

Business Process Improvement

You are juggling a constant stream of demands including "how do I get more out of what I do today with the resources available" while generating "more value" from what I actually find time to "do".

So where do you start? By Focusing.

It is important to understand that business process improvement and technology converge. Think of it as a DNA string with two separate elements wrapping themselves around each other.

While you always want to start with your ideal process, that ideal process must adjust based on the technology available. Thus you might design a process to work in a certain way, but the closest fit technology does not work step-by-step the way you envisioned - that is where the wrap around starts to occur. At this point you have two choices. Do you decide "this is what I want my technology to do and this is what my technology can do," and adjust my process to meet what the technology can do? Or do I adjust the technology to meet the requirements of my process? That is where Business Process Improvement comes in.

Business Process Improvement consultants can lead you through the discovery process although to begin you must have the right strategy to avoid wasting time and money.

What is a Business Process?

Frequently we are lost in our own world of work, focused upon what we do and we often have no idea what the next person does or what happens after that.

Business processes are the key mechanisms by which businesses deliver value to the marketplace. . Through the reengineering process organizations redesign their existing business methods to improve efficiency and flexibility.

What is business process improvement?

Processes represent the flow of work and information through an organization. These combinations of steps and activities are the mechanism for creating and delivering value to a customer. Many organizations do not understand, improve or manage how value is provided to the customer. You can use proven Lean and Six Sigma techniques to understand, analyze and improve the process.

Where do you start?

Your starting point will depend on your end goal. Once you understand the goals you can organize the project, the activities, and the improvements to align with those metrics, objectives and requirements. Where that goal comes from and how it plays out is unique to every organization but the tools and techniques can be applied across the board.

Who Needs It?

Both startup and established organizations benefit from Business Process Improvement. Your company might have a brand new strategy that you are trying to implement and you need systems to support that strategy. Through the process we can help you design the processes you are going to support that strategy to make that technology decision; this can include the requirements and implementation. It does not matter if this a young or well-established organization – a brand-new process or a change in established routes. At the end of the day what you are trying to create the most customer and shareholder value.

What are the signs your company needs business process improvement?

Errors are the first indicator that the process is broken. In some cases you may notice that customer service levels have slipped and a solution must be found before the impact is felt on the bottom-line.

Occasionally fast growing organizations need improvement assistance. Some organizations believe the only way to keep up with demand is by adding more people. Although if the solution is to throw more people at the issue there is likely something wrong in the underlining process.

Other organizations just want to be better and may not have the resources internally or otherwise to pull back and look at the bigger picture to see what needs to happen to make the organization better.

What is most important when conducting a business process improvement project?

Make sure you understand who the customer of the process is and what their requirements are. If you are always thinking about their needs you are focusing your attention in the right direction - if you do not know then you should be asking. Everybody should be thinking about the customer as they go about their day-to-day business. It is through this understanding of the customer, what they require, and how what I do fits into their satisfaction with our company that will make the biggest difference in the end.

Who should lead the effort?

The team must be led by somebody that knows the tools and techniques to get the most the process. Sometimes this person is not someone currently on the team and it is sometimes better to find external resources to ensure success.

Who should be involved?

If you are putting any kind of resources into a project you must have the right level of executive sponsorship – especially if the project is very visible. But at the same time every individual involved in a particular process must be part of the project team discussions. These individuals are key to the success of brainstorming, identification of opportunities are and solutions.

We often discover a duplication in efforts, incomplete hand-offs and extra work that could be streamlined if the person at the front of the process knew that was even being done at the back.

Change is hard. How do we deal with it?

You can come up with all of the brilliant ideas in the world, but if you cannot get the organization to accept it, adopt it, and implement it long-term then it is a total waste of time and effort. The change management element must start from the very beginning by establishing the priority and the importance with the executive project sponsor.

For change to stick long-term you must include the people impacted by the change in the process. No one person can come in with a magic wand and fix everything. Primarily because no one would understand what happened and why it happened, what was it that we fixed and why. And those are the people who must carry the process forward.

Open organization communication and getting the right people involved is pivotal. By conducting a stakeholder analysis at the beginning we can determine who has the power/and or the influence to negatively affect the project. Then we need to take action to make sure that person is brought on board and we are moving that person along the acceptance line.

What is the methodology?

Before we can discuss the concepts and tools of lean six sigma we must first define the project in terms of:

- What problem we are trying to solve?
- Where does the process starts and stop?
- What are the key metrics to improve?
- Who is impacted?
- From a customer perspective what are their requirements?

From there we can talk about the creation of value, the elimination of waste and focus on the process from end to end which allows us to initiate current state mapping session.

The facilitated mapping session details the basis of what the process looks like, where there are issues or hand-offs and delays. We can also uncover steps in the process that do not create value by finding the root causes that are known to impact the project.

Lean Six Sigma Focus Areas Include:

- Benchmark Assessment
- Process Mapping
- Six Sigma Analysis and Improvement
- Technical Blueprint
- Organizational Readiness Assessment
- Change Impact Analysis
- Organizational Structure Redesign
- Financial Impact Assessment
- Business Case and Return on Investment
- Continuous Process Improvement
- End-User and Executive Training

- Leadership and Organizational Change Management Support and Services

How do you measure success?

You always want to identify a key metric that you are trying to measure to and improve. The improvement of that metric may have financial opportunities as a result in addition to operational performance improvement within their business drivers.

Why Brown Smith Wallace Consulting Group?

As an outside partner we can provide objectivity in assessing your current processes, we can identify and prioritize opportunities for process improvement, and we can design and implement business process improvement solutions.

BSWC focuses on the combination of technology and business processes as defined by our strong financial, risk management and control background. Because the majority of our work is focused on the back office aspects and how you run your business we are able to connect the financial and risk management values to the process.

We are able to help you be a success because we identify with people throughout your organization from your receptionist to the CEO and board of directors. It is critical that people from all levels of the organization are comfortable. The comfort helps us draw out issues that are often times they have well known but the employees were too afraid to say it or did not know what to do with it. When we can help create that unique culture we can understand what the project really needs and bring the appropriate tools and methodologies to that. We do not have a preconceived notion of what it should be or how/what is going to work best.

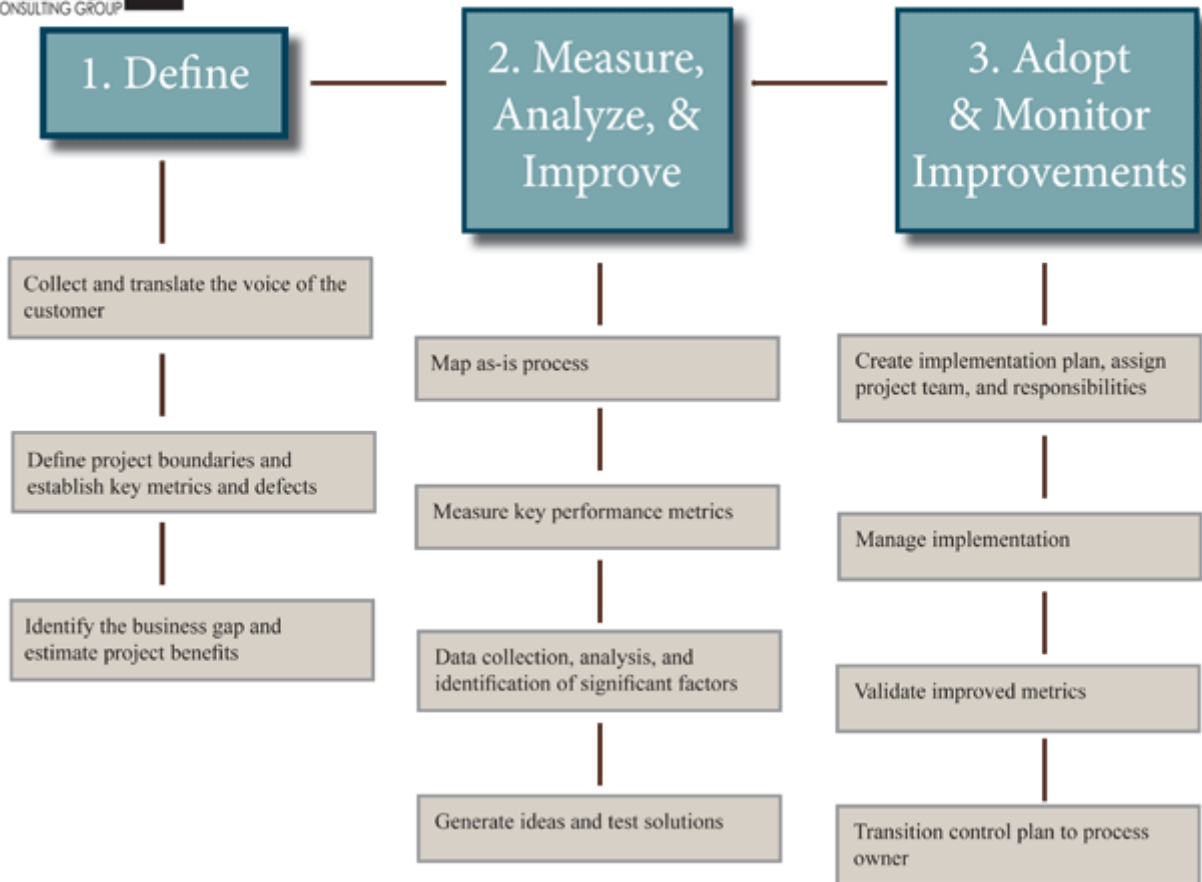
About The Brown Smith Wallace Consulting Group

The Brown Smith Wallace Consulting Group has been serving the distribution community for almost 25 years through the publication of the Distribution Software Guide, creating articles and industry research, giving complementary advice to distributors, and providing fee-based consulting services to companies who need assistance to select the best software packages for their business.

Sidebar (Include by methodology section):



Business Process Key Activities



Organizational Change Management