

POINT OF VIEW

Six Ways to Identify Opportunities to Automate your Blueworks Live Processes



Introduction

Process mapping is a great tool to allow businesses to discover, capture and document their business processes so that they can be analysed and refined.

This POV will outline how organisations can identify opportunities for automation through their visualised processes using IBM Blueworks Live.

[IBM Blueworks Live \(BWL\)](#) is a process mapping tool that aids in process discovery and visualisation, understanding of complex dependencies, and identifying inefficiencies.

Collaborate with your teams and stakeholders to map and understand your key processes and workflows, with features that foster input and improvement.

Identifying Opportunities

Understanding how your organisation runs starts with understanding the key processes that make up the day-to-day operations. Getting insight from staff to record these key processes is a critical step in consolidating knowledge and removing dependencies.

BWL process activities provide the ability to enter metadata about specific stages of a process, for example, entering inputs and outputs, costs, and systems. This means processes can be understood to an acute, activity level of detail to improve the overall insight into the specific process stages.

The screenshot shows the 'Inform Recruiter' interface with a sidebar menu containing 'Details', 'Problems', 'Policies', 'Documentation', 'Attachments', and 'Comments'. The main content area displays a list of metadata fields for a process activity, each with a star icon and a pencil icon for editing:

- Participant:** Recruiter
- Business Owners:** Hiring Manager
- Experts:** Human Resources
- Systems:** (empty field)
- Due Date:** (dropdown menu)
- Cycle Time:** work time (Minutes) + wait time (Minutes)
- Cost:** (empty field)
- Suppliers:** (empty field)
- Inputs:** Final Hire Decision
- Outputs:** Requisition Close Email to Recruiter
- Customers:** (empty field)
- Risk:** (empty field)

Figure 1; Process activity metadata fields and example

Teams and organisations can analyse their processes and assess the risks, cost, and opportunities for improvement. Where processes are lengthy and inefficient, they can be adapted or reordered to remove bottlenecks, for example, activities can be refined for manual intervention or replaced with automation.

Take a look at these opportunities for automation, and see whether these apply to your processes:

1 - Bottlenecks

When you have a bottleneck in your process, it means the desired outcome or moving to the next stage in the process cannot be achieved.¹ The process is slowed or halted, causing delays in service for staff and customers.

Many factors can contribute to process bottlenecks. For example: approval delays, communication failure, lack of resource allocation, manual data processing, limited staff, or lack of clarity around outcomes.² In turn, these cause inefficiencies that can impact your business outcomes.

Productivity and efficiency will be impacted, cost of resources can increase, work backlogs can appear, and customers become dissatisfied.

Take this recruitment process as a use case. If the accounting team are not approving paper documents from HR to onboard an employee in time, the process comes to a standstill. By automating the workflow with a tool such as Business Automation Workflow (BAW), companies get oversight of their in-flight onboarding processes and where activities are delayed, and have the ability to escalate the process should work be unaddressed for a defined amount of time.

Use of other automation tools can automate specific tasks such as raising requests for resources including laptops, or signing staff up for training courses. AI can be used to review documentation and ensure the required data is present in the right format, and alert of any issues that require manual intervention.

2 - Repetitive Tasks

Once your process is documented, it is likely you will discover repetitive tasks that are currently completed manually by employees.

Repetitive, data heavy, tasks are the bread and butter of automation opportunities. If your process has an abundance of these manual activities you can automate to improve process efficiency and reduce the need for staff to work on these tasks.

If multiple employees are doing the same task, there may be inconsistencies within the process which may cause errors from manual data entry, or unreliable and subpar customer experiences.

Instead of focusing on tasks that are valuable to core business and provide time and cost savings, employees will be focusing on tasks that are not as high value. Introducing automation will remove the time consuming and lower value tasks. For example, manual data collection and entry across systems is time consuming and prone to human error.

Implementing RPA bots to complete keystrokes or extract and input data in defined fields will reduce the need for human intervention and thus the chance of erroneous entry. This will help in adopting 'tell us once' data, as customers no longer need to enter the same data multiple times with data being shared accurately as required across an organisation.

3 - High Risk

Process maps with relevant metadata also provides the opportunity to spot areas where risk is high, allowing teams to plan risk management strategies.³

Knowing where risks are likely to arise based on data enhances decision making, allowing teams to pro-emptively prepare for issues, and find ways to mitigate the risks.

Process risks can arise for many reasons, including failure to be procedure, policy, and regulation compliant, bottlenecks and delays, data sharing and security, or even just a lack of awareness of any risks. The outcomes of these risks are not positive and can result in reputational loss or regulatory backlash.

Attaching policies to your process map mitigates this particular risk as stakeholders and key staff are made aware of particular policies and compliance regulations associated with their process and activity.

¹ How to resolve bottlenecks in a business process? | Cflow (cflowapps.com)

² How to resolve bottlenecks in a business process? | Cflow (cflowapps.com)

³ Business Process Modeling to understand the context of risk (mega.com)

Automating to mitigate risk can ensure only privileged users are involved in the process, so data and critical information is not shared with unauthorised users. Additionally, automating will ensure documents are in a compliant format and are created as expected, without error.

Automation may also just be a workload and distraction offset tactic that allows teams to focus on fixing any process and business risks.

4 - High Cost

Efficient and effective decision making is a challenge for organisations, mainly due to a lack or delay of data. Delays in decision making and other process tasks takes up time and creates unnecessary cost.

Identifying bottlenecks, unnecessary stages and systems, or lack of data sharing within your process is a crucial step in optimising your process and saving costs and time.

Where multiple resources or unnecessary systems are being utilised for the same activity, optimisations can be made by streamlining the process (before having to automate).

Adding automation on top of this optimised process will remove the cost of staff time to locate and collate data for decision making, and in completing these repetitive tasks (see 1 and 2 above). Cost is saved by reducing the need to remediate any errors, chasing for information, and developing data reports.

Resources can be utilised and focused on more value-add activity, and decisions can be made more efficiently to further business advances, making the most out of investments.

5 - Single Point of Failure

Single point of failure is defined as an individual system or resource that your business cannot be without.

For example, if an employee is the only one with a certain skillset, experience, or knowledge of a process or system, their absence will create a single point of failure.⁴ The impact of this single point of failure will affect business productivity if there is now a barrier to process progression.

To safeguard against single points of failure, organisations can carry out risk assessments to understand who and what plays a crucial role in a process, perform detailed system analysis to discover dependencies, or map out interdependences to pinpoint potential single points of failure.

Mapping this process will consolidate this understanding and knowledge of the process or system, meaning other individuals can be made aware of the necessary stages of the process to avoid this dependence and single point of failure.

Once the process has been documented, automation can be implemented to further remove the single point of failure as the likelihood of a bot taking sick leave is minimal in comparison to a human resource.

6 - Are Tasks Deemed as Value Added?

When performing process analysis, it is important to determine whether a task provides value to the overall process and business. If a task is not performed correctly or the cycle time is high, then this can be deemed a non-value add.

Keeping non-value add tasks that may be increasing cycle time will reduce the overall efficiency of a process. In many processes, non-value add tasks may include high volume tasks or execution needing multiple people.⁵

Is Automation the Answer?

Technology can transform the way you do business.

⁴ How do you identify single points of failure in your business? | Tate Recruitment

⁵ Why should you automate your business processes? | Vault-ERP

Once you have reviewed your process and identified one or more of the opportunities that are affecting the efficiency of your process, it is time to consider automation. Automating all or parts of a process allow for a streamlined solution.⁶

There are many benefits from business process automation, including:

- improving data insights and sharing for faster decision turnaround
- creating consistent experiences and outcomes
- removing human error and the need for re-work
- saving time and cost

There are various tools available to automate different types of processes such as order entries, file transfers, marketing, report generation, and event log monitoring.⁷

Automation is the key to efficient processes in any area of business as it improves productivity, save time and money, and ensure your processes are reliable and compliant.

Choosing the tool that is fit for purpose can be daunting, so doing research is important. Most automation tools can be utilised in combination with each other to achieve the best outcome, for example, Business Automation Workflow (BAW) orchestrates a process workflow for oversight and control but can use Robotic Process Automation (RPA) to automate specific tasks within the workflow to remove manual intervention where possible.

Click here to learn about the [differences between BAW and RPA](#).

Engaging stakeholders and ensuring they are part of the project journey is crucial in ensuring the automated process is fit for purpose and adopted by staff. Even when automation is the answer, it can be rejected by stakeholders if they feel they were not consulted in the project despite it being their working practice that is changing.

Conclusion

Finding areas to automate starts with understanding your processes and analysing them for inefficiencies. This is where IBM BWL comes into its own, allowing you to playback and analyse your process activities and the critical metadata associated to each stage. These process maps encourage collaboration and contribution from teams, improving the decision outcomes and uptake of any process adaptations.

Automating on the back of IBM BWL is made simple with the ability to integrate with IBM BAW. This means your process maps are automatically integrated with BAW, creating a process skeleton that can be developed around, ensuring you do not have to start automating from scratch with the risk of erroneously recreating the flow.

Engaging stakeholders and staff is important in completing this task, providing insight and perspective to the process and implications of any changes that would be made. Stakeholder contribution will also aid in the adoption of any automation or process changes, especially if they are expected to adapt their working practices in response to new processes as their input can help or hinder a project.

Responsiv

Responsiv specialise in business process automation and integration. We provide organisations with trusted expert advice on how they can solve their business challenges, proposing technologies and products that fit their bespoke requirements.

⁶ How to resolve bottlenecks in a business process? | Cflow (cflowapps.com)

⁷ Automation in Business: Why It Matters and Why Your Organisation Needs It | by Simon Carter | Towards Data Science

Our robust method of business analysis and stakeholder engagement allows us to work with you in developing your business requirements. This approach has allowed us to deliver projects on time and to budget with successful solution uptake.

The Responsiv Cloud Automation Platform (RCAP) utilises BAW technology. What sets RCAP apart from the competition is the combined ability to integrate and automate with the same (single) platform package and no sneaky add-ons.

In conjunction with Responsiv Consulting and Responsiv Assist, our customers can use a single partner for their entire project lifecycle, from conception and requirements gathering to solution deployment and support.