



Construction Industry Institute®

The Role of Executive Support in Implementation Champion Success

Construction Industry Institute

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**Prepared by
Construction Industry Institute
Implementation Strategy Committee**

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Executive Summary

The success of a new implementation process relies on two critical organizational elements:

- an implementation champion (IC) who has the primary responsibility of introducing new practices to benefit the organization, and who also offers technical support, administrative contact, management oversight, and general process support.
- the Board of Advisors (BOA) member who in the case of CII member organizations is the direct link to management, and who facilitates the IC's ability to successfully deliver the anticipated results.¹

This research addresses the question, if the required IC support is being provided and if there is a gap between the BOA and IC perspectives, can the desired end results be achieved?

This research studied the IC's role in several major areas, including organizational support, barriers, and success measures. Of particular interest was the alignment of the ICs and the BOA members on these areas within the organizations studied. The research indicates that both IC and BOA respondents believe that

- an IC enters an implementation process with little authority and with unenthusiastic support from management.
- few organizations have defined success metrics to judge the success of an implementation effort.

Their perspectives diverge with respect to the barriers to implementation they perceive. In this regard, BOA members believe the primary barrier to implementation success is personnel-based while ICs

¹ While this study focused on CII member organizations, the dynamics between the executive sponsor and implementation champion exist, in similar fashion, within non-CII member organizations when introducing organizational change.

believe budget and risk play a pronounced role in the approval process. It is the presence of these kinds of discrepancies that challenges the success potential for implementation efforts. This research highlights the need for organizations to reconsider the roles undertaken by individuals in successful implementation efforts. It also asks organizations that are serious about improvement to reexamine the requirements for supporting ICs as they carry out their implementation responsibilities.

Introduction

The role of Implementation Champion (IC) is a critical position in any effort to implement new organizational work processes or project practices. The IC is the designated/assigned change agent in the organization. As such, he or she leads the effort to implement new practices and stands as the central liaison between all parties involved in the planned change. As a change agent, the IC will undertake responsibilities that cross the boundaries of strategic planning, business planning, project management, and financial controls. Although the IC does not have to be the company expert on each of these topics, he or she must enter the position with the understanding that responsibilities will include interacting with the individuals who are responsible for these areas. Concurrently, the IC must also adopt the role of implementation proponent and marketing agent at various times in the implementation process.

The diversity of responsibility associated with the position can make the position both challenging—perhaps even daunting—to the individual who assumes it. However, the importance of the IC's job makes this role a pivotal component in the ultimate success of new practice implementation. Specifically, it is the responsibility of the IC to oversee the new practice process from its initial presentation to management through the pilot phase and, beyond that, to a broader marketing phase throughout the organization. In this capacity, the IC becomes closely associated with the new implementation and its ultimate success or failure. Although this association may not reflect the totality of the effort involved with implementing a new practice, the reality of the implementation process is that one individual must take public responsibility for it.

Although the IC stands at the center of the implementation process, he or she must also work to integrate its management up and down the organizational chain. This dichotomy of responsibility is what makes the IC such a unique agent of change. Very few corporate positions require the diversity of tasks that are associated with the IC's many roles.

Additionally, very few individuals are required to interact with such a diverse audience as the IC. When combined in a single package, the IC's responsibilities and relationships make up a unique position in the implementation process. Clearly, the position requires a dedicated individual.

Current Status of ICs in CII

With a membership of over 100 organizations, CII is comprised of a significant number of organization types. Large public organizations, such as federal agencies, are represented. Both global and national product and service organizations are also represented, alongside the engineering and construction organizations that perform capital facilities delivery. And, finally, the research component of CII brings experts into the mix to provide scientifically validated input to each of the member organizations. In each of these organizations, an IC or group of ICs have the responsibility of bringing the large body of CII practices into the organization and making it relevant to their specific circumstance.

The experience and success of current ICs varies in terms of their time with the organizations they serve and their positions within them. However, this diversity does not alter the fundamental responsibility of the IC, which is to introduce new project delivery practices that can benefit the organization. This is the responsibility accepted by the ICs and the challenge that each one faces.

Study Motivation

The current study supports the ongoing effort to enhance practice implementation efforts. The ten-stage new practice implementation process that is introduced in Implementation Resource 246-2, *Steps to Implementation Success*, spotlights the importance of the IC in the implementation process. From beginning to end, the implementation process is dependent on the IC. Given this dependency, the CII Implementation Strategy Committee (ISC) has been studying IC assessments of their ability to succeed. The result of these studies has been a realization that a significant barrier to the success of new

practice implementation is the poor organizational support that ICs get. Specifically, ICs were found to believe that their ability to successfully complete their tasks is being hindered by their organizations' lack of recognition of the scope of IC responsibility.

The emergence of the ICs' concerns during the informal sessions at recent CII Performance Improvement Workshops (PIWs) was the motivation for undertaking a formal study of the ICs' roles and their perspectives on their ability to successfully introduce new practices into their organizations. Thus, the ISC undertook the current study to obtain a better perspective on current IC concerns and responsibilities, and to compare them to management's views on these issues.

Methodology

The current study used a Web-based survey to obtain responses from active ICs and the Board of Advisors (BOA) members in CII member organizations. Each IC and BOA member was sent an invitation to participate in the study. The response rate from the ICs was 35 percent, representing 39 responses out of 113 CII queries. Although total industry and company experience varies, the term of service for the respondents in an IC position was found most often to be fewer than five years. Forty-three percent of the respondents have been an IC for one year or less, and 73 percent of the respondents have been an IC for fewer than five years. Although this data would appear to skew the results towards new ICs, it reflects the trend of organizations to periodically change the IC and thus represents the demographics of the CII membership. The total response was sufficient to provide the summary results presented in this document.

The response from the BOA members was similar to that of the ICs, with their 37 replies translating to a response rate of 33 percent. The respondents' experience in their roles as BOA members correlates to the findings for the ICs, with 78 percent having served on the BOA for fewer than five years, and 30 percent having served for less than one year. Once again, these statistics reflect the tendency of organizations to change their BOA members on a regular basis.