

White Paper on the Road to Overcoming Overload



Overcoming Committee Overload

Adam's dream job was a career where he can have a significant impact on lives of hurting people. Joining the hospital leadership team, as Director of Public Relations, was the closest thing he could see to achieving his goal. With a degree in public relation, and an MBA, the healthcare system is a fertile opportunity for a self-motivated individual like Adam.¹

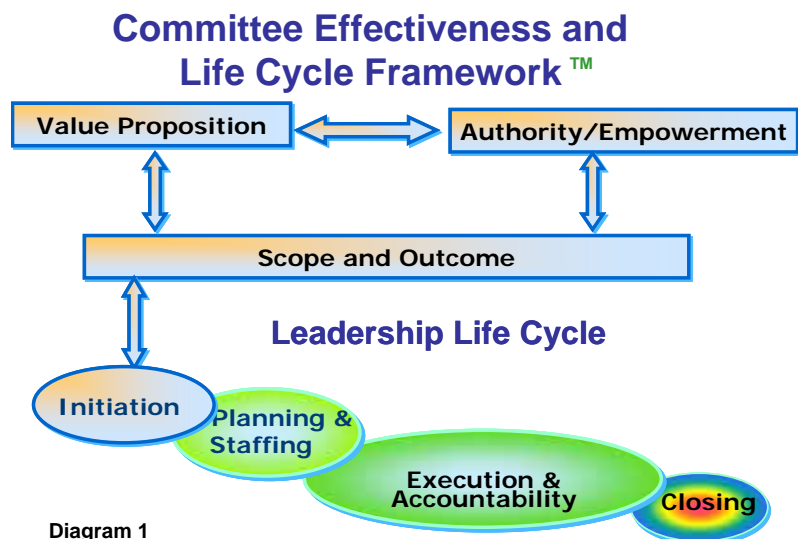
As his boss escorted him on the introductory rituals, Adam was flattered by the number of people who expressed interest in his talents. As soon as his e-mail account was established he started getting invites to join a variety of committees. He often questioned what contribution he could make to such committees. Discussing his concerns, his boss told him that being on committees is the best way to gain expositor and recognitions in the hospital. Within 6 month of joining the hospital Adam found himself on 14 different committees. Tired and overworked he began to question his effectiveness and if he is really making an impact on lives of hurting people.

Do you know any one like Adam?

In conversation with healthcare leaders some articulated their concerns in the following comments:

What is the solution?

Diagram 1 illustrates a topical framework and a process that could help us discuss possible solutions. This framework will highlight key point that should be reflected in a Committee Charter or Terms of Reference. Further, candid



¹ *The names and titles are changed. The experience is based on participants in our [Overcoming Overload Workshop](#).

Note:

* This whitepaper is extracted from our book *Overloaded? From overload to balanced living*. See more [@ amazon.com](#)

* If this page was sent to you by a friend we invite you to [subscribe to our e-letter "On The Road To Overcoming Overload."](#)



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discussions can help can help leaders enhance the effectiveness of their committees.

Value Proposition (VP)

No committee should exist without a documented **VP** reflecting its attributes and the value it brings. A well-stated **VP** must:

- A. Clearly **relate to and support** the hospital values, mission, and business objectives.
- B. Reflect how the committee **differentiates itself** from other existing committees and/or organizations within the hospital.

Committee Authority

The purpose of authority is empowerment and accountability. **There should be no responsibility with out authority and there should be no authority with out accountability.** No committee should exist unless it has an appointed senior authority that supports its **VP**, is rewarded for its outcome, and empowers it to fulfill its mandate. **The committee achievements should be part of its authority's performance measurement.**

- A. The committee will be totally accountable to its Authority who:
 - i. Is responsible for its achievements and performance
 - ii. Approves its membership to provide the optimum mix of skills, competencies, authority, and ability
 - iii. Appoints **only one Committee Leader** who is accountable for its operation.
- B. The Committee Authority must meet at least once a month with the Committee Leader to provide **support and to review** its progress, issues, and concerns. This he/she should summarize to the senior leadership team.
- C. The Committee Authority must terminate the committee when its term expires or when its value proposition is fully realized or fails to materialize.

Scope and Outcome

The committee must have a clearly defined scope. To ensure its focus the committee scope and outcome can be defined by:

- A. **Scope of accountability** that is the target of specific objectives resulting in **tangible** and/or **non-tangible** benefits. The scope of accountability must be documented and approved by the Committee Authority during the committee initiation phase.
- B. **Scope of influence** could include areas where the committee **may have** indirect impact or benefits but should not be included in its performance measurements.



The Committee Life and Cycle Process

- ✓ From initiation to closing, the life of a committee is a trust in the hand of its leader and must be effectively managed. This is how activities and expectations are clearly communicated and misunderstanding is strictly avoided.
- ✓ The life cycle of a committee should not be longer than **12 months** or the job performance evaluation period of its authority, whichever is less.

Initiation

- A. Any business leader may call for the initiation of a committee but the initiation phase **cannot** start unless its vision and benefits capture the interest of a potential senior authority that would sponsor initiating an assessment of its viability.
- B. This phase is a foundational investigating phase. Commitment to the initiation phase does not imply commitment to the committee.
- C. The outcome of this phase will be documented as:
 - i. **Statement of explanation** indicating the reasons why the committee existence is not viable or
 - ii. **Committee Charter** or **Terms of Reference** that:
 1. Announces the committee and confirms the Committee Authority
 2. Appoints its leader. **The committee achievement will be part of its leader's performance measurement.**
 3. Highlights the committee value and benefits to the organization and or its key stakeholders
 4. States the committee's scope and expected outcome
 5. Defines expected tangible and non tangible benefits
 6. Highlights possible costs and obligations,
 7. Anticipates critical success factors, risks, and risk mitigation options
 8. Explains the roles and expectations of its members along with staffing guidelines
 9. States the committee term and life expectancy
 10. References the closing and termination plan

Planning and Staffing

During this phase the committee leader documents the:

- A. Committee execution plan including:
 - i. Confirmation of the committee scope and deliverables
 - ii. High level activity plan and smart goals
 - iii. Expected reporting and communication plans
 - iv. Expected closing and hand over plan
- B. Staffing plan which reflects:

- i. How each of the committee members can play an effective role in achieving the committee objective and goals.
- ii. The staffing goal should be to provide the optimum mix of skills, competencies, authority, and ability. The committee leader must ensure that committee **staffing strictly avoids “title imposed roles” or be only based on organizational titles.**

Execution and Accountability

During the execution phase the Committee Authority must **support** the committee leader and hold him or her **accountable** for:

- A. Motivating and maintaining appropriate committee staffing levels and avoiding meeting and work overload.
- B. Ensuring that committee members play their roles with excellence
- C. Ensuring positive collaboration among committee members
- D. Ensuring effective communication with key stakeholders
- E. Maintaining appropriate records of committee proceedings and communication
- F. Regularly reporting progress, issues, and concerns to the committee authority **who in turn must similarly communicate to the senior leadership team**

Closing

At the end of the committee term the committee leader must document:

- A. A summary of achievements and outstanding issues
- B. An assessment of the contribution and performance of each committee member.
This assessment **will be part of the participant’s performance measurement.**
- C. A list of lessons learned
- D. Recommendation for follow-up activities, committees, or projects.
- E. In many cases the mandate of the committee could be renewed. This is the case with many standing committees. If a continuation of the committee is recommended the committee authority should request the same riggers in a new initiation process.

What did Adam do?

With the above check list in hand Adam decided to meet with his boss to assess the many committees he had been drafted to. This process highlighted the need for an audit of many of the committees Adam was on. It also highlighted the need for training and modeling of effective committee leadership.

Armed with this Adam was able to excuse himself from committees where he was less than effective and focus on well run committees where he could make a significant contribution. As he modified his role and time investments he began to realize the goal of improving the impact he has on the organization and having an impact on the lives of hurting people.