



What is the difference between  
a process and a procedures approach?

Whitepaper

# Process vs procedures: What does this mean?

The concept of process management was first introduced to the ISO 9001 series in the 2000 version of the international standard.

Whilst recognized by the experts on the standards committee as a key component of an effective management system, it caused many organizations problems with its introduction. Even now, with many organizations having certificates to confirm they meet the requirements of the standard, their approach to process can often be described as 'immature'.

ISO is not alone in recognizing the significance of process management. It is also at the heart of the EFQM Excellence Model and Baldrige Award schemes and reducing process variation is the focus of Six Sigma initiatives. Process management is also equally applicable to service and manufacturing organizations.

It can be argued that the achievement of an organization's objectives is critically affected by the performance of its people and its processes, and that successful organizations manage both effectively.

To begin to explain the approach, it may be useful to take a step backwards and reflect on the difference between policies, processes and procedures, which is often a source of confusion.

## Policies

These are the guidelines that drive the organization and its processes and procedures. They may be supported or influenced by defined standards or regulations.

**Processes** are a high level view of the organization's activities. The key tasks within the overall process are identified. Process descriptions usually refer to several individuals or teams as processes tend to flow across the organization. ISO defines a process as a set of interrelated or interacting activities which transforms inputs into outputs. So every process will have a clearly identified input and output, and depending on whether these are internal or external, there will also be a customer or set of customers.

**Procedures** are the detailed steps that describe how a process step will be performed.

## Understanding the process approach

This guide provides an understanding of the concepts, intent and the application of the "process approach". It also may be used to apply the process approach to any management system regardless of the type or the size of the organization. This includes, but is not limited to, management systems for:

- Environment (ISO 14000 family)
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Business Risk
- Social Responsibility

A process approach is a powerful way of organizing and managing activities to create value for the customer and other interested parties.

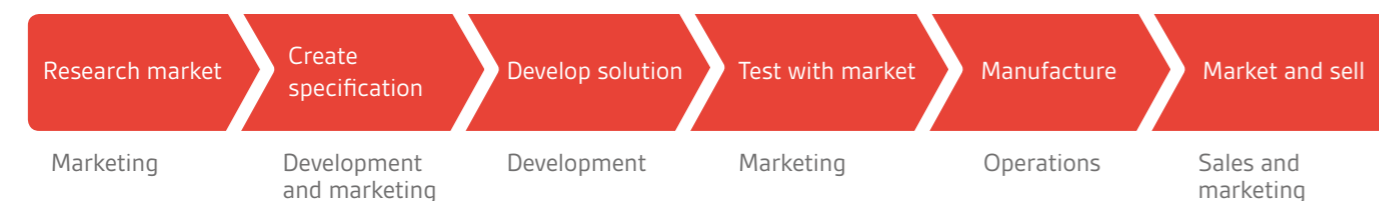
Organizations are often structured into a hierarchy of functional units and usually managed vertically, with responsibility for the intended outputs being divided among the functional units.

The end customer is not always visible to all involved. Consequently, problems that occur at the interface boundaries between functions and teams are often given less priority than the short-term goals of the units. The process approach introduces horizontal management, crossing the barriers between different functional units and unifying their focus to the main goals of the organization.

Shown below is a typical process used in many organizations to bring a new product to market. It typically involves several functions and teams, all who are critical to achieving an effective process.

A successful new product launch requires each of the departments to operate collaboratively with a common view of what success looks like. The reality is that often individual departmental goals and priorities take precedent. That is why managing the process and giving ownership can achieve the focus required to make the process successful.

## Typical process: Bringing new products to market

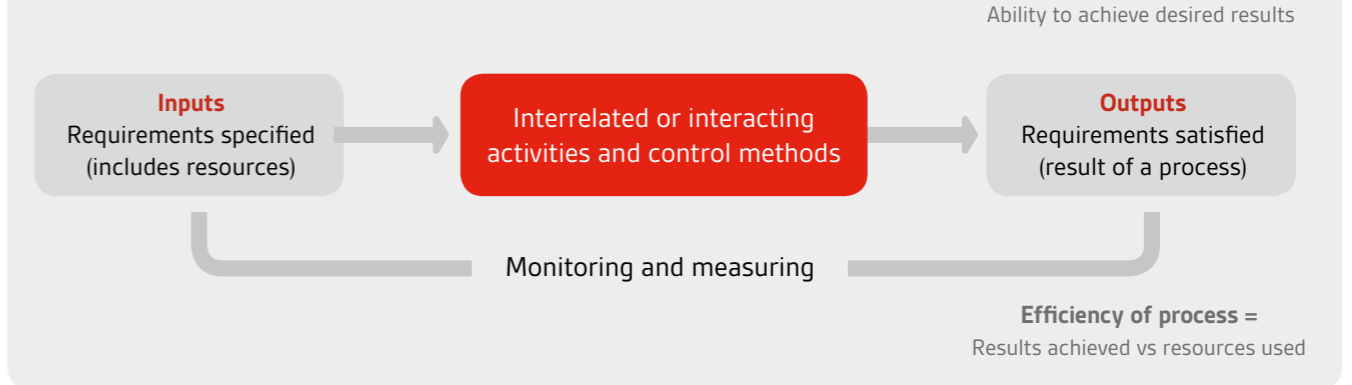


# Process vs procedures: What does this mean?

Since "process" is a "set of interrelated or interacting activities, which transforms inputs into outputs", it is important to note that these activities require the allocation of resources such as people and

materials. In the example below, the input is a customer need, while the output is a new product or service. Figure 1 shows a generic process.

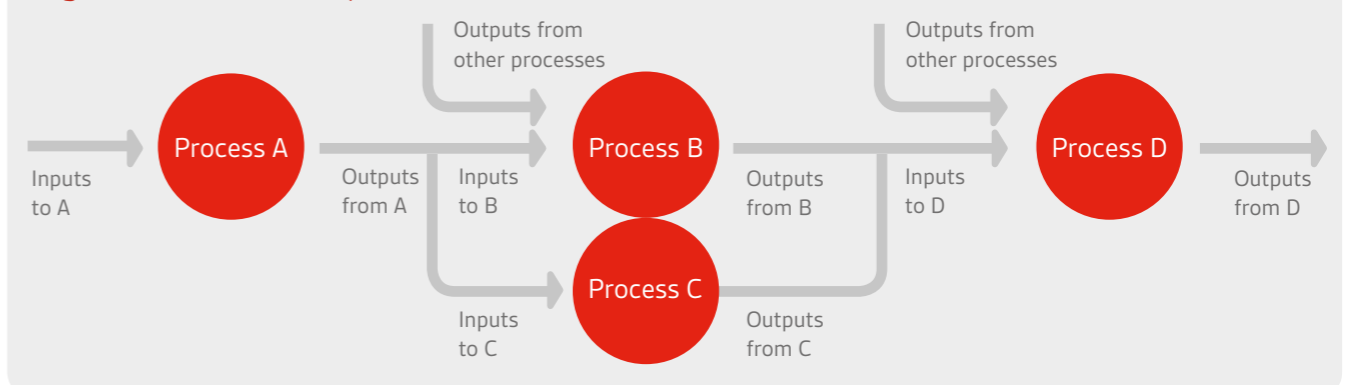
Figure 1: A generic process



Inputs and intended outputs may be tangible (such as equipment, materials or components) or intangible (such as energy or information). Outputs can also be unintended, such as waste or pollution.

Often the outputs from one process can be the inputs of other processes and are interlinked into the overall network or system.

Figure 2: Interlinked process



A system should be used to gather data to provide information about process performance, which should then be analyzed to determine if there is any need for corrective action or improvement.

All processes should be aligned with the objectives, scope and complexity of the organization, and should be designed to add value to the organization.

## Types of processes

Organizations have to define the number and types of processes needed to fulfil their business objectives. While these will be unique to each organization, it is however possible to identify typical processes, such as:

**Processes for the management of an organization.** These include processes relating to strategic planning, establishing policies, setting objectives, enabling communication, as well as

ensuring the availability of resources for the other organization's quality objectives, desired outcomes and management reviews.

**Processes for managing resources.** These include all the processes that are necessary to provide the resources needed for the organization's quality objectives and desired outcomes.

**Operational processes.** These include all processes that provide the desired outcomes of the organization.

**Measurement, analysis and improvement processes.** These include the processes needed to measure and gather data for performance analysis and improvement of effectiveness and efficiency.

# Looking at the process-based approach in revised standards

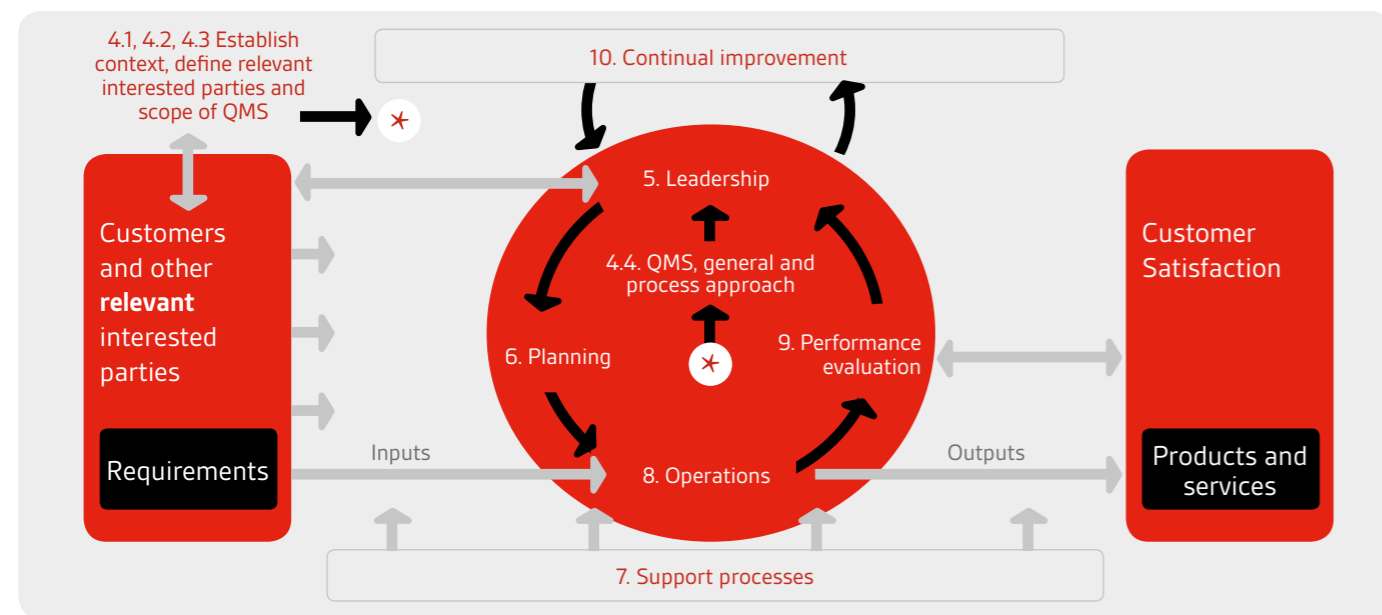
Over the years, ISO has developed a range of management system standards for topics such as quality, environment, information security, as well as business continuity and records management.

These management systems all have very different structures, despite sharing certain commonalities, which can make the implementation phase difficult and complex. To tackle this challenge, ISO has looked at ways to create an identical structure, text, common terms and definitions for management system standards of the future. The framework they developed is called Annex SL, and with its new high level structure (as set out in the table to the right), will bring consistency amongst future and revised management system standards:

Clause 1	Scope
Clause 2	Normative references
Clause 3	Terms and definitions
Clause 4	Context of the organization
Clause 5	Leadership
Clause 6	Planning
Clause 7	Support
Clause 8	Operation
Clause 9	Performance evaluation
Clause 10	Improvement

Adopting the new framework should not be challenging for organizations that have embraced the management system philosophy, but could be a concern for those that have certification for the badge on the wall. With increased reference to "organizational" context, future management systems should be linked to the strategic direction of the business. This means an organization has to align all its processes effectively.

Figure 3: Clauses in Annex SL



# How will this affect organizations?

First let's take a look at some of the specific clauses or references to process in Annex SL.

## 4.4 XXX management system

(Xxx allowing each committee, environment, quality etc. to insert their own description)

The organization shall establish, implement, maintain and continually improve an XXX management system, including the processes needed and their interactions, in accordance with the requirements of this International Standard.

This is further expanded by adding requirements such as:

- Determining the inputs required and the outputs expected from **each process**
- Determining the sequence and interaction of **these processes**
- Determining the risks and opportunities associated with **the process**
- Determining criteria, methods and measurements needed to ensure that both the operation and control of these processes are effective
- Ensuring the availability of resources
- Allocating responsibilities and authorities for particular processes or **sets of processes**
- Monitoring, analysing and reviewing **these processes**
- Implementing necessary actions to achieve planned results and continual improvement of these processes. And ensuring new or **revised processes** continue to deliver the intended outcomes.

# How will this affect organizations?

## 5.1 Leadership and commitment

Top management shall demonstrate leadership and commitment with respect to the XXX management system by:

- Ensuring the XXX policy and XXX objectives are established and are compatible with the strategic direction of the organization
- Ensuring the integration of the XXX management system requirements into the **organization's business processes**

## 8.1 Operational planning and control

The organization shall plan, implement and control the processes needed to meet requirements, and to implement the actions determined in 6.1, by:

- Establishing criteria for the processes
- **Implementing control of the processes** in accordance with the criteria
- Keeping documented information, to the extent necessary, to have confidence that the **processes** have been carried out as planned

The organization also needs to ensure that **outsourced processes** are controlled.

All organizations are now required to determine the risks associated with each process. This is the clause that effectively replaces PREVENTIVE action which in itself caused many questions. So whilst existing techniques are still relevant, the organization now needs to demonstrate it has applied these to all processes within the scope of the management system.

There is now a requirement to establish measures for each process to determine their effectiveness. So whilst this may just be process output measures, effective systems will also have established measures for supply inputs, in process measures, as well as outputs and customer satisfaction measures (every process, even those that are only internal, has a customer for the output).

It requires that leadership establishes responsibilities and authorities for the processes, in other words ownership needs to be clear. This may cause some cultural problems where the defined business processes cross functional and departmental boundaries.

Management have to demonstrate that they are monitoring the impact of any process changes.

And in 7.2, it requires that competences have to be established for those involved with each process.

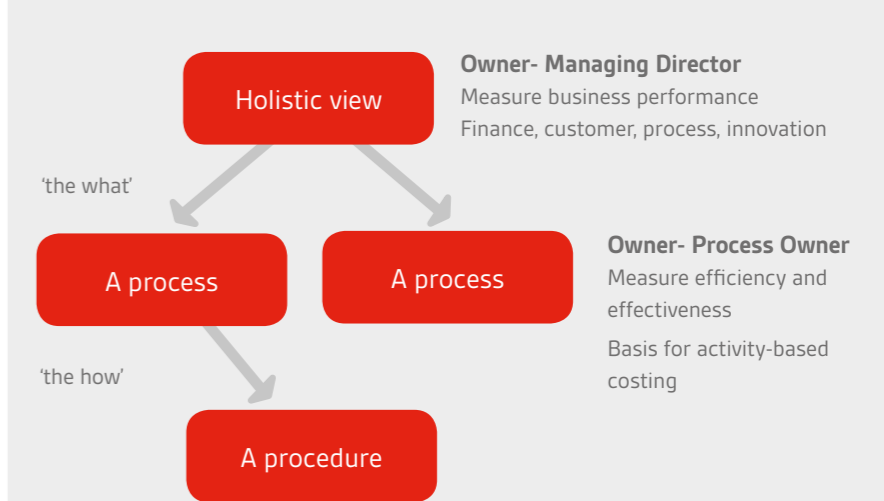
## What does a process-based system look like?

A process-based system normally consists of a high level, on page, description of the business process model. This is supported by each of the processes being defined at the next level of detail.

Procedures and or work instructions are then used to define how certain tasks are carried out at each stage in the process (see the example below).

To help document and manage systems that follow this style of approach, there are many software products available and you may wish to have a look at BSI Entropy.

## Typical structure



# Benefits of the process approach

ISO(i)\* summarises the benefits of the process approach as:

- Integration and alignment of processes to enable achievement of desired outcomes
- Ability to focus effort on process effectiveness and efficiency
- Provision of confidence to customers, and other interested parties, about the consistent performance of the organization
- Transparency of operations within the organization
- Lower costs and creation of shorter cycle times, through the effective use of resources
- Improved, consistent and predictable results

- Provision of opportunities for focused and prioritized improvement initiatives
- Encouragement of the involvement of people and the clarification of their responsibilities

Additionally for those considering building an effective integrated system, a process model of the organization is often the foundation of this. This is usually supported by a set of integrated procedures and measures and ensures that when reviewing performance or change, a holistic view of the business is taken and risks reduced.

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\*(i) Document: ISO/TC 176/SC 2/N 544R3

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