



**The “IT Solution Fairy” doesn’t exist. Neither does “Magic IT Solution Dust.”
Meaningful solutions combine People, Process, and Technology
for sustainable outcomes.**

Some watch-words for aspiring practitioners of Business Process Re-engineering.

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The idea of all-saving technology has been around since fire and the wheel were invented. Ever since then, organizations have sought to address business pain-points with technology. There is a clear dividing line between initiatives that fail and succeed:

Losers	Winners
No clear problem/opportunity statement Exclusive or over-reliance on technology	Clear problem/opportunity statement Holistic view of <i>People, Process & Technology</i>

Initiatives that take a holistic view of *technologies*, the *people* who have to use them, and the *process* “ecosystem” in which they live, fare better. While a clear problem statement and appreciation for how people, process, & technology combine for a successful outcome are needed, they are only part of the picture; a business process re-engineering methodology is a critical enabler to good, predictable results. There are many BPR methodologies but successful implementations:

Know what “Done” looks like. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart famously remarked about obscenity, “I know it when I see it.” That might have been “OK” for a Supreme Court ruling but it’s a poor yardstick for a BPR initiative. Be clear. Use reliable data. Avoid subjectivity wherever, whenever possible.

Strive for perfection, but don’t let “perfect” be the mortal enemy of “good enough.” Perfection is hard to come by, especially on the first pass of a BPR initiative. Don’t over-analyze. Don’t be afraid of incremental improvement.

Obtain just the right amount of “go/no-go” data. For organizations without BPR experience, knowing where to start isn’t easy. They may intuitively know that something is broken or have clear data indicating a problem. Knowing how much data is needed to justify a BPR initiative depends on the situation and *organizational tolerance of the effort required to gather enough data*.

Communicate. Communicate. Communicate. By definition, BPR means change. Change means—for many organizations—fear, uncertainty and doubt among stakeholders. Good practitioners know the importance of transparency and acknowledging the opportunities and threats that new business processes can bring.

Involve the troops. If your BPR effort is staffed with management, watch out. The people doing the work know the current state and what’s wrong with it. And they want it to be better, no matter what anyone else says. So make the right subject matter experts available to the BPR project; don’t stash your deadwood there. If the pain/opportunity point is clear enough to do a BPR initiative, the pain of making the right subject matter experts (SMEs) available for the initiative will pay huge dividends.

Identify what happens and give it a name that everyone understands. Many enterprises—even for critical core processes—don’t have a documented picture of what happens from the time a customer calls to the time the invoice is paid. And they lack a standardized vocabulary. Successful BPR initiatives develop a clear picture supported by standardized trade-terms that everyone can understand. Stakeholders can’t take it to the next level without a common picture and language.

Know your inputs and outputs. Generally, what you get out depends on what you put in...and you cannot evaluate what isn’t identified. On the other hand, a good BPR methodology will break-down the current state to its meaningful inputs and outputs with quality measures for each.

Beware of “But we’re unique...we have to do it this way...” Most organizations think they are special. And they probably are...except when it comes to processes. The more “special” you are, the more likely you’ll need “special” (i.e., customized, expensive) technologies to support your people and processes. Capable BPR practitioners know how to root-out gratuitous special processes that lead to customized technologies.

Cultivate desired state evangelism. It’s rare that everyone immediately embraces a proposed state. Identify the influencers among the SMEs and leverage their street-credibility to bring others aboard. Back them up with management influence where needed.

Communicate. Communicate. Communicate. Even a well-founded, well-run BPR initiative can be a wearying exercise. Validate your findings with the troops. Let people see what’s happening and why.

Get rid of everything that doesn’t help mission accomplishment. “We do it like that because that’s the way we’ve always done it...” Stakeholders need to be facilitated to challenge the status quo. Nothing—no matter how attached we are to it—should be part of a re-engineered process unless it adds a tangible value. Know the difference between “want” and “need.”

Beware of unintended consequences. If you have a good process picture—including basic metrics—you can tell how the proposed state will perform before implementation. Making “A” faster might just move the chokepoint to “C” if you’re not careful.

Implement. Monitor. Correct. Even the best desired state models can behave in unintended ways. Don’t just throw the new process over the wall and say “Done.” Watch it and correct until the variations become “normal.”

Communicate. Communicate. Communicate. SMEs and managers alike may invest significant professional and personal capital in a BPR initiative. Let them know how it’s doing. Get them to tell you the pitfalls so next time will be better.

Businesses that demonstrate an understanding—or a desire to understand—the relationship between People, Process, and Technology will enjoy a better BPR ROI than organizations that wait for the IT Solution Fairy to flap her wings over to our problems and eliminate them with a sprinkle of IT Solution Dust. Real problems need real solutions that require real work.

Contact us to learn more about how we help organizations conduct Business Process Re-engineering to drive measurably higher performance and produce savings.