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## Business Process Training and Certification – How Do I Choose?

Over the past several years we have observed two trends in the BPM market – (1) an increased interest in, and demand for, training, and (2) the emergence of BPM certification programs. Along with this comes a good deal of confusion as to how to select the training that will yield the most benefits to organizations seeking to improve their business process competencies. Finally, we have seen a considerable uptick in the number of people asking us about how to select the right training program and inquiring about certification. In this Advisor, we attempt to provide an overview of the BP Training and Certification market and to provide readers with some guidelines for making good choices.

Before we get started, however, readers need to know that BPTrends is actively involved in the BPM training and certification market. BPTrends Associates, (BPTA), our sister company, is a for profit training and consulting services company. We are also involved in the Process Knowledge Initiative (PKI), a non-profit organization with the sole purpose of developing a comprehensive, open source Process Knowledge Body of Knowledge (PKBoK). I will make every effort to be as objective as possible, however I have a biased view that has been shaped by my over 40-years of experience as a business process analyst, author, methodologist, consultant and trainer.

### Process Certification

Let's start with certification. This isn't so important here in the US, but in many other countries it is very important. The place to begin is to distinguish between certification offered by professional groups and certification offered by training companies. The former makes at least an effort at certify that an individual has some specific knowledge or skill. These certifications usually rely on tests based on a defined body of knowledge and some go on to require years of documented work experience. Training organizations simply certify that an individual has completed a particular training program, which may be narrowly or broadly focused. A few require that a test be taken at the end of the class.

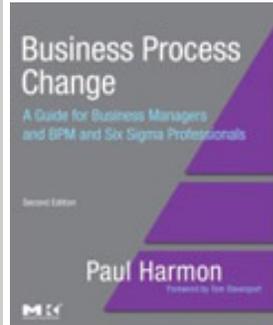
There are three "professional" certification groups that I know of that offer certification focused on what we broadly understand to be BPM.

[Association for Information and Image Management \(AIIM\)](#). AIIM is a professional organization originally focused on managing various types of text and image-based documentation. It was very active in workflow and content management and has recently developed BPM training and



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certification programs specifically tailored for their constituency. The training is more comprehensive than one might expect, including detailed discussions of process analysis and redesign, Six Sigma, Change Management and a wide variety of other topics. It has a slant toward process software tools and is probably most suitable for someone from an IT or documentation background who seeks a broader understanding of process practices, or the management of processes throughout an organization. More important, this is one of only two professional certification groups I know of that also provides training. This is probably the best general purpose BPM certification in the US.

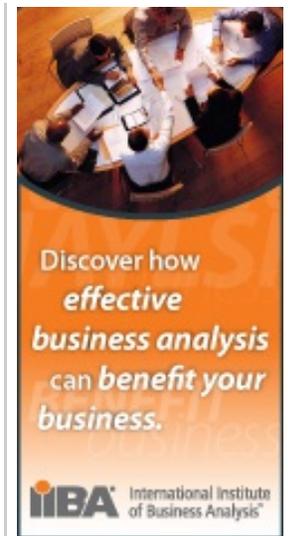
[The Association of BPM Professionals \(ABPMP\)](#). This is an association that was founded in the US in 2003 to serve as a home for Business Process Management Professionals. The ABPMP has persevered and is growing steadily with chapters here in the US, as well as in other countries around the world. They released their first BPM CBOOK in 2011 and currently offer certification examinations. When their certification was first released I examined it carefully with an eye toward aligning BPTrends Associates training to their certification. I concluded this was impossible because their CBOOK was such a mix of topics and because it simply didn't cover much of what we believed was critical for BPM practitioners to know. In spite of that, given its international chapter structure, ABPMP certification is probably the most widely pursued of any of the current BPM certification programs. At the present time, ABPMP does not offer training.

[The Object Management Group \(OMG\)](#). The OMG was established in 1990 as a software standards group. In 2005 they acquired the BPM Initiative (BPMI), a group of individuals and vendors who had developed a BPM notation (BPMN) and a BPM language. That kicked their modeling group into high gear and they have since published a number of standards in the process area, starting with BPMN (the most popular process standard throughout the world), as well as standards on rules, architecture and special topics, like maturity and case management. Most of their standards are primarily focused on IT concerns, and, with the exception of BPMN, they have had little impact on process work outside of the IT area. Nevertheless, the OMG has developed a set of certification exams (OCEB) that test student's mastery of the OMG process specifications, as well as some related process knowledge. The OMG publishes its specifications, but does not offer training.

There are other professional certification programs that are more narrowly focused on aspects of BPM, as it applies to their specific constituencies. The most notable are:

[American Society for Quality \(ASQ\) Lean Six Sigma Certification](#). The ASQ initially resisted Six Sigma, but has come around and now offers the most prestigious certifications for knowledge of Six Sigma in the US. (Their tests of Lean knowledge are very limited.) The ASQ publishes a BOK and offers a variety of training classes.

[The International Institute of Business Analysis \(IIBA\)](#). The IIBA provides a Body of Knowledge (BABOK) describing skills and knowledge that Business Analysts ought to possess. The current BABOK does not include much on architecture or process management, but it does cover process analysis and redesign. The IIBA is at work on a new version that will extend the BABOK to include more on process. IIBA certification is very popular with Business Analysts, and has the potential of shaping this group to be more process focused in the future. The IIBA publishes their BABOK but does not offer training.



## Process Training

The process training market ranges from vendors who are selling rather limited training in specific skills to those who are trying to offer more comprehensive training in all aspects of business process management. No vendor, however, offers a truly comprehensive program.

To keep from comparing apples and oranges, let's begin by setting aside those academic programs that offer an MA or PhD in Business Process. Many of these programs are excellent, but they aren't what most companies are looking for when they seek programs to train their employees as business process managers and practitioners. To be fair, some of the academic organizations offer corporate education training programs in BPM, however, we aren't going to cover any college-based programs in this Advisor. For those interested in academic programs see the BPTrends description of several of the prominent BPM Programs at [BPM Academic Programs](#).

Rather than identifying all the process training available around the world we will simply discuss some the generic types of training provided and identify examples of each type.

**Training in a Specific Tool or Technique.** Lots of process work is based on the use of tools or techniques, and lots of trainers specialize in offering training in the use of specific techniques.

Each process modeling, or BPMS, vendor, for example, offers training in how to use their software tools. Some try to go a bit beyond their tools and provide context – discussing process problems that might call for the use of their tool, but most focus on the operational details of creating models. IBM and ARIS training in the use of their respective software products are good examples of this type of training. Each offers some kind of certificate for completing their training.

Some vendors offer slightly more generic training in the use of a technique. Thus, there are courses in ARIS modeling and in BPMN modeling. Bruce Silver at [BPM Essentials](#) offers a very popular course in the use of BPMN, for example

There are even more generic courses that focus on topics tangential to BPM work. Thus, there are great courses on Change Management, Balanced Scorecard, and Managing Human Performance Problems. These are all topics that process practitioners would benefit from understanding.

**Training Designed to Teach a Specific Process Methodology.** It's no secret that process work is often broken into "traditions" and that each has its own approach or methodology. The best known among the specific "traditions" are Lean and Six Sigma. , Business Rules is another popular approach for analyzing how process decisions are made. Each looks at one part of the elephant and trains practitioners in how best to deal with the part of choice. A dozen Six Sigma vendors offer Six Sigma training, for example, and a half dozen more offer Lean or Lean Six Sigma training. Another half dozen offer business rules training.

**Training Designed to Teach a Holistic Approach to BPM.** Some vendors offer training based on an underlying methodology that is designed to encompass all aspects of business process work. The difficulty here is that there is so much involved in process work that it is hard to include everything.

[BPTrends Associates \(BPTA\)](#). BPTA is the training company I'm involved with. BPTA has developed a methodology that attempts to consider all aspects of process training. We teach business managers and analysts how to define any and all types of business process problems and how to develop and field new process designs. We also teach business people how to create business process architectures and BPM Centers of Excellence to manage an ongoing BPM program. To complete the entire program requires 3 weeks of highly interactive, hands-on classroom work. BPTA often terms its training "best practice" training. We do not try to reinvent techniques that have already been well described. We focus on teaching a structured approach to analyzing and redesigning process and to creating and managing a business process architecture. The BPTA curriculum teaches specific techniques derived from Rummier, Six Sigma, Lean, Business Rules, Business Analysis, Software Requirements, and several other specific disciplines. We do not, however, provide in depth training in the use of BPMS tools or any aspect of software application development. What we do, however, is provide a step-by-step core methodology that is integrated, consistent, scalable and based on a common vocabulary. The BPTA Curriculum and Certificate programs are available in multiple languages through our network of BPTA partners around the world. Our objective is to help organizations create a process culture that will assure that process practitioners throughout their organizations use the same approaches and speak the same language.

**Process Training Catalogs.** Some vendors aggregate a broad collection of BP courses and offer them publicly, onsite and often on-line. Some classes are delivered by SMEs, while others are offered by less experienced trainer-presenters. This training may work well for organizations seeking to train people in specific skills but it doesn't work well if an organization is seeking to establish a BPM program, since the classes are not integrated and attendees end up with a lot of inconsistent ways of thinking about process problems. [The BPM Institute](#) is an example of a catalog provider. The BPMI catalog offers training on a broad range of BPM and related topics but there is no methodology associated with this offering and there is no consistency in vocabulary or techniques associated with the various independent courses

**On-Line Process Training.** There are many groups offering on-line courses. Given the constraints of on-line training, this works better for some types of training than for others. It's a good way to become acquainted with some of the basic principles of BPM, but it is more problematic for learning business analysis or redesign, since these techniques require groups of people working together to arrive at a consensus. Moreover, there are usually no right answers when one faces a major redesign problem, and an effective learning environment, in my opinion, requires the give and take between students and an experienced instructor/consultant regarding the tradeoffs among the mix of possible solutions. The University of Phoenix, AIIM, and the BPMInstitute all offer some process training online.

### **Who Should Take What?**

To clarify the situation somewhat, I have created a matrix pictured in Figure 1. On the

horizontal axis, I listed the generic approaches to training that I have described. On the vertical axis I have identified some of the groups that might want process training. I have used color to suggest where there are options. Yellow suggests that it's a possibility and gold indicates the option or options that seem to me to offer the best training solution.

Notice right off that I didn't include two groups. First, are the are individuals who want to take an academic degree – an MA or PhD – in business process.

Second, are the individuals who want to achieve certification as a business process practitioner. Since the leading certification organizations don't offer BPM training, but do offer published Bodies of Knowledge or Specifications, these individuals should study the BOK in preparation for taking the exam. Some ABPMP chapters offer "joint study sessions," which might prove helpful. If you are serious about training and want professional certification, especially if you have an IT background and live in North America, AIIM probably offers the best combination. A broad-based, generic course might help prepare the individual to pass a certification exam, but since none of the courses are systematically related to the content and vocabulary used in each of the various certification programs, it isn't clear that this approach is helpful.

		What to Consider				
		Training in a Specific Technique or Tool	Training Designed to Teach a Specific Methodology	Training Designed to Teach a Holistic Approach	Process Training Bundlers	On Line Process Training
Why Do You Want It?	New to process work and looking for an overview of what's available					
	Process Practitioner or IT group that wants training in BPMS software tools					
	Experienced process professional and want update in a specific tool or technique					
Who Wants Training?	Organization that wants to train a large number of people in a specific approach or methodology (e.g. Lean)					
	Organization that wants to train a large number of people to deal process redesign					
	Organization that wants to train a team to deal with the creation of a business process architecture					

**Figure 1. Who Should Take What**

A few other comments on the matrix pictured above. Obviously, an individual can plan a course of study for him or herself, putting together a program of courses to provide a comprehensive understanding. There is no real difference between taking several individual courses and going to a conference and taking several individual courses there. The problem with this approach is that you will need to evolve your own "methodology," since each individual class will offer a slightly different approach, and you will need to formulate your own decision rules to determine when to diagram and when to develop business rules, or when to choose BPMS or to focus on human performance improvement. The idea of holistic training based on a core methodology is that it provides the skeletal structure that ties all the individual approaches together into a complete approach. After getting a holistic grounding, however, individuals may well decide to take other courses to gain more specific knowledge. For example, anyone who has completed the BPTA training might want to take a specific course on the use of a BPMS software tool or get more training in a particular technique.

The training and certification picture I have described here simply reflects the situation I

described a few weeks ago when I talked about the BPMS market as a whole. The field is changing very fast as new techniques are being introduced to deal with new problems that confront practitioners. The whole area of case management (or whatever you prefer to call those processes that are very dynamic and rely on extensive network communications), is getting lots of attention, but there are still no good courses that teach how to do case management in practical situations.

Finally, as I continually note, organizations vary greatly in their process maturity, and while some need basic training in analysis and design, others need advanced help to create process architectures or to establish BPM centers of excellence. The field, as a whole, faces a wide variety of different concerns and priorities and the process training and certification market reflects all of this change, confusion, and diversity.

Till next time,

Paul Harmon

**BPTrends LinkedIn Discussion Group**

We created a BPTrends Discussion Group on LinkedIn to allow our members, readers and friends to freely exchange ideas on a wide variety of BPM related topics. We encourage you to initiate a new discussion on this publication, or on other BPM related topics of interest to you, or to contribute to existing discussions. Go to LinkedIn and join the [BPTrends Discussion Group](#).