

# Top Ten Tips for Business Process Management Projects

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Today's organisations compete through more efficient and better executed business processes. [Business Process Management \(BPM\)](#) is an approach and technology for implementing well-defined, well executed processes. Michael White provides his top tips on how to successfully introduce BPM to your organisation.

## 1. Pick a project that will make a difference.

For your first BPM project select a highly visible business process where improvements will yield real organisational [benefits](#). The process you choose should be in a key operating area that is important to the organisation, so it can act as an example and inspiration for subsequent projects. Clearly define what the expected benefits of improving the process will be, such as cost efficiency, customer service, or faster responsiveness. Quantify these benefits you require in terms of money, time, people or other specific measures.

## 2. Obtain Senior Management Buy-in.

You want high-level sponsorship of the project at the outset to ensure you get the resources you need, to gain buy-in from staff and to overcome resistance to change. Your executive sponsor should have the authority and respect required to keep up project momentum. He or she should also be prepared to remain in a hands-on role throughout the first delivery – just showing up at project kick-off won't be sufficient.

## 3. Get the team structure right.

Create a cross-functional, collaborative team to analyze the existing process and prototype a better approach. You will need subject matter experts - people knowledgeable about particular steps in the process as well as those who have an end-to-end view of the entire process. Have both business and IT staff on the team, but make sure that the business owners drive the project. If you're using a [BPM tool](#), get help from the vendor or your preferred system integrator for the first project, with a view to transferring their skills in-house over time.

## 4. Plan for the Real World.

Assume from the start that major new requirements will surface as the project proceeds - businesses change and so do requirements. Plan your BPM project so that you can cope with these changes, adopting a [flexible, iterative approach](#) and regularly reprioritising the features you intend to include. And design with exceptions in mind - think about what typically causes problems in today's process and how you can better handle those exceptions in your new process.

## 5. Avoid 'paralysis by analysis'.

When [analysing](#) the current 'as-is' process there is always a temptation to drill down further and further to describe it in more detail. Our advice is don't get too granular on your first BPM project – "better is the enemy of

good". Look for the parts of the process that capture 50% to 80% of what people do – improvement here will yield the highest and most immediate benefits. The BPM approach means you can come back and further optimize the process after the first delivery.

## 6. Use an iterative delivery approach.

Deliver the new process iteratively in a succession of 'builds', ideally completing the final build within one business quarter or less. At each iteration, the business owners can review what's been built to date and steer the next build to include the highest priority business features. This approach ensures early visibility of how the new process will look and a close alignment of features to business priorities.

## 7. Control expectations and scope .

Avoid the 'big bang' –approach - don't try to deliver everything in the first project. We recommend that you use 'user stories', prioritised by business need, effort and technical risk, to evaluate which features are included in the first delivery. And stick to a strict schedule. Our rule is that if a requested feature can't be delivered within [90 days](#) using the available resources then it should wait until the next iteration

## 8. Plan for interfaces, integration and reports.

The main effort for the first BPM project is usually in developing user interfaces, system integration, data integration and reports. Plan your delivery to cover each of these aspects in progressive iterations.

## 9. Measure what's been achieved.

After final delivery of the newly improved business process, measure its performance and compare it against the old process so you can demonstrate you've met your ROI goals

## 10. Evangelize your success.

Make sure you advertise what you've achieved to drive awareness and acceptance of the BPM approach and encourage ongoing initiatives.

**About the author:** Michael White is Head of Marketing at Singularity, a leading BPM vendor ([www.singularity.co.uk](http://www.singularity.co.uk))



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