

How to Structure Your First BPM Project to Avoid Disaster

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Introduction

You have decided to invest in a BPM project deployment and you are eager to get started. But before you hit the ground running, you need a plan. This paper is intended to give you some helpful advice in order to structure your first BPM project for success ... and avoid disaster.

There is often a lot of pressure from within the business to “just do it” and start solving process problems as soon as possible. Some organizations have very specific “burning” process problems that cause a lot of day-to-day pain. Other organizations feel the pressure from large corporate-wide initiatives with aggressive timetables to improve processes across the organization. BPM can clearly help. But, like any non-trivial endeavor, if you don’t take the time and effort to properly set up your BPM project for successful implementation and ongoing improvement, you might just end up with a failure that leaves you in worse condition than when you started.

This paper provides some insightful recommendations for establishing a solid foundation for your important first BPM project – and for any subsequent projects, for that matter. It is extremely important to understand the following within each BPM project:

- Pick The Right Process – and Avoid the Wrong Ones
- Field the Right Team – and Include a “BPM Analyst”
- Pace Yourself – Plan for a 4x100m Race, not a 100m Sprint or a 400m Run
- Demand Business Involvement – At the Right Times

Of course, one should expect that after word spreads about the success of the first project, other projects will soon follow. So, in the same way that you will structure your BPM projects for success, you’ll also want to build the foundation for a strong cross-project *BPM program* that serves as the vehicle for prioritizing and governing multiple concurrent projects and aligning them to your corporate goals and strategies. For some recommendations on how to set up a long-term BPM program, please see our whitepaper entitled “*3 Steps for Moving from BPM Projects to BPM Programs*”.

Pick The Right Process – and Avoid the Wrong Ones

Organizations often times recognize the value of utilizing BPM for process improvement. The next question is inevitably “Where do I start” or “What process should I tackle first”? There are a lot of suggestions out there that identify characteristics of processes that are a good fit for BPM deployments. Some of the symptoms that could help you identify a process improvement opportunity include:

- High labor costs to execute the process
- Inconsistent work quality
- Inaccurate forecasting of work completion
- Difficulty in providing status reports
- Employee and customer satisfaction

If you would like further information in picking the “right” process for your first project, please see “*Getting Started with BPM*”.

Be careful: You can leverage the best BPMS technology out there. You can have the most highly skilled resources dedicated to your process initiative. But if you pick the wrong process for your first project, you will greatly increase your risk of failure.

So let’s discuss types of process not to pick. Avoid business processes with the following characteristics:

- **A completely undiscovered process.** You have no doubt heard about 90 day deployments, continuous iterations, and business involvement in BPM projects. If you pick an area of the business that is not well understood, delivering value back to the business will be challenging. We are not saying that you need binders and binders of process documentation and business requirements, but pick an area where the high-level milestones are defined, many of the “Level Two” activities are understood, and the business owners are identified. If you don’t, you might be spending the next 90 days doing process analysis instead of process implementation.
- **No defined owner for decision-making.** Processes that span the organization and touch many departments are normally great candidates for BPM projects. But trying to

run a project by a committee of the affected shareholders won't work – you should pick a process that has a defined owner that can make any decisions that are required to move forward. You can spend hours upon hours in a meeting debating the positives and negatives of any business condition. But in the end, you need to make decisions – right or wrong – to move forward. Don't pick a process if you don't have a defined owner for decision-making, or if you know the defined decision maker can't.

- ***“Let's just implement as-is” with no desire to “make it better”.*** BPM is all about continuous process improvement – delivering real value to the business. Watch out for business areas that just want to implement as-is and don't want to make it better. The good news is that you don't have to do it all in the first 90 days – most people love the fact that you don't have to implement *everything* in Version One. Many organizations start with implementing 90% of the as-is with very few improvements. These organizations understand continuous process improvement and will capture more value in further iterations.

- ***Proof point deployments are often dead ends.*** You want to prove that BPM technology can fit in your infrastructure and that your organization can handle implementing processes. You need a quick and demonstrable win. You may choose to limit the scope of your deployment to a “proof point” that limits your time and risk. But in fact, thinking this way can reduce the impact of your first BPM effort, causing it to fall short of any significant value. A result that provides no value is often viewed as a failure. Implementing something in 90 days is not enough. Can you clearly state the value the project delivered? Is the value meaningful to the business? Will the business appreciate a simple “IT trouble ticket” example process? You will have challenges in getting your organization to adopt BPM if your only answer is, “It was just a proof point”.

Avoiding these process characteristics will minimize the risks of your BPM project failing, and maximize the potential for BPM to be adopted in the organization.

Field the Right Team – and Include a “BPM Analyst”

In order to deliver success for your BPM project, picking the right team is critical. Your team needs a good mix of business and functional process knowledge, with an understanding of the underlying BPM technology. You will see recommendations from many vendors about the skill sets required for every BPM project. Those recommendations more than likely will include:

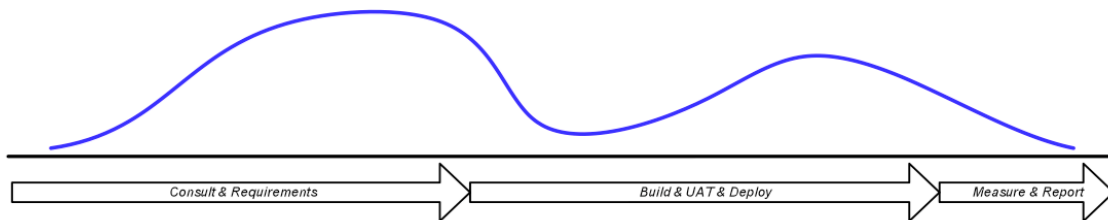
- **BPM Analysts** to assist with process analysis and requirements definition
- **BPM Consultants** for process design, implementation, and deployment
- **Technical Consultants** to provide assistance with overall solution architecture, and integration into your enterprise infrastructure
- **BPM Program Manager**, usually provided by Lombardi or a certified partner, who is responsible for guiding the deployment effort to success
- **Process Owner** who is empowered to quickly make decisions regarding process delivery, scope, and budget.

Most of these roles are similar to those needed by traditional software implementations and application development projects. You will undoubtedly have people (or partners) that can be trained to use the BPM software technology as BPM consultants. Getting a resource from IT for the Technical Consultant role may be challenging, but at least the skill set of the role is well-known. The toughest question that many organizations may have is “who is our BPM Analyst, to assist with process analysis and requirements definition?”. Here are some criteria to consider when filling this role:

- **Not just a Subject Matter Expert from the business.** This person will lead process improvement effort. There are people in the business that do a great job day in and day out, and probably understand the project’s business process better than anyone in the organization. But can they champion the effort in decomposing the process, scoping process improvements and optimizing the process after initial deployments? They need to have to passion for change for improvement and the capability to architect the solution.
- **Not too technical** - Yes, you need a great problem solver that understands requirements and can articulate a vision of the solution. But they also need to understand the metrics of the business process, the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Service Level

Agreements (SLAs). "Technical People" sometimes show they build and deliver really great features, but do they deliver value and impact process improvement?

The BPM Analyst is heavily involved in the beginning of the project in process understanding and design, but also plays a key role in the implementation “playbacks” to ensure that what is being built is going to deliver the value to the business. They keep the project implementation “on track” when it drifts away from the original goals, objectives, and strategy.



In the initial stages of the project, the BPM Analyst:

- leads process improvement efforts
- provides expertise in process decomposition, scoping, and optimization
- identifies key opportunities, develops business cases, and calculates ROI

During the Build and UAT stages of the project, the BPM Analyst:

- Enforces the delivery of KPIs, SLAs, and scoreboards

Pace Yourself – Plan for a 4x100m Race, not a 100m Sprint or a 400m Run

You elected to deploy BPM for a lot of reasons, but the root operational value proposition is the ability to process more business with less effort and higher quality. Companies have consistently made the case for BPM based on three core benefits – efficiency, effectiveness, and agility. In any case, your project has been budgeted and more than likely will be measured on specific business case objectives. It is extremely important to understand that you should not plan on delivering all of these benefits in a single phase of the project.

- **Phase is NOT a 4-letter word** – Plan on delivering the value identified in the business case for the project in multiple phases. Communicate this not only to the business sponsor, but all of the business stakeholders. Letting them know that not every single feature is going to be delivered in the first phase of the project will set the right expectation for success.
- **Iterative Approach..... Continuous Process Improvement** – By far the most common Software Development Lifecycle method in practice today is still the “waterfall” approach. However, BPM implementations demand an iterative development approach to achieve maximum benefit. An iterative approach is defined as “a development method where a solution is created through discreet development sections and is repeated until it reaches maturity.” The transition for many companies from a single Requirements → Design → Development → Test approach to repeating this work over several shorter iterations requires new tool capabilities and new methods for teams to work together. Enabling organizations to achieve repeatable success with BPM deployments is the focus of iterative development.
- **Prioritize and Trade Off (but don't always trade-off the reports!)** – What happens to the work that does not get completed within each iteration? You can't always push that remaining work to another iteration. The business has to prioritize the future work and requirements during each planned iteration. Typically, companies will prioritize in favor of the highest Return on Investment (ROI) items. The areas of lesser value that are still perhaps quite important to the overall process should be placed on the Process Roadmap. Note that one of the key values of BPM is monitoring and visibility but it is often one of the last things to be done in a project. Don't let your reporting be the first thing chopped!

Demand Business Involvement – At the Right Times

Driving closer business and IT collaboration has been an area of focus for most companies for some time now. Getting a closer match between requirements and delivery is a challenge – and one that is only exacerbated by the frequency of change found in deploying BPM.

A project organization that allows for business and IT co-dependent on each other for success is a key for BPM project deployments. The willingness and ability of these two groups to collaborate is, in the end, critical to success at every stage of the implementation. Making sure to include the “right” business resources during the right times in your project is critical for success. But how much should the business be involved, and when?

- **Process Analysis** – At the very beginning of a BPM project, the business is involved heavily to assist the core BPM team in analyzing the business process, understanding the main problem areas that exist, and formulating a roadmap for recommended process improvements. From that, a high-level implementation plan is developed, along with the estimated potential value / impact to the business. The timeframe for the process analysis exercise can vary anywhere from a couple of days to a couple of weeks.
- **Implementation Playbacks** – During the Iterative Approach, the business must be involved to ensure accuracy to the real needs and requirements of the business, and they must also prioritize the next iterations cycle that define the process roadmap. In a typical 90-day process deployment, there are three main “playbacks” with the business stakeholders for the project, each a 2-hour session separated by 2 weeks.

BPM projects typically have a high profile and are budgeted to deliver high value. Business people are busy throughout their normal day-to-day jobs and have little “spare” time to dedicated to other projects. But leveraging their time and knowledge during the analysis and implementation playbacks will be critical in delivering to the success of your BPM project.

Summary

Many companies have been able to realize significant value with rapid returns by driving process improvement with BPM. Success rates on BPM projects far exceed other more traditional software development projects. However, structuring your first BPM project for success is extremely important in a long term BPM strategy. Picking the right process, fielding the right team, pacing yourself, and demanding business involvement are four small but important recommendations to help you and your organization establish a solid foundation for your first BPM project.

For More Help in Getting Started

Lombardi's chief mission is to help companies define, implement, and execute their strategic process improvement initiatives through BPM projects and programs. We are already helping hundreds of companies around the world to get their BPM projects started. We would be glad to explain how you can leverage Lombardi's proven technology and "know how" to launch your BPM project and make it a success. To learn more, please contact us at info@lombardi.com.

About Lombardi

Lombardi is a leader in business process management (BPM) software for companies, systems integrators and government agencies of all sizes. We offer award-winning BPM technology, know-how and services to help our customers succeed with their process improvement initiatives. Our products are built on open standards, and provide ongoing prioritization, planning, visibility and control of business processes, increasing the speed and flexibility with which organizations can manage their business process activities and decision-making.

Teamworks® is Lombardi's BPM software for designing, executing, and improving processes. Teamworks for Office™ makes it easy for anyone to participate in BPM using the familiar Microsoft® Office System products. And Lombardi Blueprint™ is the only on-demand, collaborative process documenting tool that enables companies to map processes, identify problems and prioritize improvement opportunities. At the core is Lombardi's unique shared model architecture, which significantly reduces the time and effort versus competing solutions.

Lombardi is behind some of the largest, most successful BPM implementations in the world. Our customers include Allianz Group, Aflac, Banco Espirito Santo, Barclays Global Investors, Dell, El Paso Energy, FETAC, Financial Services Authority, Ford Motor Company, Hasbro, ING Direct, Intel, Maritz Travel, National Bank of Canada, National Institute of Health, Safety-Kleen, T-Mobile, UCLH, Xbridge and numerous governmental agencies.

