

111 Business Operations: Points of Failure

How many points of failure does your organization have?

Many companies fail to meet customer demands because of poor business operations.

Effective business operations — which execute the processes that are core to achieving an organization's business objectives, such as the production and delivery of goods or services — depend on the ability to co-ordinate people and systems to get the right work done at the right time. Failure to do this right results in delayed time to market, revenue loss, dissatisfied customers, and lost market share.

As the go-to person in every company, business operations managers work across departments to align teams, set goals, execute initiatives and improve processes — helping the organization run efficiently and effectively by identifying and fixing points of failure.

This document identifies 111 points of failure that — once fixed — will help you not only achieve your business objectives but also digitally transform and future-proof your organization.



Lack of Visibility



Inaccessible Information

- 1 Processes and data are buried in legacy applications.
- 2 Processes are managed via email.
- 3 Processes and data are buried in spreadsheets.
- 4 Processes are undocumented or paperbound.
- 5 No way to get a consolidated view of tasks in multiple related processes or projects.



Unavailable/Limited Information

- 6 Managers have no real-time visibility into who is doing what when.
- 7 No operational system of record to provide the basis for common metrics and dashboards.
- 8 No visual timeline for processes.
- 9 Hidden workarounds obscure visibility.
- 10 Complex process and process step dependencies are hard to visualize.
- 11 No audit trail of work done.
- 12 No early warning system.
- 13 Managers over-react to noise and under-react to real risks.
- 14 Gaps in the end-to-end visibility of a process prevent holistic visualization.
- 15 Gantt charts don't provide the information needed for operational projects.
- 16 No centralized repository of processes and operational projects.
- 17 No way to filter and see all the steps for active process instances in one place.
- 18 No way to see the critical path of a process.
- 19 No way for users to build their own process reports and dashboards.



Poor information

- 20 Status reporting by % complete is essentially meaningless, leading to extended periods of "90 percent complete".
- 21 Task duration estimates are padded with contingency but still miss their dates.
- 22 Team members are measured on metrics that encourage "bad" behavior like Student Syndrome and Parkinson's Law.



Lack of Productivity & Efficiency



Process Dysfunction

- 23 Lack of standardization and consistency in process building.
- 24 Inconsistent process execution.
- 25 Ill-defined or poorly designed processes.
- 26 Overcomplicated processes.
- 27 Siloed processes.
- 28 Inefficient processes.
- 29 Hidden workarounds.
- 30 Process anomalies are ignored.
- 31 Automating inefficient processes.
- 32 Processes do not evolve over time.
- 33 Team members forget to do a process step or do them out of sequence.
- 34 Process exceptions cause workers to fall back on email and spreadsheets.
- 35 No one owns the process.
- 36 Process output is not clearly defined or understood.
- 37 Unable to assign tasks to queues, resource pools, groups, or the content of data fields.



Knowledge Deficiency

- 38 No single source of truth for shared data.
- 39 Information needed to complete the task is not readily available.
- 40 Lack of a common communication medium.
- 41 Confusion about job roles and responsibilities.
- 42 Experts are overloaded, where the expert in an activity is forced to answer the same question over and over.
- 43 Organizational silos make data sharing and collaboration difficult.
- 44 Lack of a written and communicated process.
- 45 Too many places to find out what tasks to do.
- 46 Inability to provide just-in-time knowledge, instructions, and tools to users responsible for completing a step (e.g. instructions, wizards, videos, checklists, etc.)
- 47 There is no way for users to update knowledge in the course of doing their work.



Excessive Lag Time

- 48 Incomplete handoffs.
- 49 Things fall through the cracks.
- 50 Gaps in the flow of work from one step to another result in wasted time searching for information and potentially inconsistent information between steps.
- 51 Email overload due to lack of real-time visibility.
- 52 Waiting for decisions.
- 53 Waiting for resources.
- 54 Waiting for dependencies to be completed.
- 55 Lack of automated event monitoring.
- 56 Lack of capacity planning and implementation.
- 57 Projects run too long due to a start-stop-start again resourcing mode.
- 58 More work is pushed through the system than it can handle.
- 59 Users have trouble determining the next step or course of action.
- 60 Processes steps are sometimes marked as complete even though they have not met all the deliverable requirements.
- 61 Tasks to be done languish in email boxes or are otherwise forgotten about.
- 62 Process steps do not include reminders and escalation rules.
- 63 Users cannot "complete and forget" - once they have completed a step, they don't need to inform the next person in the process to start their task.
- 64 Workers have no visibility into the status of work being performed by others that impact them.
- 65 Deliverables are not well-defined or well-understood.
- 66 Workers have no way to see all their tasks in one place.
- 67 Resources cannot be automatically assigned based on their availability and skill set.
- 68 There is no way to include vendors, customers and partners in processes.
- 69 Non-constrained resources have no slack time available thereby impacting the productivity of constrained resources.



Excessive Work Time

- 70 Multiple applications are needed to complete a single task.
- 71 Duplication of effort.
- 72 Collaboration without context.
- 73 Shifting priorities cause too much multitasking.
- 74 There is no clear definition of what prerequisites are required before a step can begin.
- 75 Work is started work with incomplete prerequisites.
- 76 Too much time is spent on scheduling and rescheduling.
- 77 There are too many status meetings that are too frequent and too long.
- 78 Lack of focus on completing tasks on the critical path.
- 79 Inability to build and maintain multi-page and nested form, using multiple data sources, and dynamic hide/show fields, and calculations - without code.



Lack of Automation

- 80 Lack of data integration with other business systems.
- 81 Lack of automation of repetitive tasks.
- 82 There is no automated compliance with rules and regulations.
- 83 There is no automated way to collect status and notify others of potential issues.



Optimization Obstacles

- 84 Processes cannot be measured.
- 85 Inability to find bottlenecks.
- 86 Lack of clarity around how success will be measured.
- 87 Lack of focus on the most constrained resources.
- 88 No way to answer questions like: How long does a process typically take to complete? What are the min/max/average times for completing process steps?
- 89 It is not possible to turn past executions of processes that were updated in-flight into new or improved processes.



Lack of Agility



Process Limitations

- 90 Disconnected processes prevent the ability to quickly adapt to changes.
- 91 Processes are not flexible enough.
- 92 Processes are hard to change.
- 93 Operational projects use static templates.
- 94 The wrong tasks are automated.
- 95 End-to-end processes cannot be composed on the fly.
- 96 Inability to adapt processes to changing requirements and circumstances.
- 97 Processes already be maintained independently so as not to impact process instances already in-flight.
- 98 It is difficult to create and manage multiple versions of processes.



Worker Limitations

- 99 Workers cannot proactively accept, decline, reassign, or add tasks based on their workload.
- 100 Workers cannot spawn new tasks or issues and assign them to others in the context of a step.
- 101 Workers cannot skip steps, restart process branches, insert ad hoc steps, or add sub-processes in-flight.
- 102 Too much time is spent trying to get an agreement from multiple stakeholders on end-to-end process design, implementation, and modification.
- 103 Workers cannot lock a process from moving forward until a checklist item or task related to a step has been completed.



Too Much Complexity



Lack of consistency and standardization

- 104 There are too many platforms and tools.
- 105 There are too many ways a process is executed.
- 106 No standardization and consistency in building processes.
- 107 Communication and collaboration mediums are disconnected.



Inadequate response to complexity

- 108 There is no shielding users from the underlying complexity of enterprise systems.
- 109 Complicated solutions are applied to complex situations.



Not responding to complexity

- 110 Tools are too complex.
- 111 Processes are too complex.