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Speaking to the Board—*a FAB way to communicate with strategic and executive decision makers*

I've spent a lot of time talking to senior people in many different organizations about the *joys of process*. Some see the idea and the benefits immediately. Some will never get it. Others, the majority, are waiting to be convinced and that is only going to happen if we are talking the same language.

We need to speak the language of the C-suite.

As practicing process enthusiasts, we too often forget that our message needs to be translated effectively—and Google Translate is not going to help.

Making FAB Statements—the FAB Four

I'm late discovering the formal method of Features-Advantages-Benefits (FAB) Statements, and you may be way ahead of me, but I'm finding them a useful way to shape our process-based management messages.

FAB statement development also puts the challenge to the practitioner to justify enthusiasm with proven, valued, business benefits.

A FAB statement is a structured way of discovering and describing a *feature*, what that feature does (the *advantage*), and how that provides a *benefit*.

Features first. These are straightforward and easy to define as they are just the facts about the idea, service, or development. For example, "*Effective Office of BPM implemented and operational*".

Advantages are what the feature does or delivers. Just the factual consequences—we'll get to the benefits next. For example, staying with our Office of BPM example, "*Able to support all staff, provide expert advice and coaching, raise capability, and monitor standards compliance*."

Benefits say why the advantage has value. This is where we connect the factual statements with a solution to a business problem. For example, "*All staff are able to contribute to improved organizational performance*."

Then the *FAB statements* are used to create the set of marketing messages that will resonate with the target audience—the translation of practitioner enthusiasm into outcomes that are recognized and valued by senior decision makers.

This is done by first reversing the FAB order. State the benefit first and then explain how that is achieved (through the advantage and feature). In our Office BPM example one statement might be *“Optimum process performance improvement is discovered, delivered, and sustained through enhanced capabilities of people working in the process using standard techniques and transferable skills.”*

Process-based management in the language of the Board

FAB statements will often be particular to the organization in question as they will reflect specific strategic and operational circumstances. Some further general examples are presented below.

Features	Advantages	Benefits	Statements
Single comprehensive process architecture model available	Provides a single picture of all business processes and their inter-relationships	<p>Coordinated management of cross-functional processes</p> <p>Enhanced risk analysis</p> <p>Better quality decisions about which processes to analyze and improve</p>	<p>Coordinating management and improvement of cross-functional processes is made much easier using the single view of all processes that is provided by the process architecture.</p> <p>Enhanced risk analysis is possible when the interdependencies between the many processes can be seen and analyzed in the process ecosystem defined by the process architecture.</p>
Improved business process awareness for all staff	Every person understands what they add to the value delivered to stakeholders	<p>Enables genuine continuous improvement across the workforce</p> <p>Improved coordination with external entities</p> <p>Improved organizational performance</p>	<p>Practical and effective continuous process improvement across the workforce is possible when everyone has a shared understanding of the importance to value creation and delivery of end-to-end process operation.</p> <p>Improved organizational performance is delivered through improved cross-functional</p>

Features	Advantages	Benefits	Statements
			process performance and this is enabled and accelerated when all staff share an awareness of process operations.
Enhanced collaborative working culture	Removal of siloed thinking and working	<p>Improved performance of end-to-end processes</p> <p>People working together towards a shared performance goal</p>	<p>The management and improvement of end-to-end processes is improved when siloed working is replaced by teams collaborating in cross-functional improvement projects.</p> <p>A consequence of staff continually empowered and encouraged to work together analyzing, improving, and operating cross-functional processes is the development of an enhanced organizational culture of collaboration.</p>
Improved focus on high-impact processes	Effort is prioritized to areas where the most benefit can be gained	Process improvement outcomes are optimized and appreciated	Scarce resources are applied judiciously in an 'infinite' process space when the correct set of high-impact processes is prioritized for active, continuous management and improvement.
Effective process performance measurement	Process performance is measured and reported in quantitative objective terms.	Measured process performance using agreed measures and targets enables high-quality decisions about investing in process change.	Credible objective data about key process performance enable high-quality prioritization of the investments of time and other resources in the improvement of processes thereby optimizing organizational performance.

Speaking to the Board

When we use the FAB statement method executive decisions about adopting process-based management can be made in the context of their impact on the key

strategic and operational business issues, with clear understanding of the benefits available and the actions required to realize them.

[BTW that previous sentence is another example of a FAB statement!]