



## **Business Process Management Do's and Don'ts**

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### ***Abstract***

BPM has unfairly earned a bad reputation in some quarters as being difficult to implement or unsuccessful in meeting its stated aims. It is our experience that the reasons why some BPM implementations are unsuccessful fall into a small number of typical categories.

### ***Choice of BPM supplier***

A number of companies do not pay enough attention to the crucial decision of the choice of BPM supplier, often making their decision based on products that they have already bought that claim to have BPM capability. The choice of BPM product is vital, given that a BPM implementation of any complexity will have a significant impact on your business. Key factors to consider are:

- Process modelling tool
- Integration capability
- Scalability
- Human interaction
- MIS/Process analysis.

Obvious, but often neglected, options for consideration are:

- Reference site visits for similar implementations
- Proof of concept prototyping to confirm functional and non-functional capability.

### ***Lack of proper stakeholder***

BPM implementations invariably mean a significant change to the way that an enterprise functions. As such, it is essential that key stakeholders at a high level in the company formally buy in to the initiative and fully support it throughout the lifecycle of the BPM project. Without this, the project is likely to founder on the basis that people in general are very resistant to radical change. This is expanded upon in the next section.

## **Poor change management**

Implementing BPM in an enterprise has a significant cultural impact on a workforce. A BPM system often has an effect on the way that people work due to its task-based, rather than job-based, approach. This may well present cultural problems for many people, who naturally find it easier to follow one job from beginning to end rather than having to move between tasks for different jobs. The benefits of task-based working need to be explained on the grounds of efficiency and empowering the workforce to manage their work more proactively. To secure buy-in to this approach, it is essential to involve key users in the definition of the business processes, so that they feel that it is their process and that they have contributed to the success of the project. This makes excellent sense, as it is always the end users who understand the low-level detail of how business processes operate and what their shortcomings are. Following on from this, it is essential that a proper training programme is put in place, not only to train users in the operation of the new BPM system, but also to ensure that the new business processes being implemented are fully understood.

## **Lack of process methodology**

### **Define the System Boundaries**

**Process Breadth** The first activity that needs to be undertaken is to agree the process scope of the proposed system with the key stakeholders. The scope may be limited for any number of reasons, for example cost, timescales or organisational constraints. The definition of this scope is not intended to be inhibiting, and should not preclude gaining an understanding of areas beyond the direct remit of the proposed system, as these may be relevant to the overall solution. Without a clear scope, however, it is easy to waste time and resources investigating processes or systems that will never form part of the solution.

### **Process Depth**

The next section goes into more detail about how to capture process. Suffice it to say that a common mistake is to start by trying to capture process at a highly detailed level. Not only is this time consuming and costly, it usually leads to a proscriptive and unwieldy process that does not meet the true needs of the business. A far better policy is to capture the business processes at a high level and use this knowledge to decide which areas of the process require more detailed definition. This approach will enable early versions of a working process to be deployed much more quickly, providing early ROI.

### **Capture the Process**

Process capture is a highly collaborative and iterative stage in a BPM project, the time and resources needed for which is often severely underestimated. Close collaboration between process experts, business experts (real users) and IT people is required to give a good chance of success. The starting point is a process workshop involving all the above. It is highly likely that a number of process workshops will need to be convened in order to capture the customer's business processes. These workshops should start by concentrating on capturing the "As-is" process, since this needs to be understood in order that improvements can be made and objective measurements established.

## **Process implementation**

A number of BPM implementations suffer from poor performance. This may be a consequence of poor product choice, but it is often due to a misunderstanding of how to implement processes as executable BPM processes. The abiding principle is to segregate data that is directly relevant to the business process from data that the process supports. If all this data is inappropriately defined within the BPM process, the nature of the design of most BPM products (data-driven, flat data structures) will lead to a number of performance issues.

## ***"As-Is" rather than "To-Be"***

The aim of a BPM project should not be simply to implement the current business processes, but it is surprising how often BPM implementations stop at this point. A basic premise for using BPM is that current processes are poorly defined and inefficient, so it must be a key objective of a BPM project to improve current business processes once they have been captured and reviewed.

## ***Big Bang is bad***

BPM technologies and methodologies lend themselves naturally to an incremental approach to systems' development. Given that a new BPM implementation is inevitably a combination of new IT (BPM) components as well as the introduction of new working practices, it is often the wisest course to deploy a BPM system in a cautious manner, specifically:

## ***Use pilot sites to prove the efficiency of the new processes.***

Implement the new processes in a phased manner. In other words, use the 80:20 rule to implement the biggest benefits in terms of process implementation, and follow this with further releases that deal with areas of less importance and/or more complexity. This reduces project lead times as well improving your ROI.

## ***Forgot to measure and improve!***

It is surprising to see how many BPM systems are deployed with no subsequent project phases to implement a continuous process improvement cycle. To ignore this is to waste the true power of BPM technology. The measure phase is perhaps the most important part of a BPM implementation. Its aims are:

- To measure productivity.
- To use this as the benchmark for further process improvement.

Many startling claims are made for the productivity gains that result from implementing BPM. This is somewhat hard to believe given that BPM systems are partly sold as providing a means of measuring a business' performance. Therefore it is likely that the benchmark for any performance measurement will be at least partially subjective, based in most cases on performance statistics that are open to creative manipulation. Nevertheless, initial and subsequent system deployments need to concentrate on a number of key performance metrics, all of which can be objectively derived from standard BPM audit data:

- Failure rates, e.g. orders that were delivered after the agreed date.
- Delivery rates, e.g. minimum, maximum and mean elapsed times for process completion.

Process bottlenecks, i.e. the parts of a process that have a high maximum or mean completion time. These are prime candidates for process improvement.

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