

White Paper

Building a Compelling Case for Business Process Improvement

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Craig is known throughout the business world as “The Process Ninja” – he is a passionate advocate of business process management.

His talent for making things simple has resulted in a proven track record of saving organizations millions of dollars whilst simultaneously improving the customer experience.

Named as one of the top process bloggers in the world by both the Process Excellence Network and Processpedia, Craig's work has been featured on the BNet, Telstra, Flyingsolo, BPM Leader, PEX Network, iDatix and Orbus Websites as well as in the Herald-Sun Newspaper.

Contact Craig to discuss how he can improve your organization.

Often, the hardest part of bringing business process improvement (BPI) to life in an organization is in building a compelling case to get the initiative up and running.

This white paper provides a structured approach to building a compelling case for business process improvement (BPI) that will get staff at all levels of the organization involved and motivated to make the change a success.

It is intended to be used as a practical guide for Process Analysts, Change Managers and Business Architects to get buy-in to a programme of organizational change.

In summary the whitepaper details:

- Why you need a compelling case
- A nine step pathway to ensuring business process improvement initiatives obtain the necessary commitment to ensure success.

Process is not an Island - Why you need a Compelling Case

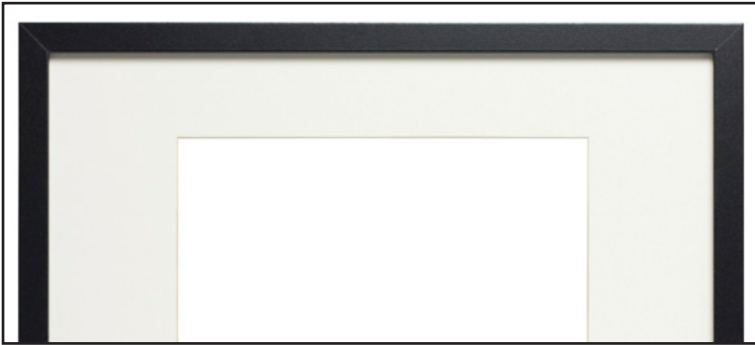
In every organisation there are a multitude of projects, programmes and initiatives being pushed by different sponsors at any one time. So how do you get your BPI initiatives noticed, sponsored and implemented ahead of the pack?

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Fortunately it is often very easy to prove the benefits of business process improvement projects. Few projects have such easy to quantify benefits in terms of cost savings and improvements in service to customers. Still, many BPI projects fail or are never delivered. The following method details an approach to ensure that your BPI initiative is both compelling and continuous.

The Method

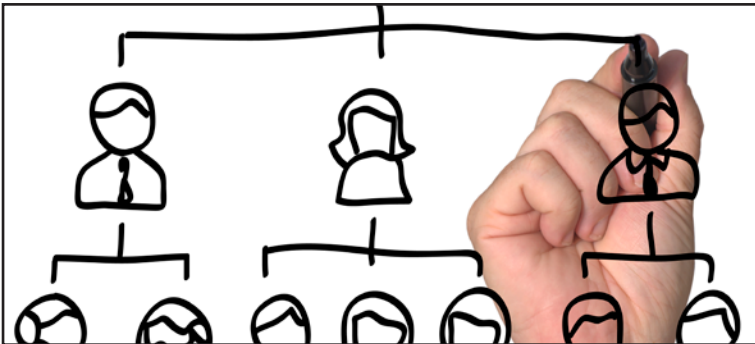
1. Understand the Big Picture



Before you do anything you must be clear in your own mind as to what you are trying to achieve so that you can communicate a clear vision to others. The first step must always be to ensure that you understand how the BPI initiative links to the organization's strategy. Ensure that you and your boss have the same vision and the vision ties directly into the higher level organizational goals. If possible have

a high level framework or methodology prepared that you can show others. People like to see structure and linkage from high level to the detail – in other words a blueprint for how you are going to deliver value!

2. Survey the Organizational Landscape



Before you get too excited about big picture vision and blue sky strategies, get your feet back on the ground. Dig out that organizational chart on the intranet – you're going to need it. Book in meetings with the managers of all the operational areas that are within the scope of your initiative. Keep the tone light and friendly, for example:

Hi First name,

I'm looking to get a bit of a brain dump on the different areas of the business as well as to sit with some of the processing staff to see how things are done "in the trenches"!

Was wondering if you could spare some time to tell me a bit about your area of responsibility and possibly introduce me to some staff who I could sit with.

Thanks, First name

Not everyone will be glad to see you! Some staff will view business process improvement as an uncomfortable threat and an unwelcome change to the way they do things – this is natural and to be expected. Try to get them to talk openly about their fears.

When sitting at a staff member's desk talking about what they do during their work day take note of what they have on their desks or walls (e.g. photos, toys, plants, souvenirs) and start a conversation about it – it's an excellent way to break down barriers and help them see that you are a human being too!

When you do sit with the managers give them a brief introduction as to what you are there to try to achieve – but the focus should be on understanding what they do – particularly their pain points.

Once you have spoken to the operational manager level, spend some time (a couple of hours per area) understanding what their operational staff do on a day-to-day basis. Ask them to walk you through processes. Take notes and photos of screens, forms and paperwork. This will give you an excellent overview of what the staff do (and they will likely complain about what they don't like).

3. Engage the C-Level



Identify all of the C level executives (or equivalent) and book a half hour meeting with all of them. By this point you will have an excellent overview of the main operational problems. As you talk to each C level executive pick out one or two real life examples where things could be improved. C-level executives rarely see what is happening on the front line and providing real life examples brings things to

life for them. Next, talk about how your BPI initiative will help to fix some of these problems, but don't forget to listen intently to what they believe the key issues are as these will help you to...

4. Define Key Messages



Key Messages convey what you are trying to achieve with your initiative. Think of them a bit like a mission statement. What you want to aim for are four to six key messages. For example:

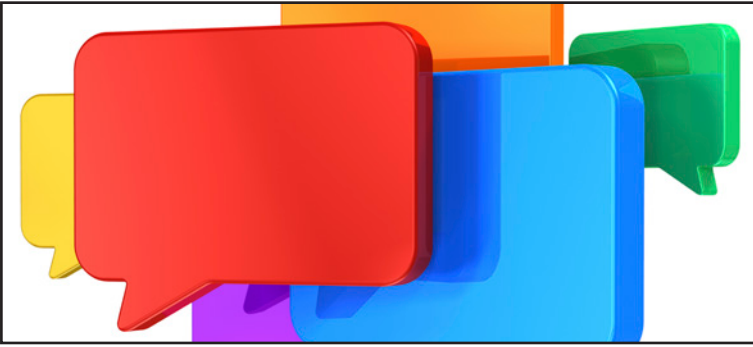
"Putting Our Customers First"

"Embracing Innovation"

"Reducing our paper usage"

Each key message should have a two to three line description to say how the key messages will be achieved. These key messages should form the basis for a repeatable communications strategy for your initiative.

5. Plan Communications



Just as firms have different customer types, so firms have different stakeholder types. Ideally tailor your communications to the audience you wish to target. For example – the message may be fundamentally the same but you may deliver the message to a C-level staff member differently than you would to operational staff.

Once key messages have been defined it's time to start talking about them. But first, you need a plan of attack. Ideally work with your change managers or internal communications people so that you can focus on BPI – after all, you're there to improve the business, not write advertising copy!

If you don't have that luxury, however you're going to have to put on your marketing hat and sell, sell, sell the concept.

When planning your communications think about all the methods open to you, such as:

- Email / intranet / video
- Teleconferences
- Events (Launch days, road shows, competitions)
- Physical (posters, mugs, t-shirts)

Try to find a balance in your communications – a combination of serious message with a fun medium can often be very memorable.

Identify your mediums to be used and plan the frequency – e.g. weekly, monthly, etc.

Don't forget to consider other projects and initiatives running in parallel – too much communication “noise” can kill the effectiveness of your key messages.

6. Show Them The Money!



Time is money. We've been improving process efficiencies for hundreds of years and it's not going to stop anytime soon. Show an executive a saving in process costs and a tidy business case that quantifies the payback period and they'll typically bite your arm off to implement it. Businesses love saving money as saving money equals more profit, and more profit equals happy CEO's and shareholders. It's hard

to increase revenues and even harder to increase profits – but it's often not so hard to save money when process initiatives can clearly highlight how to do it.

This can be achieved by calculating the cost savings between current and future state processes by using a modelling tool, such as Orbus' iServer.

7. Find a Nugget



It is usually fairly easy to identify process nuggets – these are processes that are bleeding money and are recognised as pain points in the organization. Other teams will point them out and scoff at them. Members of the teams that are responsible for the process may be very defensive about you looking at it! There's gold in those processes! Or at least there is money waiting to be saved. Your

strategy should be to find the nugget and implement improvements as quickly as you can. Ideally find a process that can demonstrate both a cost saving and a customer benefit.

8. Maintain Visibility



No matter what else is going on you should ensure that you are executing on your communications plan as it is critical to keep momentum. Even though you may be beaver away in the background improving processes, unless the business is aware of what you are achieving you may be heading for disaster.

9. Don't Talk - Implement



Fundamentally the reason that most BPI projects fail is that they don't deliver anything of value within the specified timeframes. It is critically important that you focus on implementing benefits to the business and their customers. There is nothing that sells the next BPI initiative like the success of the one before it.

Conclusion

This method provides a structured approach to gaining change management buy-in for business process improvement initiatives at all levels of the organization.

It has covered:

- Communicating a clear vision
- Understanding operational concerns
- Creating engagement with the c-level
- Defining key messages
- Planning communications for effectiveness
- Demonstrating potential cost savings
- Selecting an ideal first process for improvement
- The importance of maintaining ongoing visibility of success
- The criticality of implementing organizational benefits

Following the 9 key steps outlined will provide a sound basis for successful implementation of Business Process Improvement (BPI) initiatives.

To find out more about business process improvement, communications and change management please visit www.theprocessninja.com

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