

All I Really Need To Know About BPM I Learned in Kindergarten

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Robert Fulghum's book *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* (1988, Villard Books, Random House) was an instant classic, dominating the New York Times Bestseller List for all of 1989 and much of 1990. This collection of essays was the second longest #1 bestseller in 23 years. His ability to purge the smog of life to show its bright and essential truths has resonated with readers around the globe - 16 million books in 27 languages in 103 countries.

In this article, with Robert Fulghum as our guide, we take a different view of what it takes to create and maintain a process-aware organisation.

But first let's hear from Robert Fulghum.

"Here's my Credo:

All I really need to know about how to live and how to be I learned in kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate-school mountain, but there in the sandpile at Sunday School. These are the things I learned:

Share everything.

Play fair.

Don't hit people.

Put things back where you found them.

Clean up your own mess.

Don't take things that aren't yours.

Say sorry when you hurt somebody.

Wash your hands before you eat.

....Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.

Live a balanced life

When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together.

Be aware of wonder.

And then remember the Dick-and-Jane books and the first word you learned – the biggest word of all - LOOK.

.... Take any one of those items and extrapolate it into sophisticated adult terms and apply it to your family life or your work or government or your world and it holds true and clear and firm.¹."

Fulghum invites us to take these items and extrapolate them into the "sophisticated adult terms" of our work and life and see if they don't remain "true and clear and firm". We accept the challenge! Let's explore how we translate this wisdom into how organisations can improve performance through the practical application of process thinking.

Process thinking and process management is not new; the people who built the pyramids probably knew something about process. We all agree instinctively with the general proposition that the way work is accomplished can be, and should be, improved. Sometimes it is the inherent simplicity of the business process management message that makes it hard to communicate.

¹ Extract from: Fulghum, Robert. *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, Grafton Books, London, 1989.

Share Everything

In an organisation that is genuinely process-aware there is a palpable sense of openness and sharing. Individuals and teams are intent on developing their understanding of the processes they use to deliver value to customers. Within the constraints of commercial confidence and the protection of intellectual property, a high value is placed on sharing insights and opportunities for performance improvement.

Don't surround process work with secrecy. After all, isn't it the processes (and our understanding and consistent application of them) that create value for both customers and shareholders? Be as open about the work as you possibly can be. Create an environment of excitement and interest about the discovery, innovation, improvement and management of the company's large, cross-functional processes. There are many things we should share:

- information about what we are trying to achieve and why it is important
- information on our current performance in providing products and/or services to customers and the size of the gap to be bridged
- fears and goals about process improvement initiatives
- thoughts about the nature of cross-functional collaboration needed to perform well for customers
- process improvement successes and the credit for those breakthroughs
- knowledge about the needs of our customers and how other organisations and industries respond to comparable needs.

Organisations like Dell Inc and Wal-Mart, whose very existence depends on finely tuned processes, have a relentless focus on sharing demand and performance data both internally and externally with their suppliers and customers. There is a very significant emphasis on tightly integrated information sharing. As Peter Drucker said, suppliers don't sell to customers, they are now buyers for them. This demands extensive sharing.

For BPM to work there needs to be transparency. Cross-functional process management requires that the performance of critical cross-functional processes be measured. Of course, bear in mind that at the outset some business units may not want everyone else in the value chain to see what is going on in their area!

Create an environment where sharing of ideas and opportunities for both product and process innovation is second nature to everyone. Develop and sustain a pool of enthusiasm for process-based management and share that around at every opportunity.

Play Fair

To play fair we all need to know the rules of the game. Establish an agreed set of rules before the game starts. Sometimes with BPM it feels like we are all "playing fair" – it's just that some are playing by different rules or indeed, playing a different game entirely. Develop a clear understanding of what is in scope, the methodology to be used, the resources to be applied and the expected outcomes.

To say that we are going to take a process view of an organisation is to say that there are going to be big changes. Creating a process management culture is a difficult and daunting task. We are never looking to make inconsequential change to unimportant processes. We look to change not just some abstract notion of activity sequence, we seek also to change the way that individuals and groups think about those activities and how we measure their success. If we are going to achieve this, we need to play fair.

Be honest with yourself and others about what customers actually want and how good your company is at delivering that value. A fair and honest assessment of current and target performance must be the foundation of our process mindset and execution.

In the excitement of process initiatives we sometimes overload people with additional work that is well beyond what is reasonable. This is not fair. We can't ask people to dedicate weeks and months of their time to new process improvement projects without making some compensating adjustment to their normal responsibilities.

Don't imagine (or pretend) that creating a process-managed environment is easy and that process improvement and management initiatives won't cause pain. Change is something that most people aren't very good at, especially after years of constant, and perhaps ineffective, transformation programs. If headcount reductions are likely or planned, then say so. Many organisations are finding, however, that years of cost cutting develops not a 'lean' organisation but an emaciated one that no longer has strength and agility.

It's everyone's job to create value via process thinking and acting. That's actually the purpose of employment. So it's fair to expect that from all staff. It's also fair to expect organisations to nurture an environment that encourages and supports collaboration across traditional organisational boundaries.

In a process-aware organisation there is also a need to share resources. The more we move from function to process, the more resources within a function (legal experts, warehouses, etc) can become a bottleneck. Planning and prioritisation will be required. Independent and simultaneous optimisation of many processes tends to cause resource bottlenecks. Arriving at these compromises requires a lot of fair play and sharing.

Don't Hit People

Working to achieve consistent process thinking and doing across an organisation can sometimes be more than a little frustrating. It's worth keeping in mind that people come to work to do their best, not just to annoy you! BPM should not become the school-yard bully – rather it should influence through leading-by-example. For long term stability we need volunteers, not conscripts. As Edwards Deming suggested in the 8th of his 14 Principles for Quality, we need to eliminate fear in relation to improvement projects.

Process improvement is not about punishing people for existing inefficiencies. We set out with the deliberate intent and expectation of finding things to improve, preferably big and exciting change with significant impact. We are looking for opportunities for innovation and improvement and not for scapegoats for past under-performance.

Another of the guiding lights of modern management, J M Juran, suggested that when there is a problem, it will be in the system 85% of the time and only 15% of the time will the problem be caused by a worker.

Don't imagine that the Service Delivery Manager isn't a little worried by the prospect of actually finding ways to increase customer satisfaction and reduce costs by 30%. She, and others, might wonder why this hasn't been done before. Continuous improvement is not about continuous censure. It's never just one person involved in preservation of sub-optimal processes. We fail to optimise processes when we fail to collaborate openly and honestly. Don't ask "who is to blame?"; ask "how did the process allow this error to occur?". Keep focused – as nobody ever said, but we all should, "*it's the process stupid*".

Clean up Your Own Mess

Implementing process change and building a process mindset can be a messy business. There are many threads to such a program – strategy, people, process, systems. None of it happens 'overnight'. We need to have a clear vision of what we want to achieve and be sure that we demonstrate and sustain such achievement.

The comparatively easy part of a process change project is the capture of the current process details (the As Is) and then defining the improved process (the To Be). This can even be fun and entertaining. The hard part is implementing the proposed changes.

Don't stop too early. The real challenge is not just to come up with the To Be ideas, but to make the To Be the new As Is. The initiative has been a waste, and the credibility of the process view has been damaged, if permanent change has not been effectively achieved.

Keep the change team together and focused, not just on planning the changes, but on their execution. In the process of executing the new To Be there will be problems. Some fine tuning, or even significant rethinking, will be required.

Install measures and assign ownership for cross-functional process performance. Make the measures real; hold people accountable for performance (but don't "hit them" – make process performance and compliance a shared goal, not a subject of fear). Strive to align rewards and

recognition. Review the outcomes before, during and after the changes have been made. Review the measures and measurement methods to ensure that they are also optimised.

When we are making change, things can get messy. It's not that BPM causes a mess, it just exposes the mess that already existed. Don't leave it that way, don't leave the job half done. BPM is a great way to clean up the mess. Look after the people who are affected. Persist to the end and install a measurement system that will sustain the benefits of the clean up.

Don't Take Things That Aren't Yours

For processes to be managed and remain optimised they need to belong to someone. We need to exercise control over the use of our processes. We certainly need extensive control over changes to the processes. A key tenet of process management is that we want to optimise the entire process from end to end. Changes made to one part of the process may be "locally optimal" but may result in the whole process being sub-optimised.

We don't want five process analysts in our organisation; we want five thousand. Everybody in the organisation, as well as partners, suppliers and customers outside, need to have "ownership" of the processes in which they participate.

Ownership of processes, functions and resources will change over time. The greater the BPM maturity of an organisation, the more importance will be placed on owning processes as opposed to owning functions and resources.

Don't take (change) things that aren't yours. Equally, assume responsibility for contributing to the continuous improvement of those processes that are "yours".

Say Sorry When You Hurt Somebody

People can sometimes get lost in our drive to understand, improve and manage our business processes. They can become statistics, attributes, graphical symbols, and we lose sight of the fact that most of the changes we make to any process have a personal impact on real people. Of course, many such changes have a positive impact, but it is not always so. Especially in the immediate aftermath of change, people can be 'hurt'.

A good question to keep in mind is "What about the people?" Change is what we seek to achieve. In making changes, actively consider the impacts on the people they touch.

In working with teams of people to improve processes we see plenty of arguments. Sometimes these disagreements can be quite passionate. Analysing processes can release years of pent up frustration or provide a venue for reruns of old arguments. Process analysis can also provide the battlefield for 'turf wars'. These kinds of unintended 'organisational psychotherapy' sessions can be intense! They can also be useful. However, if there has been combat there needs to be reconciliation.

Yogi Berra, the iconic American baseball player, had this advice for process analysts: "*You should always go to other people's funerals; otherwise, they won't come to yours.*"²

Process thinking and doing is about working collaboratively. Say sorry when you hurt somebody. Consideration for the feelings of others is not just appropriate human behaviour, it's essential if our process work is to succeed and be sustained.

Wash Your Hands before You Eat

The excellent advice from Seneca that "*luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity*"³ predates our time in kindergarten by a very long way. Preparation and planning have always been important. At our peril, we rush in to get to the "doing", to start on the fun parts of designing change.

Is your organisation prepared to change? Sure, you can see the benefits of change, even if they are a little fuzzy, and you want to make changes, but are you actually prepared? Something else to hang on the wall, the famous comment from Thomas Edison: *Genius is*

² More information about Yogi Berra can be found at www.yogiberra.com and www.rinkworks.com.

³ Lucius Annaeus Seneca (3 BC.- 65 AD)

*one per cent inspiration, ninety-nine per cent perspiration.*⁴ We might hesitate to put ourselves in the genius class, but there is no doubt about the value of preparation.

An important foundational element that is too often overlooked is the need to develop a shared understanding of what you are trying to achieve (remember – “share everything”). Is there a shared understanding of what is meant by “process”, “process management” and the range of other key concepts? Can all of the immediate stakeholders give a useful description of the purpose of your process efforts? This shared lexicon and understanding doesn’t just happen, it needs to be nurtured and maintained.

Imagine yourself 12 months down the process improvement and management path. You know a lot more about your processes, many are now well documented and changes are being made. There is a developing sense of shared purpose and achievement throughout your organisation. More and more people are seeing the importance of the process view and are queuing up to sign on to the team. The benefits are really starting to flow. But, can you actually prove those benefits based on objective data (both quantitative and qualitative)? Did you make the baseline measurements that now allow you to definitively show the process ROI? If you can’t, all of your good work will eventually fail as the organisation loses interest in your “hobby”. Be prepared to prove your success, to at least prove that positive change has happened, not just assert it.

There are few, if any organisations, which survive without some form of enabling technology. Increasingly we depend on integrated IT systems to provide the information and access we need for process execution. Explore the worlds of the icons of process and supply chain management – Dell, Wal-Mart, Zara, Amazon – and you will find an intense dependence on internal and external information flow and analysis. Technology is vitally important but don’t fall for the trap of thinking that great technology alone will bring great process management. Bill Gates reminds us that *“The first rule of any technology used in a business is that automation applied to an efficient operation will magnify the efficiency. The second is that automation applied to an inefficient operation will magnify the inefficiency.”*⁵

In 1865 Louis Pasteur came to understand the role of personal and equipment hygiene in preventing contagion. Pasteur was looking at diseases killing silkworms. Joseph Lister⁶ (and others) applied the new thinking about germs to human disease. An important attribute of this new thinking was the requirement for doctors to wash their hands. Thus was born the germ theory of medicine. Building on the work of Shewart, Deming, Sarasohn and Juran, Myron Tribus makes an interesting suggestion about a Germ Theory of Management⁷. He encourages managers to stop the contagion of the virus of variability. Variability in one step of a process has a multiplier effect throughout the rest of the process. The negative effects spread like a virus. Processes are as “invisible” as the germs and we ignore them both at our peril. Just as the practice of medicine appeared to be “successful” before germs were understood, management can seem successful before a process view is adopted. We look back now to the pre-Lister days and are amazed to hear about doctors who thought hand washing between patients was a nonsense. Will others look back at our times and be astonished that process-based management was not our instinctive response to the control of “management viruses”?

While we are ‘washing our hands’, let’s talk about process model hygiene. There is probably nothing more useless, or perhaps dangerous, than a process model that hasn’t been looked at for 12 months. As the saying goes *“all models are wrong, some are useful”* and usefulness decays exponentially from the time the model was last verified. As you read this there are thousands of people around the world creating process models and that’s a very good thing as it builds process understanding. Mechanisms are required to assure and maintain the quality, accuracy and integrity of those models. If there were just three people in your organisation modelling processes today, they might create some 15 hours worth of models – how do you know they are useful right now let alone in a few months time – and how do you manage the quickly increasing number of process models? This is not an argument against

⁴ Thomas A. Edison, *Harper's Monthly*, 1932

⁵ <http://www.quotedb.com/quotes/3854>

⁶ There are many references for the work of Lister. One is at http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/joseph_lister.htm

⁷ Tribus, Myron. *The Germ Theory of Management*, 1993, http://deming_eng.clemson.edu/pub/den/deming_tribus.htm

process modelling. However, there is a need to create and maintain a clean and healthy process model repository.

Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you

John Seely Brown points out the obvious, and often forgotten, fact that “*processes don't do work, people do*”⁸. In moving to and maintaining a process view we ask many people to move outside of their traditional comfort zone. We ask them to put in extra time and effort. We want them to be enthusiastic and engaged on the process journey.

It is important to reward involvement and success. Celebrate the individual and team successes. There may be times when it seems hard to find something to celebrate, so make the most of every opportunity.

Process work can be hard work. It can also be great fun and very rewarding. Getting ‘the team’ together regularly for ‘cookies and milk’ is important for morale and that’s a prerequisite for success.

We also need to change the way we reward people if we are to make lasting change to a process-aware corporate mindset. When people are rewarded, at least in part, by their contribution to process performance rather than just for their functional activities, the process view will come into much clearer perspective.

Live a balanced life

The essential message of Business Process Management, and a key reason why implementation can be complicated, is this: *we (mainly) design, manage and reward our organisations by functional performance, yet we deliver value to customers and other stakeholders via cross-functional processes*. Getting the right balance between functional management and process delivery is at the heart of organisational performance.

Where the emphasis is on functional performance alone we create silos that optimise functional outcomes, perhaps at the expense of end-to-end process performance. Neither is organisational performance optimised by focussing on process tunnels at the expense of functional operations. We need to create and maintain a balance between process efficiency and resource efficiency. We don't want to replace *functional silos* with *process tunnels*.

In most organisations the cards are stacked in favour of the traditional departmental view and against the process view. Plans are defined in functional terms, budgets are defined by department, rewards are often defined by department. What ever happened to defining plans, budgets and rewards in accordance with the value the company creates for customers? We need to rebalance the functional and process views. However, it will depend on the context of each organisation and especially on the process-oriented nature of its business where we want to be on the continuum between process and function.

Taking a process view of the organisation need not mean making radical change to the organisation structure, especially in the short term. The roles of some people will certainly change. In some organisations there are full-time Process Owners, in others these are part-time roles. Governance is a vital part of sustaining the process view, but too much focus on the organisation chart can result in simply reverting to a new functional view.

Neither can we afford to divert too many resources to massive process modelling and analysis projects without keeping a close eye on the operational demands of day-to-day business. A balance needs to be struck between continuing to manage the organisation, albeit in sub-optimal ways, and creating the new and exciting process-based management approach.

When you go out into the world

Out in the world, process change and management is about real people doing real things with real consequences. When we go out into the world to evangelise our process view and make our process changes, we need to be prepared for the cold winds of apathy and disbelief. Life is not a process modelling and analysis workshop. Things that look ground-breaking and

⁸ *Fast Company*, The People are the Company, November 1995

innovative in the exciting micro-world of a buzzy, “we-can-do-anything” workshop, can sometimes look less inspired in the cold light of the “shop floor”.

So be prepared. Change is worthwhile and it is often difficult. Bottlenecks, roadblocks, obstructions and all kinds of impediments are part of the traffic of process change. Change teams need support. The targets of change need support. The sponsors of change need support.

Robert Fulghum suggests that “*When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together*”. This is good advice. What’s your support process?

Stakeholders need to be identified, managed and supported. Whenever you find a supporter, even an embryonic one, in your world of stakeholders, grab their hands and have them stick close with you.

There is also a requirement, out in the world, to make compelling business cases for change. There are many competing interests and many suggestions for improving the organisation. Shape up the process view and process changes in terms of enhanced business performance; show real and measurable benefits. Process management will have no traction if it is just an interesting topic to read and write about. If your organisation is to be truly process-managed then you need to create and communicate real and sustained business benefits.

In the real world there is no substitute for realising the benefits promised in the business case. In a recent article⁹ Professor Tom Davenport says, “*Most organizations should have a portfolio of process innovation initiatives underway at any given time, including both breakthrough and incremental innovations where necessary.*” In the same article he also reports that a 2005 survey reported that only 49% of surveyed executives were satisfied with the financial returns on investments in innovation. The drive for innovation was strong, however, as the survey results also showed that 87% of senior executives believed that generating organic growth through innovation was a prerequisite for growth and 74% planned to increase spending on innovation 2005. About now, out in the world, they will be looking for real benefits from those investments of last year.

Be aware of wonder

At the point at which the analysis of the current situation is complete it is often a little daunting to have to move on to the design of the improved process. It can feel like someone has issued the order: *Innovate! Now!* And we all put our hopes in the wonderful ATAMO technique – And Then A Miracle Occurs!

We don’t intend in this article to canvass the many ways to bridge the gap between As Is and To Be. We do want to make the case for the power of “wonder”.

The theory of left- and right-brain thinking tells us that each side of the brain controls different modes of thinking. Left-brain thinking is logical, rational and analytical. Right-brain thinking is intuitive, creative and holistic. Most of us have a natural tendency to lean to the left or right in this respect; some of us are more whole-brained.

Left-brain thinking gives rationality, logic and structure. However, if used alone, it might also blind us to possibilities.

In 1989 Charles Duell, the Director of the US Patent Office declared, “*Everything that can be invented has been invented*”. Neither does having a brain the size of the universe compensate for using only the left half of it. The redoubtable Lord Kelvin¹⁰, President of the Royal Society and 19th century polymath who did much to unify the emerging field of physics, said in 1895 that, “*Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible*”. The Wright Brothers didn’t know this and took off eight years later.

In thinking about processes we certainly need the logical analysis of the left-brainers. We must also have the spontaneity and creativity of the right-brainers. We need to wonder.

⁹ Davenport, Thomas. *The Different Domains of Innovation*, Babson Insight, Babson College, 2006.

¹⁰ For more information about William Thompson, Baron Kelvin of Largs (1824 –1907), see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord_Kelvin

Post-It Notes, vulcanised rubber and stainless steel were all developed by people attempting to make something else¹¹. Many of the innovations that form our modern lives have come from asking What if? and What else?

In looking for process improvements, describe the “blue sky” environment. Removed of all constraints, how would you redesign this process. Left brains think this is anarchy; right brains sense that this might be useful. Many a good idea started out as a crazy thought. Albert Einstein said *“If at first an idea is not absurd, then there is no hope for it.”* Who are we to argue with one of the greatest whole-brainers of all times?

While we are wondering ... are you sure you understand why the current process is as it is? Processes often change for good reason. Apparent anomalies in a process might be what makes it work. Or they might also be just plain silly. It's worth finding out though before you leap in to make change. As Is analysis is about increasing our understanding of a process. This should also include its history and the internal and external factors that have shaped its development. We need to understand how a process is designed and executed. Just as important is to ask the question ‘why is it so?’

We might also contemplate the impact of reference models which capture practiced “wonders” for the purpose of distribution of knowledge.

The biggest word of all - LOOK

Interesting word “look”. As a verb it can mean that we turn our eyes towards something, or we physically examine something or we just look interested. We can look into an issue, we can look bewildered. We can look away, we can look forward and backward, we command attention - “Look!” As a noun, we take a look, express a meaningful look and create a look. Look, this is a very versatile word describing many powerful and useful concepts.

We should look at a process and organisation from the outside-in as well as the inside-out. Processes deliver value for customers and other stakeholders. What does the process look like from their many perspectives?

Don't assume that you know how a process works. Observe, think, test, validate, assess – take a good look at all of its aspects.

When seeking to make significant change to mission critical processes (and we are seldom asked to do anything less) we need to be sure that we are doing more good than harm. Without suppressing innovation and enthusiasm, we should also have the motto “Do no harm!” hanging on the wall as a constant reminder of the seriousness of our task and the potentially severe consequences of failure.

In his book *Intelligent Leadership*¹², Alistair Mant discusses the metaphor¹² of the bicycle and the frog. A bicycle is a system that can be taken apart and put back together again without harm. A frog will cease to be a viable system after only a small amount of interference. A bicycle is a passive thing that does not resist change and its performance can be much improved by the overhaul. Frogs will resist change; their performance will be greatly diminished by being ‘taken apart and put back together’. The processes and organisations that we deal with are complex systems having a mix of bicycle and frog characteristics. Treating a ‘frog system’ as a bike will damage the system. This will result in unpredictable behaviour. As Mant says *“Bikes and frogs are different kinds of systems and the capacity to distinguish between them is the kind of intelligence that really matters.”*

In conclusion ...

Looking forward from the simplicity of the kindergarten reminds us that, like the rest of life, business process management is based on simple, if profound, concepts. To our loss, we sometimes lose sight of this simplicity.

Changing to, and maintaining, process-based management is certainly not a trivial undertaking. We should though remind ourselves that, to borrow from Robert Fulghum, all we ever need to know about BPM we learned in kindergarten.

¹¹ Michalko, Michael. *Thinkertoys*, Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, California, 1991

¹² Mant A., *Intelligent Leadership*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1997.

So this is our (BPM) credo¹³:

All organisations deliver value to customers and other stakeholders via processes. Those processes should be improved and managed.

Processes do not stop at departmental, organisational or national boundaries.

Every organisational transformation project in the history of the universe has been about changing one or more processes; maybe also about changing hearts and minds, but it's always about process.

Organisational strategy must be tightly integrated with the definition, management and improvement of business processes.

Core business processes should be designed to execute the business strategy, ie to deliver the strategic objectives.

Another name for processes that do not contribute either directly or indirectly to the achievement of strategic objectives is waste.

Every organisation should have a high level diagram of it's core and supporting processes; a portal into it's process view.

Process changes need to work in practice as well as in theory.

Effective process management is everybody's business and can only be achieved in an environment of genuine trust and collaboration.

People are not attributes of processes or graphic objects in process models; they are people, and need to be heard, acknowledged, supported, empowered, encouraged and managed.

Cross-functional process performance must be measured and process owners held accountable.

Business Process Management is not a project with a start and a finish, it is a management practice, a way of life.

Neither is BPM a technology. IT systems that execute processes and support their management are vitally important. BPM and BPM Systems are not the same thing.

It is not useful to replace functional silos with process tunnels. Getting the right balance between functional management and process delivery is at the heart of organisational performance.

Process innovation creates competitive advantage. Such innovation is a complex mixture of analysis, creativity, logic and serendipity occurring at the intersection of many planes of thought.

Increasingly we see organisations around the world that prove every day that taking this process view of business delivers significant, sustainable competitive advantage, greatly enhanced operational efficiency and productive customer loyalty. These companies recognise that process management fundamentally involves an additional and different dimension of management which emphasises a customer-focused, collaborative approach. The types of behaviours that "we all learned in kindergarten" are fully consistent with this approach.

One of the most critical, and perhaps overlooked, questions in any organisation is how to spend the "attention budget". Where should we spend our attention? How do we gain the attention of others? Davenport and Beck argue eloquently that "*understanding and managing attention is now the single most important determinant of business success*"¹⁴. When we were at kindergarten we were encouraged to "pay attention". So it is at work as it was in the kindergarten. Our BPM credo says that we must pay attention to the process view if we are to really deliver value to our customers and other stakeholders.

¹³ See also Spanyi, Andrew, *More for Less: The Power of Process Management*, Mehan-Kiffer Press, 2006 and *Business Process Management is a Team Sport. Play It to Win!*, Anclote Press, Tampa, Florida, 2003.

¹⁴ Davenport, Thomas and Beck, John. *The Attention Economy*, Harvard Business School Press, 2001

With all the models, frameworks, methodologies, technologies and architectures that (necessarily) complicate our business worlds, we must not forget the power and enduring relevance of the most basic of principles that we learnt in kindergarten. Nor should we forget the fun we had in living them!

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About Robert Fulghum

Robert Fulghum has published seven best-selling books: *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, *It Was on Fire When I Lay Down on It*, *Uh-Oh, Maybe (Maybe Not)*, *From Beginning to End—The Rituals of Our Lives*, *True Love* and *Words I Wish I Wrote*, and an updated, expanded edition of *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* (2004, Ballantine/Random House). There are currently more than 16 million copies of his books in print, published in 27 languages in 103 countries. A new book of Fulghum's essays will be published in the USA in the fall of 2007 by St. Martin's Press.

More information at www.robertfulghum.com.