

PAPER TITLE: BUILDING BLOCKS FOR SUCCESS AS A CVS – LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE TRENCHES

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ABSTRACT:

You accepted the challenge, you're a CVS. The CVS certificate proudly framed and affixed on the wall, you're ready to lead value studies and embark on career as a Certified Value Specialist. The SAVE Certification tests your knowledge of the value process but doesn't prepare the new CVS on the reality to facilitate and grow a successful career in the value profession. This paper shares experiences and lessons learned from over 20 years of experience as a CVS.

INTRODUCTION:

The certification process is a framework intended to teach, train and test (the three Ts) your knowledge of the value methodology. A CVS is certified to lead a variety of studies and workshops. The CVS must be prepared to conduct these studies under various conditions with each type of project, product or process; the basics are not enough to be successful as a value practitioner.

The keys to success are included in the definition of the value methodology, "*function-oriented, systematic, team approach to add customer value to a program, facility, system, or service.*"

TRUST THE PROCESS:

The value methodology creates a framework for success. Study failures have occurred when the facilitator strays from the Job Plan, skipping phases or jumping around performing the phases out of order. Skipping, jumping or rushing the process often results in delays or going backwards. Even if the facilitator is unsure of the direction of the study, always trust the process because the process works.

The Job Plan builds a successful study much like a building. The walls of a building can't be installed without a proper foundation. Well defined and implementable alternatives won't be the outcome without spending the time and effort during the earlier phases especially the information and function analysis phases. The best solutions are of no value if they solve the wrong problem. The information and function analysis phases done well will help to clearly define the problem and thereby reap great rewards.

FILL YOUR TOOLBOX:

The typical initial training, Module I, introduces the student to a few tools and techniques. With the advanced training, the number of tools is further expanded. These techniques include different function models, quality models, and evaluation techniques to name a few. Many of these techniques can be adapted to other areas of the job plan. Knowing multiple techniques allows the facilitator to use and adapt many of these techniques to meet the specific needs of the study or workshop. The key is to learn and seek out other tools and techniques even those that may be outside the usual types of studies.

As a CVS, the toolbox is filled in many ways. Attending conferences and discussions expands the CVS toolbox. Work with other CVSs and observe them. Seek and ask for mentors and be a mentor to future CVSs, never stop learning.

UNDERSTAND THE ROLE OF THE CVS:

A value study includes various participants. Each participant has a role and responsibility toward the execution of a successful study. The CVS is the subject matter expert of the value methodology, the Job Plan. An effective application of the Job Plan is the primary responsibility of the CVS, workshop facilitator.

At times, the CVS may take on other roles such as a technical expert. Taking on multiple roles could diminish the effectiveness of the CVS's primary role to facilitate and appropriately apply the value process. The CVS must be cautious about taking on too many roles and thereby reducing their effectiveness and success of the value study. The primary responsibility of the facilitator must always be for the study success and the application of the value process.

RESPECT THE TEAM:

Another key to a successful value study is the team. Sometimes the CVS assembles the team and other times the team is assembled by others. Either way, every team member brings a unique skill set and background. The successful CVS finds a means to tap and utilize those unique skills.

The CVS needs to listen and respect each team member to tap into their potential. This means the CVS needs to play coach and teacher for each team member. A team member is a technical expert but may struggle communicating their ideas. The CVS supports the team member to assure the ideas are well communicated, both written and verbal, thereby increasing the potential for implementation.

COMMUNICATION, COMMUNICATION, COMMUNICATION:

Ultimately, the cornerstone for a successful study is communication. The study starts with discussing the goals and objectives with the workshop client. This includes a definition of what can and cannot be completed within the constraints of workshop duration and stage of the project. A pre-study conversation between the study client and CVS to assure the correct team members are selected, workshop duration and establish clear expectations.

Communication continues from pre-study throughout the study and then post-study. The context of the study often changes throughout the process. In order for the CVS to adapt and adjust, the CVS needs to periodically check with each member involved in the study including the client for the study, decision makers and team members. The sooner the CVS is aware of any changes surrounding the study, the greater the number of possible options to assure ultimate study success.

BUILD A CAREER:

Beyond the individual study is the long-term career as a CVS. Don't be afraid to facilitate studies outside your technical expertise. The expertise of the CVS remains with the value process not as a technical team member. Team with other CVSs for studies in unfamiliar study topics or types of studies such as process studies or conducting training.

Give back to the value community. SAVE provides many opportunities to support the value community such as volunteering to serve on the local chapter, board of directors or certification board. Presenting papers at a value related conference gives the CVS an opportunity to connect with other CVSs and potential clients.

CONCLUSION:

Completing the certification of CVS required hard work but is only the beginning for a successful study and career as a long-term CVS. The keys for a successful study includes trusting the process, Job Plan, respecting the value team and clear communication.

For sustained success from study to study means filling your toolbox, continued growth and expanding the CVS knowledge base. Knowledge is gained by attending conferences, training and learning from others.

The value profession relies on everyone giving back to the value community. This is a two-way benefit. The value profession relies on volunteers to continue to grow and the value professional connects and learns from others in the community.

Go forth and be the best CVS you can be.