

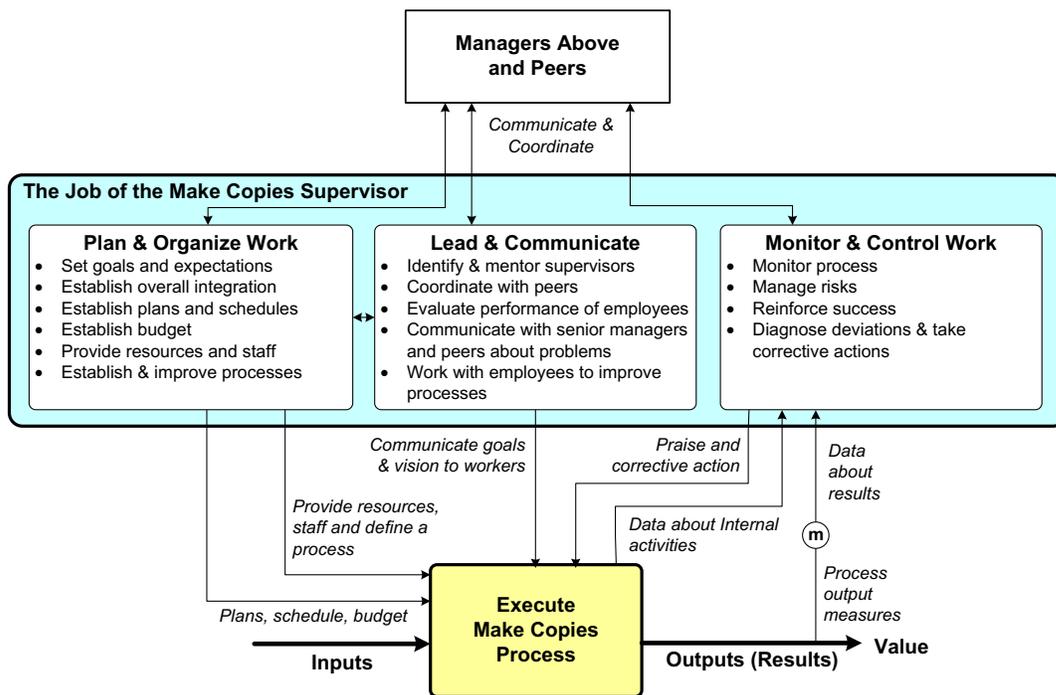
# Harmon on BPM: A Management Model

**By Paul Harmon**

In my last column I focused on describing the scope of management, and argued that it involved being able to perform a number of different tasks – which we could, just as well, say involved in mastering a number of “managerial processes.” We went on to suggest that it was useful to describe “levels” of management, and described executives, middle managers and supervisors as representative levels. In this month’s column, we want to describe a general management model that suggests some of the processes or tasks that comprise management work.

Figure 1 provides a model that I drew from an article on a company that makes photocopies. The specific focus of the figure is on a Make Copies process supervisor, but lets ignore that for the moment and consider this a generic model that could describe any manager managing any process. [1]

The business process, itself – specifically the defined procedure and the employees and equipment assigned to carry out the procedure – is pictured in the yellow box toward the bottom of the figure. The manager, his or her job, or the tasks or processes the manager needs to perform are pictured above in the blue box.



**Figure 1. An Overview of Managerial Processes that Make Up the Job of Make Copies Supervisor (highlighted in blue).**

We have divided managerial tasks or processes into three groups: Plan and Organize Work, Lead and Communicate, and Monitor and Control Work. Each of those tasks includes several sub-tasks, which are not listed in any particular order. Remember that it is in the nature of managerial work that tasks arrive on the manager's desk in an almost random order.

Above the manager's blue box, we picture another rectangle that represents the manager's boss, or it might represent his peers. Any given manager reports to someone. Even the CEO reports to a Board who, ultimately report to shareholders. Various tasks require that the manager provide information to his or her boss and acquire goals and feedback from the same. In a similar way, a manager must master tasks that involve working with upstream process managers to assure process inputs are correct and adequate and with downstream process managers to assure that they are satisfied with the outputs of the Make Copies process.

Broadly, the three sets of tasks that managers must master to assure process success include:

Managerial Task 1. Plan and Organize Work

- Managerial Subtask 1.1 Set goals and expectations
- Managerial Subtask 1.2 Establish overall integration
- Managerial Subtask 1.3 Establish plans and schedules
- Managerial Subtask 1.4 Establish a budget
- Managerial Subtask 1.5 Provide resources and staff
- Managerial Subtask 1.6 Establish and improve processes

Managerial Task 2. Lead and Communicate

- Managerial Subtask 2.1 Identify and mentor supervisors
- Managerial Subtask 2.2 Coordinate with peers
- Managerial Subtask 2.3 Evaluate performance of employees
- Managerial Subtask 2.4 Communicate with senior managers and peers about problems
- Managerial Subtask 2.5 Work with employees to improve processes

Managerial Task 3. Monitor and Control Work

- Managerial Subtask 3.1 Monitor processes (flows and quality of outputs)
- Managerial Subtask 3.2 Manage risks
- Managerial Subtask 3.3 Reinforce success
- Managerial Subtask 3.4 Diagnose deviations and take corrective actions

We'll return to these tasks often through this book and consider how to perform each task and how to improve the results. Ultimately one is a good manager because of a number of complex things, including personality, charisma, and luck, and we can't offer much advice about these more complex variables. But no one succeeds, no matter what personality, charisma and luck they bring to the job without also being a master of the tasks described here. Some may find people to delegate some of these tasks to, thus providing ways to assure the tasks are performed in better ways than they might perform them themselves, but ultimately, the manager must know that the tasks are important and assure that they are well done, even if they get someone else to do it.

As we suggested earlier, the same tasks are performed by managers at all levels in the organization, but they are performed with different emphases at different levels.

Executives are much more likely to relate to peers and “bosses” outside the organization. They work with consultants and shareholders and the board to define new business opportunities. They work with politicians to try to assure a good environment for the business. They work with other business executives to build partnerships or to undertake acquisitions. They work to maintain the stock price of the business and to raise needed capital. Their interests are in strategy and in the broad goals for the business. Their employee concerns are with the departmental or divisional officers who report to them and, ultimately with choosing a successor. The major tasks remain the same: to plan and organize, to communicate and lead and to monitor and provide corrective action – but their focus is broad and often involves external concerns and long term goals.

Middle-Managers, in effect are conduits between executive goals and plans and the people who manage the people who make it happen. Middle-Managers are very focused on communications, on monitoring and corrective actions. They worry about budgets and resources and on balancing competing needs.

Supervisors are focused on getting the work done. They hire and train, set goals and plan specific projects and oversee day-to-day work. They provide quality control, catch mistakes and ultimately decide who gets retained or promoted.

This book is organized around the tasks managers must perform, and on helping readers to organize and execute those tasks effectively. Some management books focus on one or another set of tasks. One management book might be concerned with budgeting and monitors the flow of funds in an organization. Another might be concerned with how peers coordinate to assure the smooth flow of work within an organization. This book will try to take a broader view, considering all the tasks that managers must organize and control, but with a focus on how thinking of work as a process, and how such a focus can help with the tasks each manager faces.

## NOTES

[1] None of these ideas on management is original, as I have already suggested. Peter Drucker is often cited as the originator of the idea that management is made up of tasks, but many others have said it, before Drucker, in other ways. An early version of the diagram that I offer in Figure 1 was used by Geary in his writings and in his 1995 book, *Improving Performance*.

## **[2] Management and Support Processes**

This footnote is not addressed to business managers, as such, but to readers who are business change practitioners and wonder how business management processes fit with more generic descriptions of business process flows.

Most BPMN diagrams show core processes: They picture a flow of activities that begin with a customer request and show what happens as the request is fulfilled. They do not picture management activities, nor do they picture support processes. We use other diagrams to show how support processes receive inputs and generate

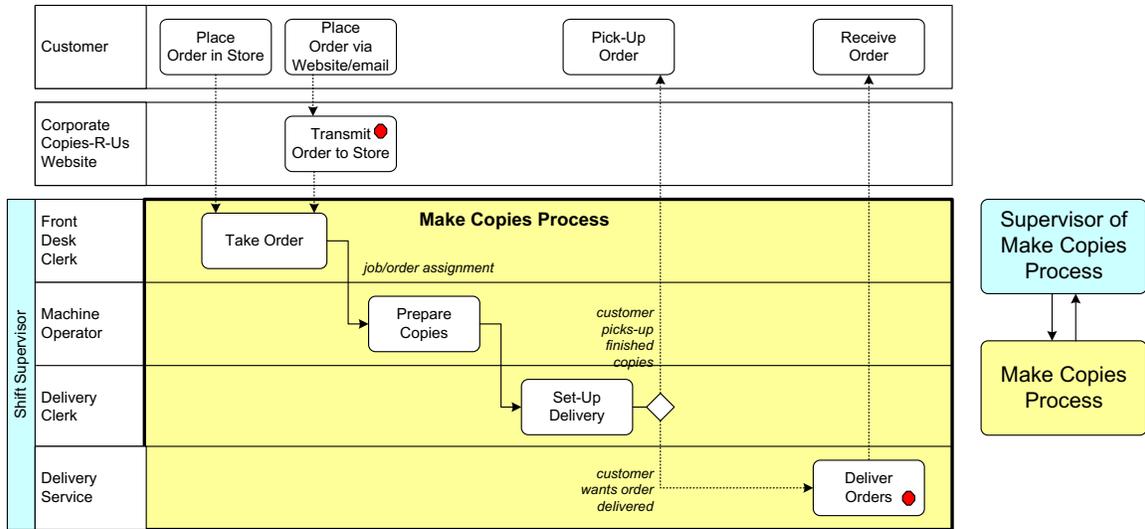
outputs for core processes. A common characteristic of support processes is that they receive inputs and generate outputs to all or nearly all core processes. Imagine a complex flow diagram. And imagine a single support process, Hire New Employees, which is located in the HR department. Now imagine how inputs would arrive at Hire New Employees from each core process and subprocess, requesting help in hiring a new employee, and imagine how outputs, documentation and ultimately a new employee, would be dispatched to the core process making the request. To show this spaghetti network of inputs and outputs between each and every core process and the Hire New Employee process would generate an impossibly complex BPMN diagram. Besides, it still wouldn't be accurate.

If you look at Figure 1 you can see some of the high level flows between the three major management processes (Plan and Organize, Lead and Communicate, Monitor and Control) and the core process Execute Make Copies. Now imagine that we expanded this diagram to include flows from the management subprocesses to the support subprocesses. For example, Provide Resources and Staff is a subprocess of the management process, Plan and Organize Work. If we were to focus on this relationship and define the exact sequence of events, we would include a request from a manager to a support process to Provide Resources and Staff for a new employee, approvals, and a request to the HR process Hire New Employees. There would be some back and forth between these two processes, and eventually a new employee would be hired, training would be arranged, pay and employee benefits arranged, and the actual employee would report to the actual manager of the Make Copies process to begin work. Thus, in a detailed process description, each of the flows between the management process and the core process, would, in fact, include numerous inputs and outputs from a large number of support processes. If we were asked to improve a support process, we might create a BPMN diagram showing the flow between a token manager and a support process. We might seek to expedite that interaction to save time, for example. For most process work, however, it's better to use other kinds of diagrams to picture these relationships, including a diagram like Figure 1.

### **[3] Management processes and BPMN**

As with Footnote 1, this footnote is not addressed to business managers, as such, but to readers who are business change practitioners and wonder how business management processes fit with more generic descriptions of business process flows.

Consider Figure 2 which provides a BPMN overview of the Make Copies Process. The swimlanes are highlighted in yellow area the core processes in the Make Copies process diagram. No management processes are shown. Experience suggests that even trying to show managerial processes on a BPMN diagram of core processes will lead to serious confusion. It's as if you were trying to introduce a third dimension onto an already complex diagram.



- What decisions depend on the Supervisor?
- What bottlenecks occur if the Supervisor isn't there?
- Are employees provided feedback and corrected when wrong?

**Figure 2. A BPMN Swimlane diagram of a core process.**

By using a swimlane diagram, however, you have provided for the description of the managerial roles involved in the Make Copies Process. They are, in effect, the labels of the swimlanes. (Some analysts label the swimlanes – on the left – with departmental names and others label them with managerial roles. When dealing with management problems, we prefer the latter.) Note that you can show more than one level of management. You can show who manages specific subprocesses, like Prepare Copies, and you can show that there is another manager – a shift supervisor -- to whom the four specific supervisors report. We have highlighted the shift supervisor in blue on the BPMN diagram.

To show the relationship between this diagram and the one shown in Figure 1, we represent a small version of Figure 1 on the right of Figure 2.

The tasks or processes associated with management are shown with a Figure 1 diagram but are not pictured on Figure 2. This is a major limitation of BPMN, since we estimate that at least half of all business process problems stem from failures of management processes rather than failures of specific functional processes. In other words, it's as likely that Set-Up Delivery will fail because the manager of the Set-Up Delivery process has not defined the task precisely as it is likely to fail because the employees assigned to Set-Up Delivery fail to do the specific work, correctly, when it should be done. Failure to monitor and provide feedback is another huge source of process inefficiencies.

These considerations may not occur if the process is automated and no direct supervision is involved, but they are serious considerations whenever supervisors are responsible for working with the employees who actually perform the work.