

The process dogma

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In my [previous blog post](#) I pointed out that *“technology alone does not solve all the problems, nor turn around a poor performing business”*, and that even though technology may be important, it won’t *“save the day in isolation”* because *“processes, culture and people are also critical”*.

Improving processes is indeed crucial, but for one reason or the other, it is seen as a nearly impossible task, for several reasons. Some of them may make sense, but more often than not the problem seems to be related to *“the way we’ve always done things”*.

There are a few things that can be done to overcome this dogma. The first thing is to really understand what processes we want to improve. And for that, it is important to understand that there are different types of processes:

- **Business Process:** the primary processes that reflect the core value-creating activities of the company – usually customer-focused (e.g. product development, marketing, sales).
- **Support Processes:** the processes that sustain the company and support its core value-creating processes – usually internal (e.g. finance, HR, facilities).
- **Management Processes:** the processes which help plan and govern the company’s operations – usually what shape the business (e.g. resources, risks, focus).

The second thing is to be aware of the fact that it is proven that by making processes more effective, efficient or transparent companies achieve incredible benefits:

- More streamlined operations, developing quality and consistency.
- Less waste and non-essential activities, lowering costs.
- Bigger focus on experience and customer, enhancing product outcome.
- Improved accountability and empowerment, boosting employee morale.
- Better service delivery, increasing customer experience.
- Happier customer, augmenting revenue and word to mouth.
- Further publicity, expanding sales and market share.

Finally, as Henry Ford once said *“Nothing is particularly hard if you break it down into small jobs”*, so break down process improvement in phases:

- **Plan** – identify the issue in hand, describe the problem, scope the improvement process, and establish roles and responsibilities.
- **Analyse** – review current process, define appropriate metrics, take baseline measurements, and determine possible root causes.

- **(Re)Design** – brainstorm ideas, prioritise counter-measures, design “to-be” process, recommend improvements, and test solution.
- **Implement** – plan training and education, deploy process, remove past artefacts, measure the results, and compare to baseline measurements.
- **Continuously improve** – monitor and analyse the process continuously

Process improvement is definitely not a piece of cake, but it is also far from being an impossible task, if you have the right methodology, skills and experience, as well as focus on core values and principles like agility, leadership, communication, collaboration, discipline, continuous learning, and human-centred mind-set.