

## What Makes a Good Process

Anyone who consults on processes to enough organizations knows that a high proportion of Quality Management Systems contain processes fit only for the purpose of achieving ISO 9001 certification, rather than of improving the way people operate. The organizations concerned may receive benefits from being certified, but along the way lose sight of the purpose for which certification is intended. This is because ISO 9001 tells you only how to implement a process approach, not what makes a good process – i.e., how to define a process that is likely to make a positive impact on working behaviour.

So, here is my guide to process quality. Respecting a long tradition in consultancy, I've grouped them into 5 Cs.

1. **Correct**

A process should accurately reflect what people do, not what they might do in an imaginary world. If operations are not as people would like, create as-is and to-be process versions, making sure that both are realistic, and put change management activities in place.

2. **Consistent**

Your processes should join up with one another so as to make an integrated set of business practices. This means capturing events that are triggered, defining sub-processes that can be used by all their parents, and ensuring that all processes use the same terminology, data sources, and resources.

3. **Complete**

Creating a lengthy document to explain a process is unhelpful, since a printed laminate or online image of the process itself is a much more practical tool for the people who need to carry out the corresponding work. Documents are shelfware, and to avoid the need for them, mark up each process to contain all the information required to operate it. BPMN contains artefacts for this, including the general-purpose Annotation. If you can't fit it all on, your process is too big, and you need to move some of it into a sub-process.

4. **Communicative**

The only purpose of a process is to tell people how to do some of the work and/or configure automated systems to do the rest. In other words, a process is a tool for communication, which means its value is directly proportional to how easy it is to understand. Make your processes readable, usable, and friendly. Don't use small fonts, do use simple language, and take

time over the layout. If anyone can see at a glance what is being expressed, you have succeeded.

5. Regulations, standards, and policies are not just pointless red tape. Many represent tens or hundreds of man years effort, and aim not only to keep everyone safe but also to improve efficiency and effectiveness. You may disagree with this, but if your organisation has signed up to or is legally bound by something, then it's your duty to make your processes reflect and implement it. This means embedding all such constraints into your processes. Otherwise, you have failed and your organisation will pay the price.

6.

Make your processes Conform to the above - see what I did there? - and you might actually make a real difference to those around, above, and below you.

## Author

**Keith Harrison-Broninski** is a writer, researcher, consultant, and software designer. He wrote "Human Interactions: The Heart And Soul Of Business Process Management" (2005), described by reviewers as "the overarching framework for 21st century business technology" and "a must read for Process Professionals and Systems Analysts alike". Keith founded Role Modellers ([www.rolemodellers.com](http://www.rolemodellers.com)), a Gartner BPM Cool Vendor that provided the UK National Health Service with NHS GATHER, a cloud service for large-scale collaborative innovation in healthcare. Backed by the Royal Society of Arts, Role Modellers now provides local government with a cloud service, Town Digital Hub ([www.towndigitalhub.info](http://www.towndigitalhub.info)), that helps people make lifelong personal wellness plans.