Ensuring operational improvement programmes actually deliver the desired results.

Despite investing time and resource into operational improvement programmes many companies are left with the feeling that the results, be it operational performance, safety or profitability could be even better.

Our experience is that many clients, despite excellent capability, are not really bringing the collective creativity of their people to bear on solving problems or realising opportunities. Too often it is managers or specialists who are tasked with improvement – leaving much of the collective in company brainpower underused.

What we offer
ABB’s novel approach to operations improvement utilizes company insight to discover the unique route to operational excellence. Our role is to help the client determine the real problem or issue and to facilitate the client in implementing the right solution(s) so that changes are fully bought into and sustained. The largest single element of achieving this is by inclusion of all the relevant stakeholders and by constant communication. This might mean the use of ‘experts’ both internal and external.

We are ‘problem centered, not solution focused’. Our approach recognises that for every situation, the route to excellence will be unique to the particular client environment. We do not know the ‘answer’ and – at the start of the journey – neither does our client. We help use inhouse expert knowledge to identify real improvement priorities. We provide support at both strategic and hands-on level to accelerate the pace of achieving success.

We avoid the perceived barriers to change by focusing on communication, training and commitment, throughout all the levels of the organization. As changes are implemented by those who are affected ‘ownership’ is created, helping to ensure the sustainability of improvements.
**Why does our approach work?**

There is a relationship between the complexity of the situation and the level of sharing required between the client and the consultant (see diagram on page 2). Complexity takes into account the overall situation rather than the complexity of the problem, e.g. an assessment for energy savings is not simple but the situation or context is clear, the organisation needs to understand where it can save energy costs. An example at the other end of the scale would be the requirement to ‘change the culture’ which is a lot more complex. The Level of sharing relates to how much joint discussions are required to clarify the problem or issue, e.g. if the problem involves a number of stakeholders then the level of sharing will be high. Changing out one piece of equipment for an equivalent would require less sharing.

Similarly the level of ‘sharing’ between the client and the consultant can vary.

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<th>Complexity of situation</th>
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**The Dave Casey model**

1. A client needs an assessment of safety integrity levels (SIL). The complexity of the situation is low and the degree of sharing that is required for the consultant to make a decision is also low. An expert is required and the result is a success.

2. This is a danger area. If the situation is complex but the level of sharing is low then the sustainability of the solution is questionable. For example, some organisations have applied Lean or 6 Sigma by trying to ‘sheep dip’ all their employees through a training course. The result? Some individuals will adopt the new behaviours, many others will take the training and do nothing – the culture will not change radically, if at all.

3. Another danger area. If the complexity of the situation is low but a high degree of sharing takes place then the solution may never get implemented or may end up like a camel – ‘a horse designed by committee’. For example, an engineer had a solution to error proof a chemical addition nozzle. Because the organisation was trying to empower and involve its entire workforce, they asked everyone from senior manager to operating technicians. The time and effort expended was unnecessary, the solution did not affect more than a few people and only they needed to be consulted.

4. The client is keen on developing a safety culture where individuals adopt the ‘my brother’s keeper’ behaviour. A solution could be an investigation into the current safety performance and culture, a workshop convened to include all stakeholders to determine what the client will do to roll out the process but this will only be the solution if the client decides it is appropriate (based on data hard and soft). This ensures that the high complexity of the situation is understood by all concerned including the consultants.

**ABB can assist with issues that fall into the high complex, high sharing quadrant.**

**Why ABB?**

- Our experience of leadership in operating businesses
- The track record of our approach
- The transfer of skills to our customers to promote sustainability
- Efficient access to a broad range of relevant technical experts that can support problem solving
- A problem led approach - rather than solution led