Getting your head around your business processes

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What’s the problem?

- We want to re-align our processes with our real business
- We want to improve how our processes operate
- We want to align our information systems with our processes
- We want to choose an organisational structure that is customer-oriented
- and so on
Getting started in process thinking

How do we get our heads around the dynamics of our organisation?

How can we tell what processes we have?

How can we challenge their existence?

‘How?’ means ‘Method!’
Process architecture

- A picture that tells us
  - what processes we have
  - what dynamic relationships they have

- But we need a method for constructing it and then for challenging what it is telling us
Chunking the organisational activity
– leave the axe at home
... and stay out of the kebab house
... and ignore those pyramids
The real business is monkeys

- A customer places an order
- An email arrives
- A clinical trial is needed
- We take on a new supplier
- A possible new product is invented
- A piece of plant fails
- We gain a new customer
The monkeys *define* our business

- Being in a particular business means there are certain things we must deal with

- ... let’s call them *Units of Work*, eg
  - customer order
  - clinical trial
  - supplier
  - product
  - plant failure
  - customer
Monkeys make demands

- Units of work generate demands:
  - demand to handle a customer order
  - demand to handle a clinical trial
  - demand to handle a supplier
  - demand to handle a product
  - demand to handle a plant failure
  - demand to look after a customer

demands which are generated dynamically

... each of which has a ‘lifetime’, from start to end
Demands imply processes

- A process to handle each unit of work
  - ‘Handle a customer order’
  - ‘Handle a clinical trial’
  - ‘Handle a supplier’
  - ‘Handle a product’
  - ‘Handle a plant failure’

- The case process
- which is instantiated whenever the demand is generated
Key properties of a case process

- It is by definition end-to-end
- It is a natural for appropriate measurement
- Inside it is where we make design decisions about
  - organisational structure
  - technology
  - culture
  - etc
The rabbits multiply
– a case of one UoW generates cases of another

- A drug compound generates (needs) several clinical trials
  - During the life of the compound, clinical trials are started for it
- A clinical trial generates (recruits) many patients
- A plant failure can generate (require) one or more maintenance tasks
- An email can generate (lead to) more emails
- A customer can generate sales opportunities
Let’s draw a picture

The business of being a library is a dynamic affair involving three sorts of monkey/rabbit

- Borrower
- Book
- Loan
And another

The business of carrying out jobs at a utility company is a dynamic affair.
And another

The business of doing clinical trials is a dynamic affair
The rabbit warren needs management

What about the scheduling, resourcing, and prioritising of all those competing cases of a unit of work?

That’s the case management process

Examples:

- ‘Manage the flow of products’
- ‘Manage the flow of orders’
- ‘Manage the flow of deliveries’
- ‘Manage the flow of production batches’
Properties of a case management process

- It concentrates all the resourcing, scheduling, and prioritisation of cases of its UoW
- It determines the efficiency of resource usage
- It affects the transit time of requesting cases
- It is responsible for delay if it batches and queues
There is a third process type

- The case process deals with one case
- The case management process deals with the flow of cases – short and medium term management
- Where do we take the long view?

- In the case strategy process – one per UoW
- For example:
  - ‘Take a strategic view of customer calls’
  - ‘Take a strategic view of plant failures’
Properties of a case strategy process

- It encapsulates the organisation’s strategic thinking about how a given UoW is dealt with
- It is where trends are observed and acted on
- It is where process improvement happens
  - It can change and control the case process and the case management process
- It might generate new cases of its UoW
  - ‘Take a strategic view of products’ might decide on some new products
From UoWs to processes

Product \arrow{generates} Change Proposal

Product \arrow{generates} Change Proposal

Handle a Product \arrow{delivers to} I

Handle a Change Proposal \arrow{starts} A

Manage the flow of Change Proposals

requests
... more generally ...

Product

Change Proposal

becomes

Handle a Product

I

delivers to

I

Handle a Change Proposal

I

I

Manages the flow of Products

requests

I

I

Manages the flow of Change Proposals

I

I

I

I

starts

monitors

intervenes

stops

reports
Hence the process architecture

- New borrower appears
- Handle a Borrower
  - Manage the flow of Borrowers
    - Take a strategic view of Borrowers
  - Manage the flow of Loans
    - Take a strategic view of Loans
  - Send a loan
- Handle a Loan
  - Manage the flow of Loans
  - Take a strategic view of Loans

- I request a book
- Handle a Book
  - Manage the flow of Books
    - Take a strategic view of Books
  - Deliver the book
- I deliver the book
  - Start the process
  - Request a book

- I request a loan
- Handle a Borrower
  - Manage the flow of Borrowers
    - Take a strategic view of Borrowers
  - Start the process
  - Request a loan
  - Deliver the loan
Here’s another

This *Riva* process architecture captures the true dynamics, not just a glib ‘chain’
A little more work on the library’s process architecture ...
‘Essential’ or ‘Designed’?

- We also *invent* units of work:
  - Invoice
  - Batch
  - Monthly sales return
  - Expense claim

- We can challenge these ‘designed’ units of work
  - Can we do without them?
  - Can we achieve the same in another way?
  - Do they just reinforce silos?
  - Do they create dysfunctional behaviour?
The process trinity

- **Unit of Work (UOW)**
  - **case process**: handles a single case of the UOW through its lifetime
  - **case management process**: manages the continuing flow of cases of the UOW, monitoring over the medium term, scheduling, and prioritising case process instances

- **Case strategy process**: observes long-term performance and trends, makes predictions, and determines the strategy for the case and case processes in the future
Think living spaghetti

- Your organisation is a *network* of processes
- As it runs,
  - there is a flux of case processes
  - under the control of a set of case management processes
  - all under the strategic eye of a set of case strategy processes
- These are the true dynamics
Getting the process architecture in practice

- Brainstorm the essential business entities
- Extract the ones that are units of work
- Capture the ‘generates’ relationships between them on a Unit of Work Diagram
- Transform that Unit of Work Diagram into the Process Architecture Diagram
Examples of process architectures

- The virtual organisation by which innovations get into the NHS
- An entire engineering consultancy
- A new utilities organisation operating in a newly defined regulatory role
- The pharmacy of a pharmaceutical R&D company
- A university faculty’s course administration
- A London Borough
Benefits of a *Riva* process architecture

- The chunking into essential processes won’t change
  - It is independent of our design decisions
- ‘Designed’ processes are exposed
- We see all our processes:
  - the true end-to-end (case) processes
  - the (influential) case management processes
  - the (vital) case strategy processes
- Who could ask for a better place to start our process thinking?
For the full story of Riva, read

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