

December Sponsor



The Process Knowledge Initiative - Update

It would be hard for most to say that 2010 was a great year. Most countries were recovering from a severe financial shock and business was generally slow. In spite of that, by the end of the year, conferences and training events were reviving, and most of us are looking forward to a better year in 2011. Moreover, there were several interesting developments in BPM in 2010. To my mind, one of the most important was the kickoff of the Process Knowledge Initiative (PKI).

The [Process Knowledge Initiative](#) is a collaborative effort with the sole purpose of creating an open source body of knowledge for process management. The PKI was formed to create an open source, standard definition of process and a high-level description of the knowledge and skills used by those in the process field. The effort is driven by the conviction that a process knowledge base should be developed and shared by a wide variety of groups and individuals who are engaged in process work. Members and contributors from all organizations and perspectives concerned with process change are participating, including, but not limited to, BPM practitioners, Universities offering degrees in Business Process Management and related topics, Lean and Six Sigma practitioners, Business Analysts and Architects, Supply Chain and Telcom managers who use frameworks, IT groups engaged in process work, and human performance professionals engaged in performance improvement.

The PKI is not a certification body. It is hoped, however, that organizations will incorporate the PKI's definitions into their own bodies of knowledge and certification programs. In this way, the PKI hopes to establish a more consistent understanding of business processes.

The Process Knowledge Initiative was kicked off at the International BPM 2010 Conference in New Jersey in September. The founding member/stewards include BPTrends, the International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA), Kemsley Design (Sandy Kemsley), the Object Management Group (OMG) and Queensland University of Technology (QUT).

Since its founding, the group has attracted a growing number of participants from other organizations, including the International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI), the Supply Chain Council, Stevens Institute of Technology and Eindhoven Institute of Technology and IBM and AgilePoint, Inc. At the same time, many individuals have volunteered to contribute to the effort. The PKI has spent the fall organizing the effort and creating a non-profit, open source organizational structure that will kick into high gear in 2011.

Recently, the PKI announced the [Technical Team Structure](#) and the members of the [Technical](#)

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Throughout the development process, the content will be released to the BPM community for comment and consumption via an easily accessible website. Once the first release is completed, the PKI will establish a program to assure that the process body of knowledge will be continually updated and maintained over time.

As I have watched the PKI initiative gather momentum, I have become more excited about the potential of this effort. When I first began to talk about the PKI effort I emphasized that it would support the creation of a common understanding of process and process work. One hardly needs to edit a website like BPTrends.com to be aware of the variety of definitions that are in widespread use and the belief that anything that standardizes usage will make it easier to communicate the process perspective to business managers.

As I have worked with the PKI during the last few months I have begun to evolve a slightly different understanding of the value of the effort. I continue to believe that standard definitions are important, but I begin to see where PKI can contribute even more to the process field. The PKI is focused on defining a high level overview of the field and specifying high level tasks and techniques. We do not plan on defining the tasks and techniques in great detail since most of the tasks and techniques have already been defined by other groups. What I now envision is a circular target with a process definition in the center. Surrounding that, there are knowledge areas where process concepts are used. In the next circle, there are the tasks that describe the work process people undertake. In the next circle out, each task is associated with techniques. And, beyond techniques there are pointers to organizations and books that define specific techniques. Figure 1 below, represents a pie shaped slice from such an imaginary target.

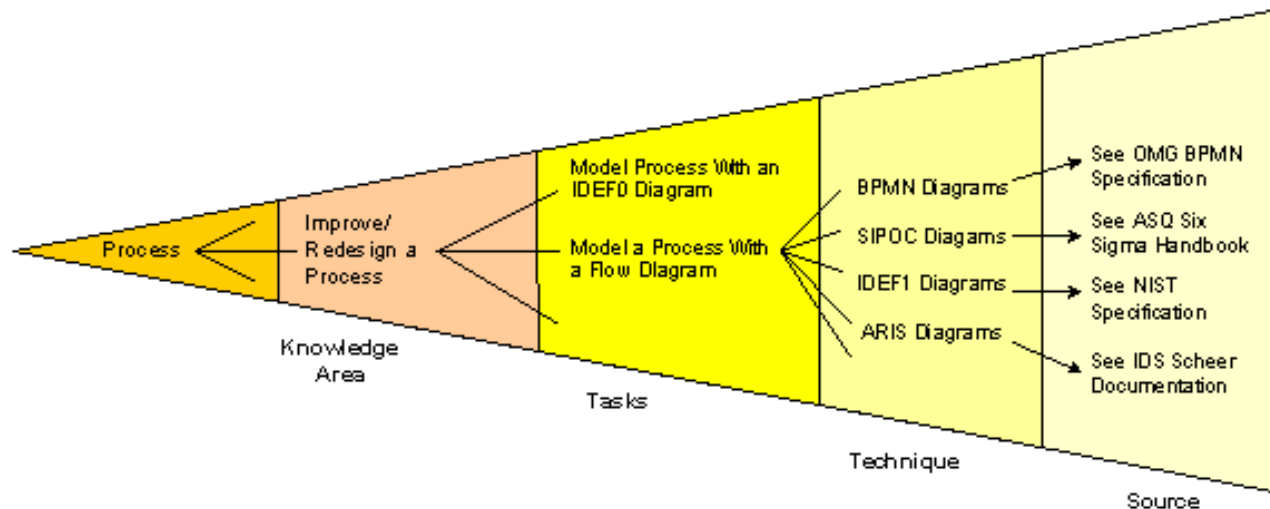


Figure 1. A pie-shaped slice of the overall business process space

If you imagine the complete circle, with all the areas, tasks, techniques, and sources filled in, you can picture a very comprehensive overview of the different techniques and the standards groups, books, and companies that are active in the process field. Hopefully, this overview will

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give everyone an idea of how business groups, like the Supply Chain Council (SCOR), Six Sigma Groups (ASQ, ISSSP), Human Performance Technologists (ISPI, ASTD), the Object Management Group (OMG) and various other BPM groups are all working to support organizations in the improvement of their business processes.

This effort would be impossible for any one organization to attempt. Working together, however, we can evolve a common understanding of process work, and generate a document and a picture of process work that will help managers better understand the variety of services and benefits that process practitioners can provide to support the improvement of organizational performance.

As I won't be writing again till next, year let me wish everyone a Happy Holiday Season.

Paul Harmon

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