

Is your Organizational Culture Fit for Business Process Management?

Theresa Schmiedel, Jan vom Brocke, Jan Recker

www.bpm-culture.org

All processes are modeled, all process metrics defined, all process support systems are set up; yet still, processes are not running smoothly and departmental silos are more present than ever. Both practitioners and academics tell the same story. A successful business process management (BPM) implementation goes beyond using the right methods and putting the right systems in place. In fact, an important success factor for BPM is establishing the right *organizational culture*, that is, a culture that supports the achievement and maintenance of efficient and effective business processes.

While research and practice used to focus on technological and methodological aspects of BPM, there is a growing awareness that BPM requires a more holistic understanding. In recent years, a broad range of studies have presented a comprehensive grasp of BPM, one of the most prominent examples being the BPM maturity model of Rosemann and de Bruin, which identifies – apart from methods and IT – strategic alignment, governance, people, and *culture* as core factors for BPM (Rosemann & de Bruin, 2005). Especially, culture is more and more recognized as a highly relevant factor in BPM.

Depending on the context of a specific BPM initiative, culture – the shared values of a group that become visible in actions and structures – can both be a source of failure and a reason for success of BPM. For example, cultural resistance to change influences the success of BPM initiatives negatively, while BPM can also lead to cultural change supporting the initiative. On the one hand, culture is recognized to influence BPM and on the other hand, BPM is recognized to influence culture.

This article provides insights about our research into the facets of BPM culture. We provide an overview of the role of culture in BPM and introduce the BPM-Culture-Model, which we developed to structure the different notions of culture in a BPM context (vom Brocke & Sinnl, 2011). Based on this model, we take a closer look at the cultural compatibility of an organization with a BPM approach, that is, we examine how we can determine the supportiveness of an organizational culture to a BPM approach. To that end, we introduce a tool that has been developed to individually examine the cultural fitness of organizations for business process management.

The BPM-Culture-Model

By means of the BPM-Culture-Model we intend to contribute to a better understanding of the notion of culture in BPM. The model is based on a comprehensive review of the literature on Business Process Management (vom Brocke & Sinnl, 2011). This review shows that (1) specific values are considered as being supportive for reaching BPM objectives, that (2) specific BPM initiatives, however, face different organizational values according to their context and that (3) BPM approaches suggest to develop those organizational values that are supportive of BPM in order to have BPM initiatives running smoothly. The BPM-Culture-Model therefore distinguishes between three major elements: (1) BPM culture, (2) cultural context and (3) cultural fit, which are illustrated in Figure 1.

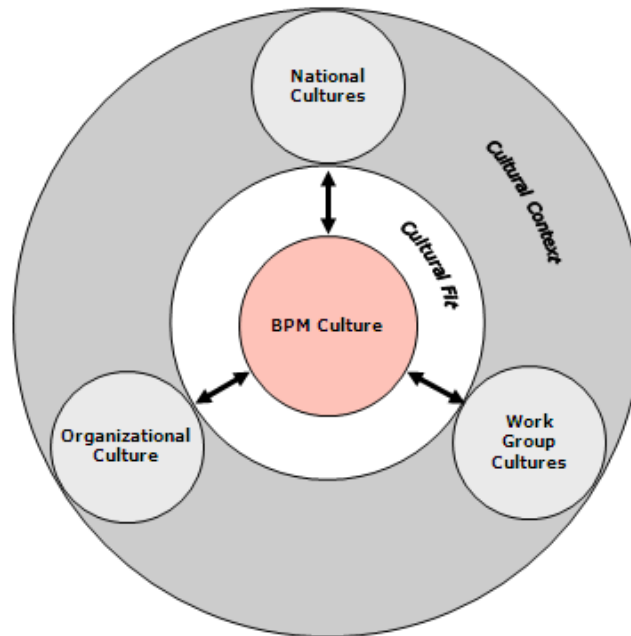


Figure 1, BPM-Culture-Model (cf. vom Brocke & Sinnl, 2011)

We give a brief description of each element:

- **BPM Culture** represents those values that come along with a BPM approach and which need to be adopted by an organization, such as customer orientation, continuous improvement, or responsibility (vom Brocke & Schmiedel, 2011). It refers to a culture that is supportive of achieving BPM objectives, i.e. efficient and effective business processes.
- **Cultural Context** refers to the complex cultural environment that a BPM initiative faces at its start. It consists of various intertwined group cultures, such as national, organizational and work group cultures.
- **Cultural Fit** refers to the basic congruence between BPM culture and cultural context that is required for a BPM approach to be successful.

BPM comes along with a couple of underlying values that are inherent in the management approach, such as customer orientation, continuous improvement, or responsibility (Zairi, 1997; Hammer, 2010; Kemsley, 2010; Jesus et al., 2010; vom Brocke & Schmiedel, 2011). The BPM literature suggests that if such values are core elements of an organizational culture, BPM implementations will run smoothly. If these values are not being lived in the context of a BPM initiative, the following situations can occur:

(1) Cultural resistances can arise, which shows how the organizational cultural context influences the BPM approach. These resistances can be accompanied by one of the following two alternatives during the implementation.

(2a) Growing understanding of the BPM approach in the organization can lead to cultural change in that the organization embraces BPM-supportive values, i.e. it broadens its canon of cultural values and develops a culture that is supportive of achieving BPM objectives. Alternatively,

(2b) The existing cultural context is inflexible and does not adapt to the cultural requirements of a BPM approach, i.e. the organizational culture does not embrace BPM-supportive values.

It is important to notice that culture as such and the cultural context in particular is a very multifaceted phenomenon. Though some organizations even have explicit corporate values and respective campaigns to develop their culture (vom Brocke et al., 2010), a homogeneous organizational culture does not exist. In fact, each employee comes with a personal cultural background formed by his or her very individual journey of life. In this context, work-group culture

and national culture are typically referred to. For example, resistance towards a BPM approach can differ from department to department due to diverse value orientations within these groups. The adoption of BPM-supportive values is not intended to erase all differences between the involved cultural groups, yet it is intended to provide a common canon of values on an organizational level which enables the successful realization of a BPM approach.

The three main elements of the BPM-Culture-Model represent core elements to explain the role of culture in BPM. In the following, we take a closer look at how an organization can evaluate the extent to which its organizational culture is already supportive of achieving BPM objectives, i.e. how fit the organization is for BPM.

Culture-Assessment-Tool

Based on the understanding of BPM culture described above, we developed an assessment tool to measure the cultural fitness of an organization for business process management. The tool was developed on the basis of several studies that we conducted over a period of two years, involving major thought leaders in the field of BPM from both academia and practice.

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33% Completed

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
Please answer based on your understanding of your ORGANIZATION's core business processes.
Part 1 of 6

	fully disagree	1	2	3	neutral	4	5	6	fully agree
Our organization regularly evaluates its business processes for improvement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employees of our organization strive to continually improve our business processes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization regularly implements best practices that improve business processes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managers of our organization regularly invite ideas from our employees on ways to improve business processes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization regularly uses performance indicators to find ways to improve business processes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The core business processes of our organization are focused on satisfying our customers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization incorporates customer expectations into its business processes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization uses customer complaints as an opportunity to reflect on the redesign of business processes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization includes our customers in the design of our business processes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization understands the processes of our customers which lead to an interaction with our organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Figure 2, Screenshot of the Culture-Assessment-Tool, sample questions to be filled out

The tool is implemented as an online survey that allows representatives of organizations to do a self-assessment of their organizational culture (see Figure 2). It can be accessed via the following link: www.bpm-culture.org. As it is part of our ongoing studies on the BPM culture topic, the tool can be used free of charge during our research. Participants of the survey are provided with an immediate analysis of their personal results (see Figure 3). If you are interested in a more detailed analysis of your organizational culture, you have the option of requesting a detailed personalized report at the end of the survey.

At this stage, we would like to invite all readers that are involved in process work in their organizations to use the tool to examine the cultural fitness of their organization for business process management.

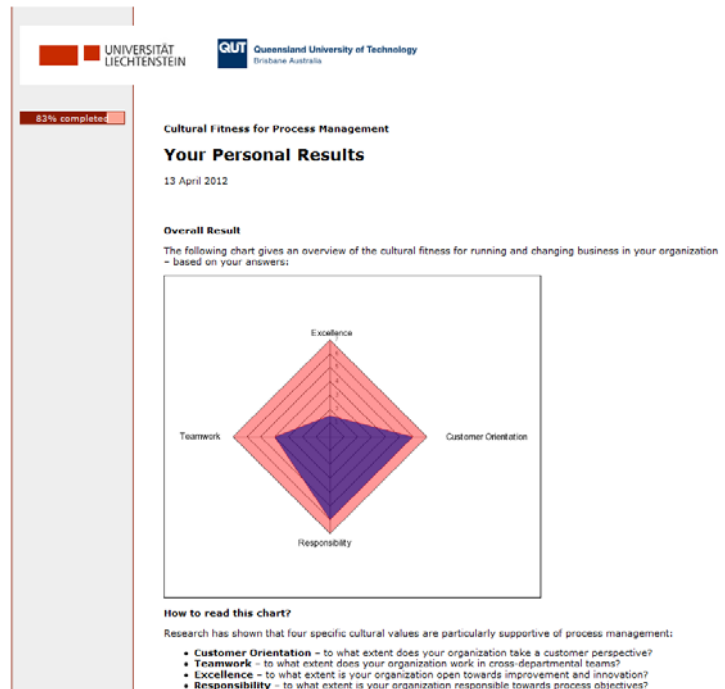


Figure 3, Screenshot of the Culture-Assessment-Tool, individual result report

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