

EIGHT STEP PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

This tool describes in eight steps how to improve a business process. Each step is defined, along with hints for ensuring quality of execution in each phase. This is an invaluable tool for leaders who want to improve a business process and assure themselves of success from planning through implementation.

	Step	Explanation
1.	Define	Establish the overall objective and reasons for improvement; define the current and desired state of the process. (Hint: Ensure that the team responsible for implementing change is involved in this initial step.)
2.	Communicate	Communicate the desired state and the reasons for change to relevant stakeholders (those who will be affected by it). Ensure that there is broad understanding of the benefits of change before you begin. (Hint: Most organizations skip this step, resulting in half-hearted implementation.)
3.	Map	Map the "as-is process." Make sure the map shows the start point, end point, key hand-off points, and typical time expended in each step.
4.	Plan	Identify why the current process fails to meet the desired state. Generate options for improvement and select solutions. Map the proposed new process. (Hint: The most dramatic process improvements occur at hand-off points, by empowering employees to make more decisions themselves and by eliminating checkpoints.)
5.	Test Drive	Communicate the proposed change to relevant stakeholders and solicit feedback. To the extent possible, "test drive" the new process to see whether the envisioned efficiencies materialize. Identify additional improvements, refine, and prepare for rollout.
6.	Implement	Plan, execute and monitor the implementation. (Hint: Ensure that the implementation team has measures of success, including a schedule of milestones and deadlines.)
7.	Evaluate	Evaluate the result of the implementation and compare it to the desired state defined earlier.
8.	Standardize	Plan for further improvements of the process. (Hint: A seasoned process improvement team can serve as internal consultant and translate its success to other areas of the organization.)