

Why is Work Process so Vitally Important?

Following the lead of experts - what is expected; how to do it; how actions affects others

One of the hallmarks of a quality company is published work processes and procedures in place in all company departments. Sales, marketing, engineering, operations, and other departments will have their tried and true processes and procedures. This is a living compendium of work processes that have been found to be effective in the past, and it is updated periodically to reflect new tools or improvements. Updates are in the form of managed and controlled changes.

The work processes and procedures are generally written by experts in those departments, and they include individual contributors, supervisors and managers. An astute manager will know who to approach for a timely work process write-up. A general invitation to the whole organization may motivate some individuals, but a pointed request to the manager generally brings results.

Who is the main beneficiary of all these work processes? The new hire will want to know what to do, how to go about it, and how his/her actions affect others in the organization. Representative examples of work processes and procedures give new hires a sense of what is expected of them and how to execute the work. Flow charts illustrate the flow of material and information, and the interaction with others within the work process becomes clear. Project management tools show how a typical project will progress in time, so a great deal of guidance is built into work procedures. It tends to answer many questions, and it allows the new hire to proceed with some sense of initiative.

The new hire is not the only beneficiary of a documented and clear work process. Every employee benefits from the clear direction and the clear expectations that go with having a clear and defined process. Managers also have standards by which to evaluate employee performance and a defined way to provide direction through clear work process and procedures. One of the most important outcomes of having good work processes is that employees in different functions understand how the output of their work affects people in other functions. This makes for more effective cross-functional teamwork.

One example in industry is the control of sources of manufacture. An engineer may find a source that has the apparent technical know how to do the work, but manufacturing experts need to be assured that the proposed company is run by quality processes. An audit initiated by operations will examine the proposed source for desired controls and disciplines in their operations.

This discipline is absolutely not limited to the manufacturing industries. Some diverse areas that benefit from quality work processes and quality procedures are:

• Healthcare;

• Education;

- Higher education;
- Food industry;
- Public organizations;
- Utilities and alternate energy sources;
- Security
- Transportation;
- Warehousing;
- Social assistance;
- Environmental planning and control, etc.

In many industries, certification under ISO9000, QS9000 or equivalent standards are beneficial to manufacturing organizations seeking efficiency and economy in their operations. A staff including quality auditors, inspectors, analysts, and managers is the first step on the road to acceptable process controls. Every industry has certifications that can be earned by documenting and following standard procedures to ensure that business is done at the highest level possible.