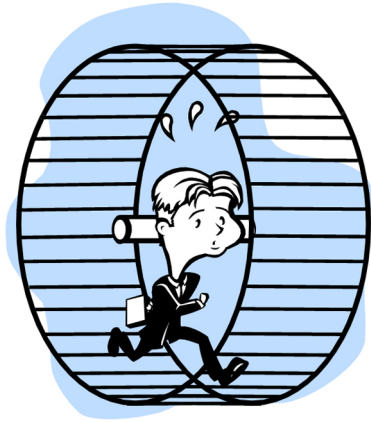


Avoiding the Hamster Syndrome:

10 Rules to Ensure Steady Progress on Your BPM Project

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Imaging, BPM/workflow, and
Document Management Software

In his well-known book “All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten,” which is regarded for its timeless insights, Robert Fulghum reviewed some basic lessons of life we all learned as children that are universally true, even at the places where we work and within our social interactions. There’s a reason we invest a good portion of our educational funds in early learning: what we absorb and come to believe during our formative years influences our thoughts and decisions throughout our lives. If you haven’t thought about each of the ten timeless truths listed below in terms of your business process automation goals, it may be time to rethink your ECM strategy. The payoff for ‘getting it right the first time’ is significant.

Here they are, rephrased a bit to help you make the connection:

1. **Remember that everything dies.** Hamsters, mice, people, and even company projects have limited life spans. Routine business processes, too, ultimately outgrow or outlive their usefulness. Take time to put everything in perspective. What are your company goals? Are your processes still relevant and in line with your vision? Are there processes you maintain purely because things have ‘always’ been done a certain way? Is anything ripe for change?
2. **Be prepared.** Remember the first day of kindergarten? Probably not, but chances are good that you carried a backpack or bag with everything you needed to address the routine challenges of the day. If you’re investing in technology, give yourself and your staff the time and resources they need to be prepared. You can’t expect miracles from even the best software and hardware. However, if you give your people sufficient time for analysis, planning, and improvement, ECM technology can produce phenomenal results.
3. **Play fair.** Be considerate. Even if you’re starting with a small project, keep the company’s enterprise goals and other departments’ needs in mind. Although you need to remain dedicated to your own vision, being selfish about your needs, simply refusing to make your project transparent, insisting on your own way of doing things, and similar self-centered practices will hurt your company in the long run. You’ll also miss great ideas for improvement that others could offer. You may have terrific ideas and plans, but someone else’s contributions might help them to prosper more fully.
4. **Share everything.** Okay... you can’t share a lot of your information because of privacy laws,

and some things are better if they're left unshared. However, you can (and should) share goals and resources everywhere it makes sense. BPM gives you an unmatched opportunity to consider all of the places the valuable data you collect has meaning within your business. Think 'enterprise'---even if you're focused on improving a single department or business area. Sharing ideas will help you to develop a broader vision and eliminate the likelihood of having to re-do work later.

5. **Look.** Open your eyes so you can see your company and its daily business operations for what they are. Recognize your company's (or department's) strengths and build on them. Also be willing to admit weaknesses and improve upon them. Look at the resources you have available to support both.
6. **Don't hit people.** Putting the blame on others for documents and processes that could be improved won't advance your game. The tools and procedures your company has now probably were the best solution at one time. Accept the past as past, then concentrate on making meaningful change and improvement for the future. Don't focus on what could or should have been done. It's a time waster.
7. **Clean up your own mess.** ...and likewise, give people a chance to clean up theirs. Meaningful process improvement only happens when people at every level have a stake in it. Chances are---unless you're a one-person shop---those who are involved in the details of everyday routine processing know some things you don't (and vice versa). Drill down through each process from the top (starting with the broader picture). Then, improve each process from the bottom (starting with the nitty-gritty details). Make sure tactful candor is part of the improvement process every step of the way, starting with your own potential for change.
8. **Hold hands and stick together.** Make sure your business and IT goals are closely aligned. IT staff needs to understand the business goals of your project. Likewise, business leaders need to understand and accept infrastructure and resource limitations. It helps to remember that you're all working toward the same goal. Once everyone understands that, make sure you do it!
9. **Be aware of wonder.** Transitioning from one method to another way of doing things is no small achievement. Change can be painful as staff struggle to satisfy relentless service demands while learning to handle everything using new tools and processes, even if they're straightforward and simple. If your goals are clear and realistic, and proper training and

support are provided to help people to succeed, you should see the results you anticipated when you defined the scope of your project. Communicate your goals clearly and often. Provide needed training and encouragement. Recognize and praise progress. A few genuine and well-placed words will spur continued achievement.

10. **Lead a balanced life.** Process improvement never ends.

Goals can be ambitious, but they should also be realistic and achievable on a reasonable timeline. It's better to accomplish less and do it well than to take on too much and get half-baked results.

Don't try to turn your company inside out all at once. Although each of your projects should fit into a larger corporate vision, tackle BPM projects one at a time, focusing on the areas that urgently demand change or that promise the greatest reward for improvement. Goals can be ambitious, but they should also be realistic and achievable on a reasonable timeline. It's better to accomplish less and do it well than to take on too much and get half-baked results. Success is a great motivator. Set ambitious goals that can be achieved, and you'll be amazed at the staff motivation that follows.

...and last—but not least—walk, don't run. Just as stalling and distraction can lead to the premature death of your project, running ahead without investing time in analysis and planning results in hours spent later fixing mistakes. Running full steam ahead without clear goals and plans quickly leads you nowhere. Remember the hamster? Make sure your 'run' for process improvement has a greater purpose and a longer life than him!



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