

Business Process...Who needs them?

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Randy has more than 30 years of experience effectively providing management expertise for a number of engineering and project-oriented organizations.

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We all do! Whether you have taken the steps necessary to formally review and reengineer your business processes or whether you have simply allowed them to evolve over time, business processes guide how you and your organization operate on a daily basis and how you deliver services to your customers. And this isn't just "consultant speak." As I indicated in a previous article, facilities management on college and university campuses is becoming more and more complex, and facilities managers are being asked to do more and more with existing or fewer resources. This is forcing us to look for every opportunity to achieve economies and efficiencies.

As you are reading this article, many of you are probably thinking "that's easy for him to say, but he doesn't have to deal with day-to-day crises and cram 14 hours of work into a 10-hour day." You're right! As I visit campuses and talk with facility managers, I realize that many organizations are "busy shooting the wolf closest to the sled, but no one is hunting for mama wolf." But the sad reality is that unless you make time to review your business processes, you have resigned yourself to accepting things the way they currently are. And in today's environment, if you aren't changing the way you do things, you are losing ground.

When you think about it, your business processes are the foundation of your organization. They impact, or should influence, a number of key considerations within your area of responsibility.

1. Business processes should determine your organizational structure. On many campuses facilities organizations don't look like they did 15 or twenty years ago. Because of their "can do" attitude and relatively large manpower assets compared to other departments, facilities organizations have been the "go-to folks" and assigned additional roles and responsibilities over time. Concurrently, business processes have morphed over time to accommodate change or simply adapt. In many instances, business processes have changed to match organizations. Individuals, particularly skilled in some

areas, have often been assigned responsibilities that don't even match their position descriptions. If your business processes have been reviewed, and reengineered if necessary, to achieve economies and efficiencies, then they should remain inviolate and should be the basis upon which your organization is structured.

2. Information management should be determined by your business processes. Every organization "generates" information and "consumes" information. Your business processes, if properly established and documented, will define your organization's information requirements and the reports necessary to support them. Accurate data, captured and maintained in accordance with your business processes will support generating the reports which allow you to make informed business decisions. It is these information requirements that emerged from your business processes that drive your technology requirements. So once again, you can see the pivotal role played by business processes. I have visited a number of campuses where the business processes have been driven by the technology rather than the other way around.

If you are conscientious about truly achieving economies and efficiencies, you should begin by examining your business processes. Once you are convinced that you have streamlined the processes to the greatest extent possible, you should move forward with whatever organizational adjustments and technology changes that best support those processes. Of course this is not a guarantee that the administration will support your request, but at least their decision should be an informed one.

While the two considerations outlined above are simple enough, implementing them cannot be accomplished readily unless you agree that business processes are at the heart of what you do and you are willing to make the effort to review, and reengineer them if necessary, in order to change the way you are currently accomplishing things.

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