

Key Decisions for the Next Step

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This article suggests a few decisions to be made as you embark on designing a business process from a leadership perspective.

Goal Driven or Task Level Business Process

When capturing and defining your business process, these terms refer to either starting at the top with the high-level goals and strategies, or at the bottom with task level activities people perform everyday.

The Goal Driven approach, attempts to define processes in line with the authority of clearly defined business needs, going deeper into details first where the need is greatest.

The Task Level method systematically captures existing tasks, organizing them into the big picture by inferring one's way to a broader view.

Goal Driven:

Pros:

- The validity of a process can be verified in the light of higher goals.
- Dispels ad hoc concepts built on limited personal experience and perspective.
- Less likely to institutionalize work of little value.

Cons:

- You might miss less obvious supporting processes.
- Executives tend to stop the work before enough details are captured to support collaboration.

Task Level:

Pros:

- Very thorough if taken to completion.
- A useful validation on the Goal Driven approach.
- Good to address highly technical or dangerous processes early.

Cons:

- Favors endless projects and unimplemented documentation.
- Easy to become technology driven and lack customer focus.
- Details captured with a vague connection to vision, goals, and strategy.

Finding a Business Process Consultant to Fit Your Needs

Consulting companies offer solutions that may lead you in a certain direction. Try to determine how their business model will affect yours.

Some common approaches:

Business Process Software Tools: the process resides in and is enforced by the tool. Expect training and expert services to be needed to get the application up and running. Most obstacles involve knowing what processes you want the tool to enforce. Setup without a defined business process is costly and can bring productivity to a standstill. Consider applications with a business process layer that can be changed without reprogramming the actual application.

Adding Resources: a Contracting Service company can quickly provide you with the expert resources you need. These consultants usually have a long-term and expanding relationship. They can provide a consistent skill set much like having an Accounting department.

Change Agents: Some consultants give their knowledge then go away. They provide the training, leadership, and facilitate the change. When the project is complete, they leave. These projects can range from intense, all encompassing change taking two to five weeks, to more gradual change lasting about a year.

Industry and Process Experts

There are consultants who can help implement business process in your organization and those who are expert in what you do. Usually very different skill sets. Industry experts can provide cutting edge input to your business process when your current process is defined. Otherwise you're paying for detective work rather than addressing root problems.

Business process experts focus on collaboration and your organization's ability to innovate and handle change.

Resident Experts or an Empowered Team

A key choice with business process consultants is between having an expert on your team or one that will develop process as a team sport. One you want continually available like legal council or your accountant, the other a temporary coach on a team building mission. The team building method isn't for every organization, but most highly successful business process projects report their most significant improvement was establishing self-organizing teams. Avoid ad hoc changes by rewarding team players over "heroes".