

The Alternative to Business Process – the RIGHT Approach

In my previous article, "[Business Process -- Irrelevant, Distracting and Dangerous](#)" I explained why the explosion in Business Information System and ERP implementation costs coupled to an explosion in [high profile and very expensive failures](#) is directly associated with what I term "Process Obsession", perhaps THE greatest ill in the business information systems arena today.

In this article I would like to present what I think the REALLY important issues are in designing, developing, customizing, configuring and commissioning integrated business information systems including ERP's. This approach is directed at exceptional [high value solutions](#) that greatly enhance corporate competitiveness, efficiency and effectiveness and produce tangible value.

This approach comprises:

1. Strategic discovery

Formal [strategic discovery](#) – get on the ground and study EXACTLY how the business operates – take lots of notes, ask lots of questions and constantly look for opportunities to improve.

Start with the CEO, then the rest of the executive team – this requires a lead consultant with deep business understanding AND deep business systems solution understanding who can ask the right questions and extract the right information and interpret it and add value it effectively.

[Discover the strategic essence](#) of the business – why it exists and how it thrives.

Then go away and document your findings in a formal structured **written** report which MAY include a few diagrams – flow charts are OUT unless there REALLY is a workflow of significance and even then a structured description will get the job done faster and better most of the time and be more easily understood. The typically used diagramming techniques are FAR too superficial to capture the REAL complexity of the business.

2. Logical and functional business entities

Precisely identify the logical and functional entities that make up the business – produce a structured list of high level functions that accurately reflects the current and future view of how the business is to be run. I am talking of logical entities like Factory, Assembly, Accounts Payable, etc – things that the client personnel are familiar with, the way real organization REALLY operates.

3. Data entities

Identify ALL major data entities (products, vehicles, creditors, etc) that must be modelled and supported and ensure that you have best fit software that caters for each component –

in developing a fully integrated solution this may require several different software products.

Draw an entity-relationship model of the entire operation and get the challenging modelling issues resolved – needs an expert in this technique plus an expert facilitator.

4. ALL possible classifications

Identify ALL possible classifications on ALL data entities that the business requires in order to comprehensively classify ALL logical entities as the business understand them towards being able to answer the questions we have NOT previously thought to ask”.

This means every possible validation list in every possible place so that as much intelligence about the business is captured. See the section on “[Strategically Enriching your Business Information System](#)” for detailed information.

Always start with a BLANK sheet of paper and an executive or executives to define the way they REALLY want things to be – see the article on “[The Power of an Executive with a Blank Sheet of Paper](#)” (or spreadsheet).

5. Master Data classifications – Strategic Engineered Precision Taxonomies

Populate all the Master Data main classification lists – Product Class / Product Group / Item Class, Chart of Accounts, Employee Class, etc with highly structured [Strategic Engineered Precision Taxonomies](#) (SEPT) that accurately reflect the executive strategic view of the business.

Again, start with an executive and a blank spreadsheet.

6. Clever software

Identify areas where there are opportunities to add pieces of [clever custom software](#) that enhance and strengthen the [strategic essence](#) of the business building on the highly structured classification data. Specify and develop these pieces of software and, where appropriate, purchase suitable pieces of complimentary software or add-on modules that you can get to do clever things because of the clever data, see the ASCO Case Study “[Doing things Differently and Better](#)”.

7. Strategic custom development

Undertake whatever major custom development is necessary to fit the solution to the business such that ALL strategic divers are full supported and that a highly aligned, fully integrated, precision solution is delivered.

8. Business simulation laboratory

Assemble all of this in a [Business Simulation Laboratory](#) operated to [Engineering standards](#) of rigour and test the software and configuration to destruction until it is NO longer possible to break it.

Then only SPECIFY (dictate) the workflow (process) from the executive and senior management level and optimized it.

Develop reports and models, develop training materials and train ALL staff until they are fully competent and conversant with the software. Do NOT release the system for live operation until all the above have been rigorously and exhaustively completed and a formal [“Go-Live Certificate”](#) has been issued.

9. Deploy a robust solution that delivers REAL value

Finally execute a comprehensively planned and carefully managed deployment in an environment in which ALL staff are fully trained before deployment and rigorous controls are in place to ensure that the system goes in smoothly.

10. VERSUS PROCESS

Please note that this is NOT in addition to Business Process, it is INSTEAD of Business Process.

The items listed above require the SAME people in the SAME room for similar amounts of time but with different facilitators and asking different questions about the same components of the business as for Business Process mapping, etc. It is impractical for the business to make these people available for both the method described above AND business process stuff and staff become frustrated when forced to participate in both of these so it is necessary to CHOOSE – one or the other!

And, as I said in the article on business process, business process is [irrelevant, distracting and dangerous](#).

I STRONGLY recommend that whether you are a business embarking on a business systems project or remediation or enhancement of an existing systems, OR a consultant who truly aims to deliver a high value outcome, that you engage with ALL the material on this site relating to the [Configuration](#) section and the [ERP Success](#) sections in particular.

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