



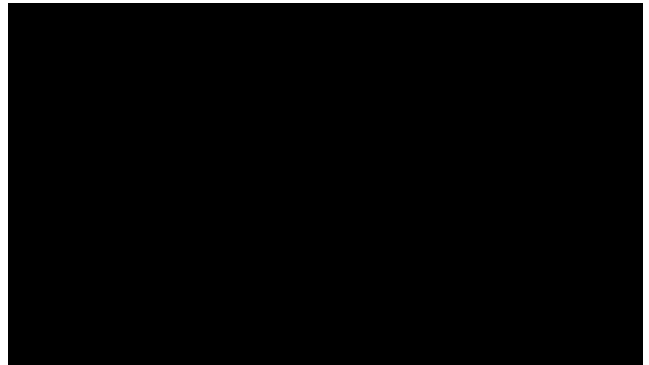
Business Process Reengineering Tricks and Traps

A Report By Xalles Limited

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Introduction

This report takes a new look at an old subject, business process reengineering. There have been many books and articles written about the subject and all its theories, techniques and limitations. So why one more? As you know from reading our other works and reports, our philosophy at Xalles is to try to arm you with a few key tools and concepts that are often underutilized and relatively unknown to give you an edge on the competition and your peers. And that is the purpose of this report. There are a number of tricks and traps. If you can correctly apply the tricks in a timely fashion while avoiding the traps, it will usually mean a world of difference in the results of your efforts.



Trap #1: Subject Matter Experts

This trap is really a series of traps that many companies fall into. Some projects use the same team who created the current processes to reengineer the new ones. Some projects load the process reengineering team with too many like minded people. This can take the form of too many systems people versus business people, too many business people from the same department, too many people with the same demographics (location, age, educational background) etc. Be careful of how “subject matter experts” are chosen. Experts on the current processes need to be balanced with people who can bring fresh ideas to the process.

Trap #2: As-Is and To-Be Modeling Method

Mapping out the current processes and then embarking on the subsequent effort to create a new process is a common practice. Often the act of mapping the existing processes can limit the creativity of the effort to develop something better. Human psychology theories warn us that too much exposure to one model can stifle our thinking and creativity. There are a couple of ways of avoiding this trap if you have complex existing processes that need to be mapped. One tactic is to start the reengineering by setting goals and starting the mapping of the to-be process before the current processes have been mapped. Then, once the initial “mental walls” have been hit, then take a break, map the current process and return to the to-be model for a second time subsequent to the completion of the as-is process documentation work. Another technique to avoid the natural tendencies and traps is to change the composition of your mapping team for the to-be process mapping. Retain 30-40% of the original team for continuity, background context and explanation of why certain things were documented the way they are but have the majority of the players for the to-be mapping to be fresh resources.

Trap #3: Ignoring Constraints

Too often project teams focus on the wrong constraints. People worry most about time and money because that is how most projects are measured. The real constraints of resources and sometimes technology limitations are ignored and “idyllic” processes are designed that could never be implemented, because new system tools would need to be in place which might take years to develop. Also sometimes people have a tendency to design for the highest common denominator. An example of this is expecting perfect conditions versus realistic conditions to exist for the new process to work. Another example is expecting the people performing tasks in the new processes to be rocket scientists when you fully expect junior employees to be hired for those functions. Ignoring these factors can lead to nice looking process documents that never produce tangible results.

Trap #4: Detailed Process Documentation

Creating the most detailed process documentation imaginable may win accolades from technical journals or University professors but it often does not lead to business results. The traps related to very detailed process documentation are multi-fold. The time it takes to create very detailed documents is longer and the risk of conditions changing necessitating new processes increases. The ability to communicate and implement the changes becomes more difficult because training of employees becomes more complicated and the perception that the new processes are too complex increases. The ability to maintain the documentation as things change becomes difficult and sometimes impossible. With so much effort spent maintaining documentation and communication difficulties, the end result is fewer business benefits.

Trap #5: Solving the Wrong Problems

Correct problem identification is a key to process reengineering. The trap of focusing on the wrong problem and solving one thing often resulting in new issues can be best avoided by using a good process for establishing goals. With clear goals for the BPR project you will have less chance of fixing the easy things, or the items that the BPR group personally feel should be fixed. Clear goals creates a basis for good process design and greatly increases the odds of creating business value instead of simply fixing what appears to be most broken.

Trick #1: Finding the Root Cause

Following along the path of Trap #5, there is a simple technique you can use to find the real root cause for your problem.

Step	Action
1	List the benefits to be derived from solving the problem.
2	List the obstacles that are preventing you from achieving the desired results.
3	Determine if you need more information to be able to state the obstacles. Get the information needed.
4	List the root causes of the obstacles.
5	Identify the root causes that need to be changed or eliminated to reduce the obstacles to the level where sufficient benefits can be derived.

Trick #2: Creativity Techniques during Process Mapping

Creativity techniques, as applied to process reengineering, can be best summarized by the ability to use all of the creative mental elements with individuals and teams:

- Desire
- Alertness
- Interest
- Curiosity
- Concentration
- Application
- Patience
- Optimism
- Co-operation
- Questioning Attitude
- Courage
- Sense of Humour
- Determination
- Discontent
- Independence
- Playfulness

If you can facilitate a project team to use and balance all of these creative mental elements, you can achieve tremendous innovation.

Trick #3: Using Quantitative Analysis and Gut Feelings

Intuition is highly active in children and adolescents, but is often lost or repressed to favour analytic thinking as people reach adulthood. Gut feelings and intuition have proven to be incredibly accurate in scientific studies. Studies of business executives have shown that highly successful executives have a stronger sense of intuition and rely upon it more than others who are less successful. Each individual experiences intuition differently. Process designers need to get in touch with their intuitive reactions and balance these feelings with the huge amount of quantitative data and analysis that inevitably accompanies BPR initiatives. If your gut feeling is not positive than at least raise the red flag and investigate data and the processes to understand why something does not sit right with you. Often components of a process can be optimized, but the sum of the parts becomes less optimized. This is a common problem where teams become too task focused instead of process focused.

Trick #4: Balancing System Design with Process Design

Most complex processes these days involve a number of data points and systems. Because systems design is a large undertaking itself, it often has the effect of either taking over process design and skewing all results or being ignored completely during the process design. When system design is ignored completely you can end up with processes that are impossible to implement. However, when systems design dominates the process design project, then creativity can be stifled and sub optimal results are often achieved. The balancing act is required and can be achieved through an iterative process design flow. This means that business architects and systems architects are brought into the process mapping sessions at specific times to provide systems insight and capabilities assessments as opposed to having these individuals in the mapping sessions full-time.

Trick #5: Value-Added Process Changes


The overall goal with BPR is to make things better. Once and a while you need to take a step back or sideways in order to take 3 steps forward. Occasionally you need to change something that does not lead to any direct benefit in order to facilitate the next change which will lead to specific benefits. Other times you need to dismantle things in order to see new perspectives and opportunities. During your process design sessions, allow components of the process to take a temporary step backwards in order to explore if it helps to make the whole process better, simpler, cheaper, faster, etc. Review all final process changes with the view of value. The net benefit that has resulted needs to be measured and assessed to determine if the reengineering initiative has accomplished anything.



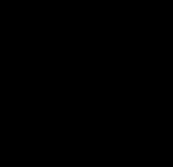


Conclusion

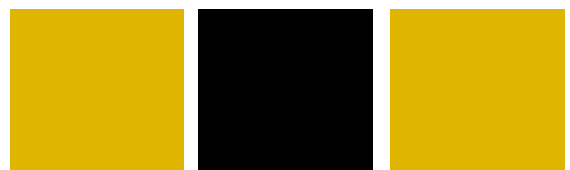
It is an art form to rollout process changes. Doing the process mapping and documentation is only one small step to achieving real results. Now the fun begins.



”The best thing about the future is that it only comes one day at a time.” Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States of America is credited with this quotation. It relates to business process reengineering in that process change does not happen as a big bang approach, but as a series of incremental changes that collectively add up to significant business benefits. Rolling out changes one day at a time allows you to effectively manage the process reengineering effort and better control the results, especially when unexpected things happen.



Use these tricks and avoid the traps when you are working in the next BPR or process design team. Some simple adjustments to your approach can make for big gains in your results.





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