

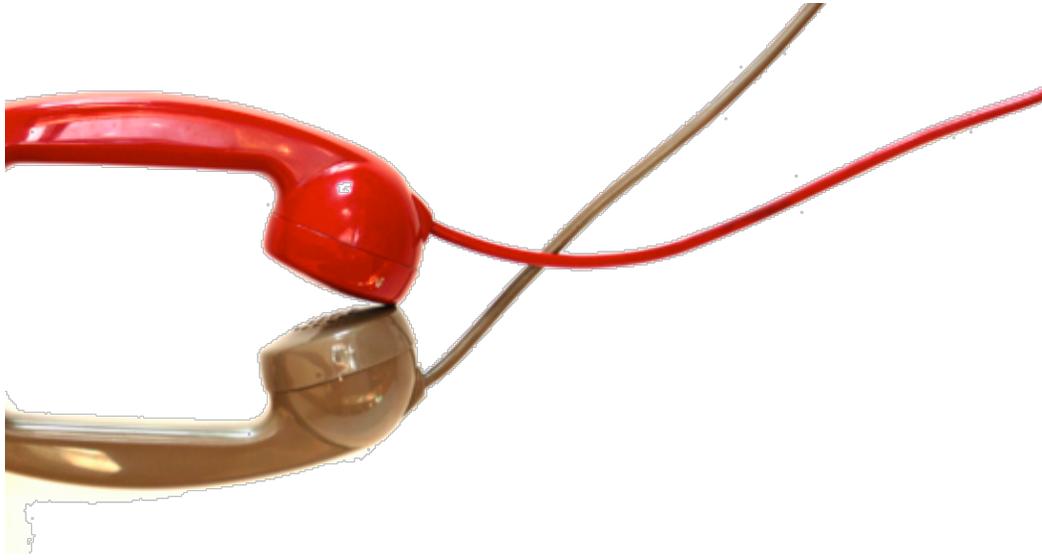


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Ensuring the success of BPM initiatives: Effective communication strategies

By Sandy Chong & Michael Rosemann



To achieve successful deployment of any business process management (BPM) initiative or program, an understanding and a competent use of communication strategies are vital. However in most cases, those who are savvy in the methods of BPM lack the appropriate but critical know-how of effective communication. Applying appropriate communication strategies will help to dissolve a high level of resistance, and in turn gain support and buy-in from executives.

BPM initiatives tend to focus on the KPIs and IT requirements, which are necessary steps in the planning phase. Yet, communication issues are hardly addressed, and good communication is what will enable employees to understand, embrace, and support the BPM initiatives.

Those who are responsible for developing new strategies or BPM initiatives often fail to communicate sufficiently with the relevant stakeholders. Executives would then fill the void with their own inaccurate

beliefs, which could undermine the original intent of the organization's leaders. Otherwise, communication is sometimes done in a way that is too complex for stakeholders to comprehend. It is no wonder stakeholders are unable to act upon the new initiative, neither can they see how the new initiative would affect their daily work.

Changing the way employees and top management think about business processes is one of the core issues faced by organizations when attempting BPM.

The role of communication

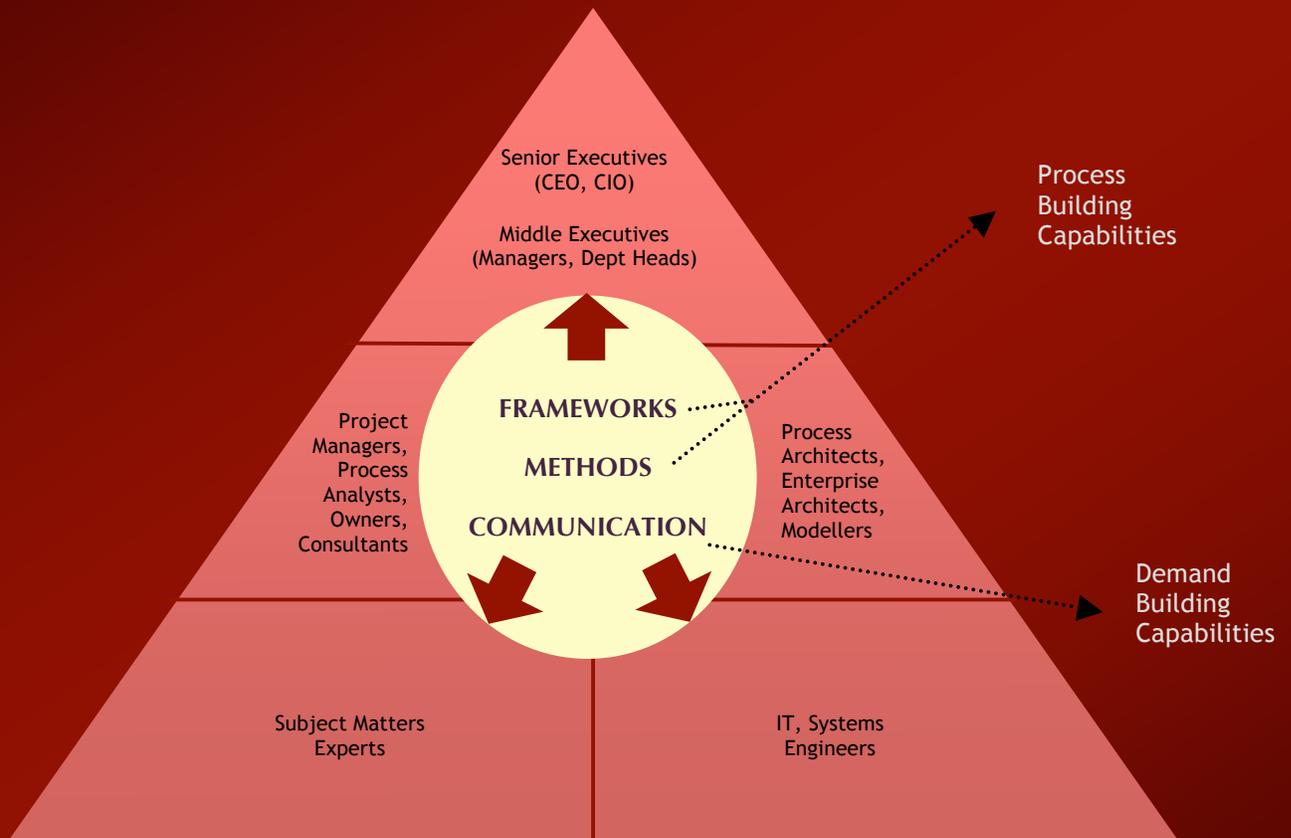
One of the best ways to accomplish the BPM goal is to issue a message clearly, stating the management's commitment to the program, and to outline the role that every employee has to play. This implies that a sound communication structure must be in place before implementation.

BPM success is centered around three core elements:

- Understanding BPM frameworks
- Knowing the implementation methods
- A good communication plan.

The first two elements build process capabilities. On the other hand, having a good communication plan builds demand - in a way that engages all the stakeholders, and moves them to action at the same time. Stakeholders from inside and outside the organization must be considered in this demand-building exercise (see Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Communication a core element of BPM success



A marketing perspective

Techniques found in the area of marketing communications provide a useful communication framework for BPM implementers. The marketing mix is one of the key concepts in modern marketing; it represents all the elements that the firm needs to consider in order to generate a desired response in its chosen target market. In particular, the 4P framework can be applied to the BPM context: Product, Place, Promotion and Price (see Table 1). Table 2 provides a list of communication types, channels and tools appropriate in BPM initiatives.



Fig. 2: Marketing Mix

Table 1: Basic marketing framework in the BPM context

Fundamental Marketing Concepts	Relevance to BPM Context
Target Market (stakeholders) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Market Segments 	Internal marketing of all potential BPM users in the organization. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Groups, teams, departments, or branches of BPM users with similar (thought unique) information and improvement needs
Product (content) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Product Features - Product Lines 	Relevant and related content, taking into account user' roles in the organization. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information, applications tools and facilities available via the BPM projects or programs. Features include the ability to streamline work function and business process. - Customized process design available for different user segments (e.g. reduction of service errors for customer service department, improvement of product delivery for logistic department, quicker decision making in business development unit, etc.)
Place (distribution)	Distribution of content and knowledge to users on both a 'push' and 'pull' basis. Include user training, corporate website, coaching sessions, upcoming business improvement projects
Promotion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal selling - Non-personal selling - Brand name 	Communication with the potential user community to establish product awareness, and subsequently about the benefits associated with BPM. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation on BPM and benefits to individuals in targeted segments (e.g. departmental meeting, coaching sessions) - Internal advertising of BPM and benefits to individuals in targeted segments (e.g. staff newsletter, promotional videos) - Development of a BPM identity (e.g. by naming BPM in its own organizational or functional context)
Price (cost)	Internal costing arrangements associated with the development and delivery of improved process via BPM initiatives



Communication Type	Communication Tools	Communication Channels
Formal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department/Team meeting Corporate announcement Milestone recognition events Written letter or email 	Traditional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Memos Newsletter Posters & Leaflets Interviews Corporate magazine Shirts with special logo for team members Suggestion & question box 	Mass <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual meetings Media announcement Mass Emails Team building Road show Conference Workshops Storytelling Community of practice Executive briefing session Study tours
Informal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Morning coffee sessions Networking lunch Friday drinks session Retreat Word of mouth 	Electronic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation slides Video clips E-bulletin Blogs Emails Discussion board Online Survey Online Chat Intranet posting updates 	Interpersonal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coaching Face-to-face meeting Training course Calls from CEO Internal roundtables BPM strategy steering committee meeting Phone hotline

Table 2: Communication strategies for BPM initiatives

In conclusion, it is recommended that organizations should think of how to build up its communication capacity over the long term, as human resistance will inevitably confront BPM initiatives.

About Us

Verity Consulting is a boutique international marketing & communication consultancy specializing in corporate training, senior executive coaching and business advisory services.

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