BPM Critical Success Factors
Lessons Learned from Successful BPM Organizations
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Introduction
In the last 24 months I have worked on six continents with dozens of organizations assisting them in developing and implementing their BPM programs. These organizations represent a broad range of industries, including capital intensive resource industries and manufacturing and distribution, customer service, finance, and government organizations. I have seen a lot of disappointing examples of Business Process Management but I have also seen some very good examples of BPM in organizations where BPM has been implemented well and is delivering improved and sustainable performance improvement. I have seen many alternative approaches and observed the practices and principles that mark the difference between failure and success. I have synthesized these observations into a set of principles I believe constitute an approach to BPM that will assure sustainable management of an organization’s process assets. In this Article I will highlight ten principles that successful organizations follow in their BPM practice.

1. BPM is a business strategy to deliver business performance improvement and sustainability
Every successful BPM organization that I have observed has used BPM to improve the business performance of one or more strategic objectives. Successful BPM teams never lose sight of the strategic performance objectives and they use these drivers to demonstrate to management that BPM is not just a “nice to have” capability. They know that measureable results are required to demonstrate success and they use some combination of the following criteria to demonstrate success.

- make work less costly
- drive higher revenues and market share
- bring products and services to market sooner
- keep products and services in market longer
- enable continuous performance improvement
- enable new products and services that are more flexible and easier to change and sustain
2. BPM is a mechanism to assure traceability of business performance

Successful organizations start at the strategy level and avoid ‘Silos of Excellence’ and stand-alone capability development. Development of Strategic Intent (ends) that provide mission, vision, goals and objectives are common but successful organizations translate these into a sub-set of integrated and manageable strategies and programs. that integrate changes in capabilities from related domains, such as information, organization and technology. The critical requirement is to cascade the measurement indicators by measuring processes that contribute to the strategic objectives in a traceable and reportable way. They may or may not employ a balanced scorecard but it is their process hierarchy that organizes the performance reporting structure. The outcome is that their investments in change are driven by potential and traceable performance results.

BPM is the best way to link the strategic intent to an integrated program of multidimensional change.

3. BPM is a mechanism to assure alignment of all required actions and capabilities of the organization

It is clear that modern organizations are faced with many elements that have to work together in order for the organization to be effective. Alignment among these elements is often missing. Leading organizations make sense of these elements by using business processes as the vehicle to integrate and align the following in a common sense manner:

- Strategies
- Performance
- Technologies
- Rules
- Information
- Knowledge
- Facilities and Equipment
- Organization
- Human resources
4. **BPM is driven by satisfying outside stakeholder requirements**

Successful process organizations understand that doing process work from the inside out or by department is risky, at best. Meeting the needs of a single external group without considering all of the others also can lead to sub optimization of performance and downstream problems in sustaining the benefits. The challenge is to find the optimal balance among the set of external stakeholders and their potentially conflicting needs and expectations. A small sample of external stakeholders is:

- Customers
- Consumers
- Suppliers
- Regulatory bodies
- Owners
- Competitors
- Staff

Each of these entities exchanges products and services with the organization. Successful process organizations examine the exchanges, needs and expectations to derive outcomes and targets for the enterprise processes that produce or consume the exchanges. The stakeholders are the beginning and end of all value streams and the outcomes needed to drive process design.

5. **BPM requires a consistent business process architecture with a structured semantic vocabulary**

A sure fire way to fail in BPM is to have a poor process architecture. Great process organizations have a great hierarchical and interconnected map of business processes and they use that single map for all purposes; measurement scorecard foundation, compliance reporting, enterprise architecture and business process management, to name a few. The best maps I have seen are driven by the stakeholder exchanges from which the value stream processes are derived.. These are consolidated into one common architecture describing what the enterprise does (the “how” comes later). For the advanced process centric organization this map provides a common language of the work that is done. It is independent of the organization chart and survives reorganization realignment so long as the business mission remains intact.
6. **BPM requires a shared commitment to a set of foundational principles**

Successful organizations have learned a lot while on the journey and have established a set of principles based on common sense and lessons learned. Typically, these principles cover key issues such as naming, notations, ways of viewing processes and other guidelines. More importantly, successful organizations are passionate and strict about their use. They are diligent in assuring that the entire organization knows them and applies them consistently across the whole organization. Successful organizations treat BPM as a professional discipline requiring a sound foundation.

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**Business Process Manifesto**

1. A Business Process is a distinct asset of an organization.
2. A Business Process exists within a clearly defined business context.
3. A Business Process is guided by business strategy.
4. The performance of a Business Process is measured to evaluate business value creation.
5. A Business Process is enabled by a set of business capabilities.
6. A Business Process name should be unambiguous, business friendly and internally consistent.
8. Business Processes must have integrity.

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7. **BPM requires a common comprehensive methodology to guide business process change**

More mature process-centric organizations consistently follow a comprehensive methodology that has a close connection between enterprise-wide process architecture and governance, process redesign for performance improvement and implementation for a broad set of enabling capabilities such as IT, HR, facilities and rules. Many organizations are versant in Lean or Six Sigma and similar techniques for process improvement. Some have a process architecture to support IT planning or a scorecard system. Some also have an approach for implementing a BPMS technology. Many organizations have more than one approach at any of these levels. But the leaders have one method that links strategy, process redesign and implementation that allows various tools and techniques to be accommodated. The BPTrends Associates Methodology is shown above.
8. BPM requires a governance framework that evolves with Business Process Management maturity

The more mature the organization is with regard to BPM, the more sophisticated their process governance framework and their commitment to it. These organizations understand that corporate management is not process governance and that both are needed. Their process governance framework monitors process performance and prioritizes a program of process change based on a process architecture that is agreed to as part of the governance framework. Those who are not yet working at the enterprise level realize that the appropriate degree of governance applies at the process improvement (project) level since there is no basis for cross-process discussions. If mature enough, they conduct formal investment prioritization based on strategic alignment (gain) and performance gaps (pain).

9. BPM requires a commitment to marketing, communication, education, training and collaboration

The mature organizations have realized that raising process management capability will only be successful if the organization understands and is ready for change. They understand that process maturity will be constrained by the degree of organizational readiness and willingness. Therefore, their BPM introduction and governance programs work on both capability and readiness concurrently. Having a capability is not the same as readiness and success is unlikely without a clear understanding of the readiness required. This is not recognized very well by organizations that are new to BPM who typically assume that building capability will naturally lead to BPM adoption. Unfortunately, the natural human and organizational barriers to change are very strong, especially when the motivation or incentive systems encourage resistance. All of the successful organizations have spent significant resources educating and training management and staff to overcome the natural resistance to change.

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**Develop Human Change Program**
- understand the **concerns** of the affected stakeholders
- determine the **messages** to be sent to deal with them
- identify the **media** to be used to start the change management process
- identify the **timetables** for communication and change
- Identify the **messengers**
- create "**Agents of Change**"
- deliver the message and handle **feedback**
10. BPM requires a Centre of Expertise to assure consistency, repeatability and sharing of knowledge and insights

Organizations that have had success in their BPM launch and ongoing operations almost always have a BPM Center of Excellence. The center establishes standards to enable consistent models and sharing of knowledge. It delivers tools, methodologies, techniques and training for use across the enterprise. It also supports initiatives and projects at all levels (enterprise, process and implementation) by participating, facilitating and assuring the quality of activities and deliverables. Once the organization is ready, it also provides a support service for enterprise executives involved in the governance process.

**Summary**

The leading organizations in the world have learned what effective BPM is all about. They have worked hard to make it a new addition to the management of companies and government agencies. Fortunately, by working with many of them, Business Process Trends Associates has also learned and we have incorporated these practices into our training and consulting offerings. We are committed to sharing these lessons learned and working with organizations like yours, helping you to be successful.

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