

**Breaking the Paperwork Barrier - Going On-Line**  
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**SUMMARY**

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This presentation reviews how suggestion systems, continuous improvement and other employee involvement processes can be effectively put on-line. Direct examples of people using on-line systems will be shown and showcase how Holsum in Arizona, a firm of 500+ employees, handles several thousand ideas per year with minimal administration. By going on-line processes are streamlined and paper based processes can be significantly reduced and possibly completely replaced by an on-line system. This improves satisfaction of participants and can boost participation as well.

## INTRODUCTION

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Current improvements in computer technology as well as staff access to computer systems in the recent years now allow many organizations to reap the benefits of a fully or partially on-line suggestion system. With staff reductions in many system offices, there often aren't the resources to continue handling the tedious data entry of forms. Added to that are the expectations of suggestion system participants of faster turn-around times on the ideas they are involved in as well as simplification of the process. Organizational management has typically become more and more results oriented and may not support older processes that are inefficient. This presentation will review the various issues with going on-line with a suggestion system. It will also discuss several different approaches to achieving that goal.

Before reviewing on-line systems, let's take a look at where our existing processes are at:

- Administrators and staff may have many other responsibilities.
- Limited staff.
- Difficulties in getting information out to people and coordinating the process.
- Frustrated participants having problems determining the status of their ideas.
- Lengthy evaluations.
- Competition among EI or quality processes.
- Top management not truly supporting the process.
- Lack of support from middle management and technical staff.
- Lack of support for training.
- Lack of technical support for implementing an adequate computer tracking system.

With these problems, the potential of a suggestion system is reduced and may be viewed as an unwanted irritant. If EI is reduced to the level of an unwanted irritant, no amount of effort to efficiently track the program will make the program successful. A successful EI process is one that communicates to all participants while streamlining the administrative staff's clerical nightmare and simplifies the workload of evaluators and other participants. This includes communicating to top management the information they need.

*Communication, efficiency and expediency are paramount in carrying out and monitoring successful employee involvement processes, regardless of administrative emphasis or technique. This is where a well designed software system to manage a suggestion system is vital.*

Next participants will write down and share their existing problems or issues and identify which of these could be partially or completely resolved by an on-line process.

## GOING ON-LINE

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We need to review to what level we want to go on-line with our process. We will define "on-line" as any electronic entry method link to your suggestion system database. Below are the basic operations that typically can be handled on-line. You may decide to provide some or all of them to your employees:

- ◆ Entry of a new idea by an employee.
- ◆ Review of idea status by an employee or their supervisor.
- ◆ Employees, teams or supervisors querying the database to research their idea based on related topics or to search for potential duplicate ideas.
- ◆ Evaluator or assessor access to review an idea.
- ◆ Managers or supervisors running their personal status reports.
- ◆ Redemption of awards (for points type processes).
- ◆ E-mail notification to submitters, evaluators and other participants. This can be useful to remind evaluators of ideas they need to be reviewing (the e-mail could be linked to a jump to the idea in the actual on-line system).

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Reduced clerical data entry time</li> <li>◆ Improved turn-around times</li> <li>◆ Employees can have access to their idea status on-line</li> <li>◆ Information can be shared.</li> <li>◆ Higher level of ownership in the process by participants</li> <li>◆ Better communication to participants</li> <li>◆ For large organizations, better consistency between sites</li> <li>◆ Cut down paper usage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Training typically is required for users of the system</li> <li>◆ Difficulty in getting access for participants who don't have a computer</li> <li>◆ Management or the evaluation staff may see it as a loss of control</li> <li>◆ Increased support calls</li> <li>◆ For large organizations with very independent local programs, a centrally located system may be difficult to initially implement due</li> </ul>

Now we need to identify which electronic format best suits us for going on-line (you will need to work with your information systems people to identify which approach is possible). Typically people identify on-line as with a web site for entry but we will review any format for getting information in/out electronically.

- ◆ E-mail – This would typically use an entry form that is directly imported into the main database or manually cut/pasted into the main system.
- ◆ Direct network access - An example of the Holsum Bakery, Phoenix, Arizona will be shown.
- ◆ Groupware – Typically this is a Lotus Notes type application that is used to provide access for participants. Groupware is a viable alternative only if your organization already has it globally implemented. Otherwise it will be very expensive to get licensing for all the sites to have the groupware software loaded.
- ◆ Intranet web site - This is the preferred approach if your organization has an intranet defined and computer workstations have a browser loaded. It doesn't require any other software to be locally loaded (thin client) and simplifies training/support. Up front pages before the data entry pages can be used to promote the program (e.g., with photos and success stories). You could also include 'jumps' from a wide range of other intranet web sites to your site. For instance there could be a safety program web page that also links to your page with a jump. Example of Union Tank Car, Chicago, Illinois will be shown.

When going on-line we recommend looking at the entire cost of the project since updating the existing system to work properly may be much more costly than creating a new one or purchasing an off-the-shelf system from an outside vendor. I recommend reviewing all of your options before plunging in.

A common concern in many organizations is that not everyone has direct access to a computer or has an e-mail account. Don't let that stop you from going on-line. Kiosks can be set up in canteens or other areas with a computer that allows people access. It is also better to get some people on-line as soon as possible as it will cut your data entry costs of the system. A related worry is that many people don't have the computer skills to use the system. We have found that this concern is diminishing, since people that don't use a computer at work may have experience using one outside the workplace (e.g., home or school).

Other issues to consider are:

- ◆ Who will use the system?
- ◆ Training
- ◆ Paper based forms
- ◆ Security
- ◆ Automation
- ◆ Keep it simple
- ◆ Dissidents
- ◆ Making the software an idea catalyst

## HOLSUM'S OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT (OFI) PROCESS

Until 1996 Holsum was using a different approach to manage the Opportunity for Improvement (OFI) process. An Associate would fill out a multi-part preprinted form and submit it to a Team leader for approval. The Team Leader would approve or disapprove the OFI. The approved OFI's were keyed in the computer system using software designed not for idea tracking but for preventive maintenance tracking for the engineering department.

The previous software system was cumbersome and not very user-friendly.

- 1) The main idea information was keyed in two different screens.
- 2) The Team Leader would pass on a hard copy to the appropriate department for action.
- 3) No updates were entered in to the system since the system did not allow it.
- 4) Only Team Leaders had access to the computer and associates had no way of checking the status of the OFI. The Team Leaders found the system difficult to use and the volume of the OFI's so overwhelming that most of the time they would not bother key in the information. They just forwarded a hard copy to the appropriate department for action.
- 5) The reporting was practically non-existent. The fact that only one person in the entire company knew how to run reports, made dissemination of information very difficult.
- 6) The associates felt that nothing was done and there were turn in very few suggestions for improvement.

After extensive review, they selected the Total Quality Systems (TQS), SIM software to manage their OFI process for the past several years. This section of the presentation covers their selection process for software and their learning curve of taking their process on-line. Since the OFI process keeps evolving, the software they use needs to evolve as well. Holsum strives to partner with the vendors it works with, to insure the best product from a viable vendor. Thus they directly involved TQS in identifying new needs of the software system for their OFI process.

### COMPANY BACKGROUND

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Established in 1881, Holsum Bakery, Inc. is Arizona's oldest family owned business and today is the largest bread supplier in the Southwest. Holsum associates produce a variety of bread, buns, and rolls that are distributed to stores and restaurants throughout Arizona and Southern Nevada. Holsum makes its products in the Phoenix facility, which was constructed in 1947 and in a recently acquired facility in Tempe. Holsum also owns and operates nine depots and ten thrift stores in Arizona.

In Arizona, Holsum is the market-share leader for commercial baked bread and bun products and is one of only three independent bakeries in the U.S. that supplies buns to McDonald's Corporation. Edward Eisele, the current owner and president, is the grandson of the company founder.

Throughout its history, Holsum has been a pioneer in its industry, and was the first to sell sliced bread in Arizona and produced enriched bread prior to federal requirements. Holsum was the first bakery to use sanitary waxed paper wrappers. Holsum is a market leader and the company consistently invests to expand its business in an industry in which small bakeries are closing or selling to larger organizations.

Holsum Bakery has won many quality awards over the years. Notably, it was awarded the 1996 Arizona Pioneer Award for Quality. Sponsored by the Governor's Advisory Council on Quality. Arizona's award process is modeled after the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, with seven categories

of criteria: Leadership, Information and Analysis, Strategic Planning, Human Resource Development and Management, Process Management, Business Results and Customer Focus and Satisfaction.

Additionally, Holsum was awarded the NATIONAL QUALITY AWARD for both Bread and Buns. For the first time in the W.E. Long Company history (over 100 years) one bakery has won both the bread and bun trophies in the same year. All of the hard work and attention to quality has paid off. This is a very big honor for all of the Holsum associates.

#### REASONS FOR ON-LINE ACCESS

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- ◆ Reduce Data Entry Time
- ◆ Reduce Paper Usage
- ◆ Improve Response Time
- ◆ Improve Communication
- ◆ Improve Tracking & Reporting
- ◆ Participant Ownership
- ◆ Instant Access to Status of Idea

#### IMPLEMENTATION

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- ◆ Redefine OFI Process
- ◆ Find Suitable Computer System (to replace existing in-house system)
- ◆ Implement System
- ◆ Set Up Data Entry Centers (for bakery associates that didn't have direct access to a computer)
- ◆ Develop User Documentation
- ◆ Train All Participants
- ◆ Re-Evaluate the Process
- ◆ Make Appropriate Changes

#### SYSTEM SELECTION CRITERIA

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- ◆ Easy to Use
- ◆ Flexible to Change as Needed (avoid costly custom software development or modifications)
- ◆ East to Maintain/Support
- ◆ Security
- ◆ Must Work on Existing Hardware/Network Platforms
- ◆ E-Mail Interface
- ◆ Web Access
- ◆ Powerful Reporting Tools

## BENEFITS

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- ◆ Increased Participation – From 25% to 65%
- ◆ 3000+ Suggestions Per Year (500 Associates)
- ◆ 10+ Ideas Per Participant
- ◆ Better Tracking of Ideas
- ◆ Clearly Defined Ownership
- ◆ Minimal Administration
- ◆ Improved Computer skills