



Mastering Your Organization's Processes: A Plain Guide to Business Process Management

John O'Connell, Jon Pyke, and Roger Whitehead

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Reviewed by Paul Harmon

The latest round of interest in business process improvement, and the special interest in Business Process Management software systems (BPMS) began in 2003. There were, of course, books on BPM and BPMS published before that and several have been published since, but only a few of these books have really address business process change in conjunction with the use of BPMS tools. It's taken awhile for companies to experiment and consultants to gain experience in the practicalities of doing process work in conjunction with BPMS tools. Recently, however, there have been several interesting books that attempt to pull together the experience of the past 2-3 years and combine it with what went before. A good example of this trend is Mastering Your Organization's Processes by John O'Connell, Jon Pyke and Roger Whitehead.

O'Connell and Pyke were Chairman and CTO, respectively of Staffware, a leading workflow vendor, before it was sold to TIBCO two years ago. Both have proceeded to set up new software/consulting ventures while writing this book. Roger Whitehead is the director of a consulting group, Office Futures.

This is not a how-to-do-it book, but, rather, a book that is designed to help you think more broadly about the BPM venture. It devotes a major chapter, for example, to explaining systems concepts and explaining how processes relate to systems thinking. The authors are more likely to suggest ways of thinking about problems than to suggest how to actually handle specific situations. They are more likely to compare and contrast alternatives than to recommend a specific path. They provide lots of short case studies, but the cases illustrate issues from 10,000 feet up and don't get into the specific solutions the companies developed.

Suggesting that this is a high-level overview, however, should not lead readers to expect a light read. The authors take principles seriously and include quite a bit of meat in their discussions of the issues executives and managers will have to think about as they seek to create more process-centric organizations.

For some, this book will seem common sense and they will wish the authors had gone into more specifics. Most will find this book an excellent introduction to the big issues facing companies that are thinking about BPM and will value the way the authors lay out the alternatives that companies face.

The chapters suggest the range:

1. A gentle introduction to systems and processes
2. Business processes and their management

3. The job BPM software is there to do
 4. The systems of an organization
 5. Looking outside the organization
 6. Organizations, people and systems
 7. The business return on BPM
 8. Corporate strategies and approaches for BPM
 9. What to look for in a BPM project
- Appendix: A short history of process management

If you are a manager and new to BPM, and want a serious introduction to the issues involved in using BPM in an organization, this is a great way to come up to speed on the key issues. Similarly, if you are a BPM manager and going to be building a case for BPM in your organization, you will also find this book very useful.

Paul Harmon is the executive editor of the Business Process Trends portal (www.bptrends.com), the author of *Business Process Change*, and an experienced BPM consultant.