

Developing effective policies and meaningful processes has been a business' most trying experience, especially for small and mid-sized businesses, but it doesn't need to be.

Historically, companies have relied on consultants that deliver a thick binder's worth of recommendations on what to do to make your business more efficient. In these same binders, there is rarely, if ever, a simple, fast and effective means to ensure that the processes and policies proposed are capable of working as designed or are adaptive to the ever-changing business environment. One key missing ingredient is usually the how.

Adopting an innovative enterprise content management and workflow solution can allow your business to 1) design both ad hoc and rules-based business processes and 2) provide a dynamic platform for optimizing business policies based on measurable process metrics. With an advanced technology in place, users can take a document-centric approach to policy and process development to "Simplify the Workplace" and take the burden out of business.

The Anatomy of Effective Policy

To paraphrase what Confucius say, "The journey of one thousand automated processes begins with a first policy." Policy is defined as, "a definite course of action adopted for the sake of expediency and facility." A policy should be a repeatable procedure that is intended to:

- Comply with required steps
- Make something easier to do
- Make something faster to do
- Avoid potential negative consequences

Policy sets the guidelines for a successful outcome and is based on a previous accomplishment or failure. In addition, policy should provide a course of action that will hopefully yield positive results. It's a treasure map with a legend, set trail and all the booby traps uncovered. If this is not the case for your business policies, than there is room for improvement.

For example, a good policy for an Accounting Department would be to "ensure that in every order, invoice number X matches with purchase order number Y and that purchase order number Y matches the items on the shipping document before posting payment." By specifying the parameters for a beneficial outcome, the process provides the needed "checks and balances" to prevent fraud, fines and costs of audit.

But policy should never overburden current organizational resources, and be based not on theoretical work or a soon-to-be-filled position but on tried-and-true, favorable business evidence. If you can prove it with numbers, like man-hours spent per task or time to completion, even better. If your HR department needs to have multiple paper copies generated of personnel documents because policy dictates that 5 people need to see a document before a person is hired and that another person needs to be kept on the payroll

to re-verify the checker's work, then your policy may need to be modified to streamline your organization, not stick to it because "that's the way we have always done it."

Once the tough job of defining policy is done, then the more difficult job of developing sustainable processes begins. This includes: ensuring adherence to policy, implementing and cultivating policy adherence, managing policy change and evolution, quantifying metrics and accountability and mitigating situational impact from policy deviations. The need to keep the organization moving and producing while accommodating changes and revisions to company policy is paramount. Disruptions to production are costly and are rarely an option for growing enterprises.

Process

Process is a procedure that converts something from point A to something that is valuable to someone else at point B. Almost always, processes are populated by documents and actions that need to happen to or with those documents. For example, at the start of an Accounts Payable process you have an unpaid invoice (point A), and at the end you should have a paid invoice (point B and valuable). Same goes for any back office or front office process across any vertical industry. The only items you need to know to start developing the process is what your input points are and what your desired output is. Then all you need to do is fill in the path in between.

ECM takes a document-centric approach ("follow the document") to process automation and can

handle processes two ways: 1) using built-in ad hoc workflow functionality, or 2) using an advanced rules-based process management module.

- **Ad Hoc Workflow** - Ad hoc (Latin for "for this purpose") workflow is designed to move documents pertaining to a specific purpose, case, or situation at hand, based on the business process to which the documents belong. The Ad Hoc Workflow pertains to the different stages your document goes through in your business process and who is responsible for handling it. Ad hoc workflow processes are designed to quickly move a document through a process without needing additional information to complete the process or needing synchronization with third-party, line of business applications.
- **Rules Based Workflow Automation** - Designed to automate process-driven organizations, Progression provides a studio-like environment that simplifies the design and implementation of in-depth, rules-based business processes. Progression is an effective tool for approval processes, controlled processes, routing, tracking and adding security to the management of document processing. It can be used to distribute documents into parallel processes and wait for events to synchronize in the decision-making process. Progression automatically implements new automated business processes within iSynergy. Tasks defined in the Progression designer are configured in the browser environment. They appear as a list of available tasks for users assigned to processing those tasks.

Policy and Process are not Static

To paraphrase another adage, "the only constant in business is change." This applies to policy and process in the sense that no one procedure will be bulletproof forever, and no one process will ever work the same forever. Many factors, like new legislation, new technology, change in organizational management, change in the supply chain, change in distribution outlets and environmental impact, could all impact your policy and processes, which is why you must always measure success (or acknowledge failure) and optimize your policies and processes to reflect the new business climate.

The right ECM solution makes process change easy and painless, especially for Progression-driven processes. In Progression, the Process Improvement Expert need only check out a process from the process library, make the necessary change (usually a couple of clicks per task) and check the process back in. With Progression, the process design is the application and there are no Visio diagrams to update or additional programming that needs to be done.

Conversely with ad hoc processes, all the Process Improvement Expert has to do is modify a user-defined list of steps and save the changes. There are no costly business disruptions or need to take the system down to make a change.

The Business Case for iSynergy

Policy and process management need not be separate from your Document Management system. After sifting through the piles of jargon and documentation, you will realize that they are symbiotic business activities that drive more benefit for your organization when integrated. iSynergy is a full document management and business process automation platform. With iSynergy, users can expect to:

- Be fully operational in as little as 3 weeks.
- Have information integrated throughout the organization without spending any additional funds for customization and integration programming.
- Implement technology that dynamically drives the business.
- Optimize the human resource as a critical and integral component of the business process.
- Enable reduction or elimination of manual administration and monitoring of document routing and handling.
- Deliver a solution easily understood by non-IT experts that automates and enforces business rules and processes.