

Business Process Management

in Government by Jack Mazwi

BUSINESS PROCESS MANAGEMENT (BPM) REMAINS a confusing subject to a number of government organisations. In South Africa, I believe there has been a realisation that most of the service delivery challenges faced by our government can be resolved through the interventions of Business Process Management. The e-Government initiative is one such programme that seeks to promote more efficient and effective government, facilitate more accessible government services, allow greater public access to information, and make government more accountable to citizens. This programme is process driven and requires integration of Business processes from different government organisations.

At Individual Government entity level, there are also a number of Business Process related initiatives ranging from simple process analysis and design to workflow automation and complex Business process automation projects. There has been successes and failures in the implementation of Business Process related projects, and I have identified 5 key challenges facing Government in terms of Business Process Management:

- BPM being misplaced;
- Inability to put together a compelling business case;
- Confusing terminology;
- Full implementation approach; and
- Implementing change without introducing knowledge management culture

Let's look at each of these challenges and explore possible solutions:

1. BPM misplaced

In most organisations, BPM is made the responsibility of the IT department. This creates a lot of confusion, because it's seen as a Technology project instead of an Organisational Transformation project. Modern organisations establish Business Process Management Offices that are strategically located at

CEO or Executive Management offices. This carries functions that cut across a number of different divisions and cannot be linked to a specific area. The biggest function of this office is to perform value realisation, i.e. benefits tracking and reporting to management on the progress achievements of the BPM exercise.

2. Inability to put together a compelling business case

The case for change is one of the most important components in the total BPM transformation process. In most organisations, the BPM initiative is mainly contained and motivated in the ICT strategy, and not included in the organisational strategy. The business case should clearly articulate the business rationale value of BPM and quantify the business value, in a language that can be understood by the senior executives. It will involve doing cost benefit analysis and Return on Investment exercises for the initiative.

3. Confusing terminology

The Business Process terminology is often used interchangeably, yet it means different things. Business process improvement is confused with business process re-engineering, which in turn is confused with business process management. This lead to lack of full understanding of what exactly the organisation is trying to achieve. It is yet the role of the BPM office to clarify in the business case, the approach that is being taken for BPM based on the challenges and needs of the organisation. This should then be followed by aggressive education process to all employees to eliminate any uncertainties about the project being implemented by the organisation.

4. Full Implementation approach

Implementing all the BPM changes at once can be detrimental to the implementation process. BPM should be an incremental

process. The BPM blueprint phase, which follows immediately after the business case phase should focus on developing priorities for the BPM initiative. The strategy for prioritisation will be to start on simple easy areas that will yield the biggest impact.

5. Implementing Change without introducing the knowledge management culture

BPM implementation challenges the status quo, and when the change process is not managed, the possibility of failure is increased. BPM involves people changing organisations, management and the way they work; and lack of knowledge creates fear and uncertainty will creep in. In order to ensure on-going, inter-departmental, committed effort from employees, a strong focus on creating a knowledge management culture is critical. Knowledge communities can be created to tie in small groups, such as cross-functional teams, to continuously share knowledge and fosters employee buy-in of knowledge management. Once a knowledge management program is successfully implemented, a system of continuous learning and growth should be created to maintain the BPM knowledge.

In summary, BPM is an organisational effort that should be handled at strategic level. It is not an ICT initiative, because it's about bringing significant gains in process efficiency, productivity, control, quality service delivery and satisfied citizens (customers). All these benefits touch on all aspects of the organisation and require involvement and ownership by organisational executives and management. This ownership is achieved by the collective creation of a business case to correlate the organisation's vision and strategic objectives with the BPM objectives. The same way that organisations will develop their strategic plans with input from all senior executives, it's exactly the way to develop a collective case for BPM implementation. The business case should incorporate metrics and measurement parameters so that tracking can happen along the way. These measures can be depicted in dimensions such as elapsed time, response time, process quality and process cost. The final Sign-off of the business case will be attained from the highest level within the organisation.

In conclusion, Tipp Focus is more than capable to can assist your organisation in facilitating the process of developing the BMP business case and implementation of BMP initiatives. Please visit our website, www.tippfocus.co.za or send an email to info@tippfocus.co.za to request more information about our BPM offering.

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