eBook

Making it Stick: Tips for Embedding Change

Adrian Reed

Access our **free**, extensive library at

www.orbussoftware.com/community

orbus software

Understanding the Problem

There is no doubt that organizations can realize a range of tangible and intangible benefits by improving their processes. Analyzing and re-designing business processes provides the opportunity for reflection, and provides the opportunity to make the processes quicker, slicker and better. Better processes lead to reduced waste, reduced cost and a better service to the customer—they may even contribute to better reputation or better staff morale. We might introduce elements of automation and IT to streamline the process even further and reduce manual work.

Yet in order to achieve the benefits of any kind of change, these changes need to 'stick'. As satisfying as it might feel to design a beautiful new process on paper, we have missed a trick if nobody actually follows that process! Yet I'm certain we have all seen situations where the 'official' documented process gathers dust whilst the workers responsible for carrying out the work at the coal-face have create their own ways of working. In other cases we might find that the new process proves unpopular, and within a few weeks or months everyone reverts back to the 'old' process. There are many reasons that a new process might not be adopted by its users. Perhaps the 'new' process didn't properly take into account the actual needs of the customer and other stakeholders—and therefore it was informally adapted out of necessity. In other cases it can be purely due to a resistance to change.

One critical thread that connects many of these problems is a lack of engagement. If the right people aren't engaged during the analysis and re-design of the process then we might not hear all the relevant views and we might not elicit and consider all the relevant requirements. This may lead to us inadvertently designing a process that will never work effectively — and therefore the process users and stakeholders will have no option but to 'tweak' or change it when it is implemented. This highlights the importance of assessing the stakeholder landscape and also utilizing the right elicitation techniques. It's also important that we take a business-centric view to our process re-design efforts, and we avoid 'dumping' a new process on a business unit and disappearing. This involves planning (and perhaps piloting) the implementation, considering the human side and considering what training is necessary. It's also important that consideration is put into what happens after the new process is bedded in, including who will monitor and assess whether the relevant benefits have been achieved, and it is important that the process itself is reviewed regularly to see if there are opportunities for further incremental changes. We'll explore each of these angles in the remainder of this paper.

Assessing the Stakeholder Landscape

When we are considering altering or improving a process, it's important that we consider which stakeholders might have a valid interest in the change. Often, there are a range of very visible stakeholders, and it can be tempting to limit our attention to those. Perhaps there are particular departments that have raised the need for the change, or perhaps there are specific subject matter experts who we know need to have a direct involvement in the process re-design exercise.

However, it can pay dividends to spread the net wider and think beyond the usual suspects. A useful starting point is to create a list of potential stakeholders. In order to create this initial list, it can be worth brainstorming and examining the stakeholder landscape from two dimensions; firstly to examine the stakeholders who have an interest in the process overall and secondly, those stakeholders who have an interest in a part or a step in the process.

By considering each process step, we are ensuring that we consider the wider stakeholder landscape. For each step, we consider who has an interest or who has power or influence. We might write an individual's name here—or perhaps a more generic category such as 'HR Manager' or 'Finance Team'. If we write a generic stakeholder category, it will be important that we find a named representative later. An example is provided in figure 1:

Process Name	Request Training Course
Process Owner	Joe Green, Learning & Development Manager

Process Step	Actor(s) and stakeholder(s)
1. Review & capture potential training needs	All department employees
2. Agree training course	Employee & Department Manager
3. Review available training dates	HR Manager
4. Approve course dates	Employee
5. Approve training & authorize request	HR Manager
6. Raise purchase order	Finance
7. Schedule training	External training provider
8. Attend training	Employee
9. Issue invoice	External training provider
10. Pay invoice	Finance
11. Assess effectiveness of training	Employee & Department Manager

Other Known Process Stakeholders / Actors	Nature of interest
Head of Compliance	Ensure that the employee's data is held securely and that all relevant data protection legislation is adhered to.
Head of Learning & Development	Ensure that training adheres to overall L&D strategy.
Head of Procurement	Ensure that only preferred training providers are used (or, if other training providers are engaged, that they are added to the preferred supplier list).
IT Staff	Maintain the system that allows requests to be raised.

Figure 1: Sample table for examining stakeholders

There will undoubtedly be overlap and you may find that a stakeholder gets highlighted or mentioned several times. This is a positive thing and it helps us to understand those stakeholders that have a wide engagement. The table above is useful to explore and uncover stakeholders and after conducting this exercise we may decide to create a single list, perhaps with the individual stakeholders' names, job roles, and we might even consider their level of interest and influence. It is also valuable to consider their attitude towards the potential change—are they supportive, or are they likely to try to block the project? Knowing this in advance can help us make a stakeholder management plan. We are unlikely to need to interact with every single stakeholder, but ensuring we have adequate representation is key. Ensuring we know which stakeholders we need to consider and casting the net wide can help us avoid missing a crucial person.

Use a Variety of Elicitation Techniques

In order to understand how an existing process really works—warts and all—it's necessary to elicit information, problems, ideas and potential requirements from our stakeholders. It can be tempting to rely on a single elicitation technique—perhaps we hold a workshop and rely on the information we gain in the workshop to help us determine where to make improvements. Yet there are a whole range of investigation and elicitation techniques available to us, and by carrying out a rich mixture of activities we will gain a 360 degree view of the problem. We'll understand the process better, the business problem better and we'll be able to propose a wide range of solutions. Elicitation techniques that are particularly beneficial are listed below, but this is by no means an extensive list:

- **Workshops:** A well facilitated workshop allows collaboration between stakeholders. This allows the range of perspectives and views to be discussed, and for any conflict to be debated and hopefully resolved. When run well, a workshop can be a very effective use of time, and can help our stakeholders to quickly and concisely describe the end-to-end process and any related problems.
- **Interviews:** A one-on-one (or even a one-on-two) interview can be a useful way of establishing a particular stakeholder's perspective on a process or a problem. As well as finding out how the process works, we can also find out their ideas for improvement. Some stakeholders might be more open in a one-on-one conversation, as in a workshop situation they may feel unable to raise their views if there are 'dominant' characters in the room.
- **Observation:** One perennial challenge when we are analyzing existing processes is that of 'tacit knowledge'. This relates to knowledge that is so ingrained in our stakeholders' minds that they forget to tell us about it! They might inadvertently forget to tell us critical steps in a process, and by observing we can see what really happens. Observation also helps us gain an appreciation for the culture and environment our stakeholders work in, and can help us see 'first-hand' any ingrained problems that the users overlook as they are so used to dealing with them.
- **Document Analysis:** When we are examining a process and there is documentation available, this can be extremely useful to examine. Different analysts use the phrase 'document analysis' to mean subtly different things. On the one hand, it might involve examining forms or reports that are used during the process itself. Examining these might give us insight into the data that is captured and may even highlight potential problem areas. On the other hand, there may be general process and procedural documentation that helps us gain an understanding of the situation. Even outdated documents can be useful —they give us a starting point on which we can follow up with interviews.
- **Questionnaires:** If there are a large number of individual process stakeholders or users, a questionnaire can be a useful tool. It can be useful to capture information about how frequently particular problems are perceived to occur, and perhaps how different teams perceive the severity of particular problems. It can also be used to gain a sense of the frequency of particular activities or exceptions. Of course, as with any questionnaire, we'll never get a 100% response rate, and the results we get may represent an element of perception and opinion rather than fact. However, this may give us a useful basis on which to investigate further.

Utilizing a range of elicitation and analysis techniques will help us to ensure we really understand the existing process and any underlying problems. Not only this, by spending time with the key people involved with the process, we build relationships and rapport. They know that we are there to help, and we can ensure that they are an integral part of the process redesign activity. With a bigger 'stake' in the re-design effort, they are more likely to champion the project, and help us make it a real success. Additionally, by ensuring we view the process from different perspectives and angles, we avoid the trap of solving a problem for one group of stakeholders, but creating a bigger problem for another group!

Be Business Centric (Don't Dump and Disappear)

In many ways, re-designing a process on paper is the easy part. Arguably, even implementing new technology can be the easy part of a project—although it rarely feels that way! A much harder element of a project can be to get people to utilize the capabilities that the new system provides, or to adopt the new processes.

A classic response to these challenges is to create a communication plan and to engage the relevant staff early. Yet, so often communication planning becomes an after-thought, or it is the first thing to get deferred when time is running short. We should treat both of these aspects of the project with equal importance. In fact, it can be extremely beneficial to think beyond traditional communication planning and to ask the wider question: "What can we do to ensure that the business is fully ready, willing and able to absorb this change when it is deployed"? There may be a number of activities that need to happen in the lead-up to the change, including:

- Communication about why the change is needed
- Training on new processes and systems
- Provision of help, guidance and notes on new processes
- Provision of process documentation in a clearly understood notation, in a common repository so there is a 'single view of the truth' for all involved
- Engaging 'super users' within departments to be localized experts and to champion the change
- Regular road-shows or town-hall meetings on the lead up to implementation
- Workshops and focus groups with those affected to build buy-in and elicit opinion and ideas (this is another source of insight and requirements)

Considering these factors up front can pay real dividends, and can help ensure our processes bed in smoothly. However, of equal importance is providing support after the change has been deployed. We shouldn't dump and disappear! We should ensure that during the 'bedding in period' there is practical support on hand. Additionally, we should ensure that there is the ability and appetite to tweak the process. So often, when we start to actually use an amended process for the first time, we discover additional improvement opportunities, or we uncover a missing requirement. Running a small-scale pilot before launching a large change can help to iron these issues out in advance.

Monitor the Benefits

After the process has bedded in, the organization can start to monitor whether the anticipated improvements have been made. It's important that there is a clear process 'owner', and also a clear owner who will be responsible for assessing and analyzing the benefits. This could, of course, be the same person. This person will need to ensure that the relevant data and metrics are collated so that analysis of the benefits can take place. The actual benefits should be compared against those in the business case or other document that has been created to justify the change.

It's important that this exercise is carried out objectively and transparently. There may be an understandable temptation to overstate the benefits—to make the change look more successful than it really was—particularly if there has been significant budget devoted to the change. Yet doing so prevents us from learning and enhancing the process even further. After all, if we discover that we haven't achieved the benefits that we expected, we might find that a small incremental tweak will release a large set of additional benefits.

It's useful to build the collection and collation of data into the process itself. Rather than marking out the monitoring of benefits as a separate and special activity, we can build this into our 'business as usual'. In many cases, we may need to collect the data for operational reasons anyway, so re-purposing it may well create no additional overhead.

Empower Incremental Changes

When implementing a process improvement, it is a perfect opportunity to foster a change to the way that the team thinks about their work. In some cases, a process may have remained relatively static and unchallenged for years. People may have—up until now—felt unable to raise suggestions for improvement. If this is the case, we have the perfect opportunity to start to plant the seeds of an innovative culture.

We may well have engaged and spoken with a range of process users during our elicitation (see point 2 above), but we will have been in touch with many more as we rolled out the change. We should have carefully crafted an efficient and effective process that meets the needs of today and also addresses any anticipated future needs.

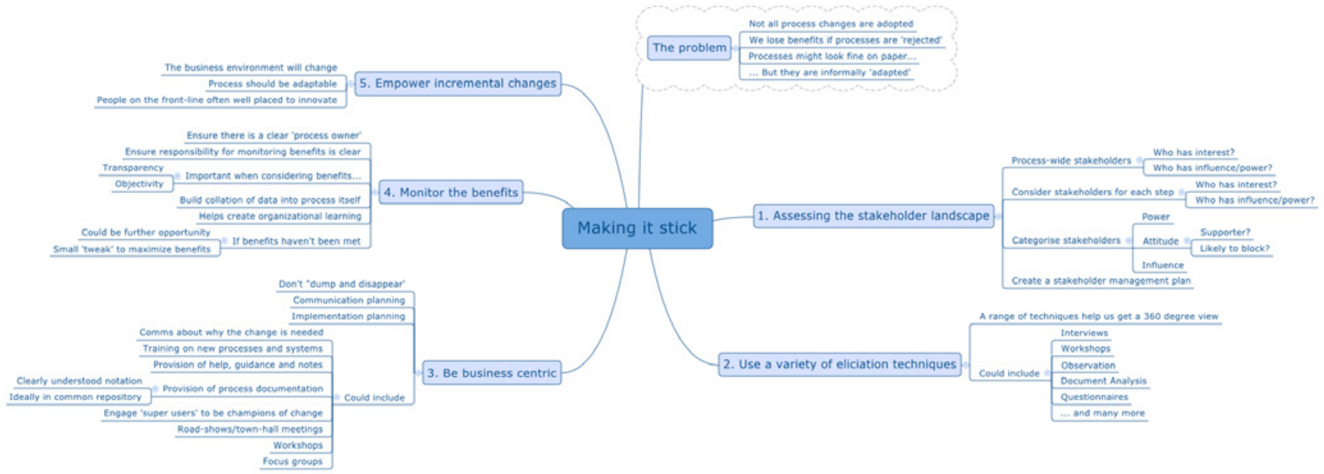
Yet, in reality, the business environment moves quickly. In 12, 18 or 24 months' time there may have been a radical change in customer expectations, or there may be new trends that we need to consider. The very stakeholders and process users that we engaged in our re-design effort are often well placed to anticipate and plan responses to these changes.

Rather than seeing the process as a static, robust, and never-changing artifact that is etched in tablets of stone, we can encourage a culture of incremental innovation. When we implement the new process we could also implement suggestion schemes, encourage regular process reviews, and provide guidance and help when needed. We can provide clear guidelines on how the process is managed and changed—who has the authority to agree specific changes. Perhaps small changes can be implemented quickly, with larger ones requiring further consideration and sign-off. By providing a process that can adapt to its environment, we ensure that it is fit for purpose for today and tomorrow. All of this can be greatly helped by ensuring that any process and procedural documentation is stored in a common notation in a single repository. There is a clear 'master', and when an update is being discussed, everyone is on the same page.

Conclusion

Business process improvement initiatives will only be successful if the changes 'stick'. Stakeholder engagement and a pragmatic implementation approach are crucial. To maximize our chances of success, it is beneficial to assess the stakeholder landscape, ensure we are utilizing appropriate elicitation techniques whilst taking a business centric view. Ensuring the process is flexible and responds to future change will be beneficial, and ensuring that benefits are measured and monitored can lead to further changes and innovation.

A summary of this article is shown in figure 2 below:



Further reading

Readers interested in the topics raised in this paper may find the following resources useful:

Cadle, J, Turner, P & Paul, D et al (2010) Business Analysis Techniques: 72 Essential Tools for Success, BCS, Swindon

IIBA® (2015) A guide to the Business Analysis Body of Knowledge® (BABOK® Guide) Version 3.0, IIBA, Toronto

Paul, D, Yeates, D & Cadle, J et al (2014) Business Analysis (third edition), BCS, Swindon

Pullan, P, Archer, J et al (2013) Business Analysis & Leadership : Influencing Change, Kogan Page, London

Reed, A. "Understanding More From Stakeholders" [Online] www.orbussoftware.com/resources/downloads/understanding-more-from-stakeholders/

Reed, A "Running Effective Process Analysis Workshops" [Online] www.orbussoftware.com/resources/downloads/running-effective-process-analysis-workshops/

Reed, A. "Observing the Process: How to see and document what happens on the ground" [Online] www.orbussoftware.com/resources/downloads/observing-the-process-how-to-see-and-document-what-happens-on-the-ground/

Reed, A "Adrian Reed's Blog" [Online] www.adrianreed.co.uk

About Adrian Reed:

Adrian Reed is a Consulting Lead Business Analyst who is passionate about the analysis profession. He is Principal Consultant and Director at Blackmetric Business Solutions (www.blackmetric.co.uk), where he provides business analysis consultancy and training solutions to a range of clients in varying industries. He is also a director of the UK chapter of the International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA). Adrian is a true advocate of the analysis profession, and is constantly looking for ways of promoting the value that good analysis can bring.

You can read Adrian's blog at http://www.adrianreed.co.uk and follow him on Twitter at http://twitter.com/UKAdrianReed

Orbus Software UK
London

Orbus Software US
New York

Orbus Software AUS
Sydney

Orbus Software RSA
Johannesburg

enquiries@orbussoftware.com | **www.orbussoftware.com**

Seattle Software Ltd. Victoria House, 50-58 Victoria Road, Farnborough, Hampshire, GU14 7PG. T/A Orbus Software. Registered in England and Wales 5196435