Processes are not just something your business does. Processes are your business. So you’ll want to pay close attention to the design of your processes to make sure they are efficient and meet your goals.

**What is a process?**

Simply put a process is “the definition of the tasks and the sequence of those tasks, necessary to fulfill an objective.”

Typically a process will deliver a business objective. But the important thing is the process must deliver something (a product or service) to someone (or some organization) outside of the process and what is delivered must be of value to that person or organization. But more than that, the process must also have some value to the business itself. Usually that means someone—the customer—will pay for the product or service delivered by the process. But that is not sufficient either, the objective of the process must also align with corporate values and strategy.

So a good process must:

- Deliver something of value to someone outside of the process
- Create value for the organization operating the process
- Align with corporate values and strategy

We can see that processes don’t stand by themselves in isolation and, when designing or modeling a process, we need to think about more than just the process flow. A good process design must take into account three aspects:

- The definition and sequence of tasks
- The resources needed to operate them
- The environment in which they operate

Only when you consider the resources required (such as people, IT systems and services) and the environment in which the process must operate (such as laws, regulations, business policies and constraints) can you properly understand and define processes.
The process as transformation

Since processes are the business, every input into and out of the organization will be connected to a process. Processes must add value to the customer and to the business so, in fact, what they do is they transform inputs (for example, customer orders and raw materials) into outputs (such as products or services) that people will benefit from and pay for.

Visualizing the process as a transformation (and also each step in the process as a transformation) is a good way to focus the design of the process on what is important and on delivering value. For example, with ARIS Cloud you can model this transformation, the required resources and the controls that constrain the process.

The five Ws of process design

Once you know what a process is and what elements it should contain, it is very tempting to get started on a new design or mapping an existing process. But hold on a minute! Never forget the “Five Ws of process design.” Designing a process is just like any other business activity. You need to be clear about the customers you’re designing the process for, what they are going to use it for and, most importantly, the benefit you expect to gain from all of this modeling work. These answers will determine the content, the format and the level of detail needed. Many organizations waste time creating inappropriate models that are never used because the modelers forgot to ask these basic questions.

So before you start modeling, ask:

Why are you modeling? For instance, will the models be used for a process improvement exercise, for communicating to end users or as a specification for an IT development? Are there constraints, such as regulation, change in business structure or resource availability? How will these processes be measured and how will that affect the design? The answer to these questions will determine what sort of information you need to include and what level of detail you should go into.

Who are the models for? Is there a single customer with specific requirements or are there many stakeholders throughout the business? Do they want the same things from the models and will they want to view them in the same format? Do they actually want to see the models or do they just want the results from an improvement exercise or documents derived from the process design (for example, work instructions)? Based on these answers, you may find you need to present process information in different ways to different people and with different levels of detail.

Productivity at Cargolux takes off with ARIS

Process improvements took off at Europe’s largest all-cargo carrier Cargolux, operating 14 Boeing 747 freighters in a worldwide network. All thanks to analyzing logistics, staff utilization and data workflows. The ARIS Platform provided Cargolux complete visualization and modeling of business processes, identified disruptive factors and uncovered potential areas for savings. More than 180 improvements were identified in 2006 with project costs comprising only 20 percent of projected savings.

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What are you modeling? Are you creating a process landscape for the entire business, modeling a specific function (for example, sales) or an end-to-end process (like lead-to-cash)? Be clear about this. Often people start with one aim and get confused, lose their way and model irrelevant details. It is often sensible to start by recording a high-level enterprise process landscape and then to drill down into more detail for specific important processes.

When are the models relevant? Are you mapping the as-is process or the to-be? If it’s the as-is, then are you considering what people think is happening now or what should be happening? If it’s the to-be, then exactly when in the future will the process be used, what are the constraints and dependencies, and will they change? Do you actually need to model the as-is process at all? A lot can be learned from the way things are done now. But if you are embarking on an ambitious transformation project, then how things are done today may not be that relevant. Often people spend too much time on as-is modeling at the expense of the actual transformation.

Where will the models be used? Will they be used by people operating the processes or just by process architects and designers? In what format will people want the designs (for example, on a Web portal or on paper)? Do they just want to look at them or directly use the models (to directly automate the process, for example)? Do the processes need to be shared with third parties or conform to any modeling standards?

Standards are key

Once you know why you are modeling, what sort of detail is required and how it needs to be presented, you can define your modeling standards. You need standards to:

- Ensure models created by different teams can link together and form a corporate asset
- Ensure your process models can be easily understood by all
- Make the design tools simple to use
- Reduce training costs and facilitate outsourcing and recruiting
- Enable designs to transfer to other tools for implementation and automation

Many people use drawing tools to document their processes and invent their own templates and symbols. The meaning of these may be clear to them but are often unintelligible to others. Hence, they don’t form part of a corporate asset. ARIS Cloud is based on industry-leading ARIS technology and best-practice methodologies so that you can collaboratively define your corporate strategy and then model, analyze, and improve processes all the same time. Consistency and a common understanding of process descriptions are guaranteed.
The how—creating a model

Now you’re ready to start creating the process model. But how do you start and where? The best approach is to tackle it in three phases that match the three aspects of a process design described earlier:

- Outline the process flow
- Allocate resources
- Map to the environment

These phases are not rigid. In practice, use them as needed to add more detail to your design. Start by documenting the process flow and think about:

- What triggers the process?
- Is there just one trigger or are there other dependencies?
- What decisions are made by the process?
- What failures can occur and do you need to cater for them?

Don’t make the mistake of just modeling the “happy path,” that is, what happens when things go right. Some failures or alternative scenarios are important to the business (they incur costs, affect customer satisfaction or contravene regulation, for example) and must be modeled. Others may be less important and can be managed by a generic fault handling or escalation process.

Designing the process flow is best done with two or more subject matter experts. The social collaboration capabilities provided by ARIS Cloud are perfect for leveraging the wisdom of the crowd for process design.

![Figure 3: Social collaboration in ARIS Cloud](image-url)
Once you have the outline of the process flow, then walk through it step by step with the experts and ask them:

- Who does the tasks and what skills do they need?
- What information or documents are required?
- What IT systems support the task?
- What business services does the task require or what IT services automate the task?
- What equipment or specialized resources are needed?

As you add this information to your model, you will almost certainly find that you need to alter the process flow. You may find there are additional steps required, such as gathering necessary information or checking that the right equipment is available. It’s only when you add this additional information that you will get a realistic design. Also remember most processes operating in the services industry transform data (for example, a customer order for broadband into network configuration data). So your design must consider the data flowing through the process so it will be an accurate and effective operational process. If you are designing the process to be automated using re-usable IT services, then you need to establish the library of services beforehand and allocate these to the activities. This step is often performed by a business analyst who defines the required business capability for an activity and maps it to one or more business services. Later, a process engineer identifies the specific IT service(s) that deliver the capability. To achieve high levels of re-use, it may be necessary to adjust the business process design to make use of existing IT services rather than request new ones to be created.

The final phase in using ARIS Cloud is assuring that the process is fit-for-purpose within the business environment and checking that it meets your customer’s requirements. Look at the process and ask:

- Does the process add value to the customer and the organization?
- Does each step in the process add value or fulfill an essential business function (for example, health and safety)?
- Does the process align with corporate strategy, the enterprise architecture and design policies?
- Are there provisions in place to measure the performance of the process? (It may be necessary to add process activities to capture appropriate metrics)
- Does the process take into account relevant regulations, risks, business policies and branding?
- Are required audit mechanisms in place?
- Will the customer’s experience of the process be a good one and has it been measured and benchmarked?

How do you know when you have finished?

This is an important question and the phrase to keep in mind is: Don’t model the universe! The scope of the process design and the amount of detail you need should have been set by considering the Five Ws. You should know what your customers expect from the process, what they are going to do with it and what formats they want. In particular, the level of detail required will be affected by issues such as:

- What affects the customer?
- What generates revenue?
- What incurs cost?
- What is affected by regulations?
- Where are the risks?
- What information do people need to do their jobs?

If the detail in your model doesn’t seem to fit any of these categories, then check if it’s really needed. If you are not sure if your process is complete, check what your customer asked for.

RWE Kundenservice employees are more energy-efficient, thanks to ARIS

RWE Kundenservice GmbH, a supplier to the energy industry in Germany, has transformed into a fully process-oriented enterprise. Using ARIS, RWE Kundenservice reorganized all business processes on time and on budget. Employee efficiency has increased 30 percent, and IT projects cost 20 percent less. Data quality also has improved—and the enterprise spends less energy on processes. Now RWE Kundenservice has only 350 processes, down from 1,000, saving an average of 300 person days a year.

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About ARIS Cloud
ARIS Cloud is a social process improvement application in the cloud that leverages social collaboration to improve requirements management and business processes. It is built on proven ARIS technology which has shaped the process management discipline over the past 20 years. Organizations can design, share and collaboratively improve processes all in the same environment. Because ARIS Cloud runs in the cloud, projects can start immediately with minimal total cost of ownership.

Get your free ARIS Cloud trial: www.ariscloud.com

“ARIS Cloud gives us the opportunity to start process improvement projects immediately and to dynamically scale them based on demand and maturity. The new user experience and the social collaboration capabilities turn process management into an interactive dialog, increasing awareness and acceptance which significantly eases change management.”
— Fabian Erbach  |  Partner at Litmus Group Singapore
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