



[The Elsmar Cove Forum](http://Elsmar.com/Forums/index.php) (<http://Elsmar.com/Forums/index.php>)

- [Process Maps, Process Mapping and Turtle Diagrams](http://Elsmar.com/Forums/forumdisplay.php?f=156) (<http://Elsmar.com/Forums/forumdisplay.php?f=156>)

- -

What IS a Process Map?

(<http://Elsmar.com/Forums/showthread.php?t=28786>)

JaneB

23rd July 2008 08:46 PM

What IS a Process Map?

What do *you* mean by a 'process map'? A few discussions in a couple of recent threads reminded me that this term is often used to mean different things, which can be very confusing for the 'uninitiated'.

I'm interested to see if there's a broad consensus of meaning (or not), and what people think a process map 'should' be / contain / look like.

William Gr

23rd July 2008 09:20 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

It all depends on what you are trying to map! As higher level processes will break off into smaller ones. For example, process mapping new product development. Many areas in the company each with thier own smaller process will become part of the bigger map. On the simpler end is a process map for making the morning coffee, were everything is local and can flow in sequential events. In both cases. the map should be a step by step recreation of actual events, including decision points.

Jim Wynne

23rd July 2008 10:18 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **JaneB** (Post 261791)*

What do you mean by a 'process map'? A few discussions in a couple of recent threads reminded me that this term is often used to mean different things, which can be very confusing for the 'uninitiated'.

I'm interested to see if there's a broad consensus of meaning (or not), and what people think a process map 'should' be / contain / look like.

In general, process maps are confused masses of symbols, arrows and text that purport to explicate the interactions of processes. In most cases they do nothing of the kind and serve mainly to have something shiny and colorful to present to a CB auditor as evidence of understanding process interactions. Give me good ol' logically derived process flow diagrams any time. Or better yet, actually describe in writing how processes interact.

Stijloor

24th July 2008 12:19 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Jim Wynne** (Post 261802)*

In general, process maps are confused masses of symbols, arrows and text that purport to explicate the interactions of processes. In most cases they do nothing of the kind and serve mainly to have something shiny and colorful to present to a CB auditor as evidence of understanding process interactions. Give me good ol' logically derived process flow diagrams any time. Or better yet, actually describe in writing how processes interact.

I believe that "a picture is worth a thousand words." The problem is that folks developing these process maps are trying to cram way too much information on an 8.5 x 11 (or an A4) piece of paper. The scope of the map is not set right so it becomes indeed a "mass of symbols, arrows and text."

The new AIAG FMEA 4th Ed. manual shows a neat (simple) example of how a process map (high level) can be broken up into separate flow charts (lower level).

But then again, I am a picture guy...:D

Stijloor.

joshua_sx1

24th July 2008 01:08 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

:2cents:

process map – is an overall methodology plan of how each major activity within an organization interact or connected with each other...

...then describing the detailed of how each major activity shall be carried-out can be done using flowcharts, procedures and/or working instructions... (and as required) supported by forms to have an evidence that they were performed accordingly...

Peter Fraser

24th July 2008 03:11 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **JaneB** (Post 261791)*

What do you mean by a 'process map'? A few discussions in a couple of recent threads reminded me that this term is often used to mean different things, which can be very confusing for the 'uninitiated'.

I'm interested to see if there's a broad consensus of meaning (or not), and what people think a process map 'should' be / contain / look like.

Jane

About time too, thanks! The use of the term has been causing confusion for far too long - have you ever been in a meeting and discovered after a couple of hours that someone is talking about something different from what you thought, because they are using a term that you thought "everyone knows what that means" but they use it differently? Or (even) reading posts in a forum for years and then suddenly realising that some posters are doing the same!

As is often the case, there is no "right" answer. Deming talked of "operational definitions" - what terms mean in a particular context. The important thing is that the meaning is understood by everyone, and that isn't the case here.

And other examples make it worse ... a "town map" and a "street map" are probably the same thing - ie a map (a visual or diagrammatic representation) of a town, made up of streets. But you wouldn't talk of a "town map" if you meant a map of a country which showed the main towns.

To me, if a "map" is a "visual or diagrammatic representation" of what is mapped, then the ideal would be to call the "picture" of your management system a "system map", and reserve "process map" (or similar) for the description of an individual process.

What is also important is why these various types of "map" are produced - I have seen enough (bad) examples to suggest that many of them confuse rather than clarify, and often they are produced because the author thinks that they have to draw one rather than because their target audience will gain benefit.

Umang Vidyarthi

24th July 2008 05:02 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **JaneB** (Post 261791)*

What do you mean by a 'process map'? A few discussions in a couple of recent threads reminded

me that this term is often used to mean different things, which can be very confusing for the 'uninitiated'.

I'm interested to see if there's a broad consensus of meaning (or not), and what people think a process map 'should' be / contain / look like.

A '**Process Map**' is a bird's eye view of a process or processes, giving you broad information about the process in one shot. Just like a picture.

BTW the 'uninitiated' also get confused with synonymous terms viz: Process flow diagram, process flow chart, process model etcetra.

Umang :2cents:

Biffen

24th July 2008 05:11 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

My understanding and use of the term "Process Map" is something that shows a single process (be it macro (high level) or micro (low level)). These maps can include graphics, symbols and text descriptions.

I can and do have several processes which means several "Process Maps" which can all be related / linked.

curryassassin

24th July 2008 06:26 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

A some have stated, the process map could be very complicated or it could be very simple. It depends on the intended use of the map and the process or processes you are mapping. Many times the quality system as a whole is mapped, when attempting to show how ISO9000 requirements are addressed. This can produce a very complicated map. Or mapping can illustrate the main activities and tasks of one critical process.

Process mapping can help improve efficiency, effectiveness, identify customer / supplier relationships, identify how to measure whether the process is performing as required, who owns the process etc. Or simply to illustrate what a thousand words in SOPs actually mean.

I like the definition of 'visual or diagrammatical representation' of the process or processes. I am aware of the following types of mapping and flow charting, each with their own benefits and drawbacks:

- Process Flowcharts
- Cross Functional or Swimlane
- Integration Definition for Function Modelling
- Relationship Diagrams or Input / Output Diagrams

JaneB

25th July 2008 04:14 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Peter Fraser** (Post 261839)
have you ever been in a meeting and discovered after a couple of hours that someone is talking about something different from what you thought, because they are using a term that you thought "everyone knows what that means" but they use it differently?*

Too often :D

Only yesterday, I saw that a draft procedure I'd sent a client had had the following sentence added to it (which I most certainly didn't write!)

"This procedural process is to be adhered to... "
Or was it a 'processional procedure' that he called it? Groan. :confused:

Or then there's the case of 'translation' where you look up a word in a dictionary and then use it, thinking it has the meaning you looked up, only to find it's quite different. I did this with the word 'embarrasoza' (may have spelled wrongly) in talking to some Spanish speakers in a professional situation, and wondered why they looked at me funny. I was trying to say I was embarrassed about something; apparently I communicated to them that I was pregnant.

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Peter Fraser** (Post 261839)
As is often the case, there is no "right" answer. Deming talked of "operational definitions" - what terms mean in a particular context. The important thing is that the meaning is understood by everyone, and that isn't the case here.*

Yes, just so. The phrase 'process map' isn't defined anywhere (which doesn't stop people hotly defending or writing as if it were), and then to add to the confusion, it also has synonyms, as Umang points out. Meanings DO at times depend & yes, I **know** is something that the dyed-in-the-wool engineering types don't like! As long as we avoid the Cheshire Cat approach.

So I thought it was worth breaking this question out and polling it - early results and comments already show some interesting results. I look forward to more.

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Peter Fraser** (Post 261839)
What is also important is why these various types of "map" are produced - I have seen enough (bad) examples to suggest that many of them confuse rather than clarify, and often they are produced because the author thinks that they have to draw one rather than because their target audience will gain benefit.*

Yes, me too, and very good point. If they're not useful and meaningful, I wouldn't bother. And I've seen some truly hideous examples which no doubt took the creator a long time to do... and essentially communicated zilch (except perhaps 'boy, have I spent a long time in VIsio copying in the clauses from

the relevant Standard!) Hence perhaps Jim's aversion, which I thoroughly understand. (Great definition, Jim!)

qualityos

25th July 2008 10:39 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

I think Jim's definition a very good one as well... some process maps have absolutely zilch for value. However some can be very useful... Like all good discussion, the answer to when a process map is useful and when it is not is that it **Depends**.

The only time I use process maps is when I have never seen the process before and I need to understand a very high level flow (Six Sigma Consultant). I am not talking about a Visio produced process flow, I am talking about a "on the back of a napkin" high level flow. Enough to tell me which step happen after which step and a basic idea of what happens in each step.

The second instance where I will use a process flow will be when I have to understand the physics and geometry of how a particular machine/transaction works. (i.e. the clamp gets indexed, the collet closes, the tool engages, and the part is released). Obviously this level of detail is needed well within the DMAIC process, which shows that process flows are not as critical as many believe.

What I find a lot of the time is that the documented process flow (in Visio) does not represent how the process actually runs. That is really sad. :nope:

gfreely

25th July 2008 12:51 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

"have you ever been in a meeting and discovered after a couple of hours that someone is talking about something different from what you thought, because they are using a term that you thought "everyone knows what that means" but they use it differently?"

Just a sidebar humourous example:

When I took over as Calibration Manager for a manufacturing company (having come from a Metrology lab background), I was explaining to my bosses in a meeting about the system I had created and got up-and-running....aaaaaaand I used the word "recall". I thought they were going to melt like wax candles. Anyone working in or around calibration KNOWS what it means, but having been new to a manufacturing environment, I didn't KNOW what it meant in the MANUFACTURING world...oops!

Ashok GS

28th July 2008 06:09 AM

Re: What Is a process map?

1 Attachment(s)

Typically, Process Map is a schematic representation of the linkage between process and process elements.

It depends on the organization, to the extent it wants to use the mapping. It can be done at an organization level or at a unit level. List of activities can be mapped to complete a process. List of processes can be mapped to complete the system of working in an organization.

Mapping becomes very effective in the way the improvements are done. For example in our organization we have used the mapping to describe the flow of activities for specific processes. We have identified a Initiator, Reviewer, Responsible person through blocks and colors for the importance of the activity. Similarly the way of mapping can be optimized with respect to the business needs.

A snapshot of such a process mapping is attached for your reference.

Good luck ! :agree:

raju8177

4th August 2008 01:29 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **curryassassin** (Post 261850)*

A some have stated, the process map could be very complicated or it could be very simple. It depends on the intended use of the map and the process or processes you are mapping. Many times the quality system as a whole is mapped, when attempting to show how ISO9000 requirements are addressed. This can produce a very complicated map. Or mapping can illustrate the main activities and tasks of one critical process.

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I like the definition of 'visual or diagrammatical representation' of the process or processes. I am aware of the following types of mapping and flow charting, each with their own benefits and drawbacks:

- Process Flowcharts
 - Cross Functional or Swimlane
 - Integration Definition for Function Modelling
 - Relationship Diagrams or Input / Output Diagrams
-

Process mapping is time line Process flow charts. Where in doing the Time studies are much easier where we can find out the Value Added & NVA time.

Hondo812

4th August 2008 04:18 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

Since the word "map" is used it is understood to be graphical in nature. No one confuses written directions to a destination with a map to the same location. I honestly can't see why anyone would suggest that a "process map" would amount to a procedure or other text only document.

Jim Wynne

4th August 2008 04:32 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Hondo812** (Post 263841)*

Since the word "map" is used it is understood to be graphical in nature. No one confuses written directions to a destination with a map to the same location. I honestly can't see why anyone would suggest that a "process map" would amount to a procedure or other text only document.

I agree that "map" (as a noun) suggests a graphical representation, but it's possible to have written descriptions of process interactions that are not maps, per se, but are more effective than maps.

Peter Fraser

4th August 2008 04:40 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Hondo812** (Post 263841)*

Since the word "map" is used it is understood to be graphical in nature. No one confuses written directions to a destination with a map to the same location. I honestly can't see why anyone would suggest that a "process map" would amount to a procedure or other text only document.

Easy! "3.4.5 procedure = specified way to carry out an activity or a process". No mention of a "text only document" in ISO9000.

And have you never drawn a sketch of how to get somewhere by drawing lines for the roads, and added a few notes to explain that the rectangle is a supermarket, or that the junction is 200 yards past the church...?

egarry

4th August 2008 10:35 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

I like process maps to help define the overall view of the organization. In my opinion, it makes it easy to describe the core systems of an organization using the IPO model (Inputs, Process steps, Outputs). Once the core systems are identified, you can use the process map to help you determine what procedures you should consider documenting to define your QMS.

Hondo812

5th August 2008 04:43 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Jim Wynne** (Post 263846)*

I agree that "map" (as a noun) suggests a graphical representation, but it's possible to have

written descriptions of process interactions that are not maps, per se, but are more effective than maps.

I agree that there is more than one way to effectively document a process. Most of that is dependent on what you expect to get out of it. I have used left/right hand charts/sheets to document which hand an operator is using to assemble/transport/grasp/etc. a product for a specific assembly step. This is information that does not present well on a classical flowchart format but does present very well in a 2 column list. It is not a process map however and I think that was the focus of this thread, to define what a process map is.

Raffy

6th August 2008 02:06 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

Our process map describes the bird's eye view of the company's business. A PDCA cycle should be applied to a process map (SIPOC - Supplier-Input-Process-Output-Customer).

Raffy

JaneB

6th August 2008 03:47 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

Interesting - a range of viewpoints.

The poll results do seem to indicate some broad agreement on two points - if not total consensus :D

- A 'process map' can illustrate either a *single* process or multiple *processes*
- It is definitely not an 'all text' thing, though it usually has some text with it (eg, perhaps to explain or identify)

Beyond that... a whole range of different opinions on what it is, or what it 'should' or 'should not' be.

I do think the 'single vs multiple' point is an important one. It helps explain some of the confusion that can arise during discussions of process maps, particularly for the new or inexperienced.

After all, if 'my' mental model of a process map is firmly multiple and 'your' mental model is of a single process only, there's heaps of potential for confusion.

I also agree with Jim but only to a point. I love clear diagrams. But I dislike very busy ones, or ones that are not easy to understand, and in fact require considerable explanation!! So I'd agree that a clearly written description could be better than a poor process map. But then of course, a good process map would also be much better than a verbose and bad description!:lol:

Biffen

6th August 2008 05:27 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

The Basics of Process Mapping by Robert Damelio was also helpful to me:

It suggests there are 3 types of "Process Map"

1) Relationship Map -

Shows supplier-customer relationships (which functions or parts of the organization receive inputs from and provide outputs to one another)

Level of detail: Least

Focus - Organisation Context

Relates pieces of the organisation to one another, answers the question: What does the organisation provide to its internal and external customers?

2) Cross functional Process Map -

Shows functions, steps, sequence of steps, inputs, and outputs for a particular work process

Level of detail: Medium

Focus - Process / People Interface

Shows supplier/ customer linkages for a single process. Answers the question, What steps does the organisation perform to provide outputs to its internal and external customers? And who performs each step?

3) Flowchart -

Shows tasks, sequence of tasks, inputs and outputs for a particular work process

Level of detail: Most

Focus - Process Detail

Shows detailed tasks that make up a process. Does not show supplier-customer linkages. Answers the question, How does the work actually get accomplished?

Personally I am working on producing Flowcharts (3) at the moment in my work, high detail, step by step work flows. In my organisation this is what is commonly referred to as Process Mapping.

Peter Fraser

6th August 2008 07:09 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Biffen** (Post 264158)*

[I][U]

3) Flowchart -

Shows tasks, sequence of tasks, inputs and outputs for a particular work process

Level of detail: Most

Focus - Process Detail

*Shows detailed tasks that make up a process. Does not show supplier-customer linkages.
Answers the question, How does the work actually get accomplished?*

Even at the "flowchart" level it subdivides - a "process flowchart" shows what is done, and a "deployment flowchart" shows who does it and who else is involved. And you can use "RACI" (or a variation) to show the type of involvement. It helps get away from this apparent "obsession" that some folk have with finding a "supplier" and a "customer", and "inputs" and outputs", for everything that moves - or at least puts the description of how work is done into terms that the average worker can relate to!

Intesar

6th August 2008 09:12 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

I believe: notme:

Its advantages:

Save time:

just by a quick look at it you understand it & you may be able to locate the critical steps

Easy to correct and improve:

just by editing an arrow or a box

thanks all

ashwaniraina82

7th August 2008 01:05 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Umang Vidyarthi** (Post 261845)*

*A '**Process Map**' is a bird's eye view of a process or processes, giving you broad information about the process in one shot. Just like a picture.*

BTW the 'uninitiated' also get confused with synonymous terms viz: Process flow diagram, process flow chart, process model etcetra.

Umang :2cents:

dear umang,

well said

but sometimes it reveals more than an overview

navalbhawsar

10th August 2008 06:52 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

Mapping up of a process in different way perhaps may give simple idea about process map. May be presented graphically with symbols and text to synchronizes a process step by step to indicate input and out put.

Hondo812

10th August 2008 11:44 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

A Process Map provides the details of the the process (aka the steps), the time(s) involved per step, and may include where applicable what department/person is responsible. A basic flowchart only covers the first of these, typically.

Now, to the person that started this thread, the real question is not what a process map is, but rather what do you expect to get out of it? It has been my experience that it provides a baseline from which I can reasonably measure the level of improvements to the process by changes that are implemented. Change is the name of the game to be competitive in manufacturing and as Churchill once said, " To improve is to change, to be perfect is to change often". The process map is one tool used to evaluate change.

JaneB

12th August 2008 11:58 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Hondo812** (Post 265137)*

A Process Map provides the details of the the process (aka the steps), the time(s) involved per step, and may include where applicable what department/person is responsible. A basic flowchart only covers the first of these, typically.

Interesting viewpoint & a good illustration of how very differently the term 'process map' is used, and how differently people think about what should/should not be included.

For example, in many if not most processes in **service**-based firms, it would be absolutely meaningless (and often quite ludicrous) to attempt to put in the 'time involved per step' - whereas I see that it is seen as often critically important in a manufacturing field.

Peter Fraser

13th August 2008 03:13 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **JaneB** (Post 265645)*

*For example, in many if not most processes in **service**-based firms, it would be absolutely meaningless (and often quite ludicrous) to attempt to put in the 'time involved per step' - whereas I see that it is seen as often critically important in a manufacturing field.*

This is at least partly because in manufacturing you want to minimise variation, but in service you are more likely to want to tailor your delivery to meet the circumstances, the customer and even the capability of the person providing the service. (Which is why the ISO9000 definition of a "process" hinders rather than helps in such situations)

Hondo812

13th August 2008 12:01 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **JaneB** (Post 265645)*

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*For example, in many if not most processes in **service**-based firms, it would be absolutely meaningless (and often quite ludicrous) to attempt to put in the 'time involved per step' - whereas I see that it is seen as often critically important in a manufacturing field.*

I would strongly disagree with your assessment. I worked with a firm that had a Customer Service department that kept track of the number of calls answered per hour, the average call time, the average wait time, etc. They obviously thought that managing those times was important. I have seen here in the last 2-3 weeks a repair center manager asking specific questions about mapping his process, mention of office processes time study data, and references to this article <http://www.ad-mkt-review.com/public.../aj200611.html> and how tackling the white collar sector is a task vital to the survival of business.

I have worked at other firms that have addressed some of the soft issues like purchase orders. We mapped the original process, identified area of waste and streamlined the process to yield a cut of approximately 50% in delivery time. The firm that I am with at the moment tracks time for ECO's. Date initiated to date approved. The process is mapped and routinely evaluated to see if there are areas for improvement.

I don't find the notion of looking at service industry processes ludicrous at all.

Patricia Ravello

13th August 2008 12:17 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **JaneB** (Post 265645)*

*For example, in many if not most processes in **service**-based firms, it would be absolutely meaningless (and often quite ludicrous) to attempt to put in the 'time involved per step' - whereas I see that it is seen as often critically important in a manufacturing field.*

:confused: Surely, you jest!!?? :confused:

Peter Fraser

13th August 2008 12:23 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Hondo812** (Post 265771)*

I would strongly disagree with your assessment. I worked with a firm that had a Customer Service department that kept track of the number of calls answered per hour, the average call time, the average wait time, etc. They obviously thought that managing those times was important. I have seen here in the last 2-3 weeks a repair center manager asking specific questions about mapping his process, mention of office processes time study data, and references to this article <http://www.ad-mkt-review.com/public.../ai200611.html> and how tackling the white collar sector is a task vital to the survival of business.

I have worked at other firms that have addressed some of the soft issues like purchase orders. We mapped the original process, identified area of waste and streamlined the process to yield a cut of approximately 50% in delivery time. The firm that I am with at the moment tracks time for ECO's. Date initiated to date approved. The process is mapped and routinely evaluated to see if there are areas for improvement.

I don't find the notion of looking at service industry processes ludicrous at all.

Unfortunately, reducing the time taken to answer a customer call / getting more calls per hour can very often decrease customer satisfaction - the customer may be held longer before he or she gets through, the "solution" offered may not be the best since there is pressure to get on to the next call etc. It is often not a single process that should be "measured", but the overall cycle time and level of satisfaction from the need to call to final resolution.

Patricia Ravello

13th August 2008 12:40 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Peter Fraser** (Post 265784)*

Unfortunately, reducing the time taken to answer a customer call / getting more calls per hour can very often decrease customer satisfaction - the customer may be held longer before he or she gets through, the "solution" offered may not be the best since there is pressure to get on to the next call etc. It is often not a single process that should be "measured", but the overall cycle time and level of satisfaction from the need to call to final resolution.

Hondo 812 didn't imply that they were trying to **reduce** call time. They appear quite pro-active and astute in their process performance measurement choices.

I would hope that they are reviewing their Customer Satisfaction Performance while planning and setting their "optimal timing - average call time, average wait time, etc" objectives, which would meet targets for both **effectiveness and efficiency**.

Patricia Ravello

Peter Fraser

13th August 2008 02:51 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Patricia Ravello** (Post 265789)*

*Hondo 812 didn't imply that they were trying to **reduce** call time. They appear quite pro-active and astute in their process performance measurement choices.*

*I would hope that they are reviewing their Customer Satisfaction Performance while planning and setting their "optimal timing - average call time, average wait time, etc" objectives, which would meet targets for both **effectiveness and efficiency**.*

Patricia Ravello

Maybe I assumed that "managing" the times meant setting some sort of limit or controls, rather than doing what was necessary to close out the reason for the call. Which is a major fault with (eg) call centres.

I do warn others not to "assume", though! The meaning of words, again...

JaneB

13th August 2008 08:32 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Hondo812** (Post 265771)*

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I have worked at other firms that have addressed some of the soft issues like purchase orders. We mapped the original process, identified area of waste and streamlined the process to yield a cut of approximately 50% in delivery time. The firm that I am with at the moment tracks time for ECO's. Date initiated to date approved. The process is mapped and routinely evaluated to see if there are areas for improvement.

I don't find the notion of looking at service industry processes ludicrous at all.

Yes, I think that I didn't word it carefully enough, & definitely shouldn't have said 'if not most' - too sweeping a generalisation, based on the examples I was thinking of at the time. Call centres? Yes, absolute prime example of when measuring time taken is considered important and a valid measurement - presuming that the issue is actually effectively handled.

But there are others when it isn't - and would be quite wrong. For example, an organisation providing one to one support to callers with a mental illness - the absolute last thing *they* want to do is get them off the line as quickly as possible! In some cases, the call may last a minute or two, in others it may be an hour or more...

In some government department processes, they have no control over the time, which is dictated by the amount and complexity of the consultation process and responses. Here again, time is not an effective metric for effectiveness (except to indicate how long some things can become).

Peter makes a good point about the assumptions. I want the focus to be on the effective outcome - and in some cases in some service fields (she says, wording it more carefully!), time measurement is *not* an effective metric.

QA gremlin

1st January 2009 10:18 PM

Re: What IS a Process Map?

To me it is synonymous with flowchart, process diagram. It shows the sequential sequence of activities over time using graphical symbols. It has a beginning & end. Usually one process depicted but not always. The word map to me, connotes getting from A to B following a route or routes. My impression of process mapping is that the symbology is rather open - anything goes, whereas flowcharting or Lean current & future state maps have more standardized symbols.

:bigwave:

JoCam

16th March 2009 01:22 PM

Re: What IS a Process Map?

A Process Map comprises a stream of activities that transform a well defined input, or set of inputs, into a pre-defined set of outputs. I use Process Mapping as an Improvement tool, as it is an excellent means of identifying weak or absent stages in a process.

Jo

JaneB

16th March 2009 09:41 PM

Re: What IS a Process Map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **JoCam** (Post 303125)*

A Process Map comprises a stream of activities that transform a well defined input, or set of inputs, into a pre-defined set of outputs.

Jo, thanks for this. But I'm a little confused by what you've said, as it sounds to me like a description of an actual **process** ('a stream of activities that transform...') rather than a process **map**.

I do agree with you that process mapping is a useful tool, but my interest was in what people mean by a 'process map'. And I notice from the various votes that the thing/document/diagram/whatever can be either of a single process or of multiple processes. Which is rather what I thought, and no wonder some people find the term confusing.

Peter Fraser

17th March 2009 05:05 AM

Re: What IS a Process Map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **JaneB** (Post 303202)*

*Jo, thanks for this. But I'm a little confused by what you've said, as it sounds to me like a description of an actual **process** ('a stream of activities that transform...') rather than a process **map**.*

I do agree with you that process mapping is a useful tool, but my interest was in what people mean by a 'process map'. And I notice from the various votes that the thing/document/diagram /whatever can be either of a single process or of multiple processes. Which is rather what I thought, and no wonder some people find the term confusing.

In the same way, there is often danger of confusion between "the management system" and "a description of the management system". A manual, or a set of process maps (whatever they are...!) etc in electronic format, is never "the management system" - it is no more than someone's best attempt to describe it. The system is what you do and what you need to be able to do it.

JoCam

17th March 2009 05:21 AM

Re: What IS a Process Map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **JaneB** (Post 303202)*

*Jo, thanks for this. But I'm a little confused by what you've said, as it sounds to me like a description of an actual **process** ('a stream of activities that transform...') rather than a process **map**.*

Process Mapping as an Improvement technique consists of a group of carefully selected employees establishing all the stages of a particular process, usually by writing, affixing post-it notes, photographs or flowchart symbols onto a wallchart. This highlights any gaps or weaknesses and raises discussions on how to improve the process. The output of such a session is corrective and preventive actions, and usually amendment of the associated procedure.

Jane, I agree with you that the term is a little confusing, and this is just my understanding of it. I consider it to be simply a detailed illustration of a process, leading people from the inputs to the outputs, just as a road map would lead you from A to B.

Jo

qualityboi

17th March 2009 04:28 PM

Re: What IS a Process Map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **JoCam** (Post 303230)*

Process Mapping as an Improvement technique consists of a group of carefully selected employees establishing all the stages of a particular process, usually by writing, affixing post-it notes, photographs or flowchart symbols onto a wallchart. This highlights any gaps or weaknesses and raises discussions on how to improve the process. The output of such a session is corrective and preventive actions, and usually amendment of the associated procedure.

Jo

Thats funny, what you described is exactly the way we do it even down to the terminology yor are using. Sometimes we call it a process definition...the biggest problem with the mapping is that we find issues with horizontal ownership. This is also a good activity to reduce FMEA severity via a process re-design.

JaneB

18th March 2009 12:42 AM

Re: What IS a Process Map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **JoCam** (Post 303230)*

Process Mapping as an Improvement technique consists of a group of carefully selected

employees establishing all the stages of a particular process, usually by writing, affixing post-it notes, photographs or flowchart symbols onto a wallchart. This highlights any gaps or weaknesses and raises discussions on how to improve the process. The output of such a session is corrective and preventive actions, and usually amendment of the associated procedure.

Jane, I agree with you that the term is a little confusing, and this is just my understanding of it. I consider it to be simply a detailed illustration of a process, leading people from the inputs to the outputs, just as a road map would lead you from A to B.

Jo

Bingo - now I pretty much agree with you. Good overview & explanation.

Sorry - I really wasn't trying to split hairs, but originally you said that the process map (itself) comprises 'a set of activities etc. ' Which I read as being akin to saying a road map comprises a set of states and roads, for example. It doesn't - it's some kind of document that represents them. If all that sounds too darned hairsplitting... forgive me.

Good point about the horizontal ownership, qualityboi. Can be difficult! Hence the importance of process-centric view vs that by procedure or department/function. (And I'm currently trying to sort out a bunch of procedures and figure out where the *process* is/are...)

JaneB

18th March 2009 12:45 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Jim Wynne** (Post 261802)*

In general, process maps are confused masses of symbols, arrows and text that purport to explicate the interactions of processes. In most cases they do nothing of the kind and serve mainly to have something shiny and colorful to present to a CB auditor as evidence of understanding process interactions. Give me good ol' logically derived process flow diagrams any time. Or better yet, actually describe in writing how processes interact.

Jim, I was just rereading this. And after snickering through the 'confused masses' and 'shiny and colourful'... I wanted to ask something.

What *is* a 'logically derived process flow diagram' and how would I know if I were looking at once? (vs say a process map or anything else?)

JeffreyS

24th March 2009 04:34 PM

Re: What IS a Process Map?

Jim Wynne,

That's the best truth I've heard in a while!

Jim Wynne

25th March 2009 11:42 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **JaneB** (Post 303414)**Jim, I was just rereading this. And after snickering through the 'confused masses' and 'shiny and colourful'... I wanted to ask something.**What is a 'logically derived process flow diagram' and how would I know if I were looking at once? (vs say a process map or anything else?)*

I missed this when it was first posted, so apologies for the tardy response.

A "process map" is anything you want it to be, but my point about a "logically derived process flow diagram" was that there is actually [a standardized way of doing PFDs](#), and the standardization comes from computer programming, where *logical* flow is of the utmost importance.

For a simple example, look at this flowchart I from another post:

<http://elsmar.com/Forums/picture.php...&pictureid=856>

Note that the flowchart dictates the logic flow of the process--if the steps are followed as depicted, you have to perform the process as designed.

Contrast this with flowcharts and process maps and turtle diagrams that we're used to seeing, where there are symbols and arrows and god-knows-what-else jammed onto a sheet of paper such that it's impossible to know where to go or what to do.

If a processes are rationally and *logically* depicted (designed) it's possible to see the intersections and know what the requirements are for shifting the flow from one process to another, and you won't be able to get out of process "A" and into "B" without satisfying the requirements of "A" first. You also won't be able to skip over "B" and go directly to "C" from "A" if that's not intended to be allowed.

JaneB

25th March 2009 08:23 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

Jim, yes, now I'm with you in both senses.

Do agree about logic being highly desirable in a process flow.

Although I'm often not as strict (eg, use of symbols and detail as the standard methodology dictates); those with an engineering/IT background seem fine like such diagrams, whereas many others often find them confusing - perhaps a bit like I feel about the more complex engineering drawings ;)

But as for those confusions of colour and heaven-knows-what and 'more arrows than Custer's last stand' - not to mention confusion and illogicality, spare me.

One of the things that I have discovered through this thread is that the term 'process map' may be used by some people where I might instead use the term a 'system map' or 'system diagram'.

Thanks for clarifying.

Jim Wynne

25th March 2009 09:44 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **JaneB** (Post 304947)*
Do agree about logic being highly desirable in a process flow.
Although I'm often not as strict (eg, use of symbols and detail as the standard methodology dictates); those with an engineering/IT background seem fine like such diagrams, whereas many others often find them confusing - perhaps a bit like I feel about the more complex engineering drawings ;)

If the *process* is logically designed and controlled, the PFD will be too, whether you like it or not. :D

JaneB

26th March 2009 12:02 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Jim Wynne** (Post 304956)*
If the process is logically designed and controlled, the PFD will be too :D

This *ought* to be the case, I agree. Would that 'twere always so. :)

Yarik

18th April 2009 08:05 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Biffen** (Post 264158)*
The Basics of Process Mapping by Robert Damelio was also helpful to me:

It suggests there are 3 types of "Process Map"

1) Relationship Map -

Shows supplier-customer relationships (which functions or parts of the organization receive inputs from and provide outputs to one another)

Level of detail: Least

Focus - Organisation Context

Relates pieces of the organisation to one another, answers the question: What does the organisation provide to its internal and external customers?

2) Cross functional Process Map -

Shows functions, steps, sequence of steps, inputs, and outputs for a particular work process

Level of detail: Medium

Focus - Process / People Interface

Shows supplier/ customer linkages for a single process. Answers the question, What steps does the organisation perform to provide outputs to its internal and external customers? And who performs each step?

3) Flowchart -

Shows tasks, sequence of tasks, inputs and outputs for a particular work process

Level of detail: Most

Focus - Process Detail

Shows detailed tasks that make up a process. Does not show supplier-customer linkages. Answers the question, How does the work actually get accomplished?

Personally I am working on producing Flowcharts (3) at the moment in my work, high detail, step by step work flows. In my organisation this is what is commonly referred to as Process Mapping.

With all due respect to Mr. Damelio, this "classification" of process maps is more confusing than helping. At least to me, a novice.

IMHO, this "classification" puts several VERY different things into one bowl called "process map"...

BTW, from the purely grammatical viewpoint: how come one of the types of "process map" has the word "process map" in it whereas other two types don't (and you can't even attach "process map" to them)? Whenever I see a classification that is grammatically inconsistent - it's always a big red flag to me...

Just :2cents:

Stijloor

18th April 2009 08:38 PM

Re: What IS a Process Map?

Friends,

This is getting waaaaaay too complex...:mg:

OK. Here is a simple example. Assume that you have to explain to an interested person (outside of the

organization) how an order is converted into cash. You must do this using simple pictures (symbols, whatever). I am sure that this person will ask a few questions for clarification. Once this person's light comes on, you are finished with your process map (or whatever you want to call this thing). :agree1:

Imagine; if road maps were produced based on the information in some of the posts in this thread....we would be lost forever.....:confused:

Just venting my frustration.....:frust: :frust: :frust:

Stijloor.

JaneB

18th April 2009 10:00 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Yarik** (Post 309215)
BTW, from the purely grammatical viewpoint: how come one of the types of "process map" has the word "process map" in it whereas other two types don't (and you can't even attach "process map" to them)? Whenever I see a classification that is grammatically inconsistent - it's always a big red flag to me...*

Anyone who expects or wants complete and total consistency in all terms in the quality world at all times is going to have a hard time. (I don't say that's good or bad, it just is). Your redflag is going to be working overtime, Yarik ;)

I agree with Stijloor - let's keep it simple. So if one of you uses the term to mean one kind of diagram/chart/whatever (or even 3) and someone else uses it to mean something else, it doesn't matter a lot. Know that, decide what it means in your world and move on. There's lots more important things to do and battles to fight than this one. :tg:

Yarik

18th April 2009 10:27 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **JaneB** (Post 264152)
The poll results do seem to indicate some broad agreement on two points - if not total consensus :D*

- A 'process map' can illustrate either a *single* process or multiple *processes*
- It is definitely not an 'all text' thing, though it usually has some text with it (eg, perhaps to explain or identify)

Beyond that... a whole range of different opinions on what it is, or what it 'should' or 'should not' be.

I do think the 'single vs multiple' point is an important one. It helps explain some of the

confusion that can arise during discussions of process maps, particularly for the new or inexperienced.

After all, if 'my' mental model of a process map is firmly multiple and 'your' mental model is of a single process only, there's heaps of potential for confusion.

The term "process map" appears to be totally useless to me because I, too, believe that there is a very big difference between

(A) showing multiple processes and interactions between them

and

(B) showing how a specific process works (which is essentially description of that pesky set of interrelated/interacting activities that constitute a process)

This belief is based on another belief - a belief that there is some substantial conceptual difference between the "process" and "activity".

NB: I am a novice to the "process approach" as it is described (very vaguely, IMHO!) by ISO, so I still only *believe* in the abovementioned difference, because even after spending about a month with all this "ISO stuff" I'm still looking for a good definition of "process", and especially for a good explanation of what's exactly is the key difference between a "process" and "activity". From what I saw around so far, these two concepts are used practically as synonyms; for instance, consider this train of thoughts: "...a process is a set of closely inter-related activities; each of those activities can be split into another set of closely inter-related activities and also has some input(s) and output(s); therefore each activity can be considered as process, too..."

But I digress, I'm sorry... Clear definitions of "process", "activity", and differences between them seem more like a good topic for a separate discussion thread...

Anyway, let me try to get back to the terminological aspect of this discussion and make two points:

---(1)---

If I were responsible for definition of the term "process map", I would try to make its meaning consistent with similar terms like "world map", "country map", "city map", "park map", "campus map", etc. You see where I am going with this:

{SOMETHING} map = map of {SOMETHING}

= essentially description of *internals* of a *single instance* of {SOMETHING}

NB: I know, I know, there are such things as "street map" and "road map" that do not show internals of streets and roads. But those cases appear to be rather exceptions than same-frequency variations. (Please correct me if I am wrong - after all, English is my second language. and I obviously can't see the "big picture" as clearly as native speakers... :o.)

Therefore, I would define the term "process map" as depiction/description of *internals* of a single process.

Of course, this definition would not prohibit including other processes into a picture (e.g. to show how some specific elements of a given process interact with "outer processes"; like, for example, a map of

city X may include references to other cities to explain which of the roads/streets of city X are the best routes to other, "external" cities). But the essence/focus of the "process map" would remain on a single process - the process that is being mapped. :-)

All this is wishful thinking, of course, because it's probably too late to define or re-define the term "process map". It would be a really nice term if it wasn't as ambiguous as it is now... :(

--- 2 ---

I may be a total rookie in ISO- and QMS-related domain, but I have very extensive experience in software development. We, s/w developers, also build all kinds of models of all kinds of domains (including organizations and what they do). So I hope I could contribute something more than just "fresh/dazzled/puzzled looks at things".

For example:

As many of you may already know, one of the latest (and allegedly most widely used) approaches/tools in software-related modeling is UML (Unified Modeling Language):

<http://www.uml.org/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unified_Modeling_Language

UML includes graphic notations for many different types of models and uses a very simple terminological convention for the **types of diagrams** that can be built:

STATIC (STRUCTURAL) DIAGRAMS

class diagram: essentially shows *multiple classes* and relationships between them (FWIW: supersedes old-fashioned ERDs, entity-relationship diagrams)

package diagram: essentially shows *multiple packages* and relationships between them (FWIW: essentially, packages are sets of closely related classes)

object diagram: essentially shows *multiple objects* and relationships between them

component diagram: essentially shows *multiple components* and relationships between them

BEHAVIORAL DIAGRAMS

object interaction diagram: essentially shows *multiple objects* and *interactions* between them (FWIW: there are subtypes like "sequence diagram" that focuses on sequence of interactions)

activity diagram: essentially shows *multiple activities* and relationships between them - like how activities follow each other and what data are being passed between them (FWIW: supersedes old-fashioned workflow/dataflow charts/diagrams/maps)

state diagram: essentially shows *multiple states (of an object, for instance)* and transitions between them

And so on, and so forth.

Of course, UML's vocabulary is not perfect either, and there are some exceptions (like, for example,

"sequence diagrams" that do not depict multiple sequences). But those exceptions are not abundant and are quite tolerable.

Anyway, the point I was going to make is simple: since the term "process map" is somewhat compromised (perhaps, irrecoverably), why not to borrow the terminological approach (and even some terms) from UML? For example:

A term like **activity diagram** could be used to designate any picture/chart/diagram that shows *multiple activities* that interact and interrelate with each other. In particular, it could be used to designate a description of *internals* of a process (in which case you could probably call it "{PROCESS_NAME} activity diagram").

A term like **process diagram** could be used to designate any picture/chart/diagram that shows *multiple processes* that interact and interrelate with each other. In particular, it could be used to show all processes (or all key processes) that exist in an organization.

What do you think?

Perhaps, there are other things that could be "borrowed" from UML. In particular, I am going to try to use UML activity diagrams to describe procedures and process internals. Also I am looking at UML-based attempts to deal with "processes" (including business processes), but at this point I am not sure that UML will be easy and/or effective for such application.

Just :2cents:

Patricia Ravello

18th April 2009 10:44 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Yarik** (Post 309223)*

The term "process map" appears to be totally useless to me because I, too, believe that there is a very big difference between

(A) showing multiple processes and interactions between them

and

....yatta, yatta, yatta.....

....but at this point I am not sure that UML will be easy and/or effective for such application.

Just :2cents:

I'm with Stijloor....This is getting waaaaaay too complex....:mg: and serves no purpose...except for you.

If it helps you keep things straight in your mind...then run with it...

The topic really doesn't merit all this rhetoric.

Just my:2cents:

Patricia

Yarik

18th April 2009 10:53 PM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **JaneB** (Post 309221)*

Anyone who expects or wants complete and total consistency in all terms in the quality world at all times is going to have a hard time.

Well, in my experience, the vocabulary of "quality world" is not worse than the one of any other worlds that I've seen so far. In fact, the "official vocabulary" here is quite good! ISO deserves a lot of credit for that, IMHO.

Also, in this particular case I was criticizing terms proposed by some book, not commonly used terms or standardized terms.

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **JaneB** (Post 309221)*

(I don't say that's good or bad, it just is). Your redflag is going to be working overtime, Yarik ;)

I know, I know. It's already happening... :(

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **JaneB** (Post 309221)*

I agree with Stijloor - let's keep it simple. So if one of you uses the term to mean one kind of diagram/chart/whatever (or even 3) and someone else uses it to mean something else, it doesn't matter a lot. Know that, decide what it means in your world and move on. There's lots more important things to do and battles to fight than this one. :tg:

Sure. :yes:

But I am taking a slightly different path, though: Whenever possible, I am not going to use the term "process map" at all. At least until it becomes well-defined. :)

Yarik

19th April 2009 05:47 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Patricia Ravanello** (Post 309225)
I'm with Stijloor....This is getting waaaaaay too complex...:mg: and serves no purpose...except for you.*

If it helps you keep things straight in your mind...then run with it...

The topic really doesn't merit all this rhetoric.

Just my:2cents:

Patricia

Sounds a little bit harsh but... fair enough. Perhaps, I should've indeed used another thread for my "terminological suggestions"...

:cool:

Stijloor

19th April 2009 06:14 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Yarik** (Post 309245)
Sounds a little bit harsh but... fair enough. Perhaps, I should've indeed used another thread for my "terminological suggestions"...*

:cool:

Yarik,

My post about "**complexity**" was meant to be a general observation and comment about posts in this thread, not necessarily to single you out. :agree: I hope you continue the dialogue.

Stijloor.

Jim Wynne

19th April 2009 10:54 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Yarik** (Post 309223)
Perhaps, there are other things that could be "borrowed" from UML. In particular, I am going to try to use UML activity diagrams to describe procedures and process internals. Also I am looking at UML-based attempts to deal with "processes" (including business processes), but at this point I am not sure that UML will be easy and/or effective for such application.*

Just :2cents:

I made the point earlier in this thread that the basic idea of process flowcharting came to us from what used to be called "data processing," and works well because of the need in software development for controlling logical algorithms. Nevertheless, you shouldn't get hung up on names and titles for what you're doing. As with software development, you start with a goal in mind--what the software (or the manufacturing process) is expected to produce--the output--and then develop the most efficient means of accomplishing the goal. The analogy extends to control of input and logical means of processing. If your algorithm is logical and efficient, the ~~flowchart turtle diagram process map~~ graphical representation will take care of itself, and no one will care what you call it.

Pancho

19th April 2009 11:15 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Jim Wynne** (Post 304872)*

For a simple example, look at this flowchart I from another post:

<http://elsmar.com/Forums/picture.php...&pictureid=856>

:topic:

Jim,

Can you please post a link to that other thread? I'd like to read more on the subject of this diagram.

Thanks,
Pancho

Patricia Ravello

19th April 2009 11:36 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Panchobook** (Post 309267)
:topic:*

Jim,

Can you please post a link to that other thread? I'd like to read more on the subject of this diagram.

*Thanks,
Pancho*

Hi Pancho,

I don't know if this is the only place it appears, but here's another link where I've seen this flow chart:

<http://elsmar.com/Forums/showthread....ventive&page=8>

I think it's posting number 58 in the thread.

Patricia

Jim Wynne

19th April 2009 11:41 AM

Re: What IS a process map?

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by **Patricia Ravanello** (Post 309270)
Hi Pancho,*

I don't know if this is the only place it appears, but here's another link where I've seen this flow chart:

<http://elsmar.com/Forums/showthread....ventive&page=8>

I think it's posting number 58 in the thread.

Patricia

Thanks, Patricia. It's also [here](#) in this thread. It's a very simplistic representation, but demonstrates logical flow.

The time now is 10:29 AM. All times are GMT -4.

Your time zone can be changed in your UserCP --> [Options](#).

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