

Process Assessment

University Process Innovation
Updated May 2016

Introduction

As you have discovered, business processes are extremely complex entities that even the people in the process lack sufficient awareness about how it functions. The Process Summary framework provides clarity of a business process breaking it down into the process, sub-processes, trigger(s) and result(s), and actors. The framework was developed by Alec Sharp, and for details on factors of the framework and step-by-step instructions on how to build the framework refer to the “Process Summary” document. While the Process Summary clarifies how a business process starts and ends, actors involved, and the underlying objectives, it does not establish the factors that provide context for the business process environment the actors work in. The Process Assessment framework is a variation of the Process Summary, but considers the factors of the business processes and the goals and constraints of the business process. These factors that dictate a process are known as enablers and business processes are constituted by 6 of them; Process Design, IT systems, Motivation and Measurement, Human Resources & Organization, Policies and Rules, and Facilities. The meaning of each enabler will be discussed later in the document.

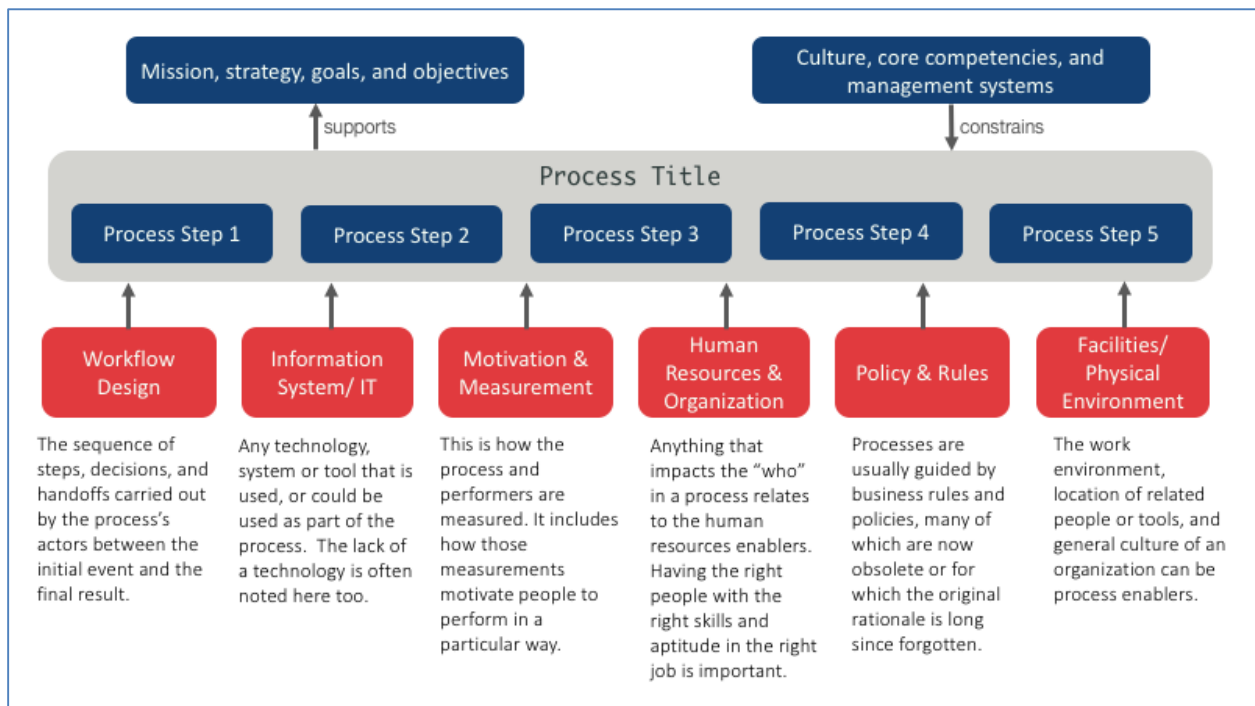


Figure 1. The process assessment with the general process summary, enablers, and process objectives and constraints.

I. Process Summary

The process summary is a familiar tool that was discussed in detail in the “Process Summary” documentation. The process summary should be completed prior to developing a Process Assessment, therefore it can be easily copied over. The few caveats transferring the process summary to the Process Assessment is to omit the trigger(s) and result(s), goal arrow, and the actors from the process. The result is shown in Figure 2 below.

The process summary in the Process Assessment still maintains the process, sub-processes, and core objectives of the process.



Figure 2. The process summary portion of the Process Assessment.

II. Enablers

The enablers provide context for the functional drivers of the process. There are 6 enablers of business processes, Workflow Design, Information Systems/IT, Motivation and Measurement, Human Resources & Organization, Policies and Rules, and Facilities/Physical Environment.

1. Workflow Design

The workflow design strictly focuses on the workflow of the process, including hand-offs and decisions made by the actors. The workflow is typically displayed as a swimlane diagram to show the hand-offs and delegation of work. Commentary can include general statements about recurring processes, inefficient process steps, etc.

2. Information Systems/IT

Systems and IT include any applications or tools that the actors interact with. These can be complex data system or simple documents or spreadsheets. Commentary can involve the actor interaction with the system, missing

functionality with current systems, requests for new features, lack of use of available tools, etc.

3. Motivation and Measurement

Motivation and measurement involve the drivers for an actor to perform their job well, in addition to how the actors are graded on their performance. Another word for this area is key performance indicators (KPIs) and this enabler is usually factored into an employee's performance review. The motivation and measurement should provide incentive for the actor to perform their job well, while enhancing the overall goals of the process. Commentary should include current KPIs, the motivation of the actors, inconsistent/lack of measurement, etc.

4. Human Resources & Organization

This is the overall functions of human resources and the organization as a whole, i.e. the skill of the workforce, how well they are trained, organization design, recruiting practices, as related to the business process. Discussions about distribution of responsibility (centralized or decentralized), staffing, reporting structures, management, etc. should be noted here.

5. Policy & Rules

The underlying policies and rules that dictate how a process must be run. These rules can come either from local/departmental, organizational, state, or federal levels. This can involve the interactions between the policies and rules for each organization. Another factor to include are "anecdotal policies," which are made up policies that actors follow because "that is how it has always been." In addition to noting any policies or rules that are problematic, the lack of understanding, enforcement, or existence of such should be included here.

6. Facility/Physical Environment

The physical location of people, processes, tools, and facilities can also affect a process. For example, if a document needs to be walked across campus to another building, or if the office is located off-campus. This also involves the physical design of a building and how it affects the facilitation of a process.

Once information is aligned with the 6 enablers, place the information underneath the corresponding enabler as shown in Figure 3. Information is written in bulleted lists using short statements providing the gist of an idea. Keep the statements concise, similar to a PowerPoint presentation, since information can be elaborated on more thoroughly during a meeting/workshop.

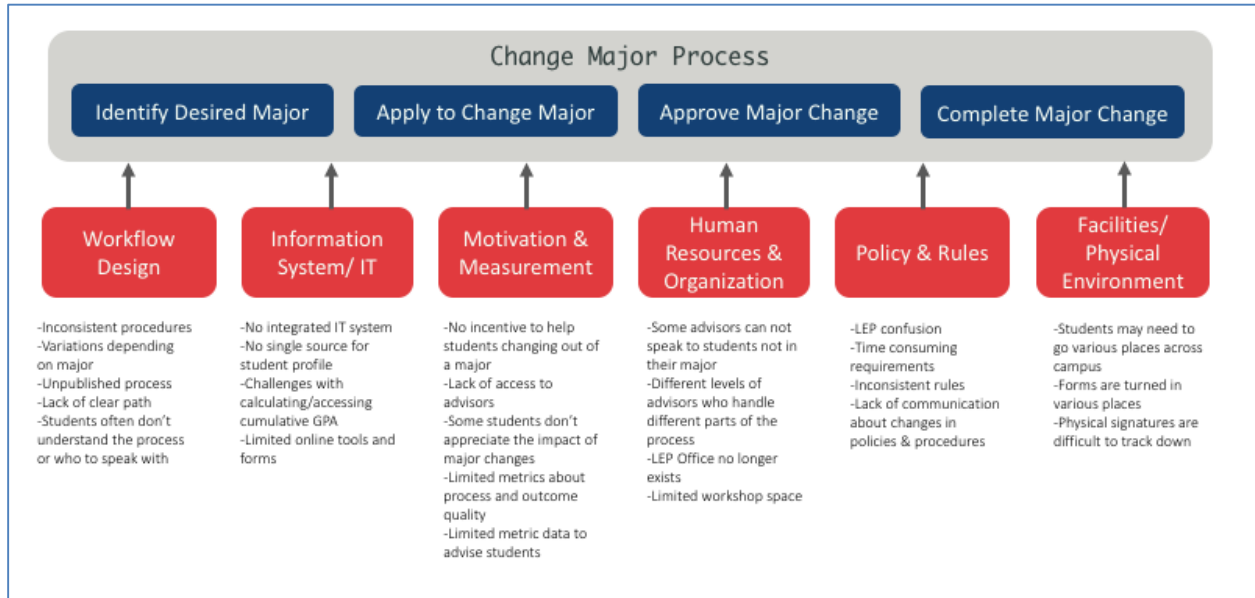


Figure 3. The process summary with the 6 enablers. Information on the current-state analysis of the process based on enabler is written below each enabler.

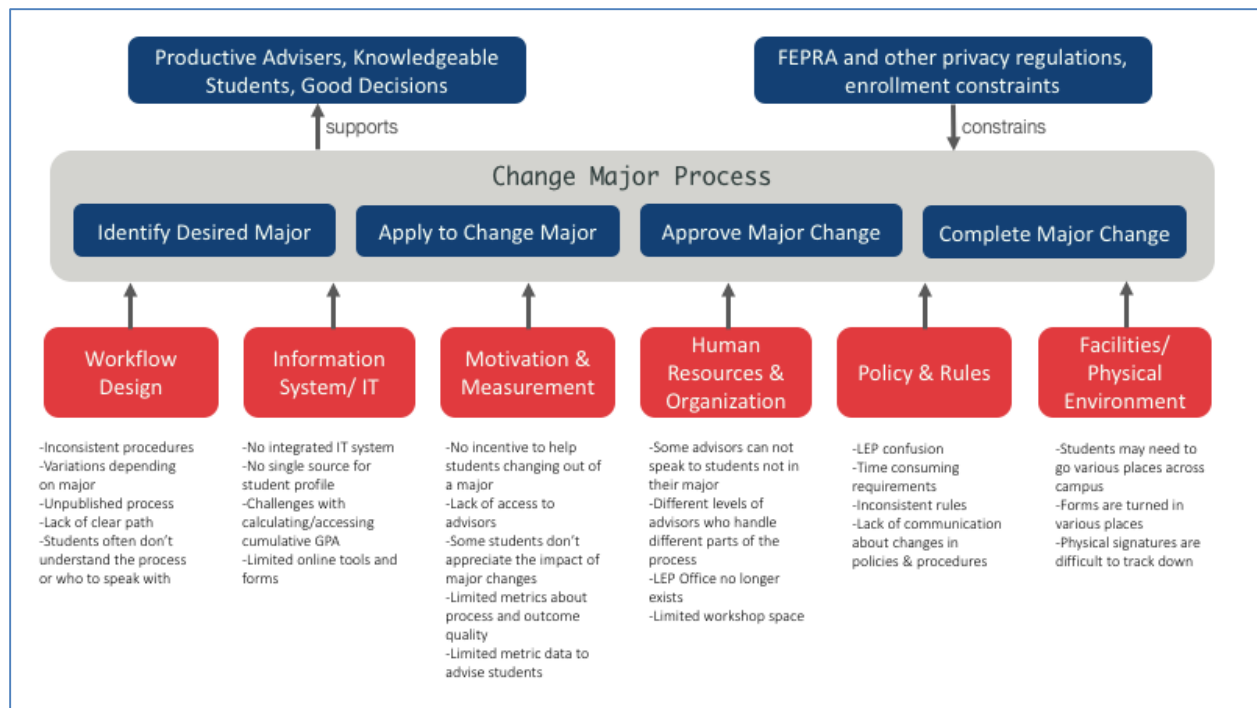
III. Goals and Constraints

A business process has goals to maintain a standard of service each time the process is conducted. The goals should be explicit where they have the ability to be measured. The constraints are the overall themes gathered from the interview notes, or through analysis of all of the data. Constraints are the areas hindering smooth operation of the business process, and most times accurately identified in the kick off meeting.

A convenient way to understand the roles of goals and constraints in the diagram is to integrate them with the enablers. The enablers must support the business process to consistently meet the goals of the process. For example, in Figure 4 a centralized source of information would support knowledgeable students, thus result in good decisions. Hindrances on the process as a result of poor execution of the enablers will constrain

your process and must be taken into consideration when doing an assessment. For example, in Figure 4 we list FERPA and privacy regulations as constraints to the process. Often, things listed as constraints are things that can not easily be changed to support the process.

Another distinction should be made between goals of the process and the objectives of the process from the process summary. The goals of the process are the external results the organization wishes to produce after completing the process. The objectives of the process are the internal results the organization wishes to meet at the end of the process. In some ways, the objectives of the process act as an enabler for the goals of the process.



IV. Conclusion

The Process Assessment Framework is extremely important to a process improvement effort. This single model holds a majority of the information required to understand a process. That is including the sub processes, the specific enablers and the key performance indicators. While building this model information is collected and displayed tracing a process, discovering what the user is trying to do, using the process specific metrics for improvement and identifying reasons the process is currently not

meeting standards. Since this is the culmination of collected information it is going to be used between information collection and recommendations as a tool to organize and display all of the information.