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11.958 Getting Things Implemented: Strategy, People, Performance, and Leadership
IAP 2009

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Creating Value + Political Management

**11.958 Getting Things Implemented
January 2009 IAP**

DAY 1 NOTES



Outline

- **Thinking like an implementer**
- **Creating value, value propositions**
 - Re-defining value (UpGlo) vs. efficiently producing outputs
 - UpGlo's value proposition as a “yes and” (supplement, not replacement) for established refugee assistance.
 - Implications of a new value proposition: Operating model, resource model
- **Political management: Need, opportunity, approaches**

Thinking like an implementer

Consider two broad concerns:

- The quality of **IDEAS** (how strong vs. weak?)
- The quality of **IMPLEMENTATION** (how effective vs. ineffective?)

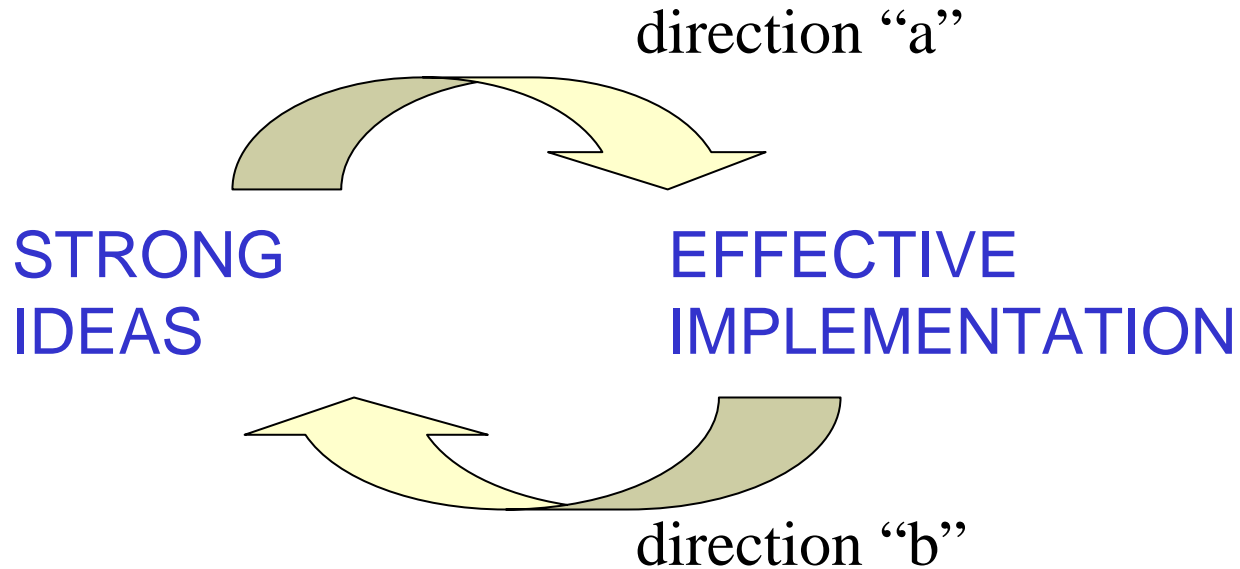
Example: We want to be able to distinguish strong ideas, weakly implemented from bad ideas. These distinctions are often not easy to make—but are hugely important for the support we can build for good ideas.

Thinking about combinations:

	Strong Idea	Weak Idea
Effective Implementation	A	B
Ineffective Implementation	C	D

Quadrant “A” is a wonderful place to be, “D” a noxious one. But let’s also working at **“staying off the diagonal”**: Weak ideas very efficiently produced (gears are turning, but little value creation) or strong ideas ineffectively implemented (great concept, execution lacking, so: little value created).

One more framing thought: Which comes “first”?



Rational policy and planning, growing out of the applied science model, assumes “a” is the natural order of things. But many powerful, value-creating ideas emerge out of “b”—creative and restless tinkering, which is *generative* of new ideas (think the free-wheeling inventor, perhaps, as opposed to the linear, hypothesis testing scientist in the lab).

How does UpGlo reflect “b”?

- Jane Leu’s frustrations with the limits of the dominant refugee assistance model lead her to redefine value.
- How do we reconcile this with her agency’s *apparent* success? The performance measures are narrow, and so is the value proposition (get refugees “a” job fast). The system rewards contractors who place many clients ... so they can keep doing that limited job efficiently (Quadrant “B” on Slide 4).
- Multiple factors led to the dominant model: A shift in the client population (e.g. low-skilled rural refugees without English-language skills who struggled to become self-sufficient in America), welfare reform, etc. *Strong pressure not to redefine value.*

Where else does Leu look for clues?

Competitors and potential competitors:

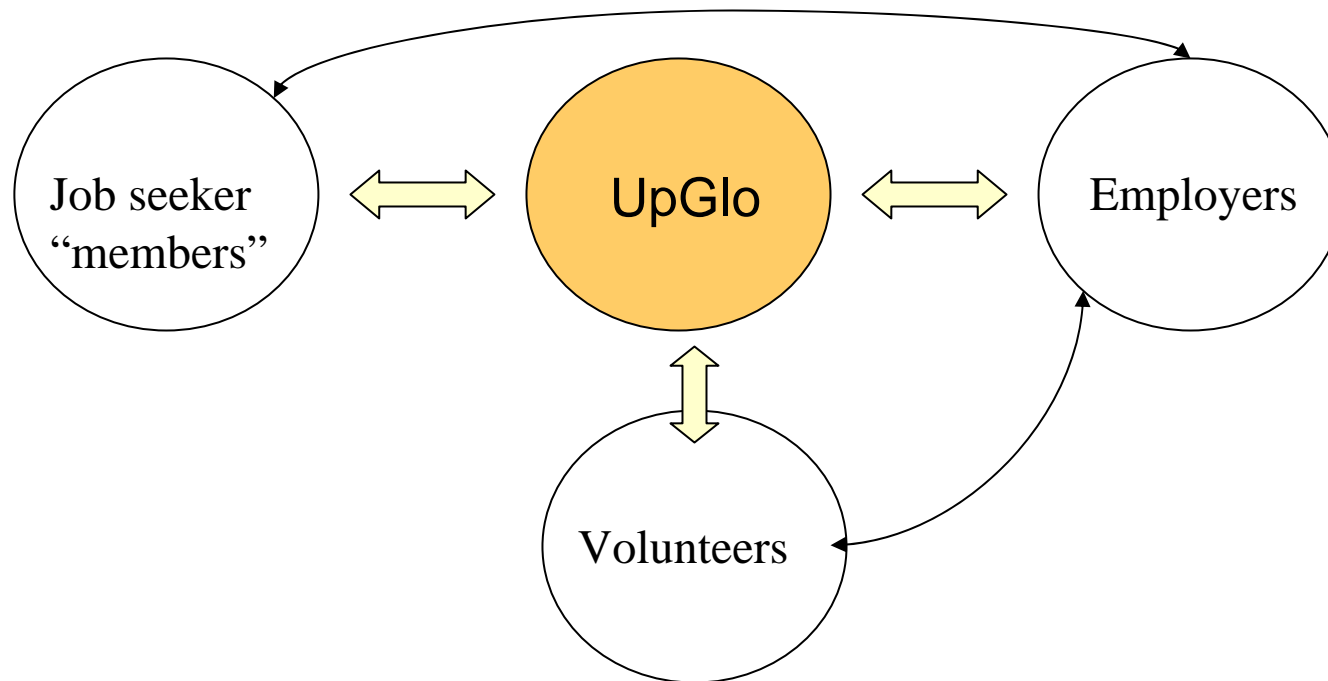
- **Other nonprofit refugee assistance contractors (“volags”)**: staff also frustrated, but focus on the mandate from government, contract fulfillment. *Government is the “indirect producer” in this picture (creates value, however limited, through contractors).*
- **Private job placement firms (talks to “line” staff)**: Incentives also favor clients who can be placed quickly and placements per se, nothing broader.

Defining value (two propositions)

- 1. Help refugee/immigrants find a job quickly** (to they can support themselves once short-term government assistance runs out)
- 2. Help (some) refugee/immigrants develop their careers** (as a path toward fuller integration into mainstream American society).

Leu sees #1 as limited (myopic) but necessary (and clearly supported), #2 as a worthy **supplement**.

This suggest a radically different operating model



New operations and resources

- **Volunteers** help a “lean” UpGlo staff deliver a suite of benefits to job seekers.
- **Employer partners** gain access to valuable human resources, plus benefit of “good neighbor” contribution (social impact). They can also be a source of volunteer professionals.
- **Job seeker “members”** can be ambassadors for the program, employer contacts and even volunteers over time.
- **Donors** offer core funding to cover gap between expenses and member or employer fees.
- ***Final implication:*** UpGlo needs a value proposition for each of these stakeholders! The old assistance model offered none of this.

Summary: Lessons

- 1. Having a goal is not the same as having a clear, actionable value proposition.**
- 2. Myopic conceptions of value, narrow success measures and incentives to back them can reproduce Quadrant “B” for a long time: Efficiently administered, *weak*—as in incomplete, suboptimal, or even counterproductive—ideas.**
- 3. Effective implementers must often help to define *ends* (value propositions), not just political or operational *means*.**
- 4. Implementation strategy includes good ideas about both.**
- 5. To define or re-define values, look for clues in the environment, your own implementation experience, expert data or research, outspoken customers, other sources.**

Case B: Park Plaza

Mahoney seems to have strong grounds for rejecting the June submission:

- **Legal:** Careful interpretation of the defined urban renewal criteria.
- **Political:** His political boss seems strongly supportive
- **Substantive:** Real gaps in the proposal (e.g. uncertainty about the Combat Zone area, financial risk)

Yet support erodes fast, illustrating the importance of effective political management

- **The project gets linked, in the Governor's Office and among key interest groups (unions), to the big transport policy issue. Jobs are at stake, the prospect of appearing to be a "no-growth" Governor.**
- **DCA-BRA conversations go nowhere, seem "cosmetic," perfunctory.**
- **The Mayor, legislature, media all come out against Mahoney's decision, and the Mayor even seeks to strip DCA of key powers (home rule petition).**
- **Mahoney is increasingly isolated, and then the Governor announces publicly that Park Plaza seems at last on the road to being approved.**

So what did Mahoney miss, and what might he have done differently?

- Looking “upward”: Park Plaza and transport policy are becoming “**linked bargains**,” yet Mahoney isn’t tracking this, nor is Governor’s staff including him in their strategizing.
- Looking “outward”: Mahoney has been absorbed in BRA meetings, missed the chance to
 - *Deliberate* with the wider public and interest groups about what motivated his decision, what trade-offs are appropriate among competing public objectives.
 - *Negotiate* toward a livable agreement (construct a favorable coalition that makes a restructured Park Plaza a “win” for the pro-development group and a useful precedent for Mahoney the reformer)
- **Focus only on Mahoney’s formal authority to approve, and we miss the importance of sustaining support and legitimacy where interests are many, objectives compete with each other, there are multiple centers of power (include) to get things done.**

Summary: Lessons

- **Effective implementers need to interpret, develop, and sustain a mandate to act, which is often about deploying their limited formal authority to win the support and cooperation of others (who do not report to them).**
- **Indirect production: Each agency in this picture “needs” the others to create value (DCA needs the developers and BRA, etc. to make “responsible urban development” real, etc.).**
- **This also clashes with the traditional conception of implementation as effectively tasking your subordinates (administering *within* a hierarchy).**