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**THE TIMELESSNESS OF  
BUSINESS PROCESS REVIEW**

# The Timelessness Of Business Process Review

Written by Wes Trochlil

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Way back in the 1900s (November 1996, to be exact), I wrote an article for ASAEs Membership Developments newsletter. The article was entitled Creating a Customer Service Team, and outlined what I had experienced while doing just that at my association. I recently had occasion to re-read the article and was struck by how timeless and important business process review is. The article serves as a nice case study on this process. (You can read a copy of the article here. Its so old, its a scanned document from a printed copy!)

Ostensibly, the article was about creating a customer service team. But the creation of the customer service team was really the result of a good business process review. We were presented with a problem, so we had to identify the issues at hand, review processes to address those issues, propose solutions, and then create measurements to ensure our changes addressed the issue at hand. This is the exact process that should be used to address any business process issue.

## The Issue

In the article the issue we identified was bottlenecks (i.e., transactions taking too long to process) and errors in transaction processing (e.g., incorrect payment amounts applied). So we needed to identify what was causing the bottlenecks and why the errors were occurring.

The Review

We reviewed the current process for each area of transactions. We looked at the who, what, where, why and when for each area (e.g., membership joins, renewals, product sales, and event registration). What we discovered was that for each area, a single staff person was responsible for processing all transactions in that area. While that made sense for a manageable amount of transactions, when orders came flooding in, the single staff person was overwhelmed. As a result, throughput slowed greatly (too much to input) and errors increased (trying to process too quickly to handle the overload).

## The Solutions

To address the issue of the bottlenecks, we changed our operating procedure so that no single staff person was wholly responsible for processing a single type of transaction. Instead, multiple staff people would be able to manage multiple transaction types, so that when the busy times inevitably hit, more staff could be assigned to process more transactions.

As to the issue of errors, much of that was addressed by lessening the workload on a single staff person. Other processes were also put in place to allow for a check of transactions prior to completing it (thus allowing the opportunity to correct mistakes before they went out the door).

## The Results

Finally, with the new process in place, we checked our results. Anecdotally, we saw customer complaints decrease. And more analytically, we saw a reduction in the amount of time between orders coming in and orders being processed. The changes were a success!

To some, business process review can sound very intimidating, and imply days or months of analysis, review, and work. (Of course, some consulting firms have made millions on this very belief!) But business process review is simply identifying a problem, identifying potential sources of that problems, identifying potential solutions, and verifying whether the solutions addressed the original issue. Even simple business process reviews can have a profound effect on performance.

## About the Author

For more than 20 years, Wes Trochlil has worked in and with dozens of associations and membership organizations providing a range of consulting services, from general consulting on data management issues to full-scale, association-wide selection and implementation of association management systems. Follow Wes on Twitter @westrochlil. His website is [www.effectedatabase.com](http://www.effectedatabase.com).