



Down Under

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Authors: *Business Process Management*

Practical Guidelines to Successful Implementations and

Management by Process: A Practical Roadmap to Sustainable

Business Process Management

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Re-inventing Business Process Improvement and Management

*Business Process Management has been around for many years, and is yet to mature into a structured and acknowledged discipline. BPM is still a catch-all phrase used by anyone who wants to “do something” with business processes rather than someone following best practices or proven methodologies. Many so-called BPM professionals prefer to develop their own methodology from scratch rather than focus on realizing business benefits using existing and proven methodologies to improve **and** manage processes. This column suggests an overview of the indicators, causes, and solutions to this phenomenon.*

Indicators of re-inventing BPI, BPR or BPM

Please tick all the relevant boxes as they apply to your organization:

- 50% or more of time, duration, and/or resources is spent on developing / improving the process improvement and methodology or approach.
A multinational organization was more than half way through its 30 month drive to improve its cost ratio by €300 million and was still discussing the engagement model and methodology, and had still not realized any savings!
- The proposed methodology had not proven its success.
When questioned about the demonstrated and proven capability of the “in-house” developed BPM methodology, the author provided a long list of references to theories and concepts, but could not provide any case studies of internal (or external, for that matter) actual realized business successes.
- People who are developing the methodology have not actually been involved in successful end-to-end and holistic implementations of business process improvement projects.
A Quality Assurance manager was offered a promotion to Business Process Manager and wanted to use her QA disciplines to address a strategic organizational change by focusing mainly on adherence to inspections and procedures rather than aligning the processes with the key strategic objectives, and delivering much needed results to the business.
- Training has to be developed from scratch and does not leverage existing methodologies or approaches.
An organization spent nearly 40% of its process improvement budget on “vanilla” training that was not aligned with any established and proven methodology. When people completed the training, they were motivated to use the learning; however, there was no structured framework or approach to actually use the learning, and the entire BPM initiative faded and disappeared.

STOP, if one or more of these indicators is ticked it is a strong indication that your BPM initiative is incorrectly focused for achieving business success. You should seriously consider adopting the use of a proven and successful methodology or approach to BPM.

Root causes

Some of the main root causes for organizations re-inventing best practices and methodologies include

- **Hobbyism**
Many view the challenge of developing their own methodology as an intellectual challenge – and fun. The author may wish to be recognized as the person who was able to solve this complex challenge.
Counter argument: Usually, BPM initiatives need to yield quickly realized benefits for the business in order to have the business buy into and maintain funding. Businesses do not need yet “another” approach. The current economic climate requires BPM practitioners to provide results, not more good intentions or nice models.

- **“We are unique”**
Wow. If we had a \$100 for every time we have heard this, we could both retire!
Developing a new methodology is justified by claiming that the organization is unique and that “standard” or existing methodologies are not applicable in addressing our specific needs. “Our own process improvement methodology will provide us with a competitive advantage that others don’t have.”
Counter argument: Companies do not invent their own project management methodology; they will use PRINCE2 or PMBOK or another recognized methodology and adjust it to the specific needs and situation of the organization. Why is BPM any different?

- **Lack of results accountability**
Implementing process improvement and management is seen as an activity that is out of the ordinary and does not require any performance indicators to justify, monitor, and evaluate.
Counter argument: Implementing process improvement and management should be considered business as usual and is itself a process that needs to be justified, measured, monitored, and evaluated. In other words: Practice what you preach!

Steps to be taken by the Process Management community

To counter the above shortcomings we call upon the Process Management Community to take the following steps:

- **Unite to agree upon an acceptable BPM methodology that is not aligned to any commercial interests – available to all.**
Project management methodologies have been widely accepted, and yet the BPM community has been unable to agree on a structured approach. Pure play Six Sigma initially tried to fill this space, but has increasingly been seen as not appropriate to the non-manufacturing area (especially if you define BPM as a management philosophy). It certainly does not cover the sustainability of BPM, using this definition.
No wonder the BPM marketplace is confused, as even we cannot agree.

Why not take the best of the existing, publicly available, and documented BPM frameworks and build on it and make it available to all.

Share experiences

The process management community must share ideas among practitioners. Local BPM chapters / forums can play a crucial role. BP Trends has well established local chapters in Australia and is looking to launch chapters in other countries. We will shortly re-launch the **Sydney** chapter (for more information contact Johan). The BPM Forum in the Netherlands (www.bpm-forum.org) has a large number of active members (hundreds) and has spread its wings to other chapters in Europe

- **Use of a Process Coach or Mentor**

Internal organizational BPM capability should be developed and must be part of business as usual and management. Every organization can benefit from an external highly qualified Process Coach and Mentor. Andrew Spanyi wrote a book entitled: *"BPM is a Team Sport: Play it to Win."* We would suggest, *"Every top sportsperson has a coach to help them win. If you want to win in BPM get the best BPM coach you can find!"*