

## Process is Bigger Than Workflow

Process redesign used to be something companies only did in conjunction with a major system upgrade. Expanded automation forced it, so they had no choice but to examine and refine their workflows to comply with the requirements of the new system. Since then we have all learned that letting automation drive process design is backwards, but that's a subject for another time.

What is important today, and the subject of this communication, is that process redesign is something more and more companies are doing continuously. And, within the parameters they set, some companies are getting quite good at it. They have dedicated fulltime resources to it; they use simulation and analysis software to study it; almost everything is measured; and changes are made continuously to achieve and maintain efficiency. Non-essential handoffs, redundancies, delays and other 'low hanging' inefficiencies are significantly reduced in these companies. Like the popular arcade game, they are pounded down as soon as they raise their heads. The cost of this is high but it's important from a service perspective, so companies do it.

Unfortunately, that's still where most improvement efforts stop. Most companies still don't see (or want to see) and therefore, don't address, the improvement opportunities that lie beyond workflow. To them, "process" and "workflow" mean the same thing. But they don't. Process is bigger than workflow. In addition to workflow, "process" includes the fundamental principles, philosophies and practices that drive not only how work flows through the company but also all of the other influences that determine how work is performed at each point in the flow. When examined from this broader perspective, it becomes clear that "process" also includes the design of the jobs assigned to execute the work; the organization structure that 'houses' it, the controls that focus it, the manner in which management directs it, the measures that evaluate it, the rewards for doing it right, etc. All of these things influence how effective and efficient companies are, and all require periodic evaluation and updating to maximize results.

So why don't more companies give these things the attention they deserve? The easy answer is that it's harder. The expertise needed is seldom available in-house and, even when it is, it's extremely difficult for in-house staff to address these issues objectively and trigger the needed changes. Another reason is that it's threatening. If done right, careful scrutiny of these processing influences may reveal that some or all of the basic principles, philosophies and practices, jobs, the organization structure, controls, measures, rewards, etc -- have to change. And these are not changes most people welcome – even when they know it's necessary.

Our message this month is: *you have to address these issues too*. Because they have such a strong influence on your company's effectiveness, they have to be evaluated and updated to make sure *everything*, including workflow, is aligned properly and contributing to the best possible results. And when you do, the results are significantly better.

Few companies can make these changes without outside help. We started our firm 15 years ago to provide it. Give us a call. We would love to talk to you about how to proceed.

Also, please visit our web sight at [McDonaldConsultingGroup.com](http://McDonaldConsultingGroup.com), where you will find further explanations of these ideas (and other exciting ideas) in our Concepts and Ideas section. We also have some case studies that you might find interesting.