

How to Map A Business Process

Introduction to Process Mapping

Process maps can take many forms ranging from a simple listing of the key steps on one page to an elaborate depiction of the entire process on a very large sheet of paper that takes up a whole wall.

"Mapping" a business process is a simple, orderly and powerful way to identify and describe each step that takes place in a business process. Process mapping helps you to see through the complexity of organizational structures and focus on the activities that are potentially generating legal risks. Process maps enable you to identify not just the problems that create legal risks, but the causes of these problems so that you can develop effective prevention solutions.

- For the legal staff, the key purpose of process mapping is to identify every step in the process that generates legal risk.
- For purposes of your preventive law review, you'll want to decide how detailed your review of the business process will be to fully meet your objective.
- Your clients may already developed a process map that you can use, so don't forget to ask if one exists.

Process Mapping Techniques You Can Use

Start out by creating a simple list of all the major steps in the process. You'll want to identify:

- Who or what action initiates the process? For example, the process of closing a customer's account might start as a result of a monthly computer analysis of the customer's payment history. The inputs for this could be both internal customer data as well as data provided by a credit reporting service.
- What are the major steps that are taken next? These steps might include: a review by an analyst or supervisor of each customer account to be closed; a closing status update on the company computer so that no future orders will be accepted from the customer; stopping the shipment of any ordered products that have not been shipped; a notification letter to be sent to the customer; and, a notification to be sent to the sales team about the customer's account.
- What actions complete the process? These steps might include reporting the account closing to the credit services; collecting overdue payments; and, taking the customer's name off the mailing list for future product promotions.

Working from this list of major steps in the process, you can then focus on each of steps in turn to identify more details about the actions taken to complete each step. Here again, for each step, you can make a simple list of all the sub-steps that comprise each major step. In doing so, you can consider these questions:

- Do any of the inputs for the step potentially involve legal issues? For example, in the case above, are there any legal issues related to the use of the credit data from credit reporting agencies to decide to close the account? Do the credit reporting services we contract with comply with legally required standards in the collection and provision of credit data? Is our credit scoring system in compliance with legal standards?
 - You may want to create more detailed process map sections showing the steps taken by in-house and / or outside counsel. This greater detail may help staff in the law department and in the outside firms understand their roles more clearly and where they fit in to the process.
- Do any of the outputs for the step potentially involve legal issues? For example, does our process include an adequate review of the customer's account to be sure that we are not closing the account in error or based on inappropriate criteria or inaccurate information?
 - You may want to create more detailed process map sections showing the steps taken by in-house and / or outside counsel. This greater detail may help staff in the law department and in the outside firms understand their roles more clearly and where they fit in to the process.
- Do our account termination notification letters to customers adequately disclose the basis for the decision? Does the notification appropriately describe the steps that the customers can take to research their credit report or appeal the decision? Are the steps taken to collect overdue balances in compliance with laws and regulations and high ethical standards?
- Who is responsible for managing activities that have legal risks? You should be able to identify these people by name and position. This contact list will help you determine who you should interview about the steps they take so that you can gauge whether they are following or need additional legal advice.
- If judgment calls are required by company, supplier or contract personnel, do these personnel have adequate legal advice and training so as to be able to make judgments on a consistent and appropriate basis? For example, are those people who make the final decision about what accounts to close consistently applying the company's criteria, or are they "fudging" this criteria by applying their own personal hunches and prejudices to customers with certain characteristics?

Depending on how complex and detailed the business process is, you may want to create a flowchart of the process or certain steps to show more detail.

- Many people create flowcharts on oversize paper from a roll and tape the paper sheets to the wall. This enables you to draw out the basic process and then draw additional boxes or circles to identify the inputs and outputs from each step in the process. This technique is especially good when you are working with a team of clients or lawyers to create a composite of everyone's understanding of how the process actually works.

- You can also use the drawing tools in PowerPoint or use a specialty flowcharting software to depict the process.

Sample Business Process Map

The sample process map linked below depicts a generic preventive law process review project. While it does not detail all the specific steps that need to be taken in a process review, this does effectively illustrate the overall review process. This depiction would be a very valuable asset in a meeting with clients where your goal is to explain the general steps in the review process you are proposing.

[[hyperlink here to: Preventive_Law_Review_Process_Map.pdf](#)]

When Should You Create A Process Map?

Sometimes it is well worth the effort to create a process flowchart using PowerPoint or a specialty flowcharting software. (The sample process map was created in PowerPoint and took about three hours and then converted to a PDF.) Here are some criteria to use to decide if it is worth the effort to create the flowchart:

- Do you or your team need to see how all the pieces of the process fit together and how the process flows from one step to another?
- Do you want to explain to clients or colleagues where all the critical legal risks are in the process?
- Do you want to show how steps in the process are related to one another and which steps trigger legal risks for other steps?
- Are you trying to figure out how to redesign the process to better manage legal risks? Would a process map help you to move the process steps around or show how steps can be eliminated or managed better?
- Do you want to show how client legal education or training in various steps will minimize legal risks in subsequent steps?