10 Impediments to Achieving Process Excellence

Over the years, all of us have tried to convince executives about the importance of business process. You have probably suggested that they should adopt a client-focused, result-driven, and process-focused organization. The importance of these approaches was recently highlighted in the findings of the BPTrends’ The State of BPM 2010 survey. Unless you have found the magic formula (and, if so, please share it with us all) then maybe we should try to find a different way of convincing them. We thought humor might help!

So let’s have a look at the 10 impediments to achieving process excellence within an organization. Please note that these types can apply to external and internal consultants, managers, and other process professionals.
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<th>Impediment</th>
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<th>Suggestions on how to deal with the impediment</th>
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| **The Catastrophic Cyclone** | o No buy-in from Business-As-Usual (BAU) staff  
 o Too busy to document  
 o No knowledge transfer  
 o No business benefits specified, agreed, and delivered  
 o No adaptation to specific circumstances | Business Process Management is at the heart of the functioning organization. Therefore, it is best that BPM projects are performed predominantly by internal staff. External consultants may assist internal staff to understand and perform their duties.  
 In other words, a consultant should not catch fish, but train people to catch fish or even better train them to train others, achieving a multiplier effect |
| **The Crude Cowboy**        | o Too busy to be involved in process improvement  
 o No data is required to adjust processes  
 o Fighting symptoms rather than root causes  
 o Architecture is a dirty word  
 o Bragging about own achievements not the team’s | Global competition has intensified, and companies can no longer rely on ballpark and indicative figures.  
 It was shocking to read in the State of BPM 2010 Survey that a majority of managers never or rarely used process measures.  
 Most business processes need to be high performance, and that requires fine-tuning to achieve even higher value. |
| **The Fiery Firefighter**   | o Unwilling to delegate  
 o Unwilling to explain and train staff / colleague  
 o Would prefer to cure rather than prevent  
 o Restless without a crisis  
 o No strategic thinking | A leader cannot do everything alone.  
 True leaders provide the purpose and vision as well as enabling and facilitating their team to be successful. In other words – Be a servant leader.  
 "The yardstick to measure good leadership is the culture of enduring excellence which they leave behind" (Chibber). |
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| **The Paint-by-numbers Professional** | - Require step-by-step instructions  
- Always using the same methodology, without deviation  
- Unable to think innovatively  
- Unable to work in a team (wants to do it all by themselves)  
- Method is central, not the client, problem, or business outcomes | Business processes have similarities, but have crucial differences in the challenges, strategic objectives, people aspects, partner network, and IT support.  
Hence, no single step-by-step guide exists to deal with all these specific issues. It is about an overall framework that provides guidance, and the skills and interaction of a process professional use to make things work. |
| **The Re-arranging deck chairs on the Titanic Type** | - Obsessed with detail  
- Focus on perfection, not on benefits and pragmatism  
- Ignoring the big picture  
- Want to produce a lot of data and graphs on details  
- Avoids difficult issues | Business processes are crucial to achieve strategic objectives. They are not interesting puzzles that are enjoyable to solve.  
We need to continuously look at how business processes at the executive level can steer away from key problems and then subsequently work on the fine-tuning of the processes. |
| **The Manic Modeler** | - Focus on number of models rather than business value  
- Preference for complexity rather than usability  
- Welcomes only positive feedback  
- Considers themselves to be the owner of the processes  
- Prefers an outdated color process poster to an updated black-and-white version | Process models are just a tool to assist the business in managing and improving the processes. They can never become more important that the execution of the processes. A process modeler is not the process owner just because they modeled it. The business is and will always be the process owner as they are accountable for the performance of the process. |

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"I am creating unique art by following a predefined inflexible approach."

"Missing the critical aspects: Penny-wise, pound foolish."

"Success is defined by number of models created, not by the business value created."
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<td>The Pondering Philosopher</td>
<td>o Continuous circular reasoning&lt;br&gt;o Initiate many activities, but never completed them&lt;br&gt;o Indecisive&lt;br&gt;o Easily influenced by others&lt;br&gt;o Prefer to be perfect rather than to start small</td>
<td>Business processes improvement and management comprises many different aspects and considerations and can be overwhelming at the start. However, as Keynes stated: “It is better to be roughly right than precisely wrong.”&lt;br&gt;So, it is strongly recommended to start with small steps, widen the horizons, keep doing and learning.</td>
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<td>The Crafty Carpenter</td>
<td>o Every problem has the same solution (in this case, a hammer)&lt;br&gt;o Tool centric implementations&lt;br&gt;o Insufficient attention given to human change management&lt;br&gt;o Not open for suggestions and feedback&lt;br&gt;o Prefers speed above fit for purpose</td>
<td>It is still amazing to see that in 2010 many BPM projects are still IT-driven. The solution is pushed by the vendor in an organization that is unable to cope with the flood of change and activities.&lt;br&gt;Any solution has to be fit for purpose within the organization and has to show how the processes can improve the service to the customer and achieving business objectives. Metrics are critical here.</td>
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<td>The Lonely Laborant</td>
<td>o Focus on theoretical models and concepts&lt;br&gt;o Uses solely process models rather than observation of the actual process execution&lt;br&gt;o No understanding of day-to-day business&lt;br&gt;o Introverted&lt;br&gt;o Prefers to do research rather than finding solutions</td>
<td>Business Processes cannot be developed in isolations from its execution. Many process issues relate to the incorrect execution of the defined processes.</td>
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| **The People as Packages Type**    | o Treats people same as application systems  
                                  | o No, or little, focus on human change management  
                                  | o Allocate people 100%+ of their capacity  
                                  | o Does not distinguish between individuals  
                                  | o Command and control approach  
                                  | o Lack of trust and accountability | People (not just staff, but also partners and clients) are at the heart of processes. Ignoring them often leads to a very mechanical view on processes and rarely leads to any positive results. |

“People are just boxes that you can arrange and direct however you feel like.”