

Manage Business Process Change with Process Quality, Design & Approval Checklists

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Abstract:

How to manage process changes efficiently in an enterprise? Is a Billion \$ question in every BPM leaders mind. Effective process governance is the clear answer to this question but the lack of standard approaches and tools makes it a challenge. This article outlines an efficient approach to answer this open question. *Process Change Approval Approach* is a step by step approach to review and approve process changes in an organized fashion with the help of three different checklists (*Model Convention Quality Checklist, Process Design Review Checklist, and Process Approval Checklist*). This simple four phased approach will provide significant assistance to BPM practitioners to tackle this real and present business problem.

Introduction:

Process-based approach to transformations is now used routinely by enterprises all over the world, and process change management is regarded as one of the biggest challenges in BPM. Though there are multiple business process governance frameworks and methodologies available, there is an ongoing need for a simple approach to handle this challenge. Process change is a continuous event in every organization but often they are not tracked and reviewed consistently. This inefficient behavior leads to poor process design and quality issues, which will eventually result in financial losses during and after process implementation. In other words, organizations spend millions of dollar in process change initiatives but they do not allocate enough time and effort to setup a good process governance structure in the first place. If process governance setup is in place, it will streamline and fast track the process changes, with the help of tools, templates and checklists.

Business processes needs to be managed holistically with a good change governance setup. This Article outlines an efficient and proven approach based on checklists to enable this vision. Business process quality and design checklists are needed for different levels of process reviews and approvals (usually during the initial phases of the business process lifecycle). The real value to the reader lies in the content of the checklists used to support this approach.

Process Change in Action:

What do we mean by a Process change? In simple terms process change can occur when a new process is introduced or an update is made to an existing process. The newly introduced process change needs to be reviewed before it get promoted from the To-Be state to the As-Is process state. These reviews need to be planned in a structured way to identify and fix process issues before they are implemented.

Process Change Approval Approach

This approach is the key enabler of the process change defined in the above section. BPM initiatives are usually designed to follow a top-down approach i.e. process changes and approval mechanisms are planned from the top tier of the organization but ironically the actual change follows a bottom-up approach.

In the first phase of this approach, the process models are first mapped in a workshops or interviews. The mapped processes are modeled by the Process analyst and the processes are submitted for subsequent reviews: a) Model quality check, b) Process design review and, finally, c) Process approval, before being communicated to the respective stakeholders (who will implement or execute them). The details of the approach are shown below in the Figure1.

*Depending on the scope of the change, the respective levels of approvals are requested

| Actor | | Change Scope | Checklist |
|--|--|---|---|
| Process Change Approval Board/(Steering Committee) | Phase 4 Approve /Rejects /Rework | Policy,Principle, Scope, SIPOC , Key Actors & High Level process flow, Cross functional impacts | Process Approval Checklist |
| Process Design Approver | Phase 3 Approve/Reject/ Rework | Flows, Content and RACI | Process Design Review Checklist |
| Process Quality Analyst | Phase 2 Approve/Rework | Process model changes made and submitted by Process Analyst | Model Convention Quality Checklist |
| Process Analyst | Phase 1 Create/Update Process Model and RACI matrix | Process model changes in the process repository | Process Modeling Convention Document |

Figure 1 : Process Change Approval Approach

The steps and checklists used in these 4 phases are detailed in the rest of the Article and a process example is used to illustrate this story better.

Assumption: *The Enterprise used in the example below is bit mature in terms of BPM capability i.e. Process governances & process modeling convention structure and process enabling roles exist.*

Service Request Management Process Story:

A sample Service Request process will be used to walkthrough the approach. Let's consider that an organization is planning to introduce a new IT service request management process. This new process will provide users, a formal entry channel for placing IT service request e.g. Password change, laptop replacement etc. There are 3 main activities a) Raise Request, b) Resolve Request and c) Close Request.

Phases of Process Change Approval Approach

Phase 1 - Process Mapping and Modeling: Process Analyst (PA) or an equivalent role is responsible for documenting the process model (with Responsible (R), Accountable (A), Consulted (C) & Informed (I) matrix) as per the agreed

modeling convention. Once the process models are mapped and modeled, it is submitted for a quality review.

In our Request management process example, Process Analyst models 1 high level process flow and 3 sub processes flows .Once the process models are ready all four of the models are submitted for the quality review.

Phase 2 - Model Convention Quality Check: This first check is used to perform quality assurance check on the submitted process models against the accepted modeling convention. To be more specific a) Syntax, b) Semantics and c) Notation, 3 main building blocks of a process model are verified against accepted norms. A designated *Process Quality Assurance analyst* or an equivalent role is accountable to perform these checks. Pre-approved *Model Convention Quality Checklist* is used to perform these checks.

| Model Convention Quality Checklist | | |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| Test ID | Test Category | Description |
| 1 | Notation: Set of symbols for the visualization of the constructs and their relationships | |
| 1A | Notation Usage | Process objects defined in the modeling convention guidelines document i.e. Flow objects, Events and Gateway(e.g. BPMN) should be utilized properly in constructing the process models e.g. Start and end events should be circular in shape, process symbol should resemble an rounded rectangle etc. |
| 1B | Proper usage of process objects | Process objects(objects used in the process model) should follow the usage guideline described in the accepted modeling convention guidelines document e.g. Value stream diagram should not hold any decision object, process hierarchy should not use flow objects(arrows) to depict a flow etc. |
| 1C | Nomenclature (Naming Convention) | Process objects like Business process objects, diagrams, events, Swim lanes, artifacts used in process models should follow defined naming conventions e.g. Process name should follow Verb + Noun pattern. |
| 2 | Semantics: Understanding the process model | |
| 2A | Completeness (Process owner, descriptions, associations, decision) | Process model should hold minimum information needed for an end users to understand the process e.g. process owner, process descriptions, important decisions etc. |

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| 2B | Readability (Aesthetics/look and feel) | Readability is one of the most important criteria for process model quality. All the objects in the diagram should be aligned and represented properly. e.g. as a best practice total number of process and decision boxes in a diagram as a thumb rule should be less than 15, process should flow from top to down and left to right etc. |
| 2C | Navigation (vertical e.g. drill down and Horizontal e.g. process handover or integration) | User should be able to navigate the Process landscape both Vertically and Horizontally. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vertical - process model should follow the accepted process leveling principle i.e. process drilling down into sub process. Horizontal - end to end(e2e) view of the process integration should be captured in the model i.e. sales process integrating to Finance process in an Order to Cash(O2C) scenario |
| 3 | Syntax: Principles and rules for constructing a good process model | |
| 3A | Option to Complete | The process flow should be free of deadlocks and live locks (infinite loops). |
| 3B | Proper Completion | When the process flow terminates, no other transitions should be still active and termination is signaled only once |
| 3C | No Dead Transitions | The process flow should not contain any superfluous parts that can never be activated |

If process model quality issues are identified in this phase, the process models need to be remodeled until no such issues exist. At the end of this phase, all process models should be cleared of quality issues and are then forwarded to the next level for design review.

In Request management process example, the Process Quality analyst uses this Model Convention Quality Check list to perform the Quality check on all four of the process models and once the quality aspects are validated, the process models are forwarded to the Process Design Approver for the design review.

Phase 3 - Process Design Review Check

This check is used to review process design aspects of the process models that are submitted for review (after the initial quality check). Ten different process design aspects like tactical fit, fit for purpose, usability, efficiency etc. are verified against accepted norms. A designated *Process Design Approver* or an equivalent role is accountable to perform these checks. Pre-approved *Process Design Review checklist* is used to perform these checks.

| Process Design Review Checklist | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------|---|
| Test ID | Test Category | Description |
| 1 | Tactical Fit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check if the process is consistent and in-line to supports the overall process management maturity road map Inconsistency examples : a) Duplicate processes ,b) Combination of existing process models (hybrid processes) etc. |

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| 2 | Fit for purpose | The process must do what it is supposed to do and does not require significant effort to redesign, implement, and maintain. This is the sanity check of the process. |
| 3 | Usable | Understood by all participants and stakeholder, the process should be realistic and usable. Key Checks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process Handoffs defined (Integration points between processes) • Diagram is understandable(Process Narratives or description should be detailed enough to convey the intended meaning) • RACI Consistency- check if the used actors are performing the respective task defined in their job description(roles/responsibilities) • Complexity check (make sure the process is broken down and easy to understand) |
| 4 | Relevant | A "good process" is one that fits into the enterprise process architecture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process Hierarchy Check - This check is to ensure that the process model is defined at the correct process Level i.e. Level 1,,2,3,4 etc. and fits in the process architecture and repository structure • End To End Views Check - This check ensure that the process model should be able to fit in already defined Value streams like Order to Cash(O2C), Accounting to Reporting (A2R) etc.(if applicable) |
| 5 | Valid | Process model is only a representation of the real thing. It can never represent absolutely every aspect of the real world so it must be "correct enough" for the purpose for which it will be used. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Pareto principle (80:20 rule) for decision, roles and tasks used in the process model • Make sure Important exception condition are captured (not just the happy path is mapped and modeled) |
| 6 | Efficient | Follow Lean approach in process design: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimalist - less is more - fewer steps and "moving parts" the better • Devoid of waste & unnecessary steps • Distribute work steps evenly across sub processes and activities • Minimize handoff between processes and activities • Build reusable processes and activities • Minimize duplication of flows • Eliminate "just in case" or rare steps • Minimize wait /delay • Understand upstream and downstream flows and minimize impacts |

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| 7 | Measurable | Make sure performance indicators are defined (or can be defined in future) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check if Operational KPIs can be generated • Makes sure the KPIs fit in the enterprise performance framework (if applicable) |
| 8 | Benchmarked | Make sure that the process is benchmarked against reference models like APQC PCF, eTOM, ,SCOR, COBIT ,PMI & ITIL i.e. try to reuse process structure and information from industry standards accepted in the company(if applicable) |
| 9 | Implementable | This is the reality check for process implementation. Process designed should be executable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform Impact analysis against the regulatory and compliance aspects e.g. SOX ,Risk and control framework etc.(if applicable) • Impact on the existing IT infrastructure and automation possibility (is also critical in most scenarios.) |
| 10 | Scenario(/dry run) testable | Process should be scenario tested and basic end to end scenario should be executed without any clarification from the process analyst i.e. the process token should flow through the happy path without any issues. |

If design issues are identified, the process model needs to be redesigned and remodeled until no such issues exist. At the end of this phase, all process models should be cleared of process design issues and are then forwarded to the next level for process approval. *Process Design Approver* can reject the design change, if required.

In Request management process example, the Process Design Approver uses the check list and performs the design check on the 4 process models and once the design aspects are validated, the process models are then forwarded to Process Change Approval Board or Steering committee for approval.

Phase 4 - Process Approval Check

This is the final check in this approach, to approve or reject the process change (after the initial quality check and process design review). Five different design aspects like strategic fit, high level process consistency, and cross functional integration etc. are verified against accepted norms. A designated *Process Change Approval Board or Steering committee* is accountable to perform these checks. Pre-approved checklist is used to perform these checks.

| Process Approval Checklist | | |
|----------------------------|---------------|--|
| Test ID | Test Category | Description |
| 1 | Strategic Fit | Check if the submitted processes are consistent and are in-line to supports the overall business strategy. <i>Process Portfolio Management</i> approach is recommended to perform this check consistently. |

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|---|--------------------------------|---|
| 2 | High Level Process Consistency | <p>Check if the change to the process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope • Purpose • Policy/ Code of Practice • SIPOC • Key Actors <p>are consistent with the process maturity road map and adds value to the process stakeholders.</p> |
| 3 | Cross Functional Integration | <p>Cross process integration impacts is an important aspect of this review. The new process or a change should be not create any regression issues in other existing process design i.e. changes in the sales process should not have negative impact on the finance processes in Order to Cash(O2C) value stream.</p> |
| 4 | Impact Analysis | <p>Check that there are minimal risk /impacts based on the change and that the enterprise has the capability and opportunity to handled it at this point in time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulatory and compliance angle needs to be investigated e.g. SOX, BASEL II, COBIT etc. • Existing process execution (Manual/ IT) i.e. Impact on the existing IT infrastructure and automation aspects need to be considered. |
| 5 | Strategic Performance measures | <p>Check if strategic KPIs exist or can be created and that they are in line with overall organization performance dashboard.</p> |

If approval issues are identified at this stage then the process models need to be redesigned until no such issues exist. At the end of this phase all process models should be cleared of process design issues and approved or in some cases the process work can also be rejected or benched.

In Request management process, the Process Change Approval Board or Steering committee uses this check list to take the final approval decision on the process. Once the approval aspects are validated, the process is approved .The approved process models are checked-in to the process repository, published and communicated to the respective stakeholders.

Conclusion:

The phased approach detailed in this Article can assist organizations to handle process changes efficiently, and the checklists used in various stages are the core enablers of this approach. The content of the checklists cover a wide range of process quality and design aspects from different viewpoints. The three checklists outline in this article can be reused or integrated into existing enterprise process change approval workflows. If customized properly, they can accommodate all aspects of process change and approval requests in an organization.

About the Author:



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