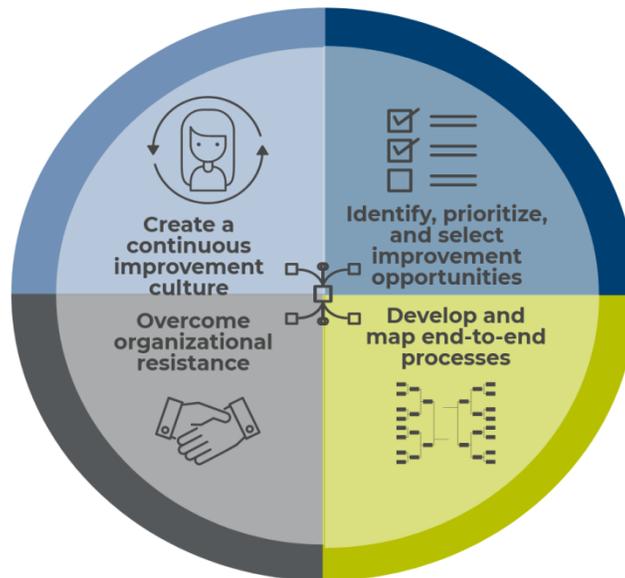


Pervasive Change and Digital Initiatives: Drive Process Challenges in 2019

Process management is a complex practice which extends beyond the identification and development of processes and into the intricacies of problem-solving, consultation, and shepherding employees through change. Hence every year we conduct [research](#) to take stock of the trends and challenges impacting the potential myriad of trends and topics impacting process professionals.

Top Four Process Management Challenges



Most of the process challenges are substantively the same as [2018](#): evergreen challenges around change, objective decisions, culture, and business silos.

Impactful Change

Process work, whether it's tied to broad organizational initiatives or discrete process improvements, requires people to change how they execute work. Hence, it's not

surprising that “overcoming organizational resistance” is a persistent challenge year after year.

To further complicate things organizations tend to either provide minimal change management support for improvement efforts or they take a “check-the-box” approach that emphasizes: milestones, new process or technology training, and one-way communication plans.

What organizations [continue to overlook](#) is that change is not a one-size-fits-all formula. Instead, it requires:

peer-led engagement—tapping into natural centers of influence to reinforce and engage,

time—when change is managed by milestones, organizations overlook that it takes time for people to learn new behaviors and internalize change, and

soft skills—most resistance is founded in emotions. Therefore, change agents and management should be equipped to address the psychological and emotional roadblocks to drive behavioral change.

Without including tactics and skills to shift behaviors, organizations will have a difficult time making sustainable change.

Organizational Culture

Process professionals continue to struggle with embedding continuous improvement and process thinking into their organization’s culture. As we know, effective and sustainable improvements require internalization of process and performance values, behaviors, and norms throughout the organization.

Organizations ought to keep in mind two things regarding cultural change:

1. It is a marathon, not a sprint.
2. Change management needs to be pervasive.

Business Siloes

Next to resistance, the biggest impediment in achieving effective continuous improvement is business siloes. Business silos focus on the individual, team, or functional objectives without understanding how this supports organizational objectives and what similar or related initiatives are running in parallel around the company. Furthermore, this directly impedes sustainable improvements, technology adoption, and global capabilities. Hence it’s exciting that for the last two years organizations—while still struggling with [challenges](#) around starting points, buy-in, and governance in particular—indicate they are working on end-to-end processes.

Objective Decision Making

Probably the least people-centric challenge is the persistent need to establish object means for identifying, prioritizing, and selecting improvement opportunities. Without a systematic approach, people struggle with conflicting or overlapping projects, executing projects for whoever has the “loudest” voice, or are unable to connect improvements with organizational value. There are several ways of systematically reviewing potential improvements. However, one of the most effective ways to [combine](#) cross-functional steering committees with structured criteria around value,

complexity, and risk, which increases objectivity, strategic alignment, and ensure they work on the “right” improvement opportunities.

What’s Old is New Again

It’s unsurprising that three-quarters of organizations report they are steadily proceeding along their digitalization journey. And of those engaged in digital initiatives, over 90 percent are tapping their process professionals for:

1. **Support services**—provide support services like process discovery, optimization, or re-engineering throughout the portfolio of projects.
2. **Leadership**—manage discrete projects within the digital transformation, such as process automation projects.

However, organizations have also come to realize that off-the-shelf solutions and investments in technology can wreak havoc or require tedious rework without a firm foundation in process, data, and analytics. Hence, all things data and measurement are once again coming to the forefront of process professionals’ priorities.

Firm Foundation of Measures

A theme throughout this year’s survey is the drive to get organizations’ data house in order. In addition to general investments in analytics and data management, organizations also struggle with identifying the right mix of measures. The decision around the right measures ultimately impacts the organization’s data management—what data to collect, its accessibility, and its cleanliness.

Dream of a Data-Driven Organization

Though data and analytics is nothing new, the survey respondents indicate they still have a long way to go. Namely, organizations continue to focus on establishing analytics capabilities, understanding how they will use advanced analytics, and embedding in [data-driven decision making](#) throughout the organization.

Conclusion

Overall, the needs of process professionals remain relatively constant. We continue to face pressure to hone our change management skills and integration of data and analytics in our work. Luckily it seems there is a realization that operational silos are fundamentally bad for business and we are experiencing buy-in for the development of end-to-end processes. The main differences in this year’s priorities seem to be around the pervasiveness of change—it’s the new normal—and the context of their work—supporting digital efforts.

About the Author.

Holly Lyke-Ho-Gland is a principal research lead at APQC, with over ten years of business research and consulting experience. Her focus has predominantly been on best practices in business processes, change management, corporate strategy, and R&D. She can be reached via email at hlykehogland@apqc.org and on Twitter at @hlykehogland.