Interactive Management(IM)

D.M. Lee M Sc.

This paper describes Interactive Management for readers not familiar with this system. It contains extract from documents written by Benjamin J. Broome of Arizona State University and A handbook of Interactive management by John Warfield and A. Roxana Cardenas.

Suggestion for further reading are listed at the end of this paper.

What is Interactive Management (IM)?

IM is a means and method of resolving and finding solutions to complex organizational, technical, or other type of complex problem or situation. Further, it is used for understanding complex situations and surfacing ideas and actions to address those situations. IM is based on scientific and mathematical principles and it leverages traits of human cognition. IM is a practical system used by many different types of organizations. It is also well utilized by individuals practicing in the field of management consulting. IM works particularly well in a group environment.

IM process consists of three phases:

- Intelligence
- Design
- Choice

Further information about these phases is presented in the references at the end of this paper.

Background

Interactive Management (IM) is a system created for organizations to deal with and understand complex issues. It is suited to interventions that require contributions from individuals with diverse views, backgrounds, and perspectives. IM allows the organizations to work on complex issues such as strategic planning and intra-organizational issues that are too complex to deal with conventional methods. The IM system promotes communication, consensus, and commitment from participants involved in the design effort. IM has been developed primarily through the work of John Warfield at George Mason University and elsewhere, and it is based on Warfield's Science of Generic Design. IM was established as a formal system of planning and design in 1980 after a developmental phase that started in 1974. In addition to the work at George Mason University, centers for the practice of IM exist around the world.

Interpretive Structural Modeling is used as the core analysis process for implementation of IM.

Approach

The Interactive Management System engages a group to move successfully through the three phases: Intelligence, Design, and Choice, as originally put forth by H. A. Simon in 1960. IM seeks to balance the behavioral demands of group work with technical assistance that maximizes use of participants' time.

The system is designed to prevent groups from:

1. prematurely focusing on solutions before they have adequately defined the situation, and

2. underconceptualizing design alternatives.

Methods are employed to encourage the participants' creativity, and group facilitation processes are used to manage and enhance the group's communication.

How does IM system differ from "Normal" meetings for issue resolution ?

The most salient feature of IM methodology is the use of Interpretive Structural Modeling - a computer-assisted methodology that helps a group identify the relationships among ideas and impose structure on the complexity of the issue. Some of the other differences are:

1. When focusing on complex issues, the typical meeting often becomes bogged down in small issues and details and the group loses sight of the larger picture. The IM process keeps the group focused on the system of issues that characterize the situation.

2. IM sessions are part of an overall design for problem solving: In normal meetings, there is a significant amount of "jumping back and forth" between seemingly unrelated issues. IM sessions are conducted as part of an integrated plan for dealing with the situation, and each session builds on what came before and lays the foundation for what will come after.

3. Special methodologies are used to handle information overload: Participants in the normal meeting are frequently asked to deal with too many pieces of information simultaneously. The methodologies in IM help participants work with ideas systematically while building up a holistic view of the situation.

4. Discussion is managed by an expert in group process: In the typical meeting the chair of the meeting attempts to both manage the process and contribute to the content of the discussion. IM sessions are guided by an experienced facilitator who manages the flow of communication and encourages meaningful dialogue but does not contribute content information.

5. Relevant documentation is provided: Normal meetings usually go to one of two extremes -they either provide sketchy minutes or they try to capture every word uttered by participants. IM sessions go to neither extreme; they do provide an "audit trail" that captures the products produced by the group and the rationales behind those products.

Role of Interpretive Structural Modeling

Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM) is the core methodology used for Interactive Management. ISM provides all of the required facilities for satisfying the requirements of IM.

Applications

Interactive Management has been applied in many types of organizations, both public and private, with a wide range of issues. At George Mason University during the past few years IM has been used with the National Marine Fisheries Service for organizational redesign, the Department of Defense for improving the acquisition process, the Virginia Nursing Alliance for mapping organizational goals and objectives, the National Science Foundation for relating the study of mathematics and computer science, several University academic and administrative departments for long-range planning, and several Native American Tribes for developing greater participation in Tribal governance.

Resources, references and links for further reading

1. A HANDBOOK of INTERACTIVE MANAGEMENT by John N. Warfield and A. Roxana Cárdenas Published by Ajar Publishing Company Palm Harbor, FL 34684

2. Structured Decision Making with Interpretive structural modeling - implementing the core of IM
   http://www.amazon.com/Structured-Decision-Interpretive-Structural-Modeling/dp/0968491413/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1296616007&sr=1-2-spell

3. http://www.sorach.com/resource.html

4. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_N._Warfield

5. www.sorach.com/references.php

6. http://www.sorach.com/paperdownload.html

7. www.sorach.com/cstarone.html

8. www.sorach.com/faq.html

9. visit www.sorach.com then click on *products* link

10. For current scientific references please visit www.sorach.com/references.php