You Have Modeled a Better Process.....Now What?
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You spent a lot of time, energy and money to model a new process. Everyone is excited about the potential savings, efficiency, improved rigor, increased productivity, etc., but now it's time to implement and make sure the team adheres to the new process. This is where most process improvement projects struggle. All stakeholders participated in the process, they even agreed to a new RACI model, but often the reality of daily pressures and the avalanche of work causes people to fall back into old habits (and therefore old processes). How does a company make sure that the academic exercise of defining a new process becomes the new reality--not just for one month, or one quarter, but for the foreseeable future? This Article discusses four key activities that drive long-term process adherence:

1. Leadership Visibility
2. Staff Ownership
3. Details and Access
4. Metrics/KPIs

Many of the activities are easily achieved if your company invests time in formally implementing the new process. Often companies go from process creation to use, while skipping the critical implementation phase.

Leadership Visibility. It's nice to have a process engineer or project manager tell everyone that the new process is important, but it is more impactful to have senior leadership talking about the benefits of the process early and often. The talking points should include:

- "The new process aligns with the company vision or strategy." We all want to be a part of the bigger purpose and frequently, staff is inspired by the longer-term company strategy. Make sure that senior leadership is active and vocal in front of staff to show how the new process connects with the company strategy. Let's say a manufacturing company wants to expand sales to a new market and to do that successfully, it has to reduce costs. A powerful message is to show the impact of the new process on costs and ability to compete in a new market.
- "It makes life easier." Yes, new processes can require some initial investment from staff to change their routines, however new processes are mostly designed to make staff work more efficiently. Having a senior leadership team reinforce with staff how their workload can become more manageable can go a long way.
- "We know not everyone got everything they wanted." Corporations are not democracies. They would not be competitive in the global marketplace if they were. One painful part about process adherence is the reality that staff may not get all of their wishes from the beginning phases of the redesign. The senior leaders of the organization need to help people understand the

trade-offs and tough decisions that are often required to make a process that works.

A change management or process implementation lead can help senior leaders of the organization implement the above messages through a detailed communications strategy (who to talk with, when to have those discussions and what to say).

Staff Ownership. The best way to drive adherence is to have those staff members who are engaged in the process become advocates for it. This is a tricky exercise as it is important to have a small, focused team, yet they have to properly represent the key functional areas involved.
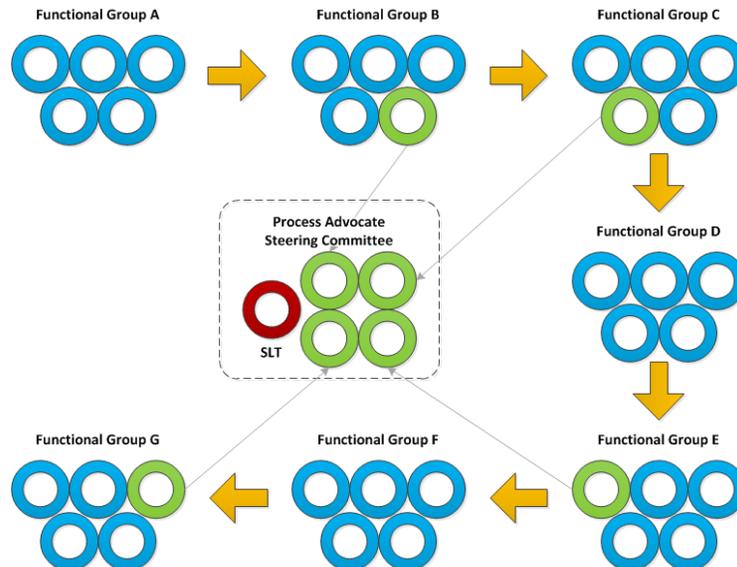

Figure 1: Process Advocates Drive Process Success by Engaging with the senior leadership team and Representing Key Functional Areas

Make sure you select people who are excited about the change, knowledgeable and vocal among staff. If these individuals are well respected among their peers, all of a sudden your new process has advocates at the project management, senior leadership and staff level. Your selected staff members will create instant credibility to the process because they are involved in the day-to-day activities as well. Their charter is to be knowledgeable about the process, to focus on continuous improvement and to hold their peers accountable to adherence. Lastly, any future changes to the process often impact a cross-functional group, so this advocate group can act as representatives of their functional areas to ensure changes do not have unintended consequences.

Details and Access. The devil is in the details. Often new processes are mapped to the detailed level, but those detailed process flows can be daunting and overwhelming for many. Many process steps, many arrows, many decisions and many owners. After developing process maps, an effective way of memorializing the process is to capture details for each key sub-process area, specifically:
- Inputs (to that process's steps)
- Outputs
- Key Meetings (with discussion points, outcomes and owners) and Decision Points (with decision required and owner)

- Attributes (specifically what data should be captured, in what system and who is responsible for capturing the information)
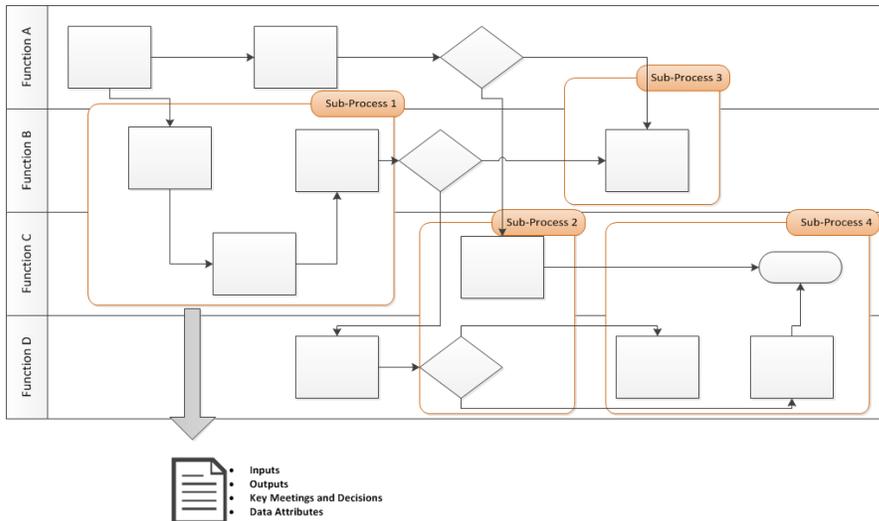

Figure 2: Develop Detail Documents for Each Sub-Process

Now that you have all of this critical information (communication strategy, detailed sub-process manuals and overall process maps) staff needs access to that information. Make sure you set up the appropriate repositories such that staff--current and future--can easily access this information for refreshers, updates and training on the process. A document repository site or shared drive can be an effective tool for managing these documents. However, for key leadership and the process advocates, a printed document binder allows for easy reference in discussions or meetings.

Metrics/KPIs. Nothing is more powerful than reports that present the health of the process. These Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) can give insights into process adherence and can serve as motivation for the staff to continue improving. Develop a series of KPIs, in partnership with your process advocates, that show how well the process is being followed by tying back to the benefits of the new process as well as the basics like time and quality. Let's say the new process had the following key benefits, here are some examples of potential KPIs:

New Process Benefit	Possible KPI
Different design approach that leads to less prototype cycles	Average # of prototype cycles for product set
Two manufacturing steps done in parallel	Average design to "ready to sell" production time
Enhanced model of quality testing added earlier in the process	Product defect rate during production

Table 1: KPI examples

Then, the hard work really begins:
1. Ensure systems capture the needed data (e.g. capturing all prototype cycles for each product).
2. Develop targets for each KPI.

3. Create an automated dashboard report that captures all of the key KPIs.

Automation of the KPIs is critical to ensure data flows to senior leaderships accurately and consistently. Often, the targets will evolve over time as the new process is put into practice and real results come in, but having targets at the outset is a critical component of adherence.

Following these steps takes additional time and effort, but it will allow the company to benefit from the new process for the long haul. The investment in process improvement must come with an investment in change management, continuous improvement and automated metrics because the cost of a future process reengineering exercise far outweighs the investment in process implementation and adherence.

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About the Author

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