

## Practical Process Roger Tregear

**BPM—myth or method?**

In talking to many people in many organizations in many places I am often told things about BPM and its various aliases that are, from my perspective, just plain wrong. These are process urban myths.

Sometimes these are excuses for not doing anything about process management and improvement. Sometimes they are caused by differences in understanding and confusion over terminology. Sometimes you just can't believe what you are hearing!

Let's call out some of these process myths and bust them.

**Myth: process is not about the customer!**

For this to be true, the definition of what business processes are all about would have to be very different to mine. Processes are important to management because they are the only way that value (i.e. products and services) can be delivered to customers and other stakeholders. Processes guardrail the customer journey.

Process analysis, management, and improvement starts with identifying the customer and understanding their expectations of the process.

Delivery of value to customers is the primary reason for the active management of processes. *Busted!*

**Myth: outside in, not inside-out!**

There is no need to debate whether an organization should take an outside-in or an inside-out view of its operations. It's not a binary choice. An organization needs to achieve its internal objectives and deliver a great customer journey.

Having an organization go bankrupt while delighting customers is not a good outcome for either the organization or the customers.

Obviously, both outside-in and inside-out views are needed. *Busted!*

**Myth: we already do process improvement**

Sure, every organization does process improvement—it's hard to avoid. Every organization is trying to make things work better. Too often though this is quite random. How do you decide which processes to improve? How do you prioritize?

The answer is process management, i.e. the active management of the performance of well-documented and understood business processes. See [Get the Circles Turning](#).

Both process management and process improvement are needed. *Busted!*

**Myth: forget about processes, we're automating!**

And what is it you are automating? Well, of course it's...um...processes. Well of course it is and that is obviously best done with deep understanding of the processes and the context in which they operate. Automating processes without deep understanding of them is irresponsible. Choosing to invest in automating a process without clear performance improvement objectives is careless.

Automating processes that are not well understood is not going to end well. Hope is not a strategy. *Busted!*

**Myth: we're too dynamic to define processes!**

Really? Everybody just makes it up as they go along, every time? When someone new starts you just wish them well and leave them to get on with whatever they think is best? There are no procedures, requirements, checklists, guidelines—or other synonyms for process?

Even the most creative and fluid operations create, accumulate, and deliver value via business processes. This is not optional. Sure, some processes are much more predictable than others, but no organization is the aggregation of random acts.

A genuinely dynamic organization needs better, not weaker, process understanding to survive and thrive. *Busted!*

**Myth: we want innovation, not improvement!**

Again, we don't have to choose, we need both innovation and improvement.

Innovation generally means big change; the new process is radically different to the one it replaced. Improvement delivers a changed process that is recognizably a modified version of the original.

Although the different degrees of change will require different approaches to analysis and implementation, the decision to change will always be based on the need to fix a performance anomaly or capitalize on an improvement opportunity.

Organizational change always involves process change and those processes, and the ecosystem in which they execute, must first be understood.

We need both continuous improvement and discontinuous innovation. *Busted!*

**Myth: too busy transforming, no time for processes!**

Many, perhaps most, organizations have some form of transformation program in play. Such complex change is a common feature of contemporary organizational life.

What is being transformed, what is being reimagined, what is being reshaped, is the way in which the organization creates, accumulates, and delivers value. That might sound familiar—it's the definition of what is done via the organization's business processes.

Whatever else is being transformed, it will certainly include business processes and those processes must be understood and actively managed. *Busted!*

**Myth: process is not strategic!**

Come on, let's get serious! Since cross-functional processes are the only way any organization can deliver value to customers and other stakeholders, it follows that they are also the way in which every organization executes its strategy.

Processes are operating at every level, from the most strategic to the most tactical. They are not just what happens on the shop floor, at the counter, or in the office. They are just as important in the Board Room and on the executive floor.

Business processes execute the strategy—it doesn't get any more strategic than that! *Busted!*

**Myth: our processes are too complicated to measure!**

Of course, there are big and complex processes. Of course, there are hard to understand. Of course, they are hard to measure. However, such size and complexity are the reason they must be managed and measured.

Is there any other important part of the organization where we just shrug our shoulders, step back, and hope everything will be OK?

If processes are too complicated to measure, they are also too complicated to manage, and you can't ever know if performance is improved. *Busted!*

**Busting myths**

If process-based management is to work effectively and be sustained within an organization, then all stakeholders must share a common understanding of what that means and does not mean. We need to bust the myths.

Nine myths are discussed above. Can you suggest any other BPM myths that need to be busted?

**Author**

As a Consulting Director with Leonardo Consulting, **Roger Tregear** delivers BPM courses and consulting assignments around the world. Based in Canberra (Australia) Roger spends his working life talking, consulting, thinking and writing about analysis, improvement and management of business processes. His work with clients is on short and long term assignments, in organizational improvement and problem solving based on BPM capability development, and business process, analysis, improvement, and management. He is available to help small and large organizations understand the potential, and realize the practical benefits, of process-centric thinking and management. Contact Roger at [r.tregear@leonardo.com.au](mailto:r.tregear@leonardo.com.au).