

Core, Management, and Enabling Processes

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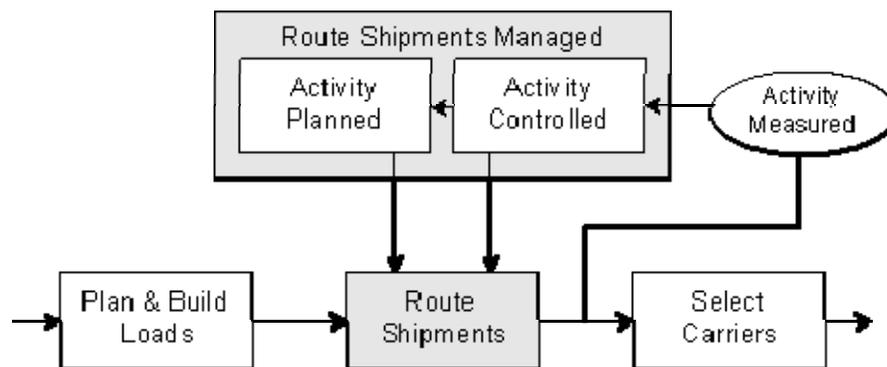
When Michael Porter initially defined the idea of the value chain in his book, *Competitive Advantage*, (Free Press, 1985), he divided the activities within the value chain into two sets: (1) the Primary activities that converted raw materials into finished products and sold and delivered them, and (2) Support activities which included Technology Development, Human Resources and Firm Infrastructure. By the mid-Nineties, most authors referred to the two types of high-level processes as core business processes and support processes.

Most process analysts don't deal with value chains, however. Instead, they focus on specific, lower-level processes. Thus, they often ignore the distinction between core and support and only focus on the specific activities within the process they are concerned with analyzing. Unfortunately, too many analysis efforts focus so narrowly on the sequence of operations being analyzed that they forget that the specific activities they are working with need to be managed and supported. In essence, too many analysts place management and enabling processes out of bounds. Thus, we analyze a shipping operation and end up with this set of activities:



Obviously it's important to understand just what happens during the shipping operation. We need to understand what we do today, and we need to consider how we might do it differently in the future. If we end our analysis here, however, we are ignoring much that is important to assuring that the shipping operation succeeds.

At the most fundamental level, Geary Rummler has always maintained that you need to model the management of processes at the same time that you manage the execution of the process. (See Geary Rummler and Alan Brache, *Improving Performance*, Jossey-Bass, 1990, or Geary Rummler, *Serious Performance Consulting*, ISPI Press, 2004.) Thus, looking at a specific activity, like Route Shipments, Dr. Rummler would propose that we think of a manager and managerial processes that control the Route Shipments process, as follows:

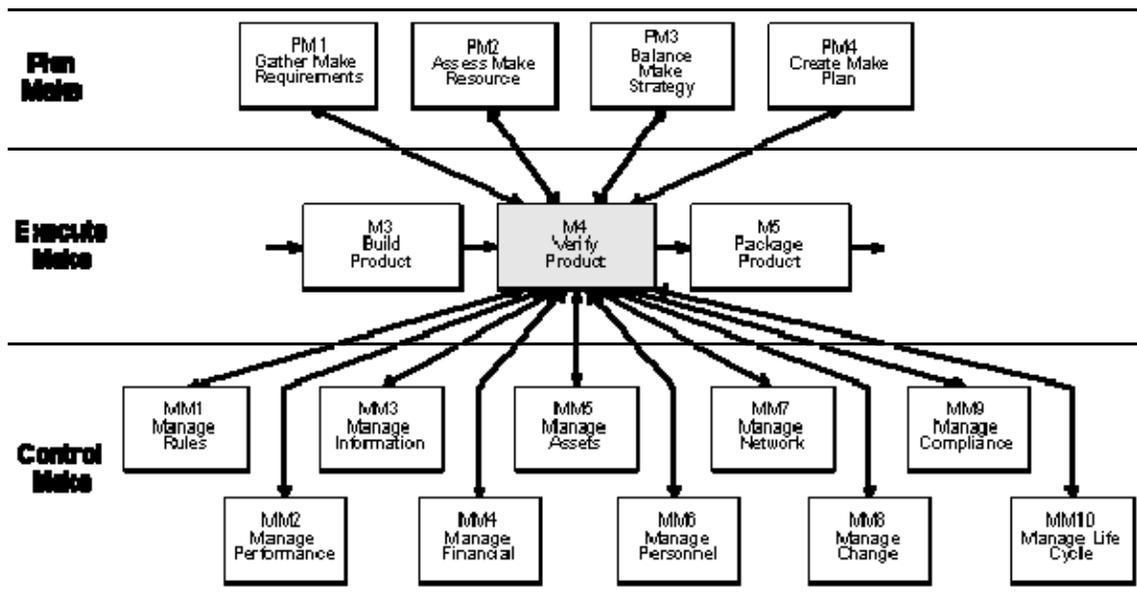


In this case, we have a manager responsible for "Route Shipments". That manager is responsible for planning the activity. He or she hires people and evaluates their performance. The manager also creates or approves the business rules used to determine how to route shipments and defines measures to determine if the activity will achieve its goals. As the activity is executed, the manager checks measures to see if the activity and its employees are meeting expectations and provides feedback on success or failure. Ultimately, if the activity doesn't perform as it should, it's the manager who is responsible for initiating changes in the process plan and staffing. (In *Serious Performance Consulting* Rummler defines these managerial processes in quite a bit of detail.) Rummler's concerns were managerial in nature, and ultimately concerned with job design. His work in Human Performance Improvement (HPI) led him to conclude that employees perform best if someone is responsible for seeing that they know what to do, that they have the necessary resources, that they get timely feedback on their performance, and that they get rewards or sanctions as appropriate. Thus, in designing a business process, he is concerned that we design the managerial processes that are needed to assure continual performance.

This kind of thinking is reflected in the Boeing Airlift & Tanker organization where every process has a designated manager and every manager needs to go through training to assure they know how to manage processes.

In a similar way, the Supply Chain Council incorporated "Planning" and "Enabling" processes into their SCOR framework. Thus, if a SCOR design team elects to focus on a "Source" process, they also focus on the "Plan Source" process and on several Enable processes that should be linked to the Source process to assure its success. Complex SCOR process maps not only represent the operational activities, but the various planning and enabling activities that support each specific operational activity.

Similarly, the Value Chain Group recognizes "Plan", "Execute" and "Control" processes and identifies the Plan and Control processes that could be associated with a specific "Execute" process, as follows.



There is no standard way of representing managerial processes in the popular process notations - like BPMN or RAD - which always seem to focus on operational processes. In theory, of course, in BPMN, one could just add additional swimlanes for managerial and enabling processes and describe the key managerial and support activities on managerial and enabling swimlanes. In most cases, that would probably be overly complex, and it's more popular to analyze the operational processes in one diagram and consider the generic managerial processes when training managers. As we begin to build more complex managerial systems that require senior managers to evaluate junior managers on their ability to manage processes, we may need to get more explicit about all this.

Similarly, as we begin to build BPMS systems and automate certain managerial activities - for example, the maintenance of business rules - we may also want more widely standardized ways of talking about the various management and support processes. Equally, we need agreed upon standard ways of identifying all of the management and support processes that impact and facilitate any given process. When we outsource a major process, the specific activities we maintain inside the company are some of the managerial activities, rather than the operational processes, and we need to get better at thinking about exactly which of those activities we need to maintain and which we can outsource.

What we can all do at this time, however, is to insist that a process analysis effort, whether high-level or low-level, isn't complete if one just analyzes the operational processes. The managerial and support processes that enable and control a given operational sequence are just as important as the operational processes themselves. We need to analyze ALL the activities involved in a given process, and we need to have ways of measuring ALL the processes that contributed to the success of a given process. At the same time, we need to continue to evolve our ability to talk about and to represent managerial and support processes. Ultimately, we want to design business process systems, like those conceptualized by Geary Rummler in the beginning of the Nineties, that integrate operational processes, real-time process performance measures, and managerial processes, to create agile, integrated performance systems that actually describe how our organizations work.

ABOUT PAUL HARMON



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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.