BPM and Project Management

Paul Harmon
Executive Editor
BPTrends
www.bptrends.com

This week we want to focus on one single aspect of Business Process Management – what skills are required of Project Managers responsible for managing a Business Process Redesign Project. Specifically, we want to focus on what's required to assure that a Business Process Redesign project progresses smoothly and achieves its objectives.

First of all, we need to distinguish between improvement projects and redesign projects. Improvement projects are undertaken to make an existing process more efficient or effective. Six Sigma is a popular approach to process improvement, and, in some cases, improvement efforts are managed by the person who has the day-to-day management responsibility for the process or by a team lead by a Black Belt. Redesign projects, on the other hand, are undertaken to make major changes in a process that isn't functioning as it should. In the course of a redesign project we consider the possibility of changing the flow of activities, eliminating portions of the process, or automating other parts. A redesign project is usually a more complex and comprehensive project than an improvement project and it requires a manager who is skilled in handling a complex project.

Unlike day-to-day operational management, project management assumes that there is a starting point, a series of steps, and a result, followed by an evaluation of the project outcomes. In the case of Business Process Redesign projects, a project team is assembled to address a specific redesign problem and dissolved when the project is finished. In a nutshell, project managers require a slightly different skill set than day-to-day operational managers.

We don't want to focus on the basic skills required by project managers, in this Advisor. They are well described by the Project Management Institute's Project Management Framework. PMI even offers a Project Business Management Maturity Evaluation Model for those who want to evaluate their organization's project management skills. Similarly, the Software Engineering Institute's CMMI model includes process areas that focus on skills needed by project managers.

In this Advisor, we want to focus on the specific knowledge that project managers need to successfully manage Business Process Redesign projects.

In the course of designing our BPTrends Associates BPM Curriculum, Roger Burlton and I have had many conversations concerning what is required for a successful redesign effort. Earlier, I discussed the same issues with Geary Rummler. And, over the years I have consulted with many companies and observed both skilled and unskilled project managers leading Business Process Redesign projects.

As a result, I tend to focus on four major areas of Business Process Redesign that a BPM project manager needs to understand: (1) Planning and Scheduling, (2) Analysis and Design, (3) Interviewing and Facilitation, and (4) Communication and Change Management

Planning and Scheduling
The first major area involves the planning and scheduling of the project and the development of the project team. Here, a process redesign methodology that specifies phases and suggests who should be involved in each phase will make the project manager's job a whole lot easier.

Analysis and Design

The second major area involves grounding in analysis and redesign techniques redesign teams can use in the course of a project. This is the most complex area and varies according to the nature of the project. Large scale projects, like the redesign of a multi-company supply chain, require techniques that are different from those required on small scale redesign efforts. Automation efforts require techniques that are different from techniques required for projects that are primarily focused on the problems introduced by poorly conceived incentive systems or those that require changes in the way day-to-day process managers interact with those performing the work. Any project manager faced with a process redesign effort will benefit from one or two courses on process analysis and redesign.

Interviewing and Facilitation

The third major area involves BPM interviewing and facilitation techniques. Again, there is much here that is generic, but there are also specific techniques that can be of great use to those engaged in a BPM project. This area is tightly coupled with analysis and design techniques – involved, as it is, with knowing what information is required, what questions should be asked and what resources should be tapped to assure that the data collected is both comprehensive and accurate.

Communication and Change Management

The fourth major area includes BPM communication and change management issues. Once again, there is much here that's generic and anyone involved in either project management or BPM can benefit from general courses in change management. There are also specific BPM concerns, however, and project managers can benefit from a knowledge of the types of resistance that process projects typically encounter and suggestions about when and how to deal with different groups.

To clarify all this a bit, consider Figure 1 which is derived from a BPTrends Associates workshop on project management.   Figure 1 provides an overview of one phase of the BPTrends Associates BPM Redesign Methodology. This diagram specifies the primary steps in one phase of a generic Redesign effort. Different groups might call the different phases by slightly different names, but nearly everyone agrees that you need phases that include: Understand or Plan, Analyze, Redesign, Implement, and Roll-Out. Different groups would choose to emphasize slightly different secondary or tertiary activities.
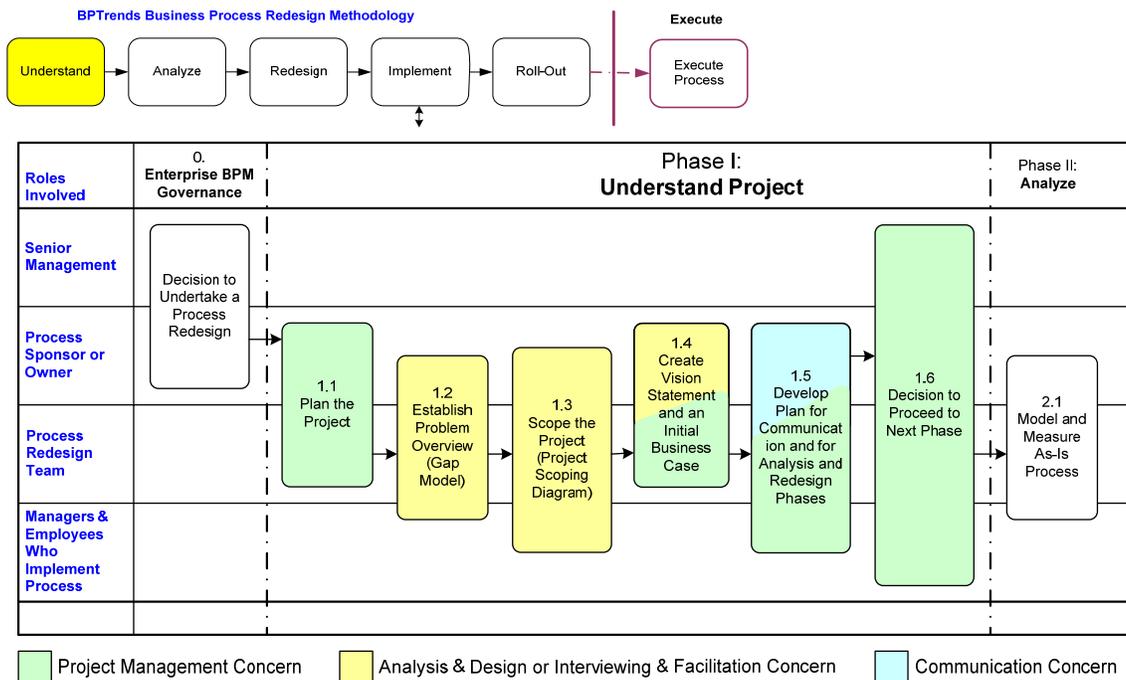
Figure 1. Understand Phases of a BPM Redesign Project

The key thing we want to emphasize is not the general phases or even the secondary phases, however, but their display on a swimlane diagram. On the left side we list some of the groups that should be involved in the project. At the beginning of the project planning effort, the project manager and the team review the list and add to it. In most cases, specific managers are named and swimlanes are created for all of the stakeholders who will be interested in changes to the process. Once we have identified all potential participants in the project, we are ready to consider which one's will need to be involved in each of the secondary or tertiary activities that will occur during the project. In essence, we rearrange the activity rectangles on the diagram to show who is involved in which activities. Some of this simply represents what all project managers do when they plan a project. Some of it, however, focuses the project manager on the tasks that are specific to Business Process Redesign efforts.

The other thing we do is color code the activities to suggest the major emphasis or goal of the activity. Some activities involve interviews to gather data. These activities are undertaken to understand the process that is to be redesigned. We seek to understand the difference, for example, between the process as it exists today (the As-Is process), and the process that management envisions (the To-Be process). We seek to determine the scope of our effort by determining just which activities are to be included in the project and which ones are excluded. These analytic activities are usually the focus in an introductory process redesign class.

Other activities are just as important, however. For example, a business process change project won't succeed without the commitment of the senior managers whose work will be impacted by the changed process. Nor will it be readily accepted and implemented by the employees if they feel the changed process threatens their own day-to-day work life or their existence. In other words, every redesign project requires that the project manager focus on communicating, and effective communication requires that managers understand the basics of change management and the specifics of relating to the different stakeholders involved in the specific project. It isn't enough, however, to simply say that the project team will communicate. Specific activities need to be planned, in advance, to assure that communication occurs. Some interviews are conducted to elicit information. Other interviews are conducted to inform participants of things being considered and to gather early signs of potential resistance. Some sessions are undertaken to obtain the commitment of senior managers, and others are undertaken to assure that that commitment is being turned into practical support. In a similar way, sessions are scheduled with employees to assure that they understand the goals and the alternatives that the project team is considering, and to assure that the employees have opportunities to make inputs to the effort. As appropriate, new people are recruited to the project team to assure that representative concerns are considered throughout the effort.

This discussion hardly scratches the surface of what is involved in the management of a business process redesign effort. Much of the knowledge required of project managers can be derived from general process management experience, however some of the knowledge required of a good BPM project manager is specific to BPM. Knowing the phases that make up a good BPM redesign initiative can result in a much more effective planning and scheduling effort. Knowing something of the kinds of resistance that process change engenders and anticipating groups that will need to be involved in the effort can also help. Finally, of course, knowing the range of analytic and redesign techniques available and knowing what kinds of changes can be made in a cost-effective manner and what kinds of changes are very difficult can make the difference between a successful and a failed process redesign effort.

Business Process Redesign teams benefit from team leaders who are experienced project managers. Moreover, given the widespread corporate interest in BPM, there are significant opportunities for project managers who are familiar with process redesign to help their companies. Managers who want to be effective in the years ahead will want to master the basics of both BPM and project management.

ABOUT PAUL HARMON

Paul is a Co-Founder, Executive Editor and Market Analyst at BPTrends, (Business Process Trends), the most trusted source of information and analysis on trends, directions and best practices in business process management, (www.bptrends.com). He is also a Co-Founder, Chief Methodologist and Principal Consultant of BPTrends Associates, a professional services company providing executive education, training and consulting services for organizations interested in understanding and implementing business process management. He has worked on major process improvement programs at Bank of America, Wells Fargo, Prudential and Citibank, to name a few.

Paul is the Co-Author and Editor of the *BPTrends Product Reports*, the most widely read reports available on BPM software products and the author of the best selling book, *Business Process Change*: *A Manager's Guide to Improving, Redesigning and Automating Processes.* He is an acknowledged BPM thought leader and noted consultant, educator, author and market analyst concerned with applying new technologies and methodologies to real-world business problems. He is a widely respected keynote speaker and has developed and delivered executive seminars, workshops, briefings and keynote addresses on all aspects of BPM to conferences and major organizations throughout the world. BPTrends Associates is partnered with Boston University to develop and deliver the BUCEC BPM Curriculum and Certification Program.