

The Business Case to Redefine Workflow Through Strategic Process Management

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The Strategic Process Management Series

1 Introduction

Organizations are traditionally structured in a top-down manner, often around the perceived strength of management team members, where stronger players are given the greatest responsibilities. In this structure leaders formulate strategies implemented by allocating resources and directing managers along departmental lines, down through business functions and job responsibilities. Jobs are bound in this command-and-control structure by *vertical*, *hierarchical* reporting relationships with increasingly smaller increments of responsibility. The more natural, *horizontal* flow of work is often missing in this management scheme. As a result, business problems are narrowly defined, often incorrectly, as something within a manager's immediate control. Improvement is absent, restrained, or short lived; workflow performance is substantially sub-optimized.

The key to developing a sustainable competitive advantage is to design the organization to deliver superior workflow execution. Enterprise work must be defined through a systematic business process architecture that closes gaps, eliminates silos, and resolves barriers to aligning the workflow into a logical and manageable structure. Strategic Process Management leverages aligned business processes to create business systems that deliver powerful value propositions in execution of strategic objectives.



2 The Problem with Workflows Today

At BEM, we use the term Red Cloud to describe a problem or opportunity that hinders workflow performance. From our 30 years of work with clients, BEM has collected thousands of Red Clouds that detail the most pressing problems, frustrations, and opportunities in organizations. These performance issues span a wide variety of industries, company sizes, and types.

Our data shows that, on average, about 70% of all Red Clouds directly relate to broken business processes. The most common symptoms of broken processes are summarized below.

- Workflow Not Intentionally Defined: Because business processes develop out of a need to solve a particular problem, and then evolve toward a state of acceptance, most organizational processes grow organically. Processes that grow into existence without intentional design meander across organizations following the development of "good ideas" that add additional tasks and work-around activities. We typically find up to 80% wasted work in processes that are not intentionally defined and deployed. Organizations often respond to these deficiencies by hiring superheroes to attempt to overcome the many obstacles to successful process execution.
- Misaligned Organization Structure: Most organizations manage vertically, where the organization chart lays out a hierarchical structure of responsibilities and accountabilities. Without developed business processes in place, problems hide in organization boundaries, between functions, departments, locations, and workgroups and where they overlap. This situation makes it difficult to know what the actual problem is, where it lies, who is responsible, and who has authority to solve it.
- Missing Customer-Supplier Relationships: Every process serves a customer. Organizations
 rarely know their internal process customers, what those customers need to succeed, and
 to what extent their internal processes are serving those customers well. Conversely, every
 process is served by a supplier. In general, organizations do not know the suppliers of their
 internal processes, what their processes need from those suppliers to succeed, and how to
 effectively measure those suppliers' performance.

- Unclear Deliverables: Every organization contains a collection of key outputs (deliverables) that drive the Enterprise mission. Most organizations have not adequately identified these critical deliverables and do not understand the role they play in value proposition delivery.
- Unmeasured Performance: Most companies measure what is easy rather than what is valuable. Good workflow measurement captures effectiveness (the extent to which customer is satisfied), efficiency (the extent to which resources are wasted), and responsibility (the extent to which operations are ethical and compliant).
- Poorly Managed Data: Poor quality data is frequently pushed along the Enterprise
 workflow rather than fixed or prevented at the front end. This can cause serious damage to
 workflow performance, including workarounds created because "we don't trust the data."
- Accountability Missing: Missing control of workflow leads to a misdiagnosis of problems, finger pointing across departments, and a general lack of accountability among staff. To be held accountable, employees must:
 - Know precisely what job they are performing
 - Have capacity to do the job
 - Understand and agree with the standards for acceptable work
 - Be granted all necessary authority to complete the work
 - Have mutual understanding with their leader of how accountability is demonstrated
 - Understand how performance will be monitored and communicated

These common process deficiencies cost organizations time, money, and resources. Strong and intentional business processes define intentional workflows, link to larger business systems, enable organization alignment, and identify the causes and location of workflow breakdowns.

3 The Five Levels of Work in Every Organization

Over many years of working with clients BEM has developed a standard structure for defining work in any Enterprise. We find this structure can describe any environment and provide a good paradigm for rethinking how the organization fulfills its mission and purpose. A brief definition of each of the five standard levels of work follows.

LEVEL ONE – ENTERPRISE

Contains all the business systems necessary to deliver the Enterprise purpose relative to customer management, value proposition delivery, resource management, and executive oversight.

LEVEL TWO – BUSINESS SYSTEMS

Comprised of contiguous and interconnected business processes providing a value proposition that accomplishes the broader business system purpose. Business systems are frequently identified by their department or functional descriptors, such as Procurement or Finance. We have found that twelve standard business systems can be used to organize workflow in any Enterprise, regardless of size, shape, or industry. The breadth and depth of each business system may vary by situation complexity, but the fundamental construct remains the same.

LEVEL THREE – BUSINESS PROCESSES

Take inputs from suppliers and transform them, through a series of tasks and decisions, to provide changed or improved outputs to process customers. Contiguous business processes connect to deliver the larger business system purpose. Our experience shows business systems typically contain, on average, between eight and sixteen business processes. This means most organizations contain roughly 100-125 business processes in total.

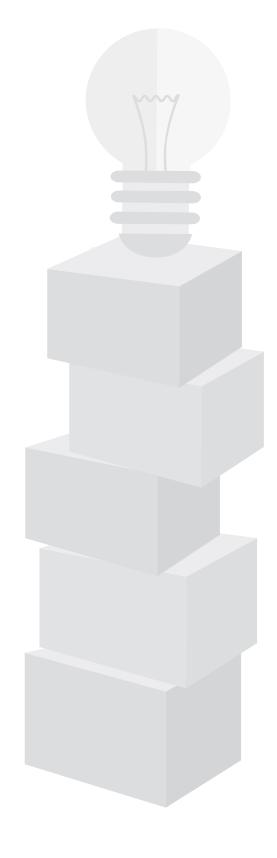
LEVEL FOUR – TASKS & DECISIONS

Represent the series of tasks (work, actions, meetings) and decisions (yes/no, go/no-go) that combine to transform a supplied input into a different output which a customer values. We find most processes contain about 25 to 50 tasks.

LEVEL FIVE – KNOWLEDGE

The intellectual property of the Enterprise and includes a wide variety of information such as records, data, policies, standards, training, metrics, regulations, certifications, bills of materials, specifications, trademarks, and patents. Enterprise knowledge can be accessed, utilized, produced, altered, and moved by business processes as they are executed.

Organizations create value through the work they perform, with a primary goal of excelling at that work. Work execution flows horizontally across organizational boundaries from department to department, function to function, and job to job. These workflows connect through the five levels of business process architecture. Employees use knowledge when executing tasks that combine to create processes. Processes link into business systems which connect to build the overall Enterprise workflow. A workflow-based management structure seamlessly facilitates the movement of work through this structure, removing the barriers to successful performance.



4 The SPM Business Process Model

A business process receives at least one input from a supplier, performs a series of tasks to use that input to produce a different output, and provides that output to a customer. It is generally defined by the standard industry acronym SIPOC:



Supplier (S): The supplier provides the input to the process that is to be used by the process.



Input (I): The input is the physical or intellectual product, service or information provided to the process by the supplier for the process to use, consume or improve.



Purpose (P): The purpose of a process is to transform its input(s) through a series of tasks into an output of value to its customer, which the process then delivers to that customer. A process exists to fulfill its value proposition to its customer.



Output (O): An output is produced by a process and delivered to its customer. Processes may provide multiple outputs to one or more customers. A **deliverable** is the key process output that fulfills the process purpose and the primary mission of the business system in which it resides.



Customer (C): The customer of a process is the entity that uses the product or service provided by the process.

Defining a process starts with identifying the SIPOC, including tasks & decisions that define how the process is executed and all the knowledge components required to support that execution. Additional characteristics inform a process's design and operating state, they include:

RESPONSIBILITIES:

The better-defined employee responsibilities are, the more likely the process will be successfully operated. A well-defined process standardizes when and how employees engage with that process during execution.

INFORMATION:

Information is the knowledge required to support task execution, including standards, work instructions, procedures, specifications, and checklists.

RESOURCES:

A process utilizes Enterprise resources to execute its purpose. Enterprise resources include people, equipment, space, technology, and data. Accurate understanding of process resource requirements is key to execution success.

FEEDBACK:

A process needs a feedback mechanism to receive and provide both positive and negative feedback to and from its suppliers and customers.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS:

Process performance measurements must capture key process performance indicators including effectiveness, efficiency, compliance, and responsibility in delivering on process purpose.

OPPORTUNITIES:

A portfolio of opportunities to improve business system processes should be identified, managed, and actively pursued. Performance shortfalls are a target rich source of improvement opportunities for an organization operating within a process-based structure.

A well-defined business process should answer these key questions about the work:

- Why does the process exist?
- How does the process begin and end? Where are the process boundaries?
- What tasks are performed? What are the tasks' sequences and their relationship to each other?
- What decisions must be made during process execution? What criteria is used to make these decisions?
- What information is needed to operate the process and how is it accessed by process users? Are templates, checklists, work instructions, etc., correctly identified? Including where they are stored?
- How does the process connect to other processes in the larger business system and Enterprise?
- What are the important timeframes in which a task or a decision happens?
 Do events trigger activities? What are these timeframes; how long are the durations?
- What physical locations are important to process operation? What occurs in those locations?
- Who participates in the process and in what way?
- What does the customer want from this process?
- What does the process need from its supplier?
- Who is the process expert (owner) responsible for its performance and improvement?
- What tools, including software, hardware.
 and equipment, are used to execute the process?



5 The SPM Business System Model

A Business System is a group of interdependent business processes that fulfill a common functional Enterprise purpose. These functional areas should be managed in almost every Enterprise: Governance, Finance, Facilities, Equipment, Employees, Information, Customers, Solutions, Suppliers, Operations, Customer Support, and Improvement. The work of each functional group is accomplished by the business processes found within that group's workflow. Usually between 10 and 20 processes make up a business system, and they collectively deliver the system's value proposition by producing the key deliverables that satisfy business system customers.

The Twelve Enterprise Business Systems

- The **Enterprise Management System** oversees Enterprise governance, strategic planning, mergers and acquisitions, scorecard, communications, and organization performance.
- The **Financial Management System** manages and monitors the flow of capital and financial assets through the Enterprise, including financial management, accounting, asset management, and financial statements.
- The **Facilities Management System** identifies, acquires, develops, constructs, maintains, and disposes of facilities while safeguarding employees and the surrounding community to provide a suitable working environment.
- The **Equipment Management System** specifies, installs, calibrates, maintains, and disposes of fleet and operating equipment utilized to deliver the firm's value proposition. The equipment and fleet lifecycles are managed to safeguard employees, as well.

- The **Employee Management System** manages the employee lifecycle to plan for, hire, qualify, train, develop, compensate, manage, and terminate employees, and includes employee benefits management.
- The **Information Management System** manages the information infrastructure, operations, and data that supports the business requirements. It ensures essential information is secure, current, and readily available and accessible when, where, and how needed. Managing the information infrastructure's lifecycle includes planning, development, operations, and end-of-life transitioning.
- The **Customer Management System** seeks, finds, acquires, onboards, and manages customer relationships. This system includes the Marketing responsible for attracting qualified prospects and the Sales activities that convert prospects into retained customers that generate sales orders.
- The **Solutions Management System** manages the products and services that are the Enterprise's solutions delivered through its value proposition. The system includes conceiving, planning, developing, testing, and delivering market-ready new products and services for production or for sale. It also manages solutions performance through product and services end-of-life.
- The **Supplier Management System** manages the supplier relationships that provide materials and services to the Enterprise. This system covers procurement from sourcing, qualification, contracts, onboarding, purchase orders, development, and management through disqualification. This system also manages the supplier relationship, including supplier scorecards and standard, consistent performance feedback.

- 10
- The **Operations Management System** executes the Enterprise value proposition by managing production and delivery of products and services to Enterprise customers, which includes production, logistics, and materials management.
- 11
- The **Service Management System** provides support, both pre- and post-production, to external customers through activities such as call center, installation, maintenance & service management, customer follow-up, and complaint handling & resolution.
- **12**
- The **Improvement Management System** organizes, manages, and sustains Enterprise performance improvement including products, services, methods, processes, customer feedback, opportunity portfolio, and corrective action. Enterprise improvement includes the processes that manage compliance with third party requirements and those that ensure ethical and safe operations throughout the Enterprise.

By defining management's responsibility through the work that must be accomplished instead of by hierarchical reporting relationships typically found on organization charts - the Enterprise is in a far stronger position to improve performance and better meet customer expectations. While improving any task is generally good for the Enterprise, improving a business process yields more benefit through deliverable performance, and improving an overall business system provides even greater value to the Enterprise. Improvements in one process or system will ripple to impact suppliers and customers, flowing through the SPM business system model structure. This new improvement paradigm can only be achieved by first redefining the organization according to its workflow, key deliverables, and knowledge requirements, and then addressing improvement opportunities that provide a superior value proposition and customer experience.

6 The SPM Organization Model

Best practice workflow performance is enabled through clear accountability established at the business system and process level so that work can be actively managed and improved. The Enterprise should organize team and ownership responsibility around the work and according to process structure. In the SPM organization model, responsibility for tasks and processes lies as close to the work as possible and focuses on capability over seniority or hierarchy. This structure would include the following positions.

- The **Enterprise Owner** is the leader of the business, usually the business owner or a member of the C-Suite and is integral to achieving leadership goals and objectives. Responsible for driving business priorities throughout the organization, the successful SPM Enterprise Owner will maintain open and direct communication and consistently perform periodic reviews. They maintain an environment that fosters continuous improvement within strategically aligned systems. "This is how we are going to run our business," is the mantra asserted by the Enterprise Owner who successfully supports the changes required to adopt SPM.
- A **System Owner** is typically a member of the executive or management team and will have organizational responsibilities for workflow improvement. The System Owner engages from the beginning of the process mapping to drive successful development, deployment, and continuous improvement in their system. They do this by ensuring the success of the Process Owners in their system who define, analyze, deploy, and continuously improve their processes. System Owners work collaboratively with their Process Owners to establish key process and system goals and metrics, align those goals to Enterprise strategy, conduct periodic reviews of improvement plans, and manage their system opportunity portfolio.
- Each **Process Owner** is responsible for the development, maintenance, and enhancement of their assigned process within the Business System. The Process Owner should clearly understand and be closely involved with their assigned process. A supervisor is not required for this role; people skills and leadership characteristics are more important than a job title. Process Owners are the Enterprise experts in their process. They also have vital periodic responsibilities to present the current state of improvement and opportunities to leadership and to represent their co-workers during internal and third-party assessments.

• Task Owners are the process execution experts; they are responsible for the successful execution of their tasks within the process sequence. They will have a specific task, standard, or workmanship expertise and the ability to ensure key knowledge integration. Task Owners are identified directly on the process map at each task they own. Tactically, they have a willingness to identify and share opportunities with others. With current and readily available information, successful Task Owners will have proven to work cooperatively with all team members. Some employees will also have education, experience, or qualification within a specialized area that makes them a Subject Matter Expert.

Streamline the Organization Chart

With SPM, once roles and responsibilities are properly defined within processes, employees are held accountable for their job outcomes, their engagement level, and their participation in improvement efforts throughout the year. Trained, capable, and empowered employees can be held accountable for process performance without damage to morale. In fact, many businesses have already damaged morale by doing the opposite - holding individual employees accountable for performance or outcomes over which they have no control.

Using the SPM Business System Model, the deepest org chart could be four layers deep: Enterprise Owner/s, System Owners, Process Owners, and Process Users. Traditional structures are commonly twice this depth with no rationale for how the structure effectively organizes the work or how many people a supervisor can successfully manage. In addition, most companies do not keep their org charts current, especially when staffing assignments are volatile. Leadership may move people around hoping to improve outcomes, but if the processes are broken, they will underperform regardless.

At a minimum, the org chart hierarchy can be restructured to focus on the work at hand and to hold people accountable for what they can control. Reducing layers on the org chart comes at some risk, however. Clear expectations and responsibilities must be developed, communicated, and maintained based on desired outcomes; training and mentoring will likely be necessary for a successful transition.

7 How SPM Improves Performance

Organizations that deploy strong business processes execute better against their strategic intentions. Here are six ways SPM delivers sustainable improvement:

1

Standardizes the Intentional Business Model: By defining and deploying strong standard business processes an organization engages its employees in a valuable way, distributing responsibility and accountability closer to the work itself. An organization that helps employees confront problems daily will access their knowledge and experience, solicit participation in solving those problems, and see improvement as solutions are implemented. Using process language to describe the organization's workflow creates a common understanding that provides many organizational benefits, including the ability to compare performance across a variety of processes, to cross-train people, to develop greater capabilities, and to benchmark performance against other organizations' best practices. Strong business processes drive better understanding and performance, which contributes significantly to reduced stress in the workplace.

2

Improves the Customer's Experience: Traditional management focuses only on the external customer (those who pay for goods and services). The key to external customer satisfaction is the alignment and satisfaction of internal customers along the delivery value stream. When a customer experiences a problem, inevitably a breakdown occurred somewhere within that value stream. In SPM, business processes are built and linked through a series of aligned internal customers. The Enterprise value proposition is built through process-to-process value propositions that form a strong chain of business system value delivery. Each business process must have a meaningful customer value proposition that seamlessly contributes to the betterment of the overall business system.

3

Increases Efficiency: Efficiency defines the extent to which a process delivers its value proposition relative to resources it consumes. Greater efficiency comes by delivering quality goods and services (meeting target specifications) with the least resources consumed for that purpose. Less efficient organizations operate at a competitive disadvantage manifested in higher costs leading to non-competitive pricing, less reliable solutions, and slower response times.

4

Improves Productivity: Organizations acquire resources - people, tools & equipment, facilities, information technology, and intellectual property - with the express purpose of using them to produce profits. Productivity of those resources is based on value produced relative to resource use. Few organizations know the extent to which resources are productively utilized to serve their intended purpose. SPM allows resource consumption to be aligned to the processes executing the work.

5

Improves Response Time: By understanding the processes that produce and deliver products and services to a satisfied customer, an organization can systematically analyze the time and activities behind that value creation. Organizations that build consistent capability to deliver quick response enjoy a competitive advantage with customers.

6

Reduces Costs: An organization that understands cost drivers producing value can improve its cost-effectiveness Enterprise-wide. The four basic areas creating process cost are: inputs, conversion, outputs, and support. When organizations execute strong standard business processes the costs of goods and services become transparent and can be localized, which facilitates visible and sustainable improvement. Along with building and serving loyal customers, a process must provide a return on invested capital that delivers positive value for all stakeholders.

Every organization's strategy includes performance improvement of some kind. SPM builds a pathway to intentionally improved performance across every key operational area, both in targeted and holistic ways.

8 How SPM Delivers Enterprise Value

Companies exist to create profits for their stakeholders, the more the better. SPM performance improvement drives a series of system and process improvements with a never-ending pursuit of that purpose. Ten attainable benefits from SPM's improvement infrastructure are below.

1

Improved Customer Loyalty: Improving customer loyalty begins by understanding the internal business processes that must align to deliver better customer outcomes. Customer value is in the perceiver's eye. By systematically studying customer wants and needs through SPM an organization can build robust business processes that consistently meet those needs, thereby growing customer loyalty.

2

Improved Business Partner Loyalty: Engaging key business partners in building strong processes can be a powerful method for not only improving business performance but increasing the valuable contribution of that key partner. As trends toward outsourcing increase, engaging business partners becomes far more important to a successful Enterprise value proposition. SPM provides numerous strategic ways to build and maintain business partnerships throughout implementation and beyond. Key business partners often drive value proposition and supply chain performance — they come to the table with a "help me help you" philosophy.

3

Improved Employee Loyalty: The best way to access employees' knowledge, wisdom, and experience is by engaging them to define the problem, solicit their participation in solving it, and then supporting them as they implement the solution. SPM provides a strong business model foundation on which to operate that builds sustainable employee loyalty.

4

Improved Shareholder Satisfaction: An organization that executes standard business processes is transparent, can demonstrate how work gets accomplished, how customers are served, and how employees contribute to its mission. This visibility provides shareholders with an understanding of how organizational capability delivers a competitive advantage. In addition, strong business processes provide an essential organizational asset that contributes meaningfully to Enterprise value.

5

Increased Revenues: Revenue growth comes from 3 sources: new customers, higher prices, or greater sales to current customers. All three sources are directly impacted by the quality of the processes producing those outcomes. SPM quickly builds superior processes that are the foundation for long-term organization growth while maintaining predictable, scalable, and sustainable performance.

6

Reduced Expenses: Every process produces a solution - either physical, digital, or intellectual - and that solution carries with it associated costs, which can be assigned to the process. SPM's continuous improvement culture means those who are best positioned to impact process cost savings are empowered to do so.



7

Reduced Working Capital: Working capital represents a substantial financial investment in many businesses. By establishing process reliability while synchronizing customer-supplier relationships within the SPM structure, an organization can minimize the working capital required to satisfy customer needs.

8

Reduced Resources: Organizations typically make substantial investments in facilities, information technology, people, knowledge, and equipment to provide the infrastructure necessary for success. These resources enable the production of products and services delivering customer value. Organizations seldom adequately invest in business processes to make those assets optimally productive. By not building, managing, and continually improving processes, an organization spends excessive dollars on resources that underperform relative to their full potential. SPM builds the process controls needed to control resource performance.

9

Reduced Risk: In nearly every industry there is an element of regulatory compliance that can be costly to the organization. Traditional compliance efforts usually involve Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that are cumbersome to create, difficult to maintain, and not very useful. SPM addresses compliance requirements through system diagrams and process maps, which are far easier to build and maintain than SOPs. Managing standard business processes puts a company in a far better position to understand and mitigate the risk of non-compliance and catastrophic failure.

10

Increased Profits: Engaging and retaining customers is just part of the story. An organization must provide a return on invested capital that delivers a successful economic outcome for stakeholders. SPM means maximized revenues, continuously improving product and service margins, reduced operating and support costs, and effective use of balance sheet assets.

Adopting SPM builds a proven, fully engaged infrastructure where any organization can quickly and effectively control and improve its outcomes, respond to customer concerns & market shifts, and build external & internal relationships that grow loyalty and profitability in smart, meaningful, and sustainable ways.

9 Conclusion – SPM Builds a Superior Business Model

A leader's intentions are executed through reliable and capable business processes. Through Strategic Process Management, dramatic improvements can be obtained through a shift in the problem-solving paradigm. Key SPM principles are summarized below.



There is a Better Way to Improve Enterprise Performance

Silos, where department boundaries form barriers to achievement, cause work to get lost. Organizations react, creating a culture of whack-a-mole that causes frustration, burnout, and high employee turnover without ever resolving underlying deficiencies. The organization's challenge is to identify the barriers to improved performance, systematically prioritize them, and then implement sustainable change that yields better outcomes. This includes making sure those who do the work also regularly spend adequate time improving their work. A business that does not allocate time to improvement creates a self-fulfilling prophecy of defeat.



Managing Processes Yields Better Results Than Managing Departments

The path to improvement starts by gaining control of the work. By redefining the work structure through the Enterprise's systems, processes, tasks, and knowledge, leadership completely captures the work definition integral to establishing control, including ownership, knowledge, information, intellectual property, and output performance to customer specifications. Lacking workflow control, the traditional organization forfeits the ability to connect strategy to execution. High-quality business processes make the execution of leadership's strategic intention possible.



Exceptional Enterprises Actively Own and Manage Business Systems and Processes

People management is all too often disconnected from workflow management, creating significant frustration throughout the Enterprise. Accountable owners should be assigned to every business system and process based upon their knowledge of the work being accomplished, their capability to define and deploy standard practices, and their desire to lead teams that solve problems and implement change. Active system and process ownership provide many organizational benefits, including workflow connectivity, customer alignment, work transparency, and effective performance accountability.



Exceptional Process Owners Engageand Understand their Customers and Suppliers

The organization's customer value proposition is built through a series of process-to-process value propositions that together form a strong chain of delivery. Individual business processes must contain meaningful value propositions that seamlessly contribute to the betterment of the overall business system value proposition.

When studying workflow, organizations err by investigating single business processes in isolation. The source of process opportunities often lies upstream. Suppliers are rarely given guidance on what they must provide for a process customer to be successful. Process owners are often unable to accurately identify process customers. By studying multiple, interconnected processes as a system, process owners can correctly identify their customers, their suppliers, and find performance improvement breakthroughs. Best practice performance always includes customer and supplier engagement to provide clear specifications at the boundary connection points.



Improvement Fads Do Not Provide Lasting Answers

When leadership does not make workflow performance a priority, it is very difficult to improve overall Enterprise performance. In most organizations the actual causes of problems are hidden; it is not easily discernable where problems lie, who is responsible, and who has the authority to solve them. While organizations invest substantial sums in facilities, technology, people, and equipment to provide the resources necessary to achieve their mission, they often neglect comparable investment in business processes. Focusing improvement on processes ensures that workflow design includes all work elements required for successful execution. Many initiatives bring incremental gains, but nothing sustains current and continuous improvement like building powerful processes through SPM.



ABOUT BEM

Since 1993, Business Enterprise Mapping has successfully implemented process-based management and improvement solutions in over 300 enterprises covering 60 industries across 6 continents. BEM has partnered with clients to obtain over 50 international egistrations, mapped 3,000 process-based systems, deployed 25,000 business processes and successfully implemented over 750,000 process improvements.

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