

## **HARMON ON BPM January 2022**

### **Management Processes**

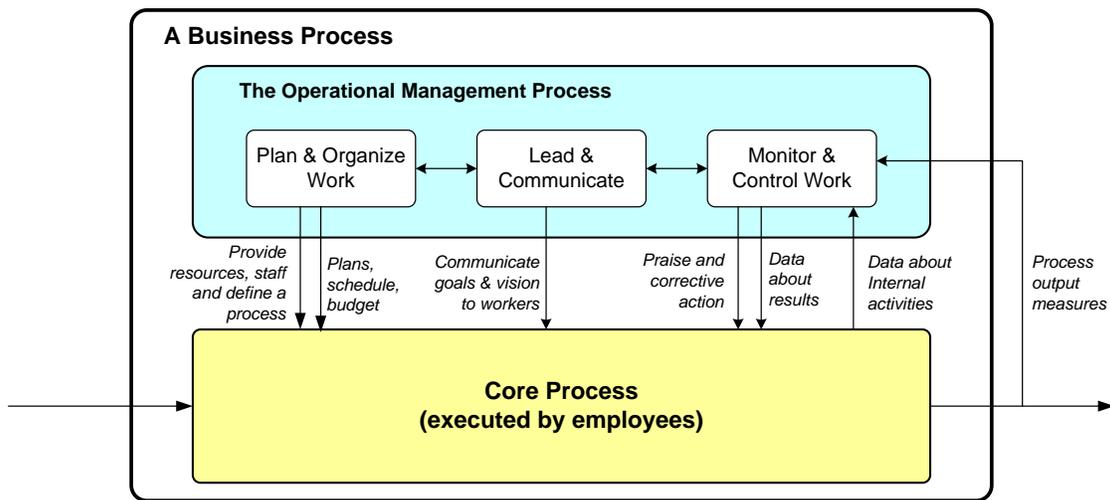
When I wrote of Service Processes in November, I argued that there are, broadly speaking, three major types of business processes: manufacturing processes, service processes, and management processes.

Early process work focused almost exclusively on manufacturing processes. A process analyst considered how workers were brought together and organized to produce a car, to refine steel, or to assemble radios. The physical structure of the final product constrained the process. The sequential steps brought together the elements required and structured the assembly. Workers were deployed to perform a sequence of steps that resulted in the final output of the product. The overall success of the processes was judged by the efficiency of the process and by the quality of the product. Once an organization has established the standard for the quality of the output, then it works to reduce the cost and time required to produce products of that quality.

Later, and increasingly, most organizations shifted to focusing on handling service processes. A service process delivers a service – which usually means that it helps a customer achieve his or her desired goals, often over the course of some period of time. In effect the service is, itself, a process, and the provider helps the customer experience the process. In the last column I provided some examples of service processes. Providing a customer with a bank account and ongoing access to that account. Providing a customer with a stay in a hotel, a room, restaurants, and a convention experience. Providing a customer with a flight from New York to London. In all cases the evaluation focuses on the customer's experience, and depends on customer satisfaction.

Both manufacturing and service processes are classic processes in the sense that workers are gathered together to perform tasks that generate the product or service desired. The third major type of process is the least understood and is rather different. Management processes are internal to the organization and focus on organizing, leading, monitoring and providing feedback to those engaged in doing either manufacturing or service processes.

There is no standard way of modeling management processes. One does not normally picture them when one shows a manufacturing or service process because they would add too much complexity to the process diagram. When one needs to model them, one often shows them with a manufacturing or service process, as pictured in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. A core (manufacturing or service) process with both its process activities (yellow) and its process management (blue) elements pictured.**

The analysis of management subprocesses derives from the work of Geary Rummler, [1] though I have modified it, and simplified it. It's easy to analyze each of the three management subprocesses into more specific activities and increase the flows between those activities and the activities that occur within a specific core process. The model shown in Figure 1 provides a nice way to conceptualize the overall rule of management processes. A management process organizes, leads and controls the work of a core process – which could be either a manufacturing or a service process.

Some of the work undertaken by managers establishes the physical setting in which the core process takes place. Some work arranges plans, schedules and budgets. A manager could be arranging for computers and scheduling automated activities, but more often he or she is organizing the work of other managers or human employees engaged in a specific process. Some work involves leading and communicating with employees and still other management tasks involve monitoring work and providing feedback to employees. Some of the work involves hiring or firing employees.

If you were to eliminate the core processes, and focus on the entire organization you might create an organization diagram with boxes for each manager and reporting relationships. When you drill down, however, and want to focus on the management of a specific process, then you are looking at specific managerial activities, and how those activities interact with specific core process activities.

The focus on managerial activities may not come up in certain process analysis work. If evidence convinces a process improvement team that a core process can be streamlined, it may be sufficient to focus on the activities that make up the core process.

Be warned, however, than many experienced process analysts have found that process problems often spring from problems with the management process. Employees can accomplish core process goals if they don't understand what they are supposed to be doing, or if they don't have the right resources. Employees won't do a great job if they see a manager who shows or indicates that certain tasks really aren't important. Employees won't get better at tasks if management never observes the outcomes or provides any feedback. If you are trying to improve a process, and the process is complex, you owe it to yourself to spend time examining how the manager interacts with the employees.

Obviously improving a process by changing the behavior of a manager is a bit different than changing the work of employees, but if your organization really wants improvement, then you will need to communicate the problem and the need for change if you are to accomplish your goal.

I remember a job where a difficult manager and reduced an engineering team to gross inefficiency. I was hired by one of the manager's assistants to improve the work of the team, but it was understood, almost from the beginning, that my real task was to help the team improve the manager. The guy wasn't really a bad guy, he was simply very introverted and avoided providing subordinates with clear cut instructions. Luckily, this occurred in the Nineties, when email was just being introduced to organizations and we focused on a solution that involved the use of email to facilitate putting decisions in front of the manager without requiring personal interactions. At the same time, however, there were also a couple of meetings between myself (the outside consultant) the manager, his aide and his boss, to discuss the basic problem: the need for clear-cut decisions in a timely manner. The aide and the email structured the interactions, and the manager was able to focus on making decisions according to a schedule the aide was able to maintain. The solution actually pleased everyone, but it was sheer luck. It could have been much more difficult and might have required that the manager be replaced, something that I'm not sure we could have pulled off. I say all this to suggest that dealing with management problems can be difficult. But in some cases, the problems have to be faced and documented and then left for the senior management of the organization to deal with. Senior management then needs to decide how important it is to improve the process in question.

Management processes are much less understood than either manufacturing or service processes, but they are just as real and just as important to anyone who is engaged in trying to understand how businesses work and how they can be improved.

## Author

### Paul Harmon

Executive Editor and Founder, Business Process Trends In addition to his role as Executive Editor and Founder of Business Process Trends, Paul Harmon is Chief Consultant and Founder of BPTrends Associates, a professional services company providing educational and consulting services to managers interested in understanding and implementing business process change. Paul is a noted consultant, author and analyst concerned with applying new technologies to real-world business problems. He is the author of *Business Process Change: A Manager's Guide to Improving, Redesigning, and Automating Processes* (2003). He has previously co-authored *Developing E-business Systems and Architectures*(2001), *Understanding UML* (1998), and *Intelligent Software Systems Development* (1993). Mr. Harmon has served as a senior consultant and head of Cutter Consortium's Distributed Architecture practice. Between 1985 and 2000 Mr. Harmon wrote Cutter newsletters, including *Expert Systems Strategies*, *CASE Strategies*, and *Component Development Strategies*. Paul has worked on major process redesign projects with Bank of America, Wells Fargo, Security Pacific, Prudential, and Citibank, among others. He is a member of ISPI and a Certified Performance Technologist. Paul is a widely respected keynote speaker and has developed and delivered workshops and seminars on a wide variety of topics to conferences and major corporations throughout the world. Paul lives in Las Vegas. Paul can be reached at [pharmon@bptrends.com](mailto:pharmon@bptrends.com)