



It is very easy to equate process modeling with process improvement, yet there are many other reasons we might choose to model an organization's processes.

Undertaking process modeling helps us understand how the detailed work flows through the organization and a set of well-managed and well-maintained process artefacts are invaluable for ensuring a consistent customer experience and also help ensure that we can effectively respond to changes.

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UNDERSTANDING YOUR PROCESSES, AND YOUR ORGANIZATION

There are many reasons that an organization might model its processes. Often, process modeling is a first step to optimizing and improving processes. Yet, there are some very good reasons to model processes even when they are currently working well and when there are no immediate plans to make major process changes.

There can be significant value in having an appropriate set of process artefacts that show how an organization's processes currently work, and how the work is undertaken.

This might sound like a counterintuitive thing to say - surely if the processes are working well then there must already be a clear understanding of how the work is undertaken? This may well be the case, but this understanding might not be properly recorded anywhere. I am sure we have all seen situations where crucial information about certain tasks exists only 'in people's heads'.

This enables them to access that information very quickly and maybe even effectively, but has the disadvantage that over time individual interpretations of the process may emerge (with different people doing the work slightly differently).

This can create customer dissatisfaction and confusion as they find that the same request is handled differently at different times. Additionally, it presents a significant risk if key people within the organization leave.



Whilst they will undoubtedly do their best to handover their work to the incoming team member, it is difficult to explain every single nuance and every single scenario and exception that might occur.

With a set of well-defined processes, it is much easier to develop training material to induct and train new members of staff. It becomes easier to provide consistently good service to our customers, as we have a clear and defined way of undertaking the work (whilst also, where relevant, providing suitable autonomy for staff to deal with truly exceptional and unexpected cases).

We understand the key handovers between individuals, departments and teams, and we can see where automation takes place. These process artefacts can become useful organizational assets, allowing us to manage and monitor our processes. Using a shared notation and a shared approach such as BPMN allows different stakeholders to collaborate on the same set of models. Perhaps even more significantly, well-maintained and well-managed process models allow us to assess potential changes.

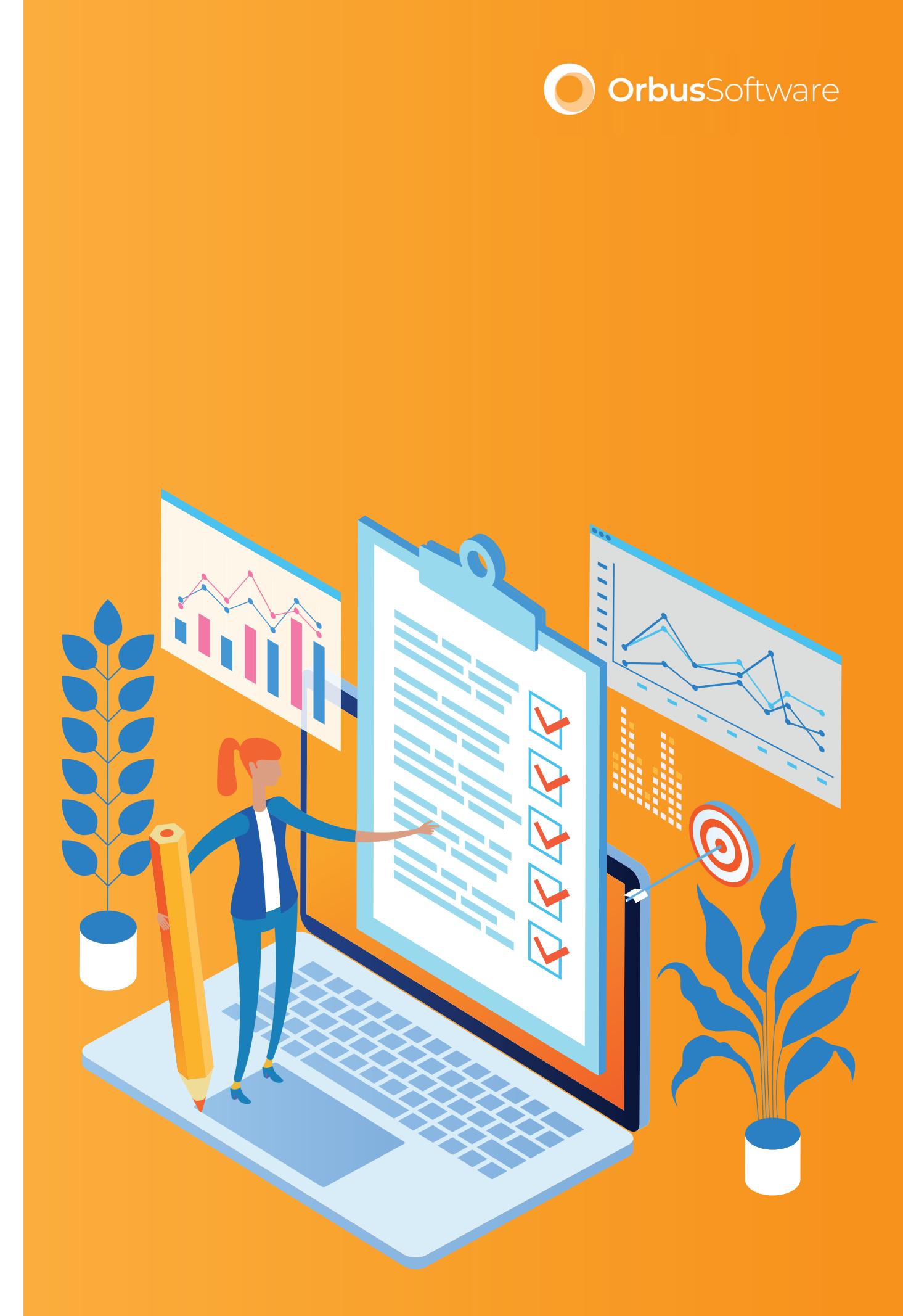
It has often been said we live in a 'fast moving' world, and there is an increasing need to respond quickly to opportunities, threats and imposed changes. When new pieces of legislation come in, if we don't have a clear and well-managed view of the current operation it is difficult to know where to start.

With a good understanding of existing business processes, we are better able to assess the areas where changes like this will have impact and we can work on defining and designing the change. Rather than having to start from scratch each time, uncovering the 'as is' like a detective searching for a trail of clues, we can refer to the existing process artefacts.

The same is true when it comes to opportunities too - if we want to launch a new product, for example, we can use process models to better assess the potential impacts. Of course, in addition to these reasons, it is quite likely that as soon as we start examining processes with fresh eyes we will find opportunities for process improvement - even if we initially think they are fine!

Overall, these scenarios provide compelling reasons for modeling organizational processes.

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