



Rapid Process Documentation Techniques for Teams

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SUMMARY

Effective communication, based on common understanding of the product and process, is a key to quality. Learn and practice visual communication techniques to highlight and resolve issues. A team-based approach allows you to see process optimization opportunities and highlight steps that don't add value to your product, without the time and dollar cost of a major reengineering effort. When problems arise, your customers and suppliers need assurance that resolution is at hand; you need their support and understanding. This approach facilitates rapid resolution of current problems and effective prevention of recurring issues. From this session, you will learn easy-to-apply techniques to build communication bridges between you, your customers, and your suppliers.

KEY WORDS

Communication, Graphics, Process Optimization

INTRODUCTION

Processes are developed to establish a common practice. Many processes are recommendations that your organization adapts to local conditions while other processes are established as mandatory procedures.

A key to success is to follow a consistent development process. This holds true especially when a specific problem drives the need for process documentation. When customers say "There is a problem," you want to respond quickly with decisive action. At the same time, you don't want to create new problems by acting hastily. You need a development process that is both consistent and rapid.

Teams drawn from organizations affected by and using the process—the process stakeholders—develop the most effective processes. Experience also shows that "committees" and "rapid" don't normally mix. Using Facilitated Interactive Deployment Flowcharting, you can strike a balance that, while not perfect, should serve you well.

Following this roadmap, you and your team will develop processes quickly and effectively. Use it throughout the life cycle of your next (or current) process-development effort.

TEXT

Development begins with a process concept. Someone has a good idea about how to improve quality and reduce cost. It expands into a plan and an expected outcome. It ends with a celebration of results achieved and a job well done. While the process may

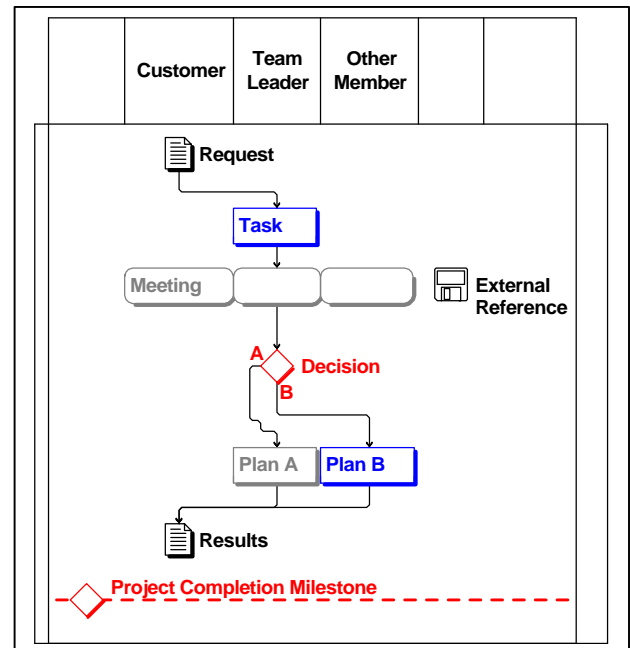
evolve over time, the development team should have a clear, consistent understanding of the scope of their task. Upon completion, the process is issued to the stakeholders. Revisions are handled as new development efforts.

Deployment Flowcharts are useful tools for describing specific processes clearly and succinctly. Text descriptions and other training aids often are added as supplements, but the graphical flowchart is the cornerstone of the description. The authors have had great success with a facilitated interactive approach to developing process deployment flowcharts.

Deployment Flowcharts

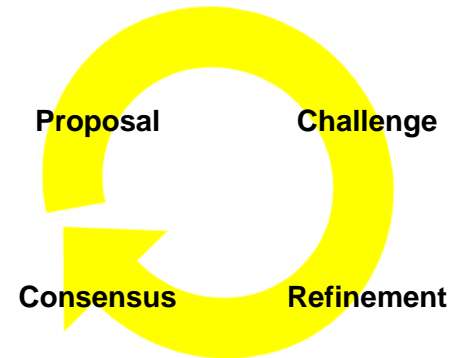
The deployment flowcharting technique was developed by Dr. W. Edwards Deming as a tool to describe the complex process of building ocean-going ships. A deployment flowchart is a process diagram that shows how the members of a project team are used throughout a project. It has four key elements:

1. **Team Membership**—The top area of the diagram depicts the process team that is involved in the process. Membership includes people, organizational units such as departments, tools such as software applications, or physical machines. Any person, team, or object that performs a significant task is included.
2. **Time**—Time is represented by the sequence of steps down the page. Milestones display important or explicit timings.
3. **Process Steps**—Each step indicates effort expended. Focus the description on the result of that effort. Use flow lines to indicate the flow of responsibility. Responsibility should change only between steps, not within. Responsibility for the outcome is not shared within a step, even when multiple members participate. Use a minimal set of process step icons: Documents, tasks, meetings, and decisions. For clarity, keep charts simple and easy to follow. When specific detail is required, consider a separate chart to explode complex sub-processes. Be careful not to focus on minute details that could impede implementation. Instead, stay focused on steps that affect the desired results.
4. **References**—When a process step requires external standards or forms insert a reference at that step. These references are treated like an appendix to the flowchart. Responsibility never flows through a reference.



Facilitated Interactive Deployment Flowcharting

In Facilitated Interactive Deployment Flowcharting, an independent facilitator works interactively with a team of key participants. Through this interaction, the development cycle of proposal, challenge, refinement, and consensus happen many times within a single session. In traditional flowcharting, each one of these cycle phases may be disjointed, potentially protracting development.



Need

Typically, a need to document a process arises following an event or an issue in your operation or your supply chain. Process documentation can be used both to clarify the current situation and to define a solution.

The initial need should clearly expose what outcomes or results are not being achieved in a specific situation. It should give you insight into the appropriate scope of the deployment flowchart and who should participate in its definition. While the scope and participants may change over time, do not lose sight of the initial need.

Charter

When you've identified this initial need, start a charter document. Include your understanding of the expected outcomes, who could potentially be impacted, and the boundaries or scope of the response. Outcomes are measurable with associated targets. Scope includes any constraints or requirements such as timing or performance. You will use and refine this charter in initial customer and management reviews. Most disagreements in process documentation teams result from the lack of a clear charter document supported by management and customers.

Before forming a process documentation team, meet with the management representative for each potential stakeholder to review the charter and to clarify the stakeholder's role in the process. Stakeholder roles fall into three categories:

1. Customer of the process—The organization that receives the final product of the process. They may be an internal or external activity. Some customers are truly the end-user of the product; others act as intermediaries or brokers.
2. Outcome owner—An outcome owner has primary responsibility to deliver the final product to the customer. This organization usually sponsors and leads the project to document process improvements.
3. Supporting organization—A supporting organization either provides interim products or assists the outcome owner in creating or delivering the final product. Involving these organizations is important to ensure that all required process interfaces are maintained and improved.

Management must approve the process charter before forming a team.

Form a Team

When the charter is approved, select a team to be responsible for documenting the process. Include members from all stakeholder organizations. Request that each stakeholder provide empowered representation on the team. Identify expected commitments, both for the proposed team member and for the stakeholder organization. Prior to the first meeting, talk to each of the participants to discuss what is expected of him or her. Use your charter to explain the objectives and constraints. For participants unable to commit to the effort, work with stakeholder management to identify alternates who can commit.

Team members will participate in team meetings and will have research and other tasks between sessions. Members should have the information and knowledge to effectively represent their constituency. Expect, however, some management “interference.” Management involvement helps ensure an effective end-result. Often, the Outcome Owner will assign the team leader. The team leader has the primary responsibility of delivering process documentation that meets the charter’s objectives. Be cautious not to select a leader who will force a pet solution on the team.

A facilitator handles a dual role. They perform the traditional role of focusing the team on achieving their objectives in a timely manner. They act as the focal point for comments, helping to keep organizational rivalries out of the discussion while encouraging the fresh flow of ideas. In their second role, the facilitator acts as an analyst, building the deployment flowchart concurrent with the team discussion. Depending on the size and time constraints of the team, consider separating these roles across two people.

First Team Meeting

As a team, review the charter document to ensure a common understanding of the objectives. Solicit any disagreement on the charter, and agree on how to resolve it. Invite management to the first session to show support and to convey the importance of the project. At the end of the first meeting, you should have a clear plan for development.

The agenda for a first team meeting includes

- **Charter**—Review the formal statement of the team’s assignment. Review the problem you are called to solve, what is already done, the urgency of the effort, who sponsors the team, and any other appropriate background on the project.
- **Ground Rules**—Discuss how the team will work together. Review the basics of facilitated process deployment flowcharting. Introduce your blank deployment flowchart listing process participants.
- **Introductions**—Each team member reviews their background, including skills and knowledge they bring towards achieving the outcome. Discuss if there are any major skills or knowledge missing which are required to meet the charter.
- **Commitment**—Review time and participation commitments. Ask team members to sign up to this commitment by signing the charter. If a team member resists or refuses to commit, get sponsor to provide an alternate. This is crucial to success.

- **Planning**—Schedule future meetings to map the process. Decide upon the objective of the next meeting and solicit proposals from team members.

Often, you will add members to the team after the first team meeting. If you've established a solid team foundation, new team members should be welcome additions, not intruders.

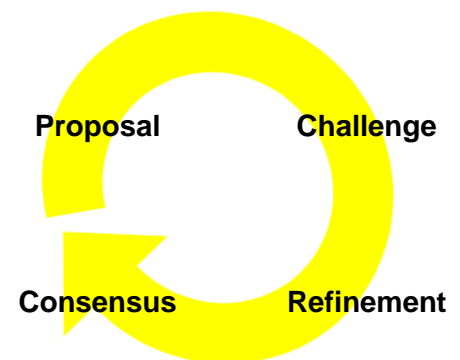
Mapping the Process

You may begin mapping the process at your first team meeting. More likely though, you will use your first session to build a common understanding of the objective and to plan your development. To kick-start development, prepare a blank deployment flowchart listing process participants. You have already identified the obvious process participants in forming your development team. Start with the process customer on the left with the outcome owner immediately adjacent. Add in supporting organizations and tools. You may discover additional participants to add as you progress, so don't worry about an all-encompassing list at the start. Your facilitator will listen for pronouns that reference new participants as development progresses.

Begin laying out the process tasks by identifying the **product** or results that are eventually delivered to the customer and the **event** or request that initiates the process. Much of your early discussion may travel down several paths. If you keep focused on these two key elements, you will naturally stay within scope.

Your team should meet regularly to map the process. How often you meet—and how long each session lasts—depends on your specific objective and constraints. If you have the luxury of no solid deadline, set one anyway then stick with it.

Plan each session to address a specific component of the process. Follow the proposal, challenge, refinement, and consensus cycle by requesting and distributing proposals prior to the next session. This gives other team members an opportunity to review proposals and to consult within their own organization. Other team members can offer challenges and refinements within the development session. Allow time for healthy discussion, ensuring that everyone has a chance to contribute. Recognize consensus when every member can support the refined proposal, even when the solution is not the first choice of every member. Capture off-topic suggestions for later follow up.



Discussion lags when progress wanes or an impasse is met. Recognize that silence is not concurrence. If one or more of your team members have removed themselves from the discussion, invite them back into the discussion. If you deal with sticking points early, you will encourage participation and complete your objective sooner.

Display the chart in progress at all times and use it to incite discussion. A storyboard or a projected computer-display each work well. With a storyboard, however, you may need a separate recorder to capture discussion and decisions. Distributing meeting results at the end of the meeting is more effective than between meetings or at the start of the next session. The facilitator is key to moving rapidly. He or she should capture the essence of your discussions, and should ensure agreement within the group on process specifics.

When your team agrees on the details of the process, conduct a final review that you've met the challenge and objectives of the charter. This final review ensures that the document you agree upon will meet everyone's needs. You may have the team sign the final document as a public declaration of consensus.

Concurrence and Deployment

Effective process documentation must be effectively implemented. Three steps to follow in achieving this are:

1. **Concurrence**—Team members have been reviewing work-in-progress with their organizations. When the final process documentation is complete, present it to your stakeholders and request authorization for roll out. Through this discussion, you may discover a need for supporting materials. Re-convene your team if necessary.
2. **Roll Out**—Offer the team's assistance to the stakeholders in deploying the process. Through roll out, share team insights on the process with those involved in roll out and in operation. This helps ensure that the intent of the process team is not lost.
3. **Process Physical**—After the process has been rolled out, the primary stakeholder reviews results with the process customer. Allow enough time to achieve clear, stable results. If necessary, review the process details and the effectiveness of the roll out. These process physicals should become a regular event to ensure good continuing customer supplier relations.

CONCLUSION

“Committees” and “rapid” can mix. Facilitated Interactive Deployment Flowcharting provides an easy-to-understand tool for building rapid team consensus on processes. Using a skilled facilitator and clear graphical descriptions, you can define new processes and resolve customer problems.

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