***Background***

Many performance issues stem from weak processes of all types, and relatively few from incompetent or negligent individuals. Information flow, material movement, financial analysis, executive decision-making, planning and scheduling - all involve processes, and many of these cross department lines and are beyond the control or even the understanding of a single person. Understanding what really happens in a process is the first step to streamlining, eliminating waste, and improving quality.

Here is a simplified view of a process map, showing the relative positioning of its title, the instructions, the sign-in sheet, comments, flags, and findings (strengths and opportunities). While precise positioning is not critical, it's important to include each of the elements and to make the flow of the process obvious leaving plenty of room for comments. It's also important not to make the chart too formal and finished looking (by creating it with a flow chart program, for example) as reviewers might be inhibited from messing it up with comments. This workbook describes in detail this proven mapping method for understanding the current processes in any organization, and offers templates to get you started.

Title

Sign In Sheet

Strengths

Opportunities

Tracking Report

Instructions

This tool provides at a very high level a straightforward approach to identifying business strengths and opportunities.

No warranty is expressed or implied about the suitability of these tools to your situation, and we recommend professional legal and accounting advice if your situation is complex or uncertain.

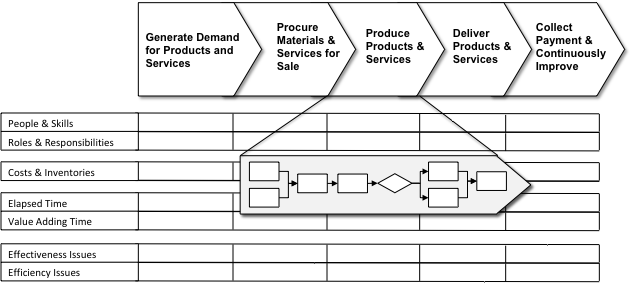
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***Context Linked to Details***

Process Mapping is an effective way to identify business problems. At the highest level, fundamental activities of a business are laid out sequentially to provide an overall map, and key metrics are applied to begin focusing on areas for improvement. These areas are then developed as sub-process maps, using the same techniques, and might also generate their own sub-sub-process maps in order to define the problems and solutions accurately. For example, the ‘Add Value’ step shown might lead to a sub-process map for ‘Electronics Manufacturing’ which might then generate a sub-sub-process map for ‘Final Assembly.’

Types of metrics used can vary, but should certainly include measurement of the number of resources and costs applied to each activity, in order to ensure focus is on high-impact areas. When used creatively, process maps will clearly identify the major barriers to effectiveness and efficiency, providing a basis for designing the future state, and provide input into the business case supporting the change program of the road map.



***Step by Step***

1. ***Assemble recommended materials***
   1. Pink, yellow, blue, and green Post-It notes - 4 packs each
   2. Brown wrapping paper - typically 3 feet high and 25 feet long
   3. Icons (described on the ‘Templates’ page)
   4. Scissors, glue and tape
2. ***Assemble required experts*** 
   1. People who designed the process and / or people who work in it
   2. For most processes, 2 or 3 people can develop the outline.
3. ***Define the scope***

Determine the first step - what kicks the process off - and the last step - what ends the process. If the scope starts creeping, return to this step.

1. ***Develop the outline (rough flow)***

Use Post-It notes to capture each step (all actions, decision steps, stops, and uncertain steps). Stick them in sequence on the wall so everyone can review them, and rearrange them until the experts agree that it is approximately correct.

1. ***Create a working chart***

Using the icons, scotch tape the steps onto the brown paper. Leave plenty of room around each step for documents and comments. Use ‘Verb - Object’ format to describe each step.

1. ***Have experts review it***

Invite the experts back to confirm accuracy or suggest changes. Update as needed and add clarification. Affix actual working documents to help clarify exactly what is happening in steps driven by work screens or print-outs. Add appropriate metrics, such as how long steps take, who and how many people are involved, how much money or inventory is required, etc.

1. ***Have the affected department review it***

Invite the departments that execute the process to review the map and to make comments according to the instructions - pink Post-It notes for improvement opportunities, green for strengths, yellow for clarifications.

1. ***Have the suppliers and customers review it***

Invite everyone affected by the process to comment.

1. ***Have the experts analyze it***

Have the experts review all comments to identify all key strengths and problem areas of the process. Start building an action plan to address the problems.

1. ***Highlight the strengths and opportunities***

Place numbered flag icons near the steps considered strengths and weaknesses and use the flag lists to define each numbered flag. Place the lists at the end of the paper. Tag particularly useful comments for focus during presentations.

1. ***Have the whole organization review it***

Invite everyone in the organization to review and comment on the flow chart. Begin discussion of possible approaches to fixing the problems.

1. ***Present it to the executives***

Invite executives to review the chart, to ensure they agree with its accuracy and conclusions. Set up follow-on actions to develop solutions to problems.

***Identifying Key Issues***

The interactive flow chart methodology generally generates a lot of enthusiasm, providing an outlet to air long-standing complaints and to creatively solve entrenched problems. The key issues - strengths to be preserved or expanded and opportunities for improvement - will be readily identified and defined when the organization participates in the mapping process.

Opportunities (pink Post-It notes) will tend to proliferate in areas of significant problems. On the 'Opportunities' chart, group similar / related problems and define each grouping by root cause (e.g., ‘Lack of standard input controls generates many errors’ might be flagged in an area where comments describe frustration with the errors.)

At this point, also ask ‘so what?’ Look for problem areas where a lot of resources or dollars are applied, and assign higher priority to areas where focus will provide significant and visible benefits.

In addition to problems, strengths need to be identified (green Post-It notes) to ensure effective processes aren't degraded. This also imparts a sense of fairness to the affected departments, and even an opportunity to praise their efforts. Group strengths on the 'Strengths' chart in the same manner as opportunities were grouped.

Neutral comments (on yellow Post-It notes) help explain what is happening, useful when analyzing and developing action plans.

**Input**

**Customer**

**Order**

**Rush Job?**

**Assign**

**Hand Carry**

**Resource**

**Place**

**in**

**Queue**

Yes

No

Usually missing key info

Customers are always late - always a rush

Who says it's a rush?

What if no one is available?

User friendly system -easy to enter

Most are preformat from Internet

Print and fill this chart based on process map 'Strength' findings, drawing themes from groupings of green Post-It notes (such as, "IT system user interface is very easy to use and helps prevent input errors.”)

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**1**

**2**

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**6**

**7**

**8**

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Print and fill this chart based on process map 'Opportunity' findings, drawing themes from groupings of pink Post-It notes (such as, "IT system user interface is cantankerous and drives many input errors.")

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To generate interest and ensure participation, it's important to explain fully what is being done and how to work with the flow chart. Some of the key points to communicate:

Explain what a flow chart (map) is and the scheme for commenting. The red-yellow-green color scheme suggested here is very useful for rapid, intuitive communication. The energy on the map is visible from across the room, while the detailed input remains available for close inspection. This combination of a big picture with detailed support is particularly valuable in executive presentations.

Explain what will happen next and who will do it. However, don't make promises that won't be delivered. Employees of many organizations have become jaded by flavor of the month improvement activities, and this process mapping approach is too valuable to be squandered.

Here is an example of an instruction sheet; copy and paste it as desired.

Do you work in or interact with this process? If so – this is for you!



What is a “brown paper?”

* Visual display of a process
* Array of key characteristics of process steps
* Working document showing key strengths and weaknesses of the process
* Low tech, high touch

What happens next?

* The continuous improvement team will review all comments to identify problems
* prioritize the problems and determine where to start correcting things

How will the problems be fixed?

* Address bite-size opportunities in “Rapid Process Improvement” events
* Train the organization in proven methods to sustain fix

How do I participate?

* Review the whole process if you know anything about it
* Add your comments to the paper on Post It notes anywhere you have knowledge or insights
  + Green = a strength of the process which must be preserved
  + Yellow = a neutral comment which will help others understand the process better
  + Red = an opportunity to improve the process (a.k.a. a problem with the way things are done today)



To demonstrate authenticity of the process and accuracy of the comments, ask everyone who creates or comments on the process to sign in. This will squelch any concerns that the comments represent uninformed opinion. Executives often look for the names of thought leaders on these maps, and may suggest others not listed who can provide additional perspectives.

***Sign in Sheet***

**Process Flow Created by Reviewed by**

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This simple 'Action' box must include at least the 'What' of this process step. We suggest that all process steps be entered in Verb - Object format (e.g., ‘Attach Bolts’) and that any additional information be bullet points only. If clarification is needed, attach the desk procedures, documents used in the process step, resource lists, or other documents, as needed.

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| WHAT |
| WHO |
| WHERE |
| WHEN |
| HOW |
| (Affix related forms / documents to the flow chart for clarity) |
|  |

|  |
| --- |
| WHAT |
| WHO |
| WHERE |
| WHEN |
| HOW |
| (Affix related forms / documents to the flow chart for clarity) |
|  |

Processes often contain decision points which are often a source of confusion and rework. This page of standard decision icons is available for printing.

Decision

Decision

Decision

Many processes have inputs from processes undefined, either because they are beyond the process scope or because they are undocumented, informal, and subject to change. Such inputs are generally captured using a cloud icon. Uncertainties in related processes often drive confusion and errors into processes, so leave some room around the clouds for comments. This page is available for printing.

As we discussed on the ‘Identifying Key Issues' page, groups of pink Post It notes (opportunities) can usually be characterized by one headline statement summarizing the comments and their root causes. Print these flags:

* Red flags to be placed near opportunity comment groups (pink Post It notes)
* Green flags to be placed near groups of green (strength) Post It notes

While setting the flags on the strengths / opportunities charts, it's useful to tag specific comments for quick reference during executive reviews, to demonstrate the link between identified problems and primary sources.

***Planning Corrective Actions***

The process mapping methodology described is designed to extract improvement opportunities directly from people who deliver or are affected by a process, so that they can be addressed in an action plan. The action plan requires strong links to the source material to gain executive sponsorship and organizational buy-in.

Participants in the analysis process will also appreciate seeing that their inputs were analyzed carefully and considered by executives in continuous improvement decisions.

This chart illustrates a format linking various planned activities to specific identified opportunities. While the format of this linkage is not important, it is important that the logic be tight and the display intuitive and engaging.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Identified Opportunity (from Process Map) | | |
|  | Weak executive and management support results in delayed decisions and lost opportunities | Confusing instructions and user-hostile information systems drive errors in customer data | Lack of understanding of the process causes significant inefficiency due to reinventing the wheel and searching for guidance |
| Rapid Improvement Event to analyze how key decisions are processed, identify and remove barriers - FOUNDATION BUILDING | Directly Addresses | N/A | Support |
| Analyze process to develop current flow chart, diagnose for barriers to success, and identify Rapid Improvement Event sequence to correct; schedule RIEs and analysis of additional processes | Support | Directly Addresses | Directly Addresses |
| Leadership workshop to ensure clarity and alignment of vision and strategy, and to communicate in a living document | Support | N/A | N/A |
| Review IT as part of process analysis to determine most effective process support; minor adjustments initially, change as required in about 6 months | N/A | Directly Addresses | Support |
| Review desk procedures and common knowledge practices to ensure coverage of all key tasks of customer data entry | N/A | Directly Addresses | Directly Addresses |

The only right way to develop the correct future process is with direct operator involvement, not just because they will buy into the new process but primarily because they see firsthand what needs to be done. And using the ‘As Is’ process mapping techniques of this workbook, they will gain powerful new insights into how they can work cooperatively across the whole process to generate high quality output efficiently.

When the corrected process is stabilized, it's okay to generate the formal 'Visio' view for training purposes and as a reference for operators. However, this ‘finished’ map is never final, and will always form the visual basis for evolution through continuous improvement.

**Commute**

**to Work**

**Set Coffee Maker (Night Before)**

**Wake up**

**(Alarm Radio)**

**Really Wake up**

**(Klaxon Alarm)**

**Shower**

**Fix Hair**

**Get Dressed**

**Pour and Inject Coffee**

**Start and Warm Car**

**Feed Dog**

**Turn on Traffic Report**

**Eat Breakfast**

**Load Dishwasher**