Using Frameworks for Process Analysis

Earlier this year we discussed in *Process Measures Equal Better Improvements* most organizations are only scratching the surface in how they apply process frameworks. Most organizations most respondents are using the frameworks for their primary purpose: as a reference model that they can use to understand their processes and clarify communications between disparate groups. This includes using process frameworks for process analysis.

Process analysis involves gathering a set of requirements and needs to guide process design, improvement, and measurement. Organizations can use process analysis to either:

- design a new process, or
- improve an existing process.

A thorough process analysis helps the organization understand the underlying needs and potential issues with a process. For example, when looking to improve a process, the root cause of the performance may relate to issues around communications, access to resources, or even poor knowledge flow.

**Types of Analysis**

Organizations use several types of process analysis techniques to develop or improve their processes. Most organizations use multiple types of analysis to create a holistic understanding of their processes, but the type of analysis will be determined by the purpose of your efforts:

1. **Requirements and needs**—understanding the business and technical drivers of the process. End goal is to discern what aspects the process needs to include—must haves, satisfiers, and delighters—to improve or build a process for end-user satisfaction.

2. **Workflow and timing**—evaluating the flow of work and what affects the speed of the process. End goal is to understand what drives the time spent in the process and pinpoint potential ways to reduce time and improve or build a process for cycle time efficiency.

3. **Risk and reliability**—understanding what can go wrong and how to address potential risks or roadblocks. End goal is to improve or design a process that proactively helps mitigate potential risks.

4. **Value and waste**—evaluating the efficiency of the process and the value its components provide. End goal is to improve or build a process for effectiveness and customer value.
5. **Resources and costs**—evaluating the necessary resources with cost effectiveness. Improve or build a process with cost effectiveness in mind.

6. **Role and responsibility**—understanding the roles and responsibilities within the process and ensure that all players are aware of how they work together to achieve the outcomes from the process. End goal is to improve or build governance and accountability into the process.

7. **Input and output**—outlining the outcome and the necessary inputs of the process. End goal is to connect processes to help reduce silos and keep focus on end-user needs.

8. **Knowledge flow**—understanding the information needs and an explicit picture of who has the knowledge, where it is located, who owns and validates it, and why it is important. End goal is to build information into the flow of work, ensuring people have access to the information and tools they need to accomplish their processes.

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**The Analysis Process**

At its highest-level process analysis is comprised of five basic steps, though the details will differ based on the type of analysis the organization decides to use (Figure 1).

**Process Analysis Process**

![Process Analysis Process Diagram](image)

**Figure 1**

**Step 1. Determine Process Scope**

Organizations first need to determine the boundaries of the process or processes that will undergo the analysis. Without a pre-defined scope, the project could potentially drill down too deep or range into processes that are not relevant, and the team can get mired in low-value work. In this step, a frameworks structure provides a starting point for process scope decisions or even serves as the foundation for the processes to include in the analysis.

**Step 2. Collect Information**

The method and type of information collected will be determined by the type(s) of analysis the organization chooses to conduct. However, there are four general methods of information collection:

1. **Survey**—best fit for assessing the processes for comparative analysis—among regions and business lines—and objective decision making on prioritization and next steps.
2. **Interviews**—best fit for projects that require in-depth information and engage employees in the process by asking for their opinions and advice.

3. **Workshop**—best fit for projects that have a narrow scope (e.g., specific process category or end-to-end process) and require high-levels of employee engagement or goal is to standardize processes among multiple groups or regions.

4. **Pre-existing documentation**—best fit for organizations that already have existing processes documented and support materials.

Most organizations use a combination of all four methods to ensure they get a holistic picture of the process and combine quantitative and qualitative information to identify trends and engagement to elicit in-depth information and buy-in. In this step the framework can be used as a reference guide for interviews and workshops or as the structure for a survey.

**Step 3. Identify Pain Points**

Whether the goal is to design new-to-the-organization processes or improve existing processes, organizations need to understand the common pain points of employees and customers. Organizations can use several different approaches to analyze and report on the collected information including scorecards, heat maps, themes and lists, and survey summaries. Frameworks can serve as the taxonomy for the analysis and reporting mechanisms to ensure the information is conveyed in concepts and terms that everyone involved understands.

**Step 4. Validate and Prioritize**

To set development and improvement priorities, organizations need to summarize or categorize the top pain points that emerge from the analysis and then validate the categorization. Once the pain points have been categorized and validated, the next step is to assess them comparatively prioritize them based on a set of criteria (potential value or impact and necessary resources) and open discussion. At this stage organizations can use a framework as the categories for the categorization.

**Step 5. Conduct Root Cause Analysis**

Finally the team will perform root cause analysis to determine the origin or reason behind the pain point. Root cause analysis can help organizations understand the problem and create stakeholder buy-in, though it is sometimes overlooked in the last step in process analysis. It also creates an open dialogue about the process and drills into the end-users’ experience and perspective.

**Summarizing the Role of Process Frameworks**

Process frameworks can be used to provide structure for the organization’s process analysis efforts, regardless of which type of analysis the organization conducts. Organizations can either use the framework as a reference guide (to determine which processes are in or out of scope and understand the steps and tasks associated in the process) or collate the information gathered for the assessment. For example, the framework elements can be used as the rows in a heat map, scorecard, or risk analysis matrix. Ultimately, the framework provides the most common process elements, and organizations can use the framework to save time and include process elements they may not already have in their pre-existing documentation.
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