

Process Flow Guide

Process Flow Defined

A process flow is defined as a task or function that is performed to get a desired end-result. Process management represents a systematic approach to process improvement.

A process flow documents a process, evaluates the current process in place, evaluates how many people are involved in the current process, evaluates how many steps are in the current process and uncovers potential sources of trouble in the current process.

Getting Started

- I. Welcome
- II. Introductions – Who you are, What you do (Job Function) and How long with Company
- III. What is a Process Flow
- IV. What is an “Ah-Ha” and a “Parking Lot”
- V. What we will use as Supplies – Hand them out
- VI. Process Flow
- VII. Next Steps... Create Process Flowchart, Ask for their Review, Process Flows Packaged, Leadership Team will Debrief and assign accountability
- VIII. Thank You



Sample Letter to Manager in preparation of Process Flow Meeting

Date

Manager's Name
Company Name
Company Address
Company City, State Zip

Dear _____,

The main objectives in evaluating your automation practices and completing a Process Flow analysis are to determine Opportunities For Improvement (OFI's). Through this process we will develop an Action Plan to streamline your operation through automation and continual training. Your Process Flow analysis has been scheduled for _____ with the Debrief Session scheduled for _____.

The scope of the process flow will include the following:

- Process Flow analysis of your production areas;
- Complete overview of your Opportunities For Improvement (OFI's);
- Debrief Session held off-site with your core Leadership Team.
- Follow-up on OFI's contained in your Action Plan.

To expedite the Process Flow analysis, please organize department meetings with the associates actually doing the task of processing that portion of a file. Please have those individuals clear their schedules during the time assigned to their department and stress that their input is essential to the success of this event.

Having visited with you to get a feel for your organization, the following will help you organize the agenda:

Order Entry Department	___ hours	<i>(normally takes between 1 – 2 hours)</i>
Examination/Abstracting Department	___ hours	<i>(normally takes between 3 – 4 hours)</i>
Commitment Department	___ hours	<i>(normally takes between 1 – 2 hours)</i>
Policy Department	___ hours	<i>(normally takes between 1 – 2 hours)</i>
Escrow Accounting Department	___ hours	<i>(normally takes between 1 – 2 hours)</i>
Escrow Closing Department	___ hours	<i>(normally takes between 3 – 4 hours)</i>
Branches (maximum of two)	___ hours/branch	<i>(normally takes 3 hours)</i>
Out of County Processing	___ hours	<i>(normally takes between 1 – 2 hours)</i>

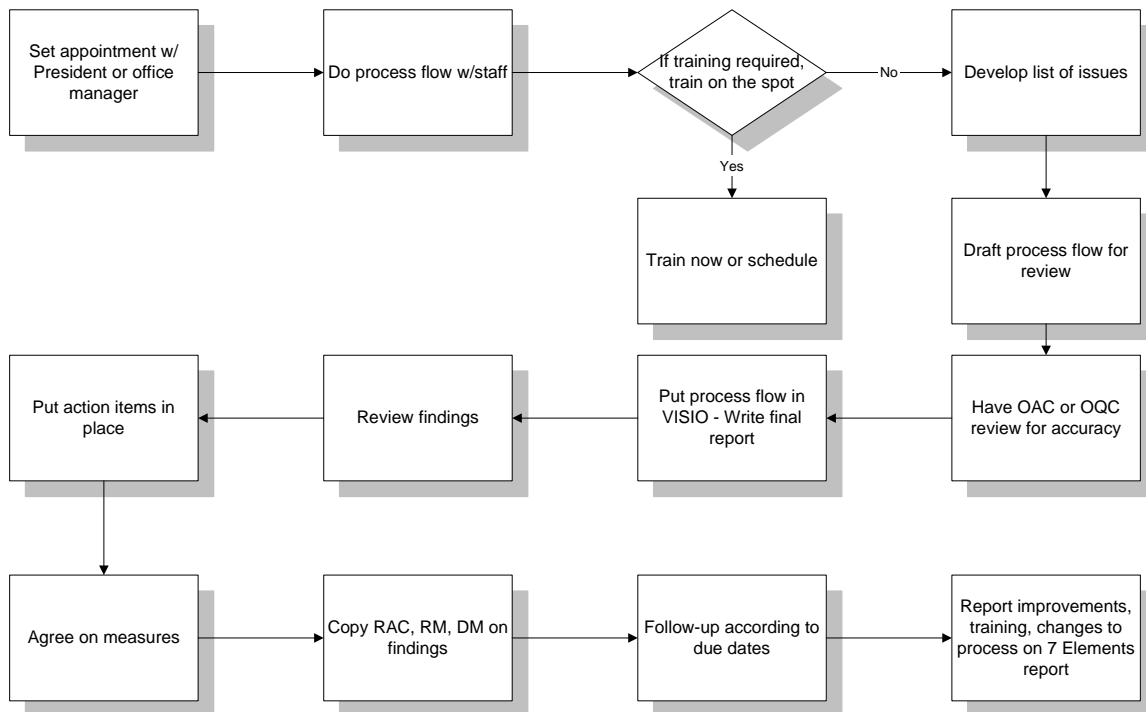
We greatly appreciate your cooperation during this time. If you should have any questions or comments regarding your Process Flow analysis, please do not hesitate to call me.

Sincerely,

District Manager

cc:

Procedures for working in office to develop process flows



Creating a Process Flow

The Five Essential Steps to Process Flowing:

1. Communicate why and the benefits
2. Follow the guidelines
3. Determine the level of detail
4. Ask probing questions, for example, who, what, why, and how long
5. Provide process flow diagram.

The benefit of creating a process flow are to assist with analyzing the process for bottlenecks and duplicate processes, helps in eliminating unnecessary steps, identifies potential dollar and time savings and helps identify how technology is or is not being put to use.



Successful companies have defined processes in place that are defined by key processes and measurements based on customer requirements and priorities. They define and implement strategies to keep each process measure in control and proactively look for ways to keep improving processes.

Improving a Process

The Key Elements Improving a Process:

1. Identify the process
2. Identify the problems in the process
3. Analyze the causes
4. Redefine the process
5. Communicate the results
6. Implement the process changes

1. Identify the Process by:

1. Prioritizing processes by identifying those processes that need to be enhanced or changed.

i. How to Prioritize Processes:

- a. **Priority One:** Those processes you have the ability to change now.
 - b. **Priority Two:** Those you can influence now
 - c. **Priority Three:** Those you cannot change or influence
2. Assign owners/teams - someone in the company who has the authority to approve changes made in the process.
 3. Establish guidelines for time lines, responsibilities and tasks.

2. Identify Problems in the Process:

- a. Brainstorm ideas
- b. Refer to customer data and information
- c. Break-down processes to the smallest elements
- d. Re-prioritize, if needed.



3. Analyze Causes:

- a. Root Cause – the most basic cause of the problem
- b. Talk to Customers/Suppliers – really understand their needs and get their input
- c. Collect Data to Validate Concerns – measurements
- d. State the Problems – be clear and specific – a problem statement
- e. Benchmark – sharing Best Practices

4. Redefine the Process

- a. Eliminate Steps – increased efficiency = save money and time
- b. Set New Measurements – begin tracking the improvements
- c. Brainstorm New Ideas – ideas to solve the problems and make improvements
- d. Document New Process – excellent training tool; shows reduction in steps

5. Communicate the Results

- a. Tell associates, customers, supplies before the change happens
- b. Be a missionary – tell others about your success

6. Implement

- a. When you take action to change – Do It!
- b. After the plan is communicated – evaluate and inspect the new process
- c. Implement your new process

Process Flow Terms

Ah-Ha - A new idea that comes out of the process flow session that is captured for later consideration.

Parking Lot - The tasks, lack of materials, redundancies, etc. that make one's job cumbersome. These items are captured for later consideration.



Process Flowchart - Gives a pictorial representation of a process showing the steps, decision points, and flow. The flowchart should depict how the process is actually being performed on the day the process is charted – not the way it was intended or you wish it to be.

Opportunities For Improvement (OFI) - The Ah-Ha's and Parking Lot items are turned into positive statements and presented as opportunities for improvement within the office.

Debrief – Session where the Leadership Team (members picked by the Office Manager) analyzes the process and begins to look for ways to eliminate unnecessary steps, eliminate duplicate steps, move to a paperless environment, and move towards Single Seat, optimize the use of ALL technology. Additionally, during this session the team reviews the opportunities for improvement and decides whether to keep and move the idea to the Action Plan or discard the idea.

Action Plan – A spreadsheet that lists each Opportunity for Improvement that the Leadership Team decided to implement. The Action Plan lists the OFI, who it is assigned to, the target completion date, status updates, and completion date.

Action Plan - Target Date Guidelines:

“A” Priority – 30 Days from Debrief

“B” Priority – 90 Days from Debrief

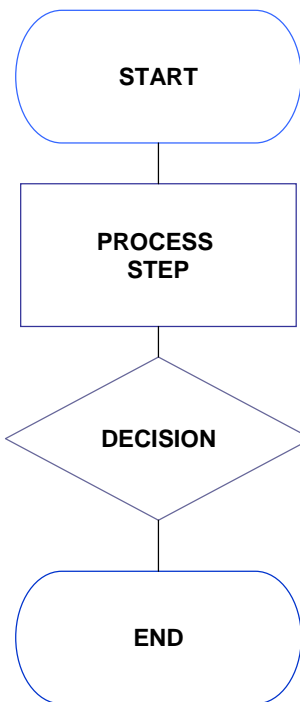
“C” Priority – 6 Months from Debrief

“D” Priority – 1 Year from Debrief

What is a Process Flow Chart?

A flowchart is a pictorial representation using special symbols to show each step in a process.

Flow Chart Symbols



Flowchart symbols represent the type of processing performed:

Rectangle: Activity in the process; a step

Diamond: A decision in the process is needed

Oblong: The start and/or stop of the process

Process Flow Tips

- When flowcharting a process, you can do it at a very high level or at a very detailed level. It is important that the team flowcharting the process understand at which level you are working.
- Ensure the members attending your Process Flow session are the people who can provide the information needed for the flowchart exercise to be effective. In other words, the person who does the job needs to be the one giving you each step of their process.
- Remember every idea is a good idea worth capturing during the Process Flow session. These are your Ah-Ha's.
- Listen to each individual and let them tell you how they do their job – don't put words in their mouth.
- It is easiest if you number your cards before you remove them from the wall. Once you pull the cards in order, off the wall, place a Header Card on top (include office name and date), and rubber band them together.
- It is best to schedule the Process Flow for sometime during either the second or the third week of the month. This way you can schedule the Debrief for either the first or the second week of the following month (i.e. keeping within the one month Turntime).
- Try to obtain copies of all the manual checklists, folders, etc. they work from within the current process. Each of these should prove to be an Opportunity for Improvement, as they can potentially be automated.
- Use flip chart paper so all members can see the process, and use index cards so you can easily move the steps around.
- Don't spray too much of the 3M spray – a little goes a long way.



- **THE MOST IMPORTANT POINT** – we do process flows to find ways to improve our efficiency, cut out steps, reduce the turndtime and provide better customer service. While doing the process flow, it's important to know what is being done manually or via technology. Are the employees optimizing the use of technology or just making a bad process go faster. Look for those areas to improve.
- Repeat the process flow in 6-12 months.