

Article

Process Blueprints: The Forgotten Deliverable

Written by: John Slack, MBA, PMP

Peer reviews of a business project WBS (work breakdown structure) frequently show missing deliverables. Among the deliverables commonly missed are:

- A strong Change Management plan,
- A strong Hand-over plan, and
- A Process Architecture Package as a deliverable.

These are inter-related deliverables. The Change Management component ensures that we address the human dimension of change. The Hand-over component ensures that what is produced does not deteriorate over time because no one “owns” the change. The Process Architecture Package is the frequently forgotten deliverable that ensures the quality of the Change Management Plan and the Hand-over Plan.

If you were asked to take on a renovation job in the construction industry, you would ask for a number of things that help your planning. One obvious request is what the client wants done, now and over the long term. In addition you would ask for the architecture package describing the current structure. This package would include at least the blueprints of the existing structure especially the “As-Built.” It would be expected that part of your project deliverables would be a set of revised blueprints showing the structure’s current state as of project conclusion. The receiving organization’s facility management group would take charge of this package of blueprints, layouts, etc. This package would then be available for use in maintenance and/or any future renovations to the structure.

Many projects we see are undertaken to improve business processes. This is equivalent to undertaking a renovation of an existing building. Unfortunately that package of “As Built” blueprints, layouts and designs are seldom there for business processes; yet that package can, and should be, there. If it does not exist, the project manager needs to add some amount of work to the project to produce what the construction trade would call the “As Built” and business analysts call “Current State.” Whether the “Current State” does, or does not, exist the project manager needs to ensure that the project deliverables will include the “Current State” as of project completion. Without a promise to produce this deliverable, the revised business process becomes more and more of an unknown quantity.

The package would consist of several of the commonly used business analysis tools such as:

- Context Diagrams,
- Process Flow Charts, and
- Use Cases

The Context Diagrams would show the intent of a given business process and it would be supported by a set of performance measurements that will allow the process owners to be confident that the process is doing what it was intended to do and achieving target efficiencies and effectiveness. We have all seen process improvement projects that optimized process components at the expense of the overall process. Context Diagrams ensure that we don’t get lost in the details.



The Process Flow Diagrams will take things to the next level of detail. This view allows us to look for ways to control, hopefully improve, efficiency and effectiveness within the process. It will also allow us to identify the measurement points where the process control data could be captured. This approach allows the business process owner to apply Total Quality Management (TQM) principles to that process.

The Use Cases would capture a set of business transactions that will reflect the process intent and required capabilities in a testable format. This ensures that any changes to the process maintain that intent and capability.

Finally, the Process Architecture Package helps test the reality of the Project Management Plan. Without a plan to define and document “Desired State” and, if required, to document “Current State” the Change Management plan is probably deficient. Similarly the Hand-over plan is deficient if this deliverable is not identified as part of the transition. If no one will accept eventual ownership of the Process Architecture Package, the project manager has a major Stakeholder issue. Someone has not been included who must be or an identified Stakeholder doesn’t understand his or her role and responsibilities.