmanagement.co.uk

If you would like further information or wish to arrange a course at a time to suit you and your organisation, please contact us by telephone or email:

Ted Hutchin
tedh@toc-lean.com

Diane Jeary
dianej@toc-lean.com