



The Business Fad with Resilience “Business Process Management”

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Introduction

This topic was chosen in an attempt to place the current “buzz” about Business Process Management (BPM) into a context relevant to the Owner, Chief Executive, or Senior Manager of today’s businesses. It is with full recognition that this article has the potential to create the impression that the information is “dated”; however, it is the assertion of this article that the fundamentals of business do not date quickly. The objective is to determine how, and to what degree, BPM may be a part of delivering meaningful, sustainable, competitive advantage to an organization.

BPM continues to receive ever increasing press. While the concepts are anything but new, a new group of software developers and vendors are doing their utmost to make it appear so. In fairly typical fashion, the buzz suggests that if you are not utilizing this methodology and technology to manage business processes, you can not possibly be on top of your business, and are therefore seriously negligent in your responsibilities to all stakeholders!

If you think this is an overstatement, then you need only do a quick search on the internet to see the plethora of technologies, associations, vendors, consultants, and your competitors, all of whom are anxious for the opportunity to clarify and amplify this message **JUST FOR YOU!**

Armed with all this good advice, where is your organization? *Management* is retained and paid to manage a *business* that is in existence to make a profit; therefore a typical stating point would be a definition the key word – **PROCESS**.

proc-ess *noun*

1. **A series of actions, changes, or functions bringing about a result:** *the process of digestion; the process of obtaining a driver's license.*
2. **A series of operations performed in the making or treatment of a product:** *a manufacturing process; leather dyed during the tanning process.*
3. **Progress;** *passage: the process of time; events now in process.*

The most fascinating aspect of all 3 of the definitions is that they imply forward motion, and therefore by inference ***change***. This is of particular interest because positive change in any environment, but particularly a business, requires a full, deep, and thorough understanding of the processes involved. *A bit of circular logic!*

Software Vendors vs. the “Real World”

If you were to ask 10 different people about what “BPM” is, you are virtually guaranteed to get a minimum of 5 different definitions. The confusion arises primarily because the software vendors offer products that have wide variations in functionality, which have been developed to address diverse number of business issues and problems.

The current incarnation of BPM has a long pedigree, which fits into a very simple “real world” concept:

ALL WORK IS A PROCESS

There are many variations on this theme; however, there are three (3) key issues that will inevitably separate a failed BPM endeavor from one that generates sustained realized results:

- Inconsistency of understanding and application.
- A lack of the fundamental work that the concept demands.
- The failure to recognize the enormous change management impacts.

The examination of your unique process requirements MUST include the human side. Many BPM applications, while meeting most technical criteria, will not provide optimal value unless they have the flexibility to support your most unique, dynamic processes. It is most often these mostly “Human Centric” processes that are central to your core competence and ability to differentiate you as a business. It is the way in which processes are handled or managed now, and the manner in which processes may be transformed that offer, both the most value and the most business risk.

Risk Mitigation

BPM, of and by itself, does not improve a business. A great deal of research has been undertaken by numerous organizations, and without exception, they all conclude that serious consideration must be given to the “type” of organization. The truly intriguing aspect of most of this research is that it primarily attempts to categorize organizations or businesses around a specific product offering, rather than providing guidance on how to assess the processes within your business and then ascertaining which product or offering will suit best.

The best possible advice on offer is:

**“ALWAYS — BEFORE EVALUATING BPM SOFTWARE PRODUCTS,
EXAMINE YOUR PROCESSES!”**

BPM: The Business Fad with Resilience

In the real world, this advice usually arrives late. A software tool or suite has already been purchased, and significant IT effort expended to make it operational. The challenge then becomes one of how rapidly the overall implementation plan can be analyzed and redesigned (if necessary) to ensure that basic process understanding will be gathered; that the business users are fully integrated into the total program; and that the program is focused on the change management aspect that the human centric processes will require.

Conclusion

Business Process Management (BPM) is clearly not a “fad”. The current marketing of software tools may create the appearance of “newness” but at the core of Business Process Management is a fundamental strength that only comes from truly knowing and understanding what takes place inside the four walls of your business.

When you combine a BPM tool set with a Change Management approach, which allows you to change your organization in a fashion that drives efficiency, control, and agility across your most unique, mission critical processes, you will maximize the ROI from BPM and ultimately achieve the competitive advantage required to compete in today’s global economy.

For more information about “Transforming Business Processes” or to contact the author, send an email to info@gtpsolutions.com or call Gordian Transformation Partners at (678) 353-3378.