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*"Don't be afraid to take a big leap if one is indicated. You can't cross a chasm in two small jumps."*

*David Lloyd George*

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## Improving the Process of Business Process Improvement

As the interest in business process improvement grows, organizations are faced with increasingly difficult decisions about how to allocate resources. In an ironic twist, some companies spend enormous amounts of time and money to "simplify" their processes. In some cases, a detailed level of analysis and flowcharting is required and shows due diligence. At the same time, the effort required for documentation and multiple approval meetings can make the process so cumbersome that the momentum and interest in the project wanes. Without continued commitment, the company/department reverts back to business as usual and the costs associated with the improvement activities are never recouped.

Particularly for smaller companies who have limited resources, here are some guidelines to increase your likelihood of success. You want to have:

- ◆ **Strong commitment from top management to support the project**
  - ◆ Demonstrated in word and deed
  - ◆ Patience, Resources (staff and budget), and Strategic Guidance

- ◆ **Buy-in from the impacted stakeholders**  
(those you are directly affected by the change—whether positively or negatively)
  - ◆ What's In It For Me – How will my job change?
  - ◆ Give them input as to **how** the change will be implemented
  - ◆ Determine what, if any, training on the new process will be needed
  
- ◆ **Acceptance of a Learning Model**
  - ◆ Set realistic expectations about the time and ease of implementation
  - ◆ Be willing to operate with a higher level of ambiguity
  - ◆ Be flexible so you can react to (unexpected) changes
  
- ◆ **Communication, Communication, Communication**
  - ◆ Be open and candid about what you know and don't know
  - ◆ Disseminate updates in a timely manner – rumor control
  - ◆ Explain rationale for decisions
  
- ◆ **A reasonable scope for the change**
  - ◆ Choose a small but meaningful change rather than a major overhaul of multiple systems or departments
  - ◆ Use a phased approach to introduce changes and monitor consequences
    - ◆ Use the evaluation results to help guide your next proposed change
  
- ◆ **Appropriate documentation and reporting requirements**
  - ◆ Capture and retain sufficient information to explain your proposed changes and key decisions/assumptions that led you to your conclusions
  - ◆ Use a format that makes sense and is

easy to use

- ◆ Don't duplicate information in multiple sources (use one template for all phases of the project rather than re-inventing the wheel), re-use presentations for multiple groups rather than tailoring it each time

- ◆ **The necessary technology or systems to support the proposed change**

- ◆ Weigh the costs and benefits of low technology solutions (creating or modifying an existing spreadsheet) versus high technology solutions (purchasing software or custom programming)
- ◆ Avoid the temptation to automate an ineffective process (e.g., five handoffs to approve vacation time). Streamline the process first, then automate.

If you have questions about how to implement business process improvement efforts or [change management](#) in your organization, please contact [Kammy Haynes](#).

## **Thanks For the Favor!**

So, you have spent a lot of time recruiting for an open position. You get some good resumes and some of those people you talked to actually sound as if they could do the job. This group gets whittled down some more through your interviews and you want to ensure you make the best hire by doing a more formal assessment of their skills. But, your best candidate hems-and-haws, puts off the assessment date and finally drops out of the process. What should you do?

Send the person a present and a thank you note! S/he has just done you a terrific favor!

We can hypothesize all we want about why someone doesn't want to be assessed (found a better offer in the meantime, doesn't want the pressure, etc.), but it all comes down to that they did not really want to work for you and by not doing so saved themselves and you a lot of heartache. Whatever you do, don't back off of your commitment to assess and evaluate your candidates just to make the process easier for them. There's a lot of research that shows that people who go through a difficult process to join a group are more loyal. Also, we know that people who do well on valid assessments do well on their jobs. Sure, it makes your recruiters' work harder, but it's worth it in the end.

If you have questions about improving your [selection process](#), please contact [Warren Bobrow](#).