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Iraq Governance Strengthening Project

Process Streamlining Guidelines

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1. Introduction

Process streamlining is not a new theme and has existed throughout time under different names and forms. It is important to note that the drive for human life improvement dates back 500,000 years ago when prehistoric human ancestors innovated their hunting techniques and used tools by using spears tipped with sharpened stones in their search for bigger prey.

Currently the drive for human life improvement still exists, however, with much more complex conditions, sophisticated tools and performance criteria.

This process streamlining guideline document and within the USAID-Iraq Taqadum GSP scope aims at documenting the method and steps on how to approach process streamlining using various examples and illustrations from real life as well as detailed instructions on how to approach this task. (See Appendixes)

Key messages for the readers of this document are to be future criteria oriented, use your analytical skills, aim for practical solutions and don't take things for granted.

2. Definitions – Types & Characteristics

A process is defined as a group of related and structured tasks which produce an output in the form of a service or product that can be used by a customer. Thus, the process begins with a mission objective (trigger) and ends with achievement of that business objective.

Historically Adam Smith, one of the most significant people in 18th century, described in 1776 the pin production process using textual process steps "One man draws out the wire, another straightens it, a third cuts it, to make the head requires two or three distinct operations.....".

Thus; the process mechanism and design transforms inputs into outputs using various resources, energy and IT systems. In this respect, the better the process design the better is its efficiency. Therefore, feedback information is crucial in the continuous improvement of a process in providing better services-products on one hand as well as optimizing costs on the company-corporation side.

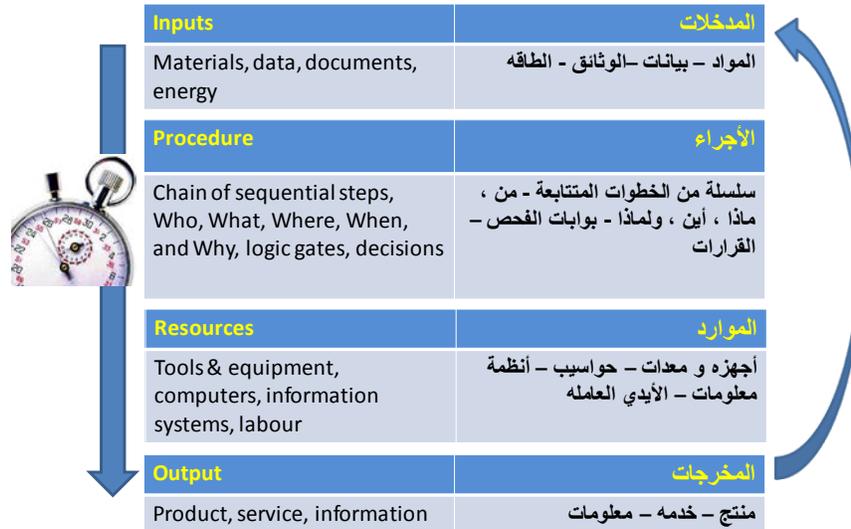


Figure 1: Process Components

Processes are divided into three types:

- Management processes which govern the operation of a system (corporate governance & strategic planning);



- Operation processes comprising the core business of an institution whereby added value is created through-out process steps. Examples are manufacturing, marketing, sales;



- Supporting processes which support the core processes to achieve their goals. Examples are accounting, HR, technical support;



Figure 2: Process Types

Successful organizations design processes in a way that overcome departmental barriers and mitigate functional silos. It is counterproductive and extremely inefficient to bound a process to one department as often the process can be decomposed into several sub-process that require their own specialized systems, tools and know-how.



Figure 3: Cross Functionality

In summary the process should have the following characteristics:

- A trigger and reason to exist;
- Definability with regards to inputs and outputs;
- Order in the sense that activities are ordered according to time and space;
- Serves a customer;
- Adding value each step of the way;
- Embided into an organization or entity;
- Cross functional respecting process chains and not rigid;
- Owner responsible for performance monitroing and result

Currently business processes can be modeled through various techniques. However, a simple and common technique is to visualize a process with a flow chart which is a model showing the sequence of activities within a process including decisions and alternate paths.

There are several software in the market; however for simple, practical use and easy to learn, MS Visio is quite handy and satisfies the needs of process documentation.

It is important to note that the flowchart must not describe the exact reality down to the most detailed step, rather to model the reality to an extent which can describe and communicate the process and subsequently facilitate identification of process shortcomings, bottlenecks and redesign needs.

3. Systematic Bottom-up Approach – Problem Identification

Using the definitions in the previous chapter, one should identify the process he/she intends to study. Special attention and care has to be given so that not to mix between a process and a result of a process.

If there is a bad product or service, then it is a clear signal that the chain of activities upstream is ineffective or inefficiently interlinked.

In this respect data analysis and service levels are the real mirror of an organization despite what the client or survey report says.

The below examples are a reflection of poor or sub-standard processes that have resulted in unacceptable corporate performance.

The extremely high revenue collection periods, 180 days in this example, are reflecting needs to analyze revenue collection and bad debt recovery process, the mountains of manual logbooks are an indicator of labor intensive manual operations and poor data quality management systems and last not least the long queues and extremely dissatisfied customers indicate deficits in citizen issues management system and customer relations process.



Figure 4: Sub-Standard Corporate Performance

The accurate identification of themes of interest and exact process to be streamlined is a critical step; otherwise the analysis will focus on an irrelevant theme, consumes valuable resources and results in an unusable solution.

Thus it is strongly advised to allocate ample time to analyze data, observe the process, use own analytical skills to question, check plausibility and challenge the stakeholder.

Don't be prisoner of statements or survey report that you see clearly to contradict reality on the ground.

By the same token, the figure below illustrates the cost associated with defining / correcting system requirements throughout project phases. Hence if the requirements were not adequately analyzed, the cost would be astounding at the last stage, Production (implementation) Stage, as opposed to what it would have cost at the Requirements Stage.

The Cost of Requirements Errors

Relative Cost to Repair a Defect at Different Project Lifecycle Phases

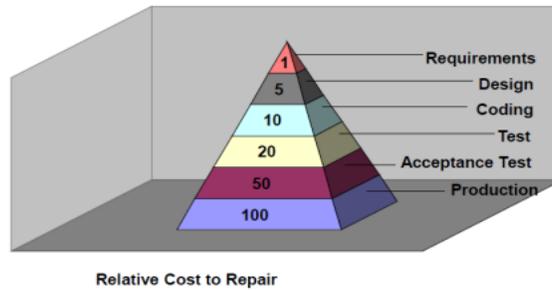


Figure 5: Cost of Requirement Errors (example from Internet)

Below is an example of business process analysis, redesign and implementation for a service utility adopting a systematic bottom-up approach of process streamlining.

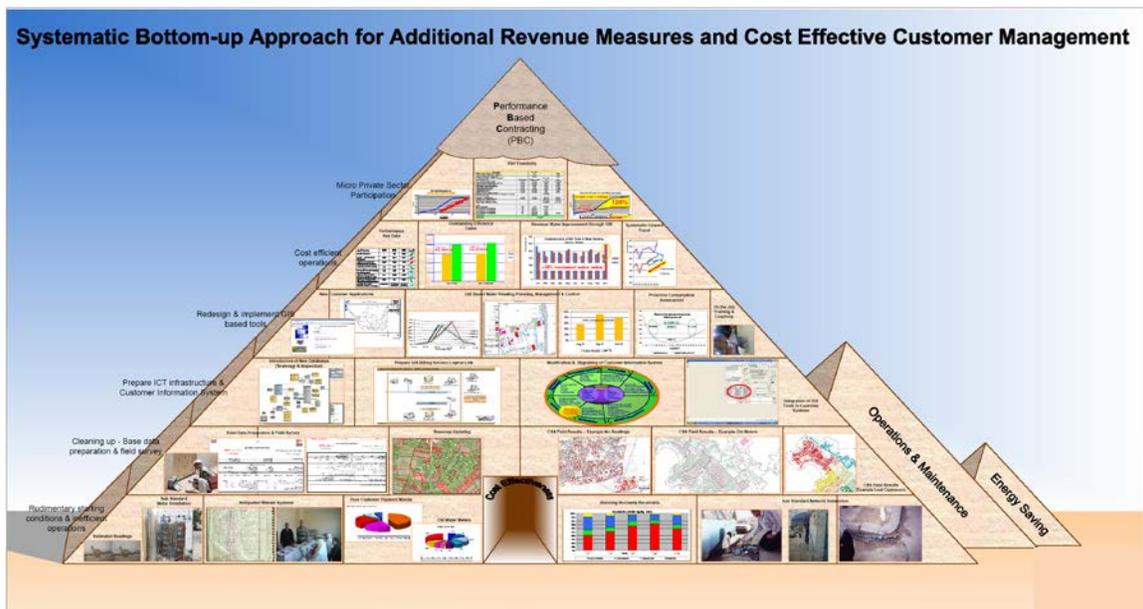


Figure 6: Example of Bottom-up Process Redesign & Implementation Stages (service utility)

In brief, the above process streamlining life cycle stages include the following:

- 0- Rudimentary starting conditions and poor corporate performance. As mentioned earlier this has to be substantiated through data analysis and process observation;
- 1- Start cleaning up activities with regards to data and initiate field surveys if needed;
- 2- Prepare ICT infrastructure & IT systems;

- 3- Analyze, redesign and pilot testing of modified / new processes. Design computer aided tools;
- 4- Implement (Go-Live) of cost efficient operations. Monitor process key performance indicators and adjust process design if needed;
- 5- Assessment of corporate performance and additional efficiency gains;
- 6- Depending on Stakeholder policy, study and prepare business case for private sector participation, outsourcing or performance based contracting.

The objective of the above example is not to copy the steps, rather to show the importance of systematically addressing the Process Criterion in the Organizational Self-Assessment & Transformation Programme.

The above figure and steps (Step 5) show that the Process Criterion by its corporate lynchpin nature could very easily crumble down the whole organization irrespective of how perfect other solutions criteria are. This is applicable whether the entity is a service utility, PC, GO or line ministry.

4. Process Documentation

To start with, different types of process flow charts give different and unique insights about the process. Moreover, process flow charts can be made in various places and at various times of a process.

Basically business analysts use four types of flow charts for process documentation namely:

- Top down – serves giving a bird's eye view, also provides sub-steps without showing rework loops;
- Linear – commonly used and provides a picture of overall process flow;
- Opportunity – breaking steps into value added and not value added and then drawing a line separating steps to be streamlined;
- Cross functional (swim lanes) – identifies people and departments responsible along the flow

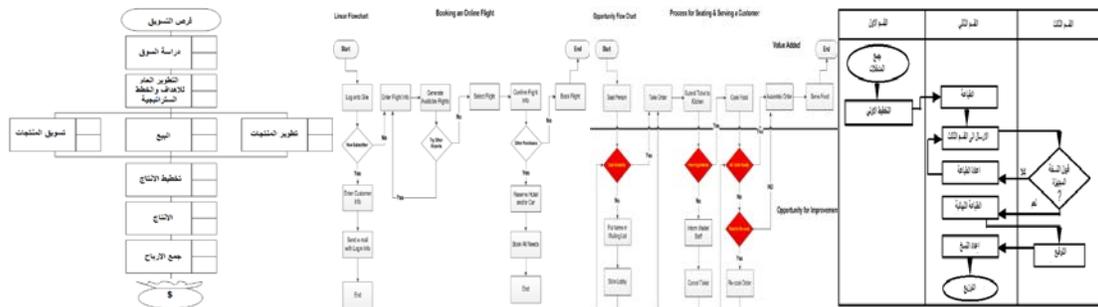


Figure 7: Flow Chart Types for Process Documentation

As a rule of thumb, it is advised to start process documentation in the order shown above starting with a bird's eye view and going into the details and complexities one step at a time especially in view that swim lane flow charts can be very complex.

Moreover, the analyst has to determine whether going into such details really serves the purpose of problem identification and solution design. Appendix 7.1 shows the types in more details.

There are certain helpful guidelines when developing a flow chart:

- Involve Stakeholders responsible for the process and who have detailed know-how about;
- Start from a high-level view (big picture). Don't attempt to find solutions at this stage. Make sure that the picture represents the current situation and not what the Stakeholder wishes it to be;
- Build ownership, shared understanding and agreement on the overall picture;
- Break picture into sub-processes – go through or observe the sub-process if possible. Stakeholders may sometimes miss telling about some steps;
- Moderate and explain the process using notes and flexible means. Allow Stakeholders to express freely all routines and step sequences. Thus; don't immediately start drawing the process into the computer before it has been totally documented and confirmed by Stakeholders;
- Don't use too many symbols which make understanding the process more difficult;
- Last not least keep the flow chart simple, readable and easily grasped. Keep consistent level of detail throughout the flow chart. It is confusing when the flow chart is detailed in one part and consolidated in another;
- Validate the documented flow chart with the appropriate Stakeholder. In some cases, to have the Stakeholder signature on the existing process flow chart enhances ownership and feeling responsible for the end result.

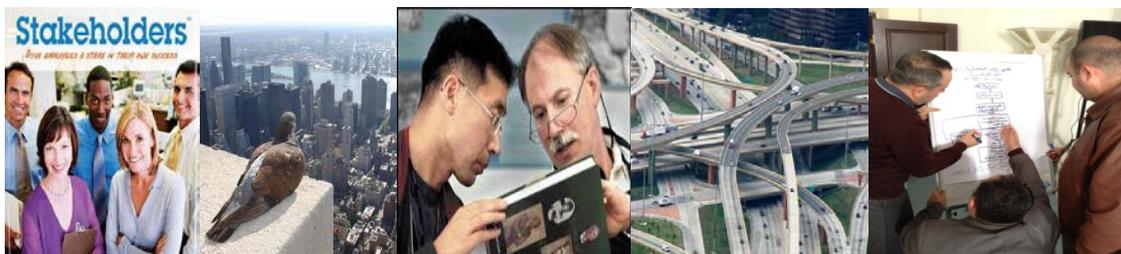


Figure 8: Process Documentation Guidelines in Pictures

In documentation of a process, the flow chart should have the following features:

- Mandatory:
 - Header information
 - Process name
 - Names of people who created the flow chart
 - Date of last update
 - Clear direction (left → right, top → down)
 - Consistent level of detail
 - Start & end points identified
 - 100% closed loops
- Optional:
 - Numbered steps
 - Symbol key (mandatory if using non-standard symbols)

The below figure shows also the most common symbols used in flow charts:

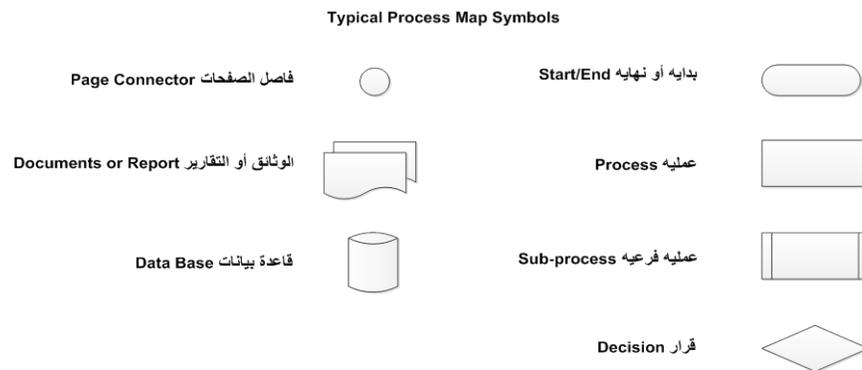


Figure 9: Typical Process Map Symbols

5. Identification of Process Shortcomings

Having documented the process and gained the stakeholder concurrence on the flow chart representation of reality, start analyzing the chart questioning the added value of each step, identifying back & forth, alternate paths without feedback and last not least your common sense skills to pin point illogical situations.

The below flow charts contain various deficits that would fit under several themes at one time. However and for the purposes of this guideline document, some themes have a prevailing and striking resemblance and subsequently the flow chart has been put under the theme most appropriate.

To systematize the analysis of the process flow chart, it is advised to look for the following:

1. Inefficient sequence of steps

- Check if many decisions about the process are taken near the end or in the inappropriate sequence. If this happens and the process starts all over again then all the above steps have taken place for nothing

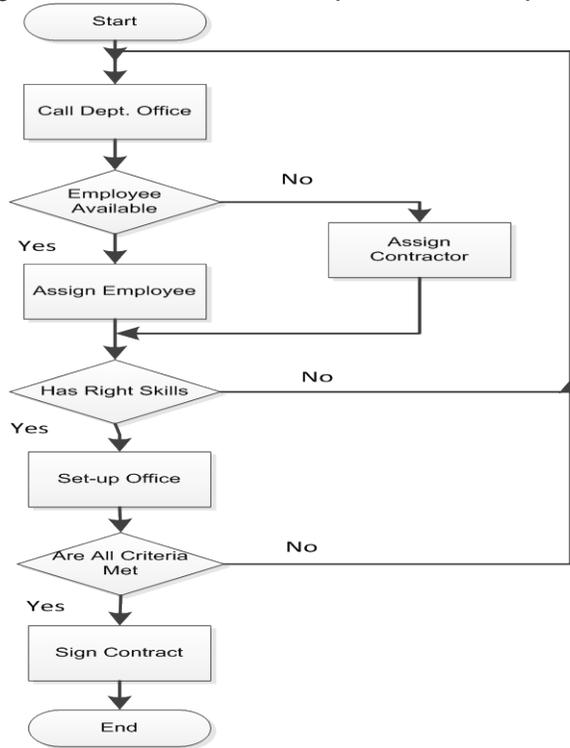


Figure 10: Inappropriate Steps Sequence – Special Tasks Process (Set-up Office)

The above flow chart shows that the employee had been selected and assigned to work before even checking, if he had had the right skills. Moreover and in the case of the contractor, the work commences and ends before a contract is signed between the two parties.

2. Redundant steps

- Check if some steps are really not needed and without added value on the end result (output)

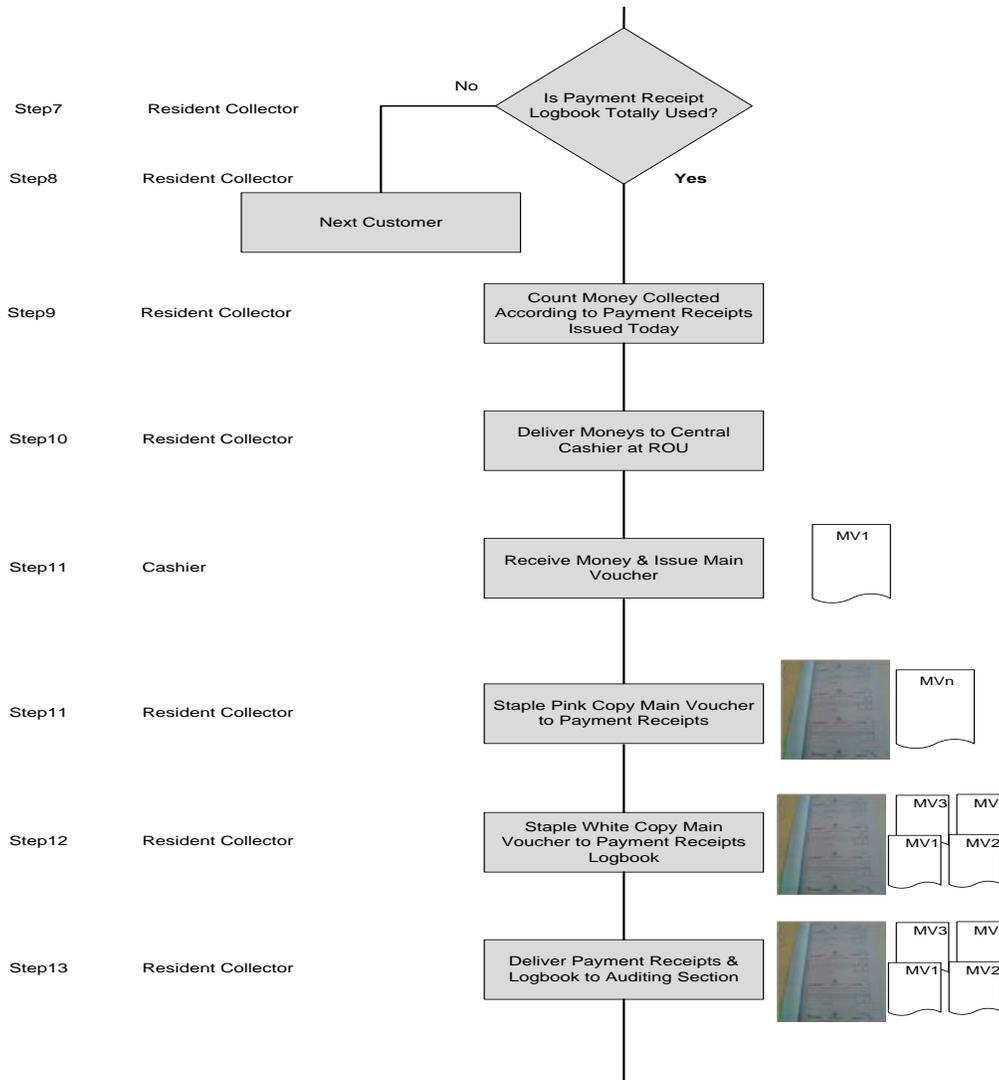


Figure 11: Redundant Manual Steps – Revenue Collection Process

The above process flow chart shows extremely labour intensive activities without added value on the end result of money collection.

The clerk is counting the number of receipts manually prepared, comparing the total amount to the cash at hand, delivers money to second cashier who in return gives him/her another payment receipt in two colours. The pink copy to be attached to the individual payment receipts and the white one to the receipts logbook and then both have to be delivered to the Auditing Section which does its more laborious manual operations.

Clearly this process has to be totally destroyed, optimized and automated from the beginning with needs to issue administrative and financial instructions as legal process references.

3. Back & forth & authorizations

- *Could indicate unclear lines of authority. Consider limiting authorizations if possible*

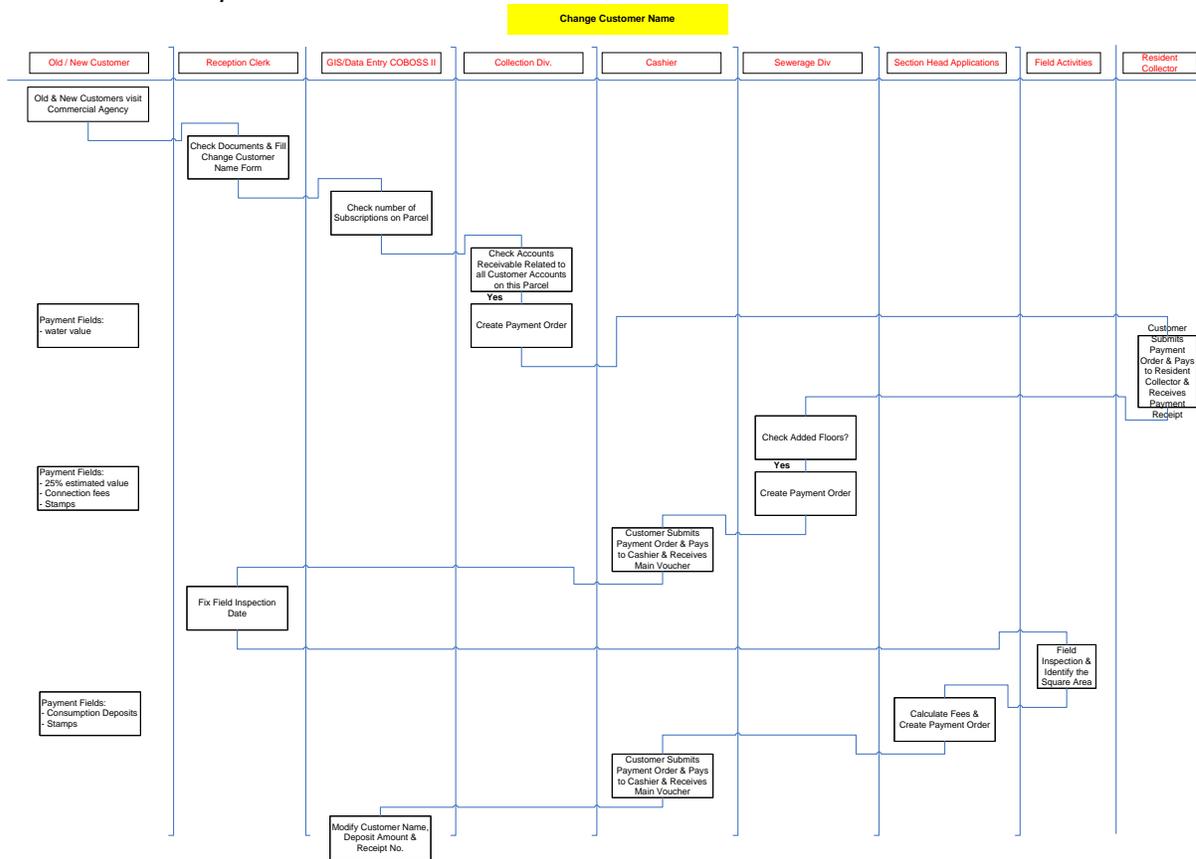


Figure 12: Back & Forth – Lack of Authorization- Change Customer Name Process

The above flow chart describes change customer name process when a new tenant is moving into a new apartment that was occupied by someone else.

This is a perfect example of back & forth where the customer has to move throughout various utility divisions just to get his contract sorted out. Moreover, the water & sewerage divisions separately have to authorize the process not to mention the customer payment step which includes checking the customer payment history and accounts receivable status.

This flow chart is evidence that this utility lacks integrated information systems, one stop shop customer service desk processes and is suffering from entrenched organizational functional silos rendering this process prone to various authorizations and delays.

4. Defects produced, substandard service & delays in service delivery

The below flow chart describes the process of serving a customer in a restaurant whereby the customer could go through three sub-standard service stages and ends up with poor product quality.

Waiting until a table is available without any recreational mean during waiting time, the second by being surprised that the meal order has to be changed due to the restaurant poor procurement process and last not least having the need for parts of the meal to be re-cooked with negative consequences on its tenderness and freshness.

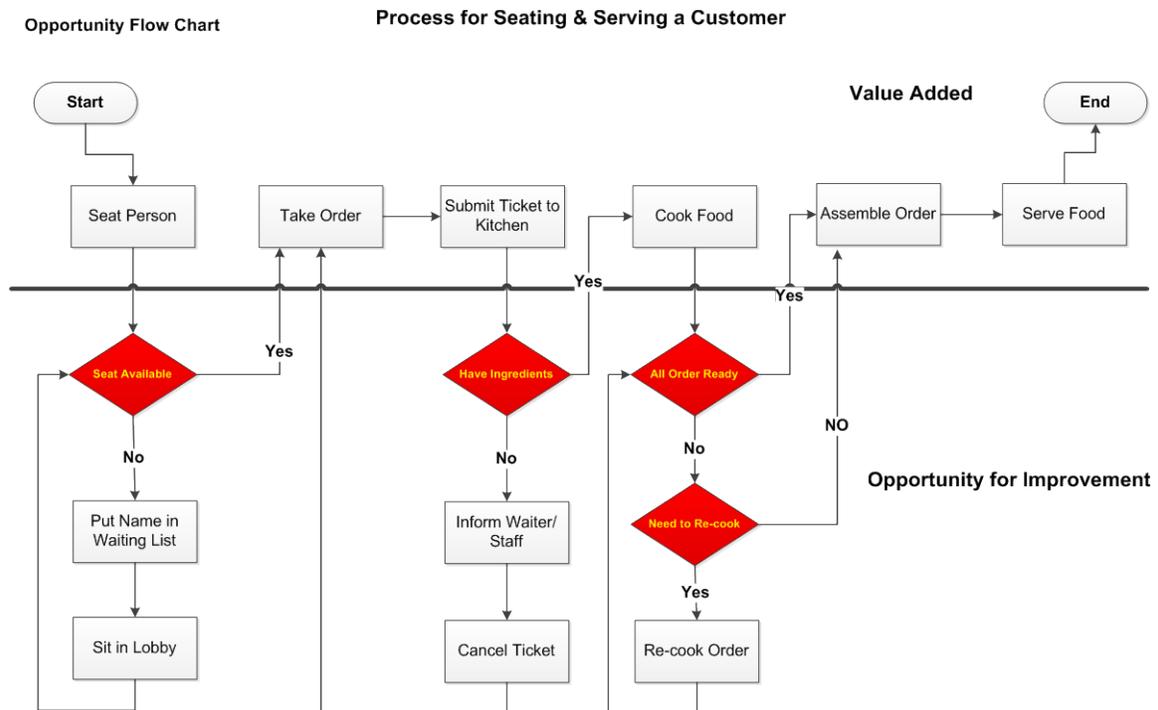


Figure 13: Sub-standard Service Time & Defective Products – Serving Customer in a Restaurant

5. Inventory build-ups

The below flow chart shows how poorly and fragmented the material requirements planning process is organized. Marketing and Sales departments are each preparing their isolated annual product plans and forwarding their demands to the Procurement Dept. Whilst Stores using production department plans and its inventory information is creating local material purchasing orders.

Having this process design and set-up, it is inevitable to have discrepancy in material item coding between procurement and local purchasing, duplicated material orders between marketing and sales and a totally different reality based on production department actual plans and material consumption.

The streamlining of such a complex situation requires a corporate wide MRP System, logging in the needs of each department, ensuring uniformity in item coding, preventing order duplications and timely delivery of material for production.

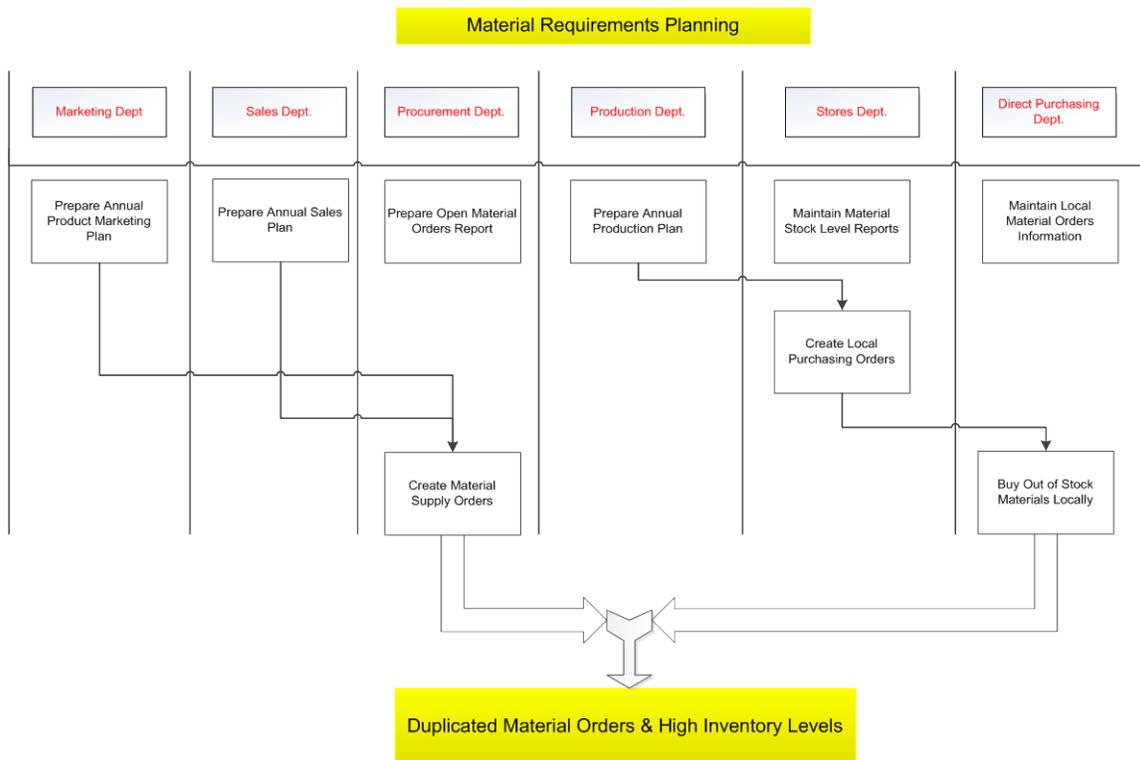


Figure 14: Inventory Build-up - Poor Material Planning Process

6. Rework loops and / or Open loops

Rework loops are indicative for poor service-product quality, lack of proper planning, limited staff decision capacities and entrenched bureaucratic structures. Open loops indicate ad-hoc process design; lack of systematic thinking and fix it when it breaks business culture.

The example below describes the interactive voice recording system with special emphasis on when the IVR is down.

Obviously this company weekly working days and daily working hours are 5 days and 9 hrs respectively.

When the IVR fails and it is not a working day nor working hour, the customer records a message in the hope that someone calls back. If a working day and hour, an employee answers the phone if he/she happens to be on his/her desk. Otherwise, the call is forwarded to the answering machine also.

Supposing that a reply call is made, the employee returning the call checks the source of the call and if not valid, forwards the call to the legal department without feedback of what happens to the Call Center.

Assuming that the call source is valid but the employee does not have all the needed training and information to respond to the customer complaint, the call is forwarded to the supervisor. If the supervisor can't solve the complaint, the customer call is forwarded again to the Call Center queue.

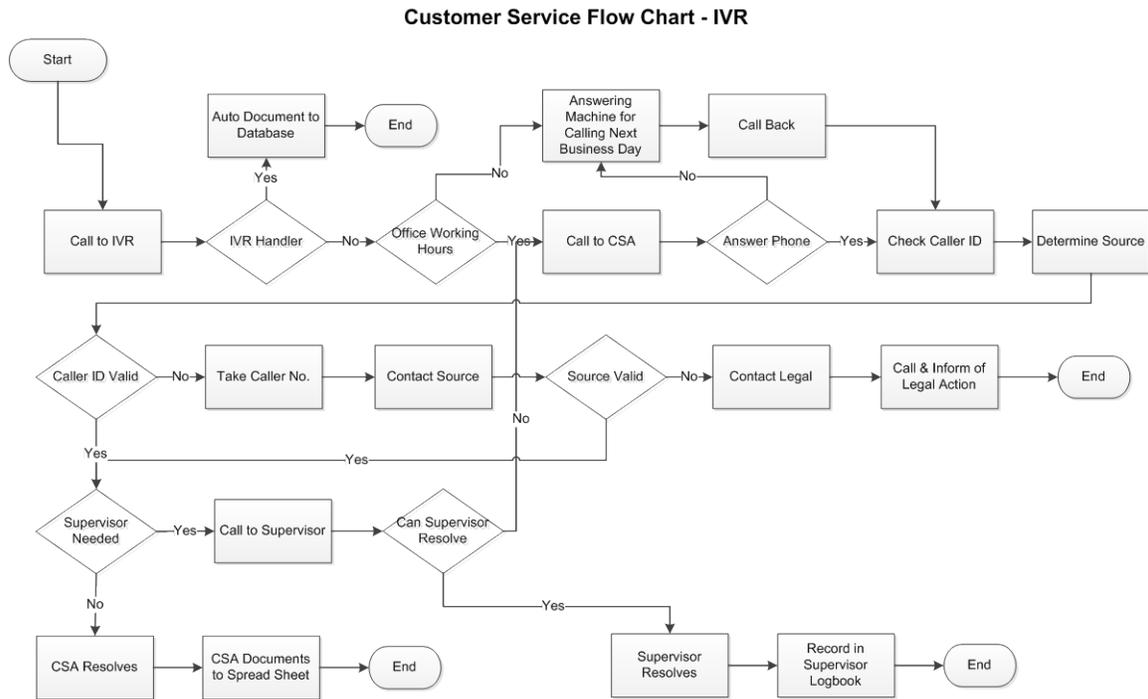


Figure 15: Rework and/or Open Loops / IVR Process

All the above flow charts and process shortcomings point towards the high need for process redesign mitigating all current bottlenecks and impediments.

Process pitfalls are usually deep rooted in organizational & functional deficits, haphazard process design, poor IT systems, fragmented databases, inexperienced staff and budgetary constraints.

In this respect the corrections and streamlining to take into consideration:

- Organizational needs to eliminate responsibility duplications. Functional silos to be avoided and view process as a chain connecting various departments;
- Proposals for regulation and official orders amendment to stem out of process redesign needs;
- Define data base user needs and computer aided business applications;
- Define missing or inadequate staff capacities, staff sizing and needed training;
- Prepare itemized lists of needed tools, equipment and hardware;
- Define objective process performance criteria and link as much as possible to staff incentive scheme;
- Streamline process logically with full detachment from past criteria and limitations. Be future oriented;
- Pilot testing of streamlined process before Go-live;

This way, process streamlining and implementation is riveted into the corporate organization, HR needs, transparent service & financial performance criteria, forcing creation of usable IT tools and systems and last not least the possibility to always use process feedback for continuous process evaluation and improvement.

6. Process Implementation and Performance Monitoring

Industrial & technical innovations as well as corporate drive for cost efficiency, competitiveness and excellence have been putting pressure on process streamlining and service improvement. On the other hand, the dynamic social, political and economic criteria have exerted their weight as well.

Thus, it is paramount to fully understand that process streamlining is not a one-time exercise.

However, this is easier said than done as sometimes organizations get euphoric about their first harvest achievements and believe that it will continue forever. In this respect comes the value of performance monitoring as ringing bells when working conditions and results start to change.

This raises the question, for the reader, how is this related to process streamlining and how it can be done?

Therefore and during the process redesign phase, the following questions have to be asked:

- Which objective key data is reflecting the best picture of the process? (process output oriented)
- Where shall this be anchored? (function)
- How it will be managed? (IT systems)
- When shall this be done? (organizational, time schedules)
- What for is it used? (process control, planning, capital investment, etc)

Having done this, the process designer is also challenging his/her design because if he/she finds out that the impact of the new process design cannot be measured, then he/she is falling in the same “no added value” trap.

Below are examples showing indicators that support process management as well as monitoring the impact.

المؤشر Indicator	2000	2001	2005	التوجه
التحصيل / Collection	-	28	58.8	
التحصيل النعم / Accounts Receivable	32.2	20.1	37.1	
العملاء الذين لا يسددوا الفواتير / Customers who do not pay	25.5	10.6	17.2	
لا يوجد قراء للعداد / No readings	7.4	6.7	2.5	
قراء العداد أقل من السابقة / Reading less than previous	5.8	1.97	2.0	
اعتراضات العملاء على الفواتير / Customer objections on bill	2.4	0.22	0.30	
الاعدادات والوصلات غير المختومة / Unsealed connections/meters	35.7	34	0.31	
احتكار معرفة عنوان العميل / Customer address monopoly	كلي / Absolute	تم إزالة الاحتكار / Annihilated	لا زال مزالا / Sustained	

Figure 16: Water Utility Commercial Department Indicators

The above figure shows percentages for water meter reading, billing and field activity process redesigns as well as GIS tools implementation that have been sustained. However, the indicators show that revenue collection and debt management processes have a problem despite the early efficiency gains in 2001.

Other examples are from proposed CSD-ITRS reports:

R1				
CSD Transaction Report				
From: Date				To: Date
Issue Type	Starting Balance	Received	Dispatched / Batched	Ending Balance
Domestic Violence	0	5	3	2
Sewerage Flooding	23	15	10	28
				0
Total	23	20	13	30

Figure 17: CSD Internal Process Control

R2							
Summary List of Open Cases							
From: Date						To: Date	
From: Target						To: Target	
Issue Type:	Sewerage Flooding						
Batch No.	Batch Date	Issue No	Issue Date	Citizen Name	Address	First Action Date	Days Still Open

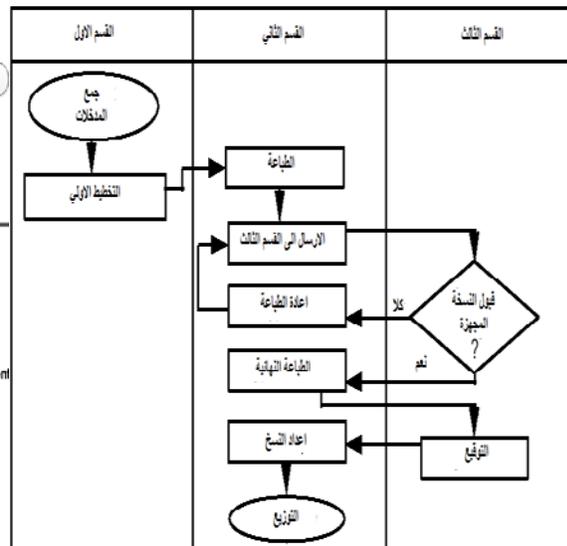
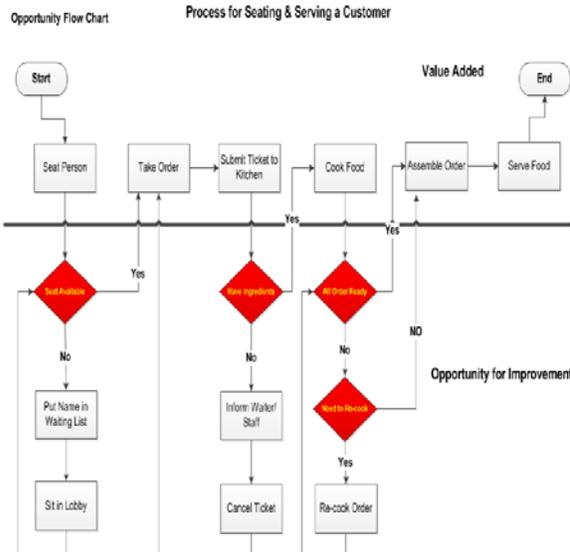
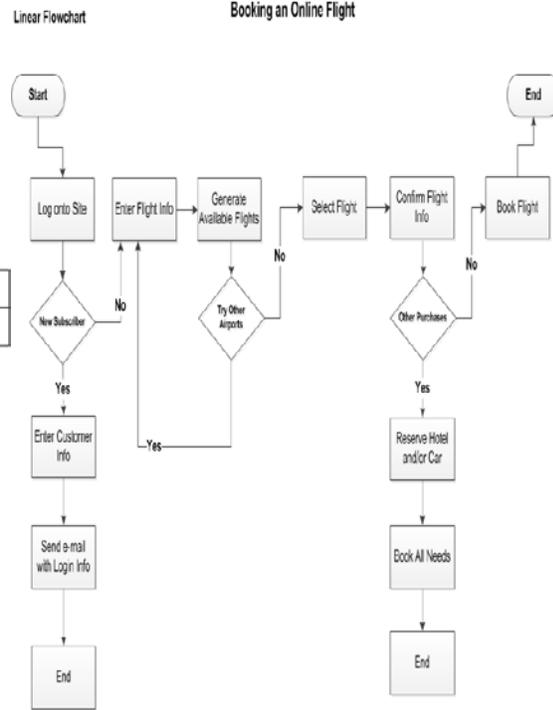
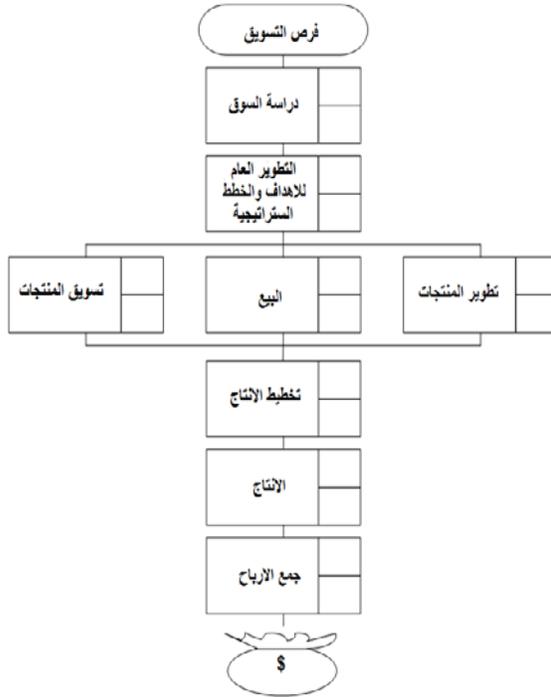
Figure 18: Service Organizations Tracking & Control

R3								
Management Reporting								
From: Date						To: Date		
Issue Type	Qty	%Total	Avg. First Action(days)		Avg. Final Response(days)			
Total								
Target Name	Avg. First Action(days)			Avg. Final Response(days)				
Issue Incoming Channel		Qty	%Total					
Total								

Figure 19: GO-CSD Management Reports

7. Appendices

7.1 Flow Chart Types



7.2 Detailed Explanation - Process Documentation & Analysis Template

7.2.1 The Header of the Template:

Name of Directorate	Process Name / Title	Revision Date
Insert name or logo	Insert process name	Date of last revision
In the header of the document, make sure to insert the name of the directorate or its logo, the process name and its title as well as the last date when this process was revised.		

7.2.2 The Footer of the Template:

Process Owner Approval	Quality Mgr Approval	General Mgr Approval
Signature showing that the process owner who is responsible for the end result of this process has reviewed and accepted this document	Signature of quality manager showing that the organization quality manager has reviewed the document and certifies that it is compliant with quality standards	Signature of general manager & date. GM is the last of the three who endorses the signatures of the process owner and quality manager and is ordering the implementation of this process as described in this document as of his signature date

7.2.3 The Purpose & Scope of this document:

Explain briefly the current process, its pitfall and impediments. If there are concrete data to support problem identification, list them very briefly. This way, the purpose of streamlining and its impact measurement is more transparent and enhances the sense of urgency across the hierarchy.

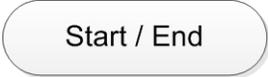
7.2.4 Process Stakeholders:

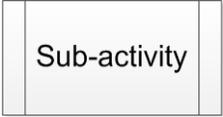
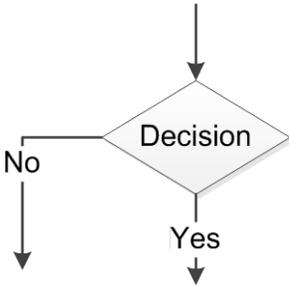
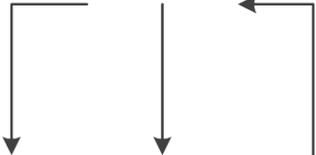
Name the process owner who is usually responsible for the end result of the process and his role. Name and explain other responsible parties that happen to be involved in this process.

7.2.5 Definitions / Abbreviations & References:

List term definitions and explain them so that to be understood clearly and not be confused. If for example you use the abbreviation ITRS try to explain more than just Issue Tracking and Reporting System. If a reference document is used in documentation or in the design of the process, you have to mention it. (i.e. building code no, year, volume, etc)

7.2.5 List of symbols used in the flow chart:

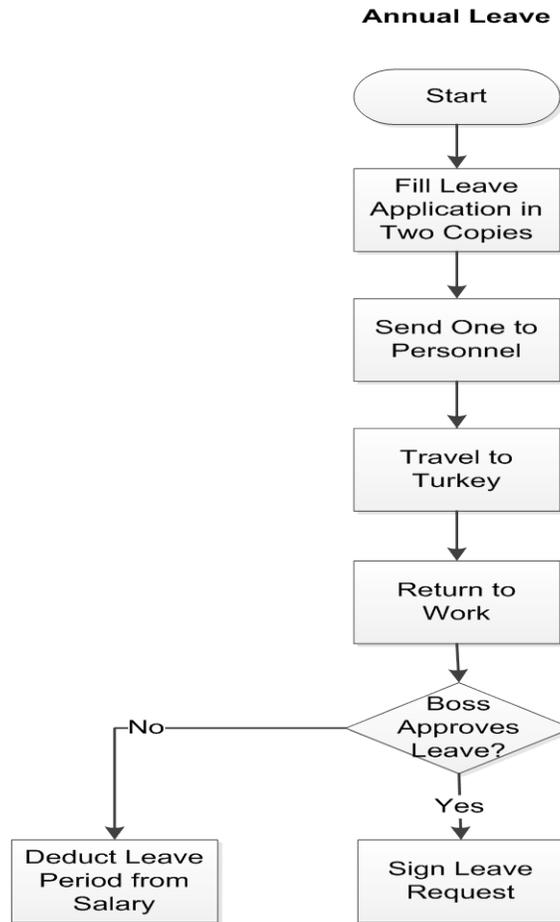
Symbol	Description	Use
	Each process or sub-process has a starting and ending point. The start is linked to an input which can be a semi-product,	At the beginning of the flow chart and also at its end.

	information or document. The end can be a sub-assembly, a service or completed document	
	Activity in a process.	Describes the action taking place (i.e. create citizen issue order in ITRS)
	A sub-activity that has to be carried out for the successful completion of the activity	Describes the sub-action that has to be done (i.e. log-on system, data entry of information, scan & attach supplementary documents, etc)
	Logic gate and decision to be taken based on the answer (Yes or No)	The question has to be formulated clearly in the box with only two alternatives (either Yes or No). The question to be formulated in a way so that the answer impact on the flow direction is visible. This way the standard case path "happy path" is visible and all exceptions "opportunities for improvement" are also identified and separated.
	Lines and connectors	Lines show direction of process flow and alternate paths direction.

7.2.6 Flow Chart Analysis Hints (current process):

Deficit	Case	Them
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Inefficient sequence of steps



The design sequences impact on the process which is an annual leave by the

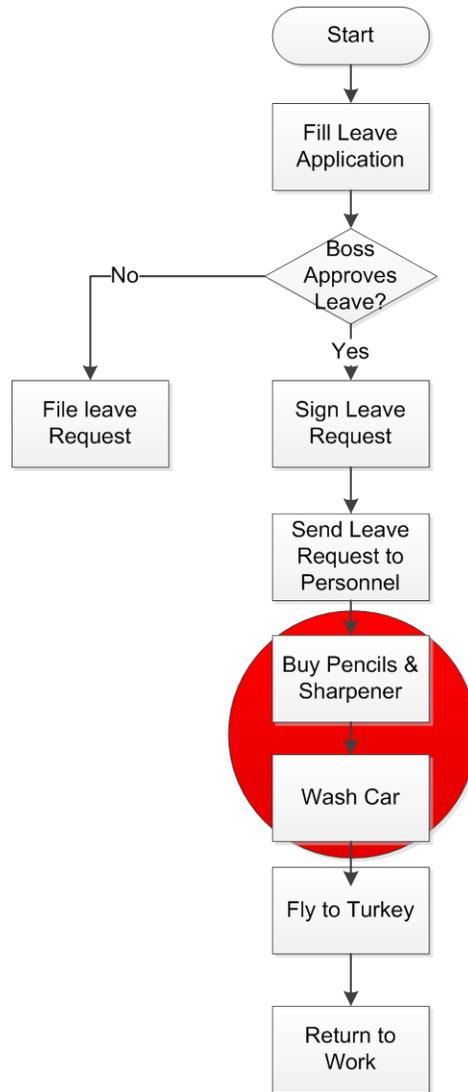
If the employee requested leave before departure, he would be notified of the second leave period and he would not need to go through the step and cost associated with deducting salary.

This hypothesis shows that the steps in the process are wrongly sequenced, such as having the approval step on the output side.

In this case, various scenarios for these steps in the sequence of the process could be identified and reduced.

Redundant Steps

Annual Leave



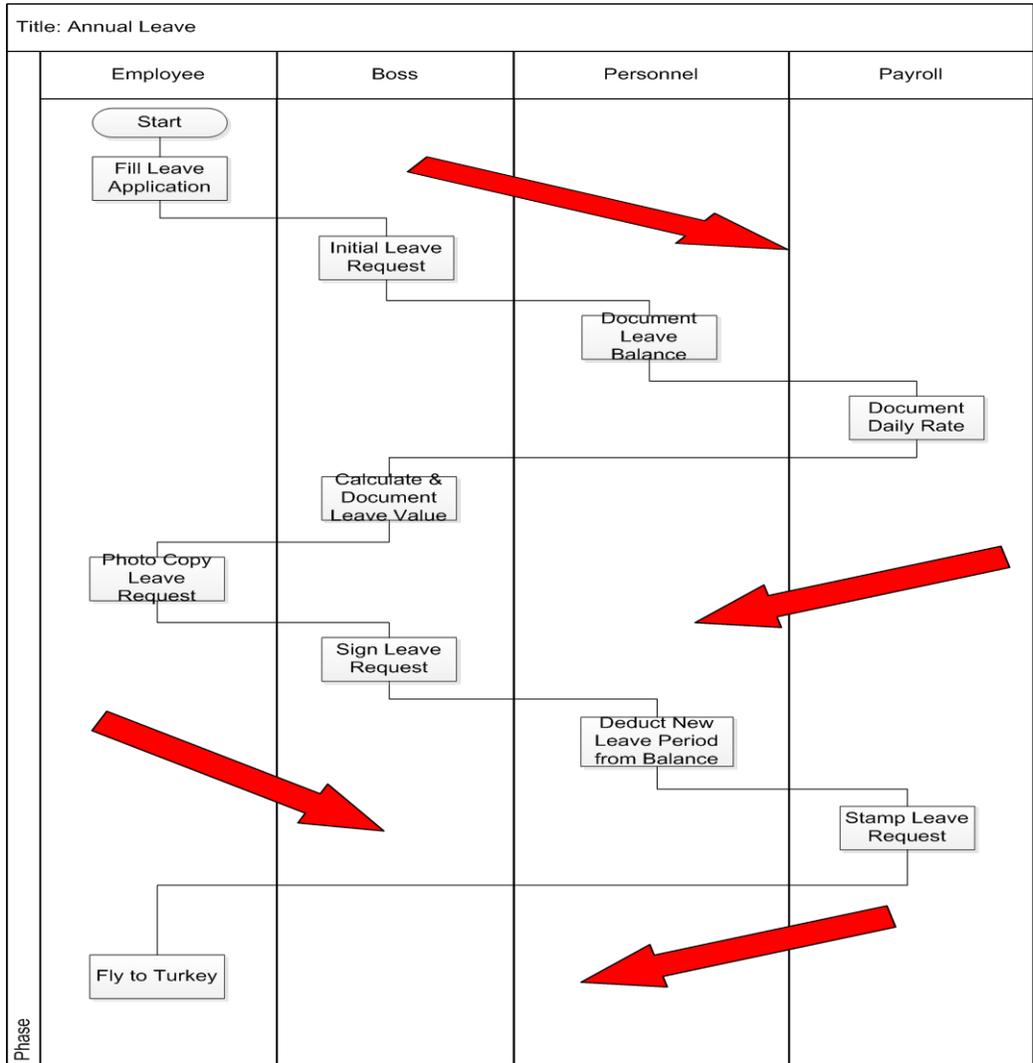
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The red arrows show a hypothetical process that would show how the back and forth communication between resources.

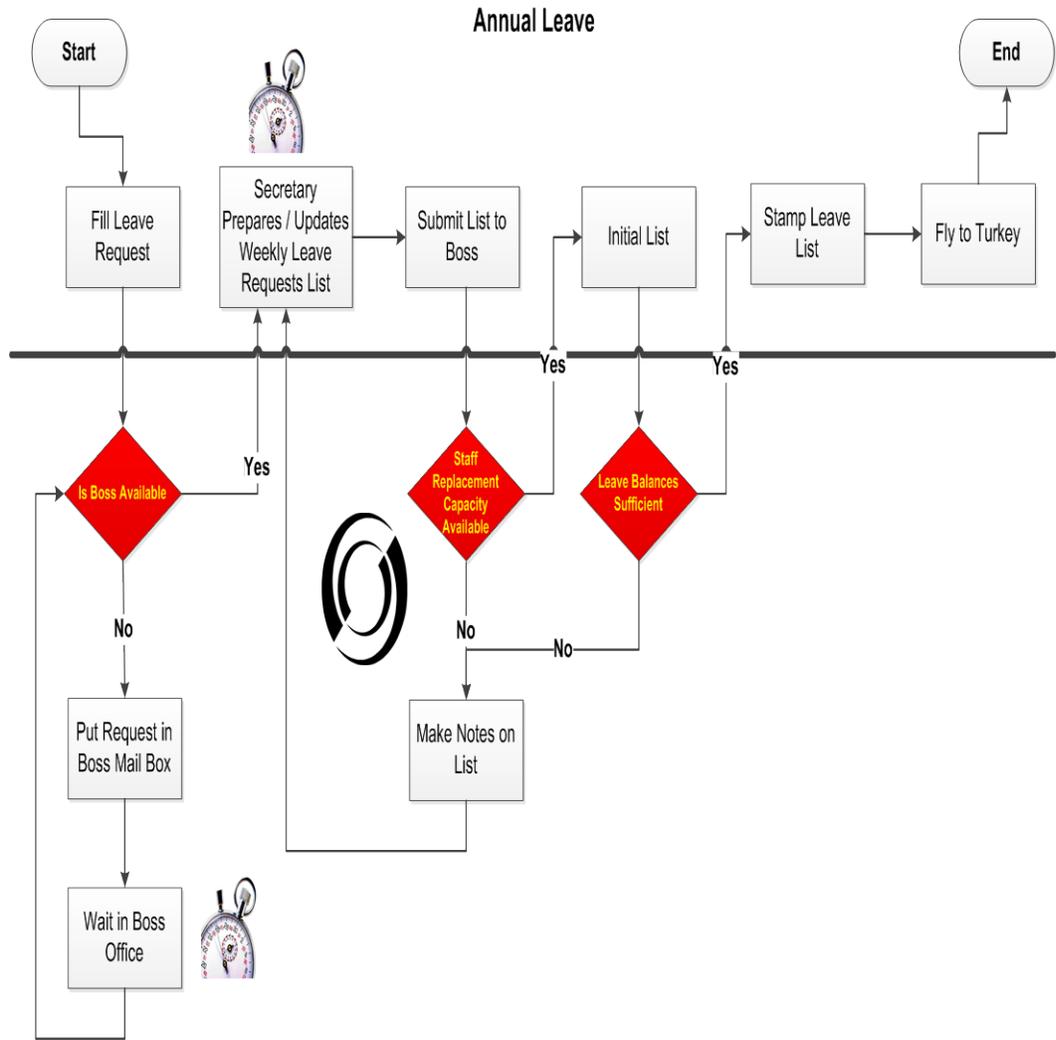
This is significant process due to lack of authority to decide based on information.

Assuming that this way, the personnel do not have the right to calculate the value despite the lack of information. Number of the daily rate.

To streamline this situation, the organization should consider looking at creating uniform instructions and revising the authorization process.

To address this, other will need a solution.

Delays & rework loops



The flow of the process is inefficient. The employee has to wait for the boss to be available and get it approved in one week.

The time spent on tasks like business preparation is inefficient.

This is also inefficient for rework loops. No added value is added during preparing the request list. The process is dynamic.

In such a scenario, schedules, management, and business rules need to be adjusted. Employees should be available for the secretary to perform value tasks in the department.

The design team should be aware that the process is in stone and it is an important task to consider in streamlining.

7.2.7 Action Plan:

Having documented the current process, identified its weaknesses and put forward a proposal for its streamlining, it is important not to forget the implementation plan since the designer knows best the pre-requisites and needs to make the vision working in reality. To leave this for others to figure out is like a half cooked meal.

The table below is an example of the main and sub-activities to consider in process streamlining implementation plan.

For documentation purposes, there are however practical software in the market. (i.e. MS Project).

Main Action	Sub-Action	Type	From	To	Responsible
Organizational Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a new section? • Modify administrative instructions? • Staff sizing? • Activities to consolidate functions in one unit? • Activities to decompose function in various units? 	One time, recurrent, milestone	Start date	End Date	Name of persons working on this activity. As a rule of thumb, the first name is the leader of the activity
Information Systems & IT infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify user IT system & communication needs • Define exact computer aided applications needed • Cleaning up of base data • Define needed reports structure • Stock taking of available IT systems, LAN, WAN and additional needed hardware & tools • Configuration of developed systems • Acceptance test design and actual testing 				
HR & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define staff job profiles and job description • Identify staff recruitment needs • Define training program needs • Carry out actual training • Develop ideas for process key data based staff incentive 				

Main Action	Sub-Action	Type	From	To	Responsible
	scheme				
Implementation Monitoring & Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare pilot test plan & carry out testing • Roll-out new processes • Coaching of implementation • Disseminate in other provinces / departments, etc • Define management meetings data structure & time schedule • Assessment of streamlined process impact and quantification of additional efficiency gains 				