

## Case Study #3: Business Reference Models

### Has Your Organization Stagnated because it Doesn't Understand its Business Processes?

*Organizations continue to struggle with their business processes, especially if they don't have their business processes defined. This makes it hard to understand end-to-end business process requirements across functional boundaries. It makes it even harder to implement integrated software packages like SAP, Oracle, and Microsoft Dynamics, as well as workflow solutions, if the company doesn't understand how its people perform work and share the work effort.*

IT Architects was recently engaged to complete an information technology assessment of an organization's business processes and the systems that support them. Our purpose was to help the organization identify its business problems, system deficiencies, and any other issues at the forefront of meeting its corporate goals and objectives. This would provide the input they needed to optimize their business processes and the systems that support them. However, there was one problem – they didn't have a process mapping of their current-state business processes. This was a show-stopper since business capabilities cannot be understood without have an understanding of the underlying processes. Furthermore, if we don't understand the business processes, we can't figure out how well systems are supporting their processes.

IT Architects had the solution. We told them that we could define their business processes within a month. The good news is that they believed us, and we delivered on our promise, and on time. So, how did IT Architects do it? It was easy. We mapped out their business processes by leveraging an industry-specific reference model. We got our two best process experts and interviewed staff in every department or functional area, and identified the processes that pertained to each area of work. As we went through the list of processes in the industry-specific reference model and started checking off which processes they performed (and crossed out the ones that weren't critical), we started developing a good process understanding of their organization. Actually, by the end of that month, they had a good handle on their business processes.

For those of you who are process experts, we were able to define a business process architecture at a Level 3 based on the industry-specific reference model, which represented the work-level processes. As we start getting into more detailed operational processes and work activities, we defined their Level 5 and 6 processes, which was easy once we had the Level 3s in place. In fact, this allowed their management team to start identifying all their business problems, issues, and concerns, not to mention the opportunities.

IT Architects used an industry reference model from APQC. APQC provides robust industry-specific process classification frameworks (a.k.a. business process reference models), and is the world's foremost authority in benchmarking, best practices, process and performance improvement, and knowledge management. I guess this means the secret is out; and IT Architects' motto? "If you're afraid of the birds, don't sow the seeds". The industry-specific reference models are the seeds, and IT Architects will help you grow your business processes.