Harmon on BPM Paul Harmon

The BPTrends BPM Market Survey

BPTrends published our first BPM Market Survey back in 2006, and we have continued to undertake a major survey every other year. Our latest survey, the BPTrends 2016 BPM Market Survey was just published and is available FREE of charge at www.bptrends.com

Other organizations also survey the BPM market. Some do surveys and sell the results while others follow the precedent that BPTrends set and publish the results FREE of charge. The result is that it is now common for process practitioners to be asked to take three or four major surveys each year. There's nothing wrong with this, of course, and most organizations tend to focus on a particular segment of the BPM market.

One problem this creates is that that practitioners get tired of taking these surveys, and it becomes increasingly difficult to get them to participate in "yet another survey." BPTrends observed this effect in our 2016 survey when we were closer to 100 participants than the 400 participants we have had in the past. That was unfortunate since it meant we could not factor in the same way that we have factored it in the past. We try to consistently hold ourselves to a reasonably high standard when it comes to statistical generalizations, and that requires a minimum base of respondents. If we have 75 people from North America and 65 from Europe, then we feel reasonably safe in saying something like… "European process practitioners are more likely to do x than North Americans."   On the other hand, if we only have 50 people from North America and 35 from Europe, we are unwilling to make general statements about European practices on the basis of such a relatively small sample. So, having only a little over 100 respondents means that we made many fewer generalizations in our 2016 report.

In spite of that, we have enough respondents to make statements about the ongoing development of the BPM market, worldwide, as a whole. Most readers will recall that we have been asking the same questions each year. This may seem a bit boring if you've taken the survey 3 or 4 times, but it guarantees that we are in a good position to spot trends in the market. Or, as in the case of the 2016 survey, this case, to note that there hasn't been much development in the market as a whole.

We watched as interest in BPMS software tools rose from 2006 through 2008 and then leveled off. It wouldn't be fair to say that BPMS tools have been a failure since about 30% of the companies in the US use BPMS tools, but it wouldn't be fair to say they have been a huge success, either.

Process change within specific organizations largely depends on the attitudes of the organization's executives. Some executives "get" business process – like Jack Welch, who said the Six Sigma initiative at GE was the best thing he did while he was the CEO. Welch went so far as to make Six Sigma results a major factor in awarding bonuses to his executives. Other senior executives don't "get" the process approach, and process people in such organizations struggle to achieve even minor improvements.

More confusing, some organizations remain consistently pro-process, from one administration to the next, while other organizations go from being very enthusiastic about process to very enthusiastic about something else when they change their CEOs. Every executive agrees that you need to keep good financial records. Not every executive agrees that process work should be a major priority.

It doesn't help, of course, that process speaks with so many voices. For some, process improvement means automation, and the keepers of the process flame reside in IT. In other organizations, process means innovation, or Lean teams and the strongest process advocates are located in the business units of the organization. In still other organizations, it's human resources that drives improvement by constantly working to improve human or organizational performance.

As I suggested earlier, BPTrends has been publishing our surveys since 2006, and our 2016 survey is the sixth we have published. Over the course of the years, some things have changed. The interest in Six Sigma has waned, for example, and the interest in Lean has grown. Other things have stayed the same. The largest numbers of people participating in our survey always come from the financial industry, for example. It's been impressive to watch the growing interest on the part of organizations on continents beyond Europe and North America. In a more modest way, it has been personally interesting to watch as the BPTrends methodology becomes established and plays a small but growing part in training new people to use the tools of the trade.

At the end of the day, however, it's a bit discouraging to report that most really sophisticated process work is confined to about 20% of the organizations in the world, or to note that no matter how sophisticated some organizations become, a good number keep forgetting what they learned a few years ago and are seemingly starting from scratch each year.

The 2016 BPTrends Survey Report is available on at www.bptrends.com website, and can be downloaded FREE of charge. In addition to a comprehensive analysis and reporting of the data from our most recent survey, the 2016 survey provides comparisons of data from all 6 surveys We believe that the BPT 2016 BPM Market Survey provides the most comprehensive survey of the BPM market you will find, both in terms of the things it considers and the geographical spread of respondents.

We hope you find it useful, and we'd be happy to hear from you regarding ways we could improve it the future.

Author

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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 Enterprise Alignment, 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 Ebusiness 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 through out the world. Paul lives in San Francisco. Paul can be reached at pharmon@bptrends.com