Workflow mapping procedures

The workflow mapping process

First steps

1. Identify the process that you want to document.
2. Define the boundaries that mark the beginning and end of the process.
3. Decide on the goals of your project. Do you want to gain a better understanding of a process? Or implement a new version of the process? Or both?
4. Identify a project manager. You will need one person who is responsible for the entire workflow exercise.
5. Identify stakeholders. These people will work with the project manager to provide information, ensure accuracy of the work, and make decisions about changes.
6. You may want to meet with your stakeholders to describe the project and make sure everyone is on the same page.

Shadowing and information gathering

1. Identify those people who are most familiar with the process you want to document – this group will probably be a subset of your stakeholders. Ideally, you want to talk to those who actually carry out the day to day work of the process and can tell you how it's really done (not how it's supposed to be done).
2. Set up times to meet individually with each person you've identified.
3. Determine if you will be shadowing each person, or just talking through the workflow.
4. If shadowing, ask each person to save several examples of their work for you to observe. Ask them to perform the work as they would if you weren't there. Emphasize that your are not judging their work, just observing.
5. During each meeting, either watch the workflow carefully or have the person you're interview give you a detailed verbal description of the workflow.
6. Make detailed notes.
7. Ask a lot of questions.

Creating the workflow diagram

1. Compile your notes from each interview conducted.
2. Use what you've learned to walk through the workflow yourself and make sure you have a solid understanding of the whole process. You can use whatever means works best for you – drawing the process on a white board, writing out a text description, creating an outline, etc.
3. If you have questions, go back to your original sources and get clarification. Questions might include discrepancies between how people do their work, gaps in your notetaking, things that don't make sense, etc.
4. Begin working on a visual diagram of the workflow using Visio or another workflow diagramming program.
5. Use workflow mapping symbols, described below, which include symbols to represent processes, decisions, flow, and documents.
6. Choose a level of granularity for your diagram. You will need to be more or less detailed depending on what type of decisions you need to make based on your diagram.
7. This is the most difficult part of the process. You may need to make several starts to determine the best way to represent something visually. It make also take some time to make things fit on the page the way you want them to.
8. Continue to think through the process, ask questions, and revise your diagram until you feel it makes sense and looks good.

Vetting the workflow diagram

1. Arrange a meeting with your stakeholders group to review the workflow diagram.
2. If you have a lot of stakeholders, you might want to break the group up into smaller meetings.
3. At the meeting, walk through the workflow diagram step by step
4. Invite stakeholders to ask questions or clarify pieces of the workflow as you go.
5. The goal is to find any errors in the workflow diagram and fix them.
6. You may also get feedback that allows you to improve the formatting and readability of the chart.

Implementing changes

1. Once you have an accurate workflow diagram, you can use it as a starting point to implement changes.
2. You can evaluate the diagram to identify parts of the workflow that are confusing, inefficient, ineffective, or unclearly assigned.
3. Many of these areas of concern may have already come up during the shadowing sessions or the review process.
4. For each area of concern, you will need to determine how it should be changed/fixed.
5. You may wish to do this with a small group of managers or stakeholders. This is not necessarily the same group as your initial stakeholders.
6. Finally, create a second diagram to document your proposed new workflow. This can be used for introducing the changes and training.

Workflow mapping symbols

RECTANGLE:
- Process, Activity
- Location
- Delay, Hold
- Both material and information symbol
-
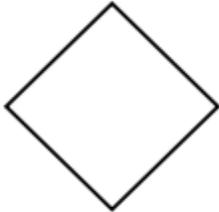
DIAMOND:
- Decision, Branch
- Two *mutually exclusive* exit paths only (yes/no, true/false), *always labeled*
- Primarily information symbol
-

CIRCLE:
- Used in matched pairs or groups to connect parts of flow or continue across pages ("A" connects to "A," etc.)
- Used singly for "start" and "stop" terminals (traditional oval variation OK for these uses)

ARROW:
- Material or information flow in direction of arrowhead
- Always single direction and single arrow
- Material and information symbol
- Labels may be attached for clarity

DOCUMENT:
- Paper input or output
- Used for required documentation in or out
- Material ("quasi-material") and information symbol

Figure 3.1   The WFMA symbol set

Source: John L. Kmetz, *The Information Processing Theory of Organization: Managing technology accession in complex systems* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 1998): Adapted from Figure A8.1.1, p. 378.

Resources

Microsoft Visio: This is a workflow diagramming program. You can download it by running the following file: G:\Everyone\it\Visio 2007\setup.exe. The product key is included in a text file in the same folder as the installer.

Acquisitions & Discovery Workflow Style Guide (Visio Document): This key is followed in the creation of all A&D workflow maps.

Me and My Shadow: Observation, Documentation, and Analysis of Serials and Electronic Resources Workflow: This article, written by Kristen Wilson and Erin Stalberg, describes the process used for the continuing and electronic resources workflow project.

Mapping Workflows and Managing Knowledge:Simply, Sensibly, Flexibly, and without Software: Another helpful article.

Workflow mapping projects in Acquisitions and Discovery

Continuing and electronic resources
MARC records service
ACQ:Ebooks
ACQ:Invoice processing