

## Overcoming the Common Challenges of Implementing a Process Framework

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In the [last article](#) we discussed some of the implementation practices of organizations using a process framework; including some activities organizations are missing out on. However as we all know implementations never run as smoothly as we hope. Most people are not used to thinking in process terms. That is why adopting a process framework requires shifting how people think in order to overcome challenges in organizational alignment, governance, and implementation. To understand the common challenges associated with implementing a process framework, the survey asked respondents to indicate what challenges they faced during implementation (Figure 1).

### *Top Five Implementation Challenges*

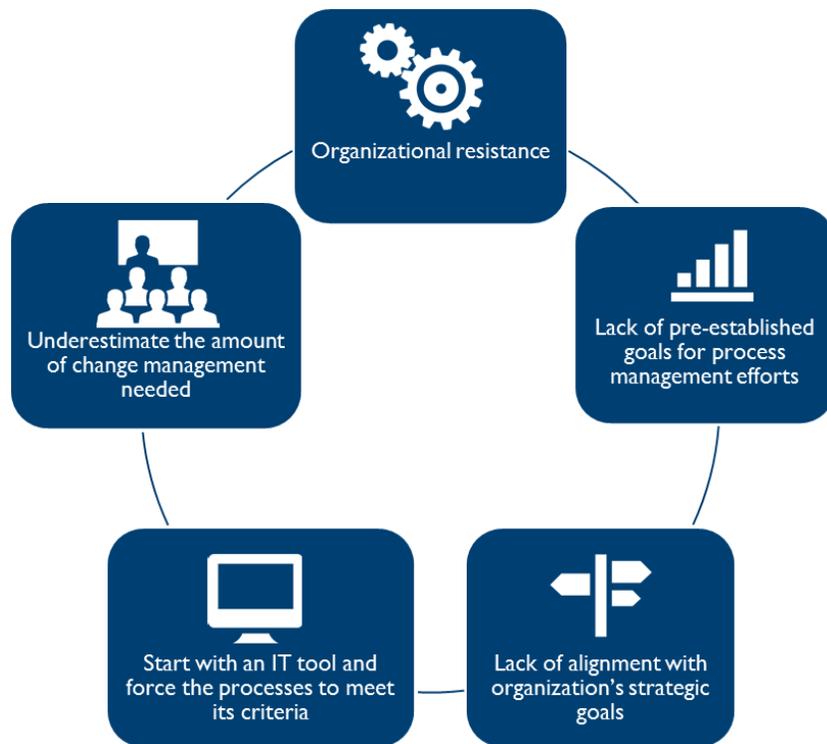


Figure 1

### **Organizational Resistance**

If there is no resistance there is probably no change. Change is hard and people will push back, avoid it, or ignore it. There are several reasons that changes within an

organization fail; from poor planning or resource allocation to taking on too many changes at once. However, the greatest challenge for business process management is making it part of the culture and getting employees passionate about it as well.

Despite these challenges, it is important to note that resistance is helpful; you have to acknowledge the fear or concerns that might be valid. Most organizations tend to push back and demand compliance. Instead take a step back and ask resisters why the new process won't work. Not only can this identify unforeseen roadblocks, engaging resistance helps communicate the value of the changes, and develop change champions to drive buy-in from the bottom up.

### **Lack of Pre-Established Goals**

Making the decision to adopt and implement a process framework is just the first step. Without clear goals for why the organization wants to implement a process framework, it risks facing organizational resistance, because it can't clearly communicate the value, and ineffectively assigning its resources, because there is no guiding principle for prioritization. Additionally, organizations that lack pre-established goals tend to dive directly into the tactical aspects of process improvement, such as process mapping. This is problematic because without goals or guidelines for tactical aspects, organizations risk wasting resources on unnecessary tasks like mapping all processes, regardless of their value.

### **Lack of Strategic Alignment**

Strategic alignment refers to how well an organization's objectives link to their process management. Strategy and process management activities should intertwine and inform each other. The focus of process management (e.g., purpose and priorities) should depend on current strategy and process management activities and measures should help decision makers track progress toward goals and determine where to make strategic changes. However, if the organization's strategic objectives do not align with process management, it will suffer from a lack of support by leadership and ultimately not have the necessary resources.

### **Start with IT Tools**

Technology is important—it ties all the processes together and provides a platform for standardization, measurement, and governance. Many organizations jump straight into developing new technology and features without understanding the needs of users or clearly developing their processes beforehand. The organization then has to force its processes to match the technology's criteria.

When the organizations lead process management efforts with technology they face many questions such as:

- How do you know the technology will meet your needs?
- How do you know you aren't over buying?
- Is it feasible to think implementing an IT solution will create the standardization?

To avoid these issues organizations need to develop guidelines for its technology and features and adopt a structure that allows it to scale and expand to meet an individual's need. Best-practice organizations accomplish process management by

recognizing that collaboration and individual thinking do the hard work of standardization, process mapping, and understanding how processes. Software applications make designing, mapping, and organizing processes (and the information related to them) simpler. However, only employees understand the emotional implications, exceptions, and realities of processes that can look very neat on paper.

### **Underestimate the Need for Change Management**

Overall, when organizations ignore the impact of change initiatives on people, roadblocks arise and intended results fall short of expectations. Many organizations conduct limited workforce engagement for process management. Limited engagement results in employees who do not understand, care about, or even agree with the process. Employee engagement creates buy-in with employees and overcomes organizational resistance.

### **The Domino Effect**

Though some of our analysis pinpoints factors that can reduce the likelihood of an organization facing implementation challenges, the most interesting relationships were between the challenges themselves. As indicated in Figure 2, organizations that report a lack of pre-established goals for their process management efforts are likely to face additional challenges such as lack of strategic alignment, insufficient communications, and starting with an IT tool. These second set of challenges result in several change management challenges like organizational resistance and underestimating the amount of change management needed.

### *Domino Effect of Implementation Challenges*

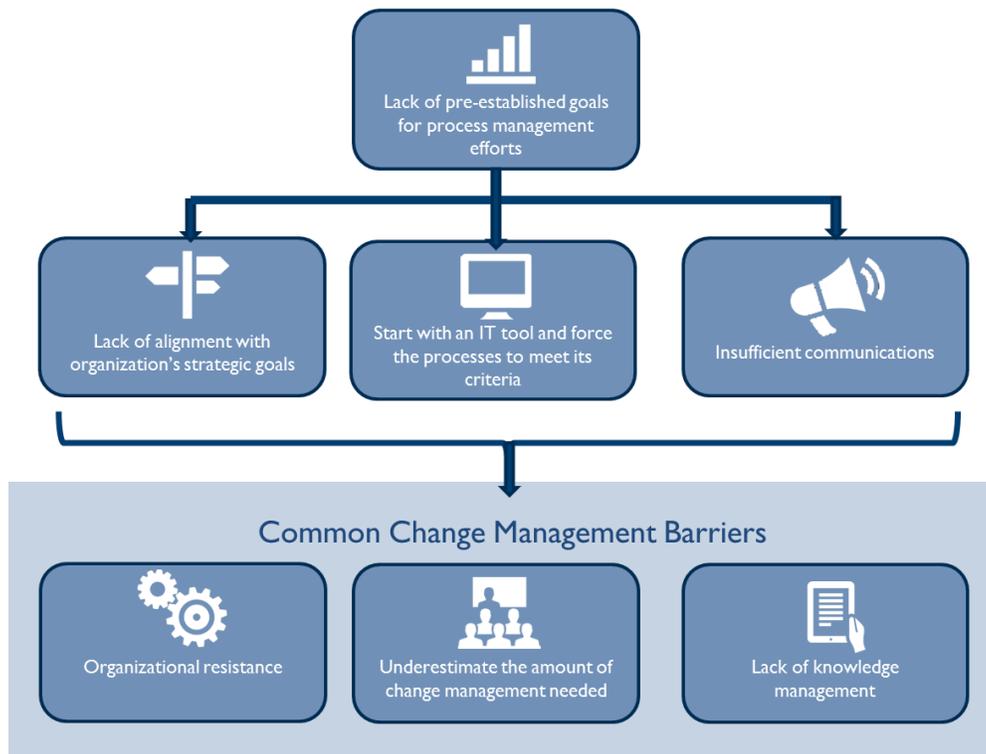


Figure 2

So what does this mean for organizations adopting and implementing a process framework?

What the first thing any organization should do when implementing a process framework is clearly outlined in the following:

1. **Why it's doing it and how does it support organizational goals?** For example, is the organization engaging in process management activities because it wants to improve business performance, reduce costs, or realign its current processes to be more customer-centric?
2. **What does the organization's processes, performance, and documentation currently look like?** Base lining its current process provides the organization with the ability to prioritize its efforts, understand what drives value, add context for its improvement efforts, and overcome organizational resistance.
3. **What would success look like?** Starting with the end state in mind helps the organization stay focused on the value of its process efforts. This also helps the organization combine phase-specific and enterprise-wide goals with bottom-up monitoring to track the implementation and resolve any issues through root-cause analysis.
4. **How will the organization's efforts impact its employees?** Understand who will be impacted by the changes, how it will change the way they conduct work, and what value it will add to their jobs.

By asking these questions the organization can establish clear, measurable goals that align directly with strategic enterprise-wide goals for its process efforts. This information, in turn, outlines the value of process efforts with executive management. This is necessary because process management needs executive-level support to succeed. Even if lower-level employees initiate the move to process management, implementation teams need an executive champion to help drive implementation throughout the organization. Without committed senior leadership, process management will not get the funding or resources needed to sustain it long term. Identifying the organization's current state and outlining the value of the efforts also provides the information necessary for effective communications and employee engagement. This is particularly useful in curtailing some of the change management challenges.

### **Author**

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