Reach for the Top
Selling Data Quality to Senior Executives

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Introduction

I have worked in data quality (DQ) for over 15 years. In that time I have talked to many DQ practitioners and others who are trying to persuade their organizations to recognize that DQ improvement is worth investing in. In these discussions one common theme often emerges. Although the benefits of DQ improvement appear self-evident to people intimately involved, a constant frustration is that others in the organization do not recognize its importance.

This common complaint is directed most frequently at senior executives within an organization. People involved in data quality improvement know that getting senior level sponsorship and support is critical but are frustrated that their efforts all too frequently fall on deaf ears. Senior executives just don't get it.

This paper tries to help those working in DQ to overcome this problem, and turn senior executives into allies and not blockers of DQ improvement. It is based on the author’s experience of initiating and leading a major DQ improvement program across a global telecommunications company, and helping other large organizations tackle their DQ issues.

It will suggest strategies and approaches to help DQ professionals gain access to, and influence over, senior executives within their organization. It will also suggest some useful tools and techniques that can be employed before, during and after engagement with senior executives. The paper will also make reference to some of the main practical lessons learned by the author in running enterprise wide data quality initiatives.
The Problem

An old South African folk tale relates the story of the Lost Message. This refers to the life of ants. Ants have many enemies – man, birds, anteaters, centipedes – so some of the ants decided they needed to improve their chances of survival by cooperating to repel their enemies. They held a council to discuss.

But the council was a babel of discord. They talked together for a long time but nothing came of it. Eventually the council broke up without agreement and different groups of ants resolved to go their own way. As a result each had their own self-appointed tasks; workers, soldiers and so on. This division of labor preserved harmony amongst the ants but did nothing to protect them from their enemies.

One day a king ant emerged. He asked the groups why they had not embraced the secret of unity and the benefits of working together. Each group gave him a different explanation based on their own roles in the kingdom. The king became very confused. Today ants are still to find the secret of unity and are still at the mercy of their enemies.

Does this feel familiar? Our organizations have become increasingly diversified and more specialized. Each group of specialists within the organization has developed its own language, concepts and ways of working. It’s become increasingly difficult for any individual to gain a picture of how it all fits together. In this context, pity the senior executive whose job it is to bring unity and harmony to these organizations. Every day he or she will be lobbied by one or more of these groups – sales, finance, human relations, IT – who will seek support for their investment cases and problems. He or she will be asked to make priority calls, favor one initiative over another, and act in the best interests of the organization as a whole.

It’s hardly surprising therefore that grabbing the attention and support of senior executives is a challenge. And it’s even more difficult for data quality professionals. DQ is a relatively recent discipline, and it’s unlikely that senior executives have been exposed to it in their education or experience, unlike sales, finance, human relations and so on. So the sell is even harder. DQ professionals must devise strategies to surmount this.
Why should senior executives care about data quality?

First of all, why should senior executives care about DQ? The good news for DQ is that there is a plethora of evidence to demonstrate they should. Here are some examples:

- In the current recessionary and stringent cost cutting environment facing both private & public organizations, senior executives need to focus on minimising cost. Several surveys have demonstrated that poor quality of information costs the average organization between 10-20% of their revenue / turnover.
- In the UK a 2008 Cap Gemini report ‘Information Opportunity Report: Harnessing Information to Enhance Business Performance’ found poor management of data and information cost the UK economy £67 billion a year. £46 billion of this was cost incurred in the private sector, £21 billion in the public sector.
- In a 2009 Information Difference survey of global organizations with turnovers of $1 billion or more, a third rated DQ in their organization as ‘poor at best’. Only 4% rated it as ‘excellent’.
- In a 2009 Gartner survey of global CFOs 75% cited ‘information’ as a barrier to achieving business goals.
- And these failures are occurring in the context of a ‘data tsunami’ where data volumes are exploding. By 2015 the average organization will hold 700 times the volume of data it held in 2000. By 2020 the average organization will hold 7,000 times the data held in 2000.

Overall, coherent and integrated attempts to improve DQ in organizations could reap massive rewards, benefitting customers, employees and stockholders. Senior executives should therefore care very much about DQ.
Why are senior executives important to data quality?

DQ improvement is a business transformation challenge. Poor DQ is usually caused by business process, people and technology issues coming together to create DQ problems. Resolving them therefore requires changes to business processes, to the way people behave and what they do, and to the technology that underpins business operations.

In many cases resolving DQ problems requires strong collaboration and cooperation across the organization as the places where the pain is felt is often not where the problems originate. To tackle DQ across an organization consequently requires a transformation across the business, transcending organizational boundaries.

Senior executives are critical in making this happen. They have a number of essential roles to play:

- They will need to endorse the business case for DQ improvement and to sanction the business investment to make it happen. Chances of gaining this approval will clearly be much greater if the senior executives involved understand the impact of poor DQ and the potential benefits of improvement.

- As a business transformation challenge DQ improvement requires champions and mentors at the most senior levels of the company. They can ensure DQ initiatives align with key current and future business strategies and goals and advise DQ teams on how to make the maximum impact across the business.

- Senior executives are usually highly effective change agents. They are strong influencers and negotiators who can open doors and break down barriers across the organization.

- Through having direct authority over the areas of the business they lead senior executives can issue direct instructions to their people to act in support of DQ improvement efforts. They can also mandate changes to business processes where required. To make DQ improvement happen the stick is often a useful adjunct to the carrot.
Senior executives are often held up as role models. By themselves showing public support for DQ improvement they can inspire others to do the same. A common barrier to DQ in many organizations is that its culture may be one where admitting to having DQ problems is seen as an admission of failure. By setting the example, senior executives can help remove this obstacle.

**So why is it so hard to engage senior executives?**

We’ve already established that senior executives need better DQ, and that DQ needs senior executives. So why is this virtuous circle, clearly a win-win scenario, often so difficult to create and sustain? Let’s look at some of the factors that get in the way:

- The most obvious is that senior executives are busy people. In the daily course of their activities they meet many people, are lobbied by many individuals and groups, and asked to make decisions about a wide range of topics. In their eyes DQ is another of many issues they need to face. Unless a case for action can be presented in a succinct, concise way there is little chance it will hit home.

- As was touched on earlier DQ is a relatively recent discipline. It is unlikely that many senior executives have encountered DQ as a business issue in their education or experience. To compound this, explaining the impact of poor DQ on a business can be complex, especially in larger organizations. The fact that it can and usually does have effects across and beyond an enterprise can add to this sense of complexity. When faced with priority calls between complex propositions and simple decisions, many senior executives will favor the latter. The implication of this for DQ professionals is that they must develop influencing strategies which simplify the issues, and relate their work to the issues senior executives face on a day to day basis. If they can’t do this, their chances of successful lobbying are massively diminished.
Finally DQ professionals must shoulder much of the blame. Many DQ specialists in organizations have become, like the specialist ants, a subculture within their organization with their own mind sets, concepts and language. Too often, when given the opportunity to influence senior executives, they fail to translate what they are doing into language that a senior executive would relate to. Phrases such as metadata management, information architecture, data modelling, data governance, master data management et al are rooted in IT and are likely to elicit a response of blank incomprehension in many senior executives whose everyday business language centres on profit, brand value, process, revenues, costs, bottom line, customers, & shareholder value. To bridge this gap DQ professionals must therefore translate their everyday working concepts into language which can influence a senior executive, and which can elicit a positive response.

To summarize, the problem faced by DQ professionals trying to gain traction and support at senior levels in their organization is qualitatively no different from that faced by finance, sales or HR professionals. They must be able to sell their case to senior executives in a way that will generate the support they need. But it’s a tougher sell, so DQ people need to work harder at it. We’ll now go on to propose strategies and techniques to help do this.
The Solution – How to Sell Data Quality to Senior Executives
For effective & enduring engagement with senior executives DQ professionals need to ensure they can tick all the following boxes. Let’s call these ‘The Six Steps to the Top’:

STEP 1 - ARTICULATE THE PROBLEM
Understand the causes of DQ problems and be able to explain them in a way that will have resonance with senior executives.

STEP 2 – CREATE THE VISION
Set out a clear vision of what DQ improvement activities are trying to achieve and have prepared 2, 10 and 30 minute pitches to communicate that vision.

STEP 3 – DEMONSTRATE DELIVERY
Have a track record of delivering at least one, and preferably more than one, successful DQ improvement project which has impacted the business’s bottom line before engaging with senior executives.

STEP 4 - PREPARE THE GROUND
Are fully briefed and prepared for initial contacts with senior executive stakeholders.

STEP 5 - INFLUENCE THE OUTCOME
Can practice effective negotiating and influencing skills & behaviors when meeting senior executives.

STEP 6 - SUSTAIN INVOLVEMENT
Develop and implement organizational structures for DQ improvement where senior executives can play an active long term role.

We’ll examine each of these steps in more detail:
Step 1 – Articulate the Problem

DQ specialists and others trying to gain traction for DQ improvement initiatives will readily recognize DQ issues. They also have practical experience of identifying, analyzing and articulating why poor DQ is happening.

However many DQ people trying to drive change have their roots in IT; in many organizations DQ improvement still remains primarily driven by IT. This can create a particular problem when trying to articulate DQ issues in a way that senior executives understand. In many organizations IT continues to be seen as culpable for DQ problems. Many senior executives (apart from the CIO!) will therefore feel this is not their problem and will assume IT should and will sort it out.

This of course is an erroneous perception of the causes of poor DQ. DQ is first and foremost a multi-faceted, inherently complex set of interrelated problems. This is illustrated on the next page.
This diagram demonstrates that:

- The great majority of DQ problems found in organizations are usually the result of complex, interconnected failures in people’s behavior, process design & execution, and underpinning technology.

- Individual shortcomings in people, process and technology can themselves create DQ problems but these are exacerbated by the fact that they often impact on each other, e.g. an incorrect input of an inventory item by a clerk will generate inaccurate information in the IT system which holds inventory information. This in turn can cause an automated process to fail, requiring manual intervention and incurring failure costs.

- DQ people need to gain a good understanding of this holistic nature of DQ problems and explain them in a way that senior executives will relate to.
Success is explaining DQ in this way will convince senior executives that business leadership of DQ is essential and so gain their endorsement and sponsorship. Being able to provide specific examples of failure is also obviously of great importance. Most important of all, DQ people need to understand business drivers and the impact on the business of the failures, both at a macro and micro level.

To summarize, ensure that you understand and can explain in layman’s terms the nature of DQ problems as interconnected failures impacting both business and IT, and caused in most instances by business and IT shortcomings.

**Step 2 – Create the Vision**

As well as being able to explain both enterprise wide and small scale DQ issues and their impact in a way that will have resonance with senior executives, it is equally important to be able to paint a clear picture of what your DQ work is trying to achieve for the benefit of the business or organization you are operating in.

To do this you need to have a clear, concise, communicable vision of what you are trying to achieve. This applies equally to a small, contained DQ improvement project right up to departmental or organization wide DQ improvement programs. This should consist of a short document or presentation which lays out:

- Why DQ is important to your organization, or the part of the organization the initiative is aimed at
- The goals and objectives of your initiative
- A summary of the current situation with regards to DQ and its impact on the business, expressed in business language
- The anticipated benefits of your initiative, wherever possible in financial terms
- How you are going to deliver the benefits – approaches, methods & tools
Two key points to stress are:

- To optimize the chances of gaining senior executive approval the document should relate the initiative to key business goals, and/or the major strategic thrusts of the organization. This will ensure that it makes the DQ initiative relevant to senior executives.

- All members of the DQ team should contribute to this visioning document and be able to communicate it to all potential stakeholders and interested parties. The document should then form the basis of 2, 10 and 30 minute pitches that every member of the core DQ team should be able to deliver wherever and whenever the opportunity arises. The 2 minute pitch is particularly useful in planned or chance encounters with key senior executives where it gives the DQ team every opportunity to sell the merits of their initiative / project. Some DQ people have supplemented this with the production of flyers which can be handed out to senior people and all others who express interest or curiosity.

- The vision should include a ‘no action’ option. It is important to spell out the implications of letting the status quo continue. What impact will this have on the current operational goals of your organization? What are the potential consequences for the future wellbeing and aspirations of the organization?

**Step 3 – Demonstrate Delivery**

One of the most common mistakes made by DQ specialists trying to gain senior executive sponsorship and backing for their DQ proposal or project is to seek to elicit that support prematurely. At first sight this might appear to contradict received wisdom in DQ which states that senior executive support should be sought early. However it is borne out from the experience of many DQ specialists who have been down this route.
Instead time your initial approaches to senior executives when you have hard, ideally quantifiable evidence to hand. This will give you the confidence to know that the vision you have laid out for your project or initiative can be substantiated and defended, and will also give senior executives more confidence in you. Moreover senior executives are confronted with people who bring them problems and are looking for solutions every day of their working lives. If you prepare the ground, you can bring them solutions, not more unwelcome problems.

There are a number of things you can do to demonstrate the feasibility of your aims, methods and tools. These include:

- Do data profiling of the key data of the problem area as early as possible. Obtaining and applying data profiling tools are an essential prerequisite of success. These will enable you to scope and quantify the scale of the data shortcomings. Once this is done find out the impact of these problems on the key business areas by talking with people who depend on that data. In turn use this knowledge to assess the impact of these problems in business terms. The findings can help to refine the Step 2 Vision. It also provides you with the hard evidence to support your case to senior executives.

- If your vision relates to a single DQ project, design and implement a trial or pilot to address a smaller part of the problem area your intended project is trying to address. This will also enable you to test out your approaches and tools. For example if your aim is to enhance inventory data in a manufacturing company, profile data for one product, design a solution to improve the data, and assess the benefits of doing so. This proof of concept can then be used to refine the business case for wider action and provide solid evidence to underpin your case.
Another useful precursor of selling DQ projects or initiatives to senior executives is to use pilots or trials to establish relationships with key lower level stakeholders within their organizations. This can include both business and IT stakeholders. There are many benefits of doing this including:

- These lower level stakeholders will need to be active participants in your initiative to deliver the changes required to achieve your goals, so getting them involved early prepares the ground for later full scale delivery.

- Lower level stakeholders can help you to quantify the impact of data quality problems in business terms and so provide further credibility for your estimates.

- They can open doors in their organizations to help you gain access to senior executive stakeholders and advise you on the approaches to those stakeholders that are most likely to win approval – see also Step 4 below.

- Potentially they can accompany you in your subsequent meetings and contacts. You are much more likely to gain the outcome you want with senior executives if their own people are alongside you demonstrating support for your proposal from within the senior executive’s own organization.

In summary a track record of delivery is in most cases a prerequisite of success with senior managers. In a larger DQ initiative the approach outlined above can be taken in early projects. In later encounters with senior executives a track record of delivery already established in other parts of the organization will give you the traction you need. Nevertheless the relevance of deliveries in other business areas to the particular senior stakeholder you are addressing must be demonstrated.
Step 4 – Prepare the Ground

Having laid out a clear vision of what you are trying to achieve and gathered hard evidence to substantiate it, you are now ready to take your case for DQ improvement to senior executives.

When meeting senior executives it is far better for initial encounters to be on a 1-1 basis. This has the benefit of enabling you to tailor your approach to their individual needs. It also allows you to explore and discuss DQ issues that the senior executive may not want exposed in front of his / her peers. Furthermore you can take their potential objections to what you are trying to do on board and address them before moving on to other stakeholders. Crucially it de-risks this critical stage. Presenting your proposals to an organizational or departmental Board meeting with all key senior executives present could derail your initiative if you do not win favor and have allies on the Board to support you. Otherwise Groupthink or the herd instinct could dominate and one executive’s objections or reservations could unduly influence others.

When meeting with senior executives for the first time it is always better to do so face to face whenever possible. This will help you to establish a personal relationship with the senior executive, important for building long term support. It will also enable you to present substantiating material prepared beforehand. If face to face is not feasible prepare some supporting material and either send it to the senior executive in advance of a call or present on a web conference.

Whatever the method adopted, there are some pre-meeting activities that if carried out will increase your chances of getting the supportive outcome you desire. These include:

- Do some preparatory stakeholder analysis. Stakeholder analysis is defined by Wikipedia as ‘the process of identifying the individuals or groups that are likely to affect or be affected by a proposed action, and sorting them according to their impact on the action and the impact the action will have on them.’ There is a mass of information on stakeholder analysis on the internet and in other sources so the topic will not be covered in detail here. However these are some key tips to apply when preparing for meetings with key senior executive stakeholders:
• Identify which senior executives are most important to your initiative and address these as top priority.

• Before meeting any of the senior stakeholders use your lower level contacts, the corporate intranet and any other sources to try to build up a preparatory pen picture of the stakeholder. As a minimum you should know:

  • Their role within the overall organization. What areas do they lead? How large? What current change programs do they sponsor? The last mentioned question is useful to see if your DQ work can support a current change program close to the executive’s heart.

  • Their organization’s purpose, objectives and goals. How does your DQ proposal relate to these objectives? How might poor DQ prevent the organization from achieving its goals? How will improving DQ make success more likely?

  • Their personal current priorities and ‘hot’ issues – what is currently keeping them awake at night? What do they really care about? Try to put yourself in their shoes and think about the world as seen in their eyes.

  • Something about what type of people they are, what makes them tick and what approaches are likely to find most favor in their eyes. A particularly useful technique for helping you to do this is attached at Appendix 2. Called Behavioral Styles Analysis the technique categorizes people into certain dominant behavioral types. Though inevitably a simplification it will help you to prepare your pitch at the meeting.

• Once this analysis is done, decide who could / should act as the senior sponsor/mentor for your DQ initiative. In some cases this sponsor will be self-selecting, for example the company CFO if the DQ project is focused on improving accounting or billing data. In cases where the answer is not obvious consider who is suffering the most pain as a result of the DQ issues you are proposing to address, and see them first.
• Meet with this senior executive and gain his / her support before moving on to other senior stakeholders. Be very clear beforehand what you want this potential sponsor to do for you and what you will do for them. Examples of what they might do for you could include the provision of seed corn funding to help you kick start your DQ work, help you find business owners for data domains, identify key change agents in his or her organization whom you can work with, and to help you gain access to other senior executives. What you can do for them will of course include support to achieve their objectives, improvements to the bottom line of their organization, better data and hence more efficient processes, and so on.

• Prepare for the meetings by sending the senior executive a statement of the purpose of the meeting and an agenda. In this tell them what you think is in it for them. Use this to forward any supporting documents you want to refer to in the meeting.

• In preparing material for the meeting you can choose a number of options. A good way is to prepare a short briefing paper or presentation as this can help ensure you get your main points across in the (probably) short time you have been given. In Appendix 3 there is an example four slide presentation aimed at the CEO of a fictional hotel chain, though its format and style have roots in actual senior executive encounters. When preparing the briefing material remember to:

  • Express all potential benefits in bottom line terms. Ideally these should be quantifiable and usually financial, though might also include brand reputation, regulatory compliance etc.
  • Highlight the risks to the senior executive of inaction. Showing him or her that doing nothing is a high risk option will help to grab attention.
  • Think not only about the current business impact of DQ shortcomings but also their potential threat to realising future goals and aspirations. Remember senior executives are paid to anticipate and plan for the future and not just manage the here and now.
• When answering questions use concepts and language that the senior executive can relate to. Avoid DQ and technical jargon. Spell out the challenges and potential solutions in business terms. This will demonstrate that you know what his or her business is trying to achieve and how your DQ work relates to this. A great way of doing this is to develop DQ stories – positive and negative – which will bring what you are saying to life. A real life example of how poor DQ has impacted a senior executive’s area is worth a multitude of theoretical suppositions.

• Be aware of DQ successes achieved in other organizations. This will enhance your credibility by showing that DQ is an industry wide, global problem and that other organizations are tackling the same issues. Keep up to date with what’s going on by keeping in touch with relevant websites, subscribing to DQ journals and magazines, and attending DQ conferences. If possible bring in an outside DQ specialist who has a track record of successful DQ delivery as it’s often easier to influence your senior executives with external corroboration.

Having worked through the above, you should now be ready to meet your senior executives. Now we can move onto how to ensure success in the meetings themselves.

**Step 5 – Influence the Outcome**

Wikipedia gives two complementary definitions of influencing’ as ‘convincing others to take appropriate action’ and ‘an action exerted by a person or thing with such power on another to cause change’. In your meetings with senior executives this is key. The outcome you seek is to get them to support and become actively involved in your DQ initiative.

Lots of information is available on the internet and elsewhere on improving your influencing skills so this will not be covered in detail in this white paper. It’s well worth reviewing some of this in preparation for your meetings.
There are a few key points about influencing that are worth highlighting here:

- You will be more influential if you have carried out the preparation suggested in Steps 1 to 4 above. Sound preparation and research will make you more confident and self-assured. This will transmit itself to the senior executive and increase his or her confidence in you.

- There is no single best way to influence others to achieve your desired outcomes. This relates to the points made in Step 4 about customizing your preparation to best take account of the individual motivation, drivers and personality of the senior executive you are trying to influence.

- Be flexible and prepared to compromise. You may not get everything you hope to in the senior executive meetings. Some may support you strongly; others will be more guarded and sceptical. Demonstrating a willingness to make adjustments will show you are listening and open to advice. Though not what you may initially want this can actually help you to be more influential with that senior executive in the long term.

Here are some wider tips from the author’s own experience and from others who have trodden this path before:

- Don’t ask for too much, especially in initial meetings. Remember that the senior executive will have lots of competing demands to juggle. This is best exemplified if asking for financial backing. You are much more likely to get a £50k investment to deliver a contained DQ project than £1 million for a major enterprise wide DQ initiative. Seek funding incrementally. Use early projects to make the case for further investment, and seek this once trust and a delivery record is established.
Ensure you manage the senior executive’s expectations. The DQ problems you will discuss have taken many years to develop and may take a long time to alleviate. Yet senior executives will expect quick results. It’s therefore vital that your initial proposals contain initiatives that can deliver early. In general the golden rule is to under-promise and over-deliver. Success should then be seen by them as exceeding expectation, not a disappointment. Similarly be open about risks, and tell the senior executive what the risks are for him / her and you, and lay out your risk mitigation strategies. The risks of DQ work can at times be high, but so are the potential benefits.

If you are not experienced in dealing with senior managers initial encounters can be daunting. It will be less intimidating if you are accompanied by a colleague, either from your own team or better still from a business unit within the senior executive's own area. They can help you handle tricky questions and assist with note taking. Capturing a true record of what was agreed is important so making accurate notes is not a trivial matter.

There will be some encounters which do not go well. However sound your preparation and assured your performance in the meeting you will not always get the desired outcome. If this happens analyze what went wrong and learn from it, but it may not always be your fault. Your executive might be having a bad day and it’s your ill fortune that you met them on it. If this does happen it can be difficult to repair. You can suggest another meeting where you can amend your pitch and try again. Alternatively use a friendly senior executive to try to reopen the door. As a worst case scenario think about damage limitation. Is this senior executive critical? If so, how can you counter / overcome any barriers he / she might put up in future? In many cases those reluctant to support you may come on board later once the early adopters have helped you to demonstrate its worth.

In most organizations attempts to improve DQ have been tried before. Some of these might have failed, and some senior executives might remember these. This may make them cynical or resistant to your proposals. Ensure you are aware of these past attempts, have captured the lessons wherever possible, and show them why and how it's different this time.
• At the end of the meeting always try to leave the door open for follow up meetings. Tell the senior executive you will send them notes of what has been agreed. Do this within 24 hours. Also ask them how they want to be kept informed of progress going forward.

• Last and not least, be confident. When it comes to DQ you are the expert, so act like a leader. Who better than you to show leadership in DQ? As President Dwight D. Eisenhower observed, “Leadership is at art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.”

Step 6 – Sustain Involvement
Once you’ve gained the senior executive’s initial commitment it is critical to sustain it as DQ improvement is a long term haul. It’s no good planting the seed if you do not propagate the relationship and make it blossom. There are several ways you can do this:

• Create organizational and data governance structures which give key senior executives a continuing role. Advice on how to do this is explained in detail in a sister white paper entitled ‘Organizing for Enterprise Data Quality Improvement’ which suggests how to involve senior executives in an organizational wide DQ improvement program. If your DQ project is less expansive than this the same rules apply. If the senior executive has a direct stake in the work he / she will remain more committed and improve your chances of success.

• Whether you need senior executives to remain formally part of your work or not you have to be able to demonstrate that you are delivering the promises you made to them. Producing regular, focused communications aimed at senior executives is vital. These could take many forms, including regular or ad hoc e-mail updates, webinars, further face to face briefings, or internal conferences / events. If organizing events, ask a senior executive to chair; this also helps to attract other executives in the organization and can encourage them to get involved. Remember that senior executives are busy people, so keep any communication short, business focused, in business language, and relevant to their direct interests and needs. Emphasise the benefits of what you have delivered, not how you did it.
• Ask for their advice and help when you need it, for instance to overcome resistance, to get more cooperation from their people, and to help you understand and react to a change in business strategy or operation. Don’t be a thorn in their side by disturbing them too often as this can be counterproductive but do remind them that the success of your initiative depends heavily on them.

Summary
Senior executives are not a breed apart. They can seem that way if we don’t understand and share their dreams and visions. But in that respect they are no different from the rest of us. If others empathize with our dreams and visions and show us they can help us achieve them we’d listen too.

This paper has tried to help those who are trying to gain commitment via a simple six step set of actions. Following these will greatly increase your chances of opening the right doors and keeping them open.

If DQ professionals and others intent on making improvement happen do their homework, demonstrate self-belief and act as leaders and not followers they can sell DQ to senior executives. If handled in the right way they can become your best allies.

So reach for the top. It could be the springboard of your enhanced, high profile career as a DQ hero within your organization!

“A new leader has to be able to change an organization that is dreamless, soulless and visionless… someone’s got to make a wake up call.”

Warren Bennis,
Organizational Consultant