

## **6 Techniques for Creating Engaging Business Processes**

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Business process management treats business processes as a key knowledge asset of your organization. If this asset is not easy for business teams to understand, manage, and improve, though, there is no way it can sustain process improvements and deliver optimal value.

Unfortunately, not all business processes are created equal. The reality is that anyone can create a business process, but not everyone can do it well. To develop meaningful, engaging processes that will actually be used, consider these six tried-and-tested techniques.

**Keep it simple.** Traditionally, process maps have been jam-packed with too much information. Old-style processes normally offer an end-to-end view of procedures, and tend to include nine to 12 decision points. Unfortunately, that's too much for users to absorb in one glance, and can be too complex to consume at all. Traditional process maps in Visio, for example, often look like the dumping ground for a series of actions and tasks.

These inflated processes quickly become defunct because no one uses them, leaving business leadership confused. Why would people ignore processes when they include everything they could possibly need to know? The answer is that these process maps are just too busy. They overwhelm the user and encourage work-arounds where colleagues fall back on asking one another what steps they should follow.

What users really need is to understand what happens most of the time. Capture those tasks and activities that happen 80% of the time. That way it's easier to keep processes simple and easy to follow. The remaining 20% make up the exceptions, which still need to be captured and made available, but aren't critical to the core of what usually happens.

**Group tasks together.** Keep in mind that activities are related to what the key steps in your process are, while tasks are tied to how you perform an activity. Focus on the high-level activities that make up your process then simplify those steps even further by grouping activities which fall naturally under high-level categories. Where it makes sense, clump tasks together that form part of the main activity. That will make it easy for teams to get an overview in one quick glance once the process is mapped.

For each process, limit yourself to 10 high-level activities. If you can't restrict the number of activities to that magic number despite finding commonalities, it's an indication that you may need to divide this particular process into sub-processes. Now you're positioned to add more detail in each activity by capturing how each one is performed.

**Don't ignore exceptions.** Once you've captured what happens most of the time, you can deal with those tasks that happen the remaining 20% of the time. These can be captured as notes inside the activities, which include "what if" situations, business rules, and background explanations.

**Use verbs to name processes, activities, and tasks.** Use an action word at the start of every process, activity, and task to help users immediately understand what they need to do next. When you add descriptions to the activity, they become even more meaningful. Restrict yourself to six-to-eight words per activity. Be clear and avoid vague language so that your activity can be easily read and comprehended.

**Create sub-processes if you need them.** Processes should give users an overview in one glance. To achieve this, the optimal number of activities for a process can vary from three to 10. If your overview exceeds 10 activities, you probably need to separate it into sub-processes.

**Add multi-media, where appropriate.** Processes can be brought to life through the use of images, illustrations, graphs, and video clips. Documents like forms, guides, and policies also make it easy for the user to follow the process.

A good BPM tool should serve as a central repository for processes, as well as the media related to them. That approach provides organizations with a single source of truth from which teams will always find the most up-to-date processes, plus relevant documentation that should ideally be updated dynamically.

By following these tips, your business processes stand a much better chance of actually being used. You'll quickly see the difference between a complicated Visio diagram or detailed Word document and the kinds of processes that engage your business teams and are regularly turned to for guidance across your business.

There are a number of ways to engage your business teams in BPM efforts. Upskilling them on how to create meaningful, engaging processes, is one of the best ways to get you off to a solid start. Bottom line: carefully created processes will go a long way toward sustaining process improvement efforts, delivering optimal value, and ultimately promoting a solid return on investment.

## **AUTHOR**

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