

December 2009

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*Topic of the Month*

## **Don't concentrate on projects only – think about process operations**

*There is a tendency to reduce process management to projects. Operations of processes – be they new processes or changed processes - seem to play only a minor role in discussions about and the application of BPM. In consequence, levels of BPMS implementations remain low and certainly below analysts expectations and in many cases reduced to one-off, isolated solutions. It might also be one of the reasons why BPM – or at least BPMS - projects have continually failed to infuse the organisations with a process mindset.*

This is all the more remarkable as the quality of a process in terms of its performance, output/results, cost, agility etc. is not determined at the time of the handover from project to line of business but only during the operations phase – a time by which the original project team will have been dissolved.

What we tend to find in most cases when we review process initiatives is that the scope of the projects cover only 'process readiness', leading to a situation in which an unprepared organization is suddenly confronted with a new or different process and left to cope with the consequences. The tendency to ignore the 'business readiness' challenges may be explained by pressures to keep project budgets small and the belief that an organization will somehow find a way to deal with a new process.

“There ain't no such thing as a free lunch” would be a good motto for any process initiative. What companies think they may save on process projects by cutting so-called non-essential tasks will haunt them (though perhaps not the same set of people) throughout the process lifecycle in terms of higher costs, employee and customer dissatisfaction, reduced agility and the need to bring process overhauls forward ahead of schedule.

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Companies which understand the very basic difference between a process which functions and a process which is 'operationable' also understand that processes will only create long-term value for companies qualified to operate processes.

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