

A Center of Excellence

Recently a Chief Technology Officer gave this quote:

“We [that is, the IT staff] don’t know how to talk about requirements in any precise way, which is a matter of the business people not understanding what we need – and IT doesn’t clarify this very well, either. Specifying requirements is a failure on both the part of the business and IT departments. Users have trouble expressing their needs and desires in a way that the technologist can understand. There must be someone in the middle to interpret what the user is saying and translate it to IT.”¹

Sound familiar? The problem at many organizations as they strive to build technology that provides true business value is at heart an organizational one. Business areas and IT just don’t talk very well.

But, you may say, in my company each business area houses a business analyst. Doesn’t that serve the purpose? We’ve found that this individual is usually too embedded within the business area and “the way things have always been done” to have the enterprise-wide view necessary to provide a perspective for today’s cross-functional systems. And while IT may have “subject matter experts” focused on a business area’s systems, those individuals usually do not have business expertise or the tools to focus on business process needs.

We believe that organizations must develop new roles and new organizations that can perform as the “someone in the middle” bridging IT and Business. We call this organization “CoRE” – the Center of Requirements Excellence.

What Is the New Organization?

CoRE is an operational infrastructure that supports a methodology and a toolset. Its focus is not just on requirements in the classic sense, but also on understanding business processes and helping to identify the need for making those processes more effective through appropriate technology projects. CoRE should be constructed in such a way that it weaves itself throughout the entire project life cycle – with strategic management, project management, and quality assuring and training initiatives.

An early step is to look seriously at CoRE’s mission and structure. We believe that CoRE should not become a Project Management Office (PMO) with a mission is to run projects, to report on projects, or to perform as the command and control center for projects. Rather, CoRE should provide the processes, the tools and the mentoring that will enable others, specifically the business areas participating in strategic initiatives, to reach their goals.

With this in mind, we believe that the CoRE infrastructure must support four main initiatives:

- **Process Development, Management and Mentoring**

CoRE should serve as the owner of the processes that will be followed to perform business analysis, requirements analysis and requirements management. That means defining the process, ensuring that it is kept up-to-date with lessons learned, and providing education and training to those who will use the process. If you don’t have your own methodology, DEA can provide its proven approach, *LINKProcess*TM, that guides projects in a defined, repeatable, and manageable manner. It has been built in

¹ From an IT Roundtable quoted in *Software Magazine*.

adherence to the Carnegie Mellon Capability Maturity Model (CMM) standards.

▪ **Tool Management and Mentoring**

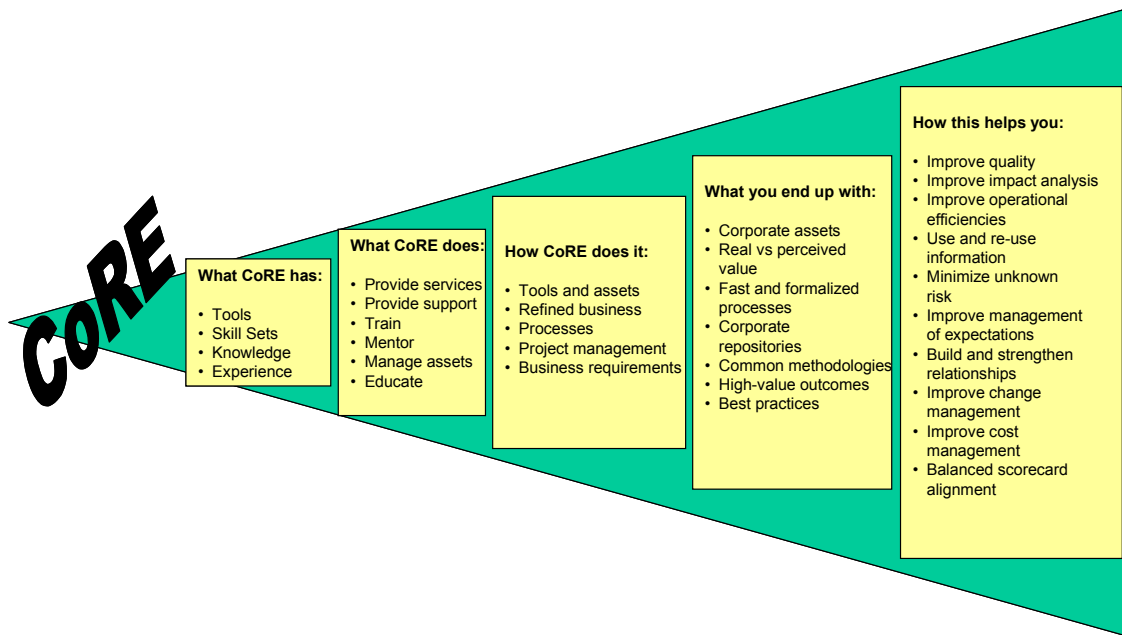
CoRE must determine the best tools to use for building models and specifying business processes and requirements, as well as for managing those assets and for ensuring that those who use them are trained for success. CoRE should build templates for deliverables.

▪ **Operational Project Support**

CoRE should provide staff to work on projects to ensure that the methodology is followed and the tools are used effectively. It should participate in opening and closing projects in order to ensure that the right people are in place and that the team understands the project's goals and objectives. The staff can also serve as quality assurance experts on projects to make certain deliverables are complete and accurate.

▪ **Asset Management**

CoRE should manage an infrastructure that tracks project deliverables and makes them available for sharing and re-use. In addition, CoRE can use the work done in projects to build an enterprise architecture of business processes and the roles, business areas and the systems that support them. What does this mean? That you will have a centralized view of information showing how the business, as a whole, performs the processes that provide value to your customers.



Building Your Own CoRE

Efforts over the early years must focus on thinking through exactly how CoRE’s own processes should work, in developing expertise in business process analysis and requirements analysis, and in creating the infrastructure and templates. There will a period of adjustment from the past, where IT drives business-related technology efforts, to a new paradigm in which CoRE provides mechanisms which will allow the business areas to be in control of their own destinies.

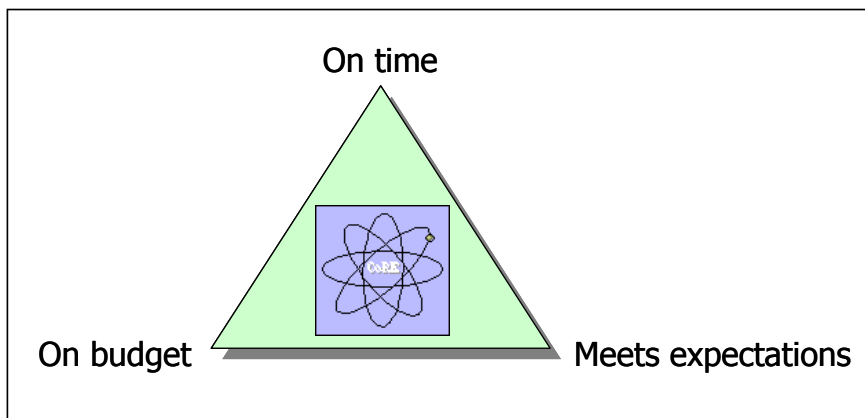
Here are a few guidelines to keep in mind:

Starting up a best practice organization such as CoRE requires a champion at the executive level to market and drive it.

- Structure the organization so that it reports neither to IT nor to an operational business area. It needs to have a neutral, cross-organization perspective so that it can see opportunities across the breadth of the business.
- Plan on a 3-5 year effort – it takes time to develop skills, to gather the expertise, and to learn how to function as a key part of the larger organization.
- Incorporate outside help, with a plan to ultimately become self-sufficient.

Measuring CoRE

The ultimate measure of success is the old one: do projects where CoRE is involved come in on time, on budget and – most important – do they meet the business needs and expectations.



Ways to Work Together

DEA can work with you to build a CoRE capability in one of three ways:

- You can engage DEA to perform as your CoRE organization on strategic initiatives. In this scenario, the CoRE infrastructure resides within DEA and we supply seasoned, industry-knowledgeable professionals to work with your team, using our *LINKProcess*[™], our tools, and our infrastructure to deliver a successful project.
- You can use the CoRE infrastructure (processes and tools) from DEA and leverage your own internal resources to serve operationally on projects.
- You can internalize CoRE, purchasing DEA tools and methods to build your own infrastructure. DEA maintains contact with you through on-going best practice seminars and by making a dedicated internal infrastructure team available to you to improve operations.