

Steps In Any Process Should Always Be Mapped As Verbs

By: Phil Blackmore

When mapping existing processes many people inadvertently label one or more of the steps as a noun such as department label or job title. I've even seen Master Black Belts do this (or at least allow it to be done).

A somewhat generic example might be "credit department" as part of a process for submitting a sales order.

Clearly this is a noun rather than a verb. It might seem rather nit-picky to point this out, but I have found that groups are much less likely to drill into the "essence" of that part of the process (i.e. further sub-divide and understand it) when it is labeled as a noun than when it is a verb, such as "approve creditworthiness."

So what? Who cares?

The project sponsor does. In discarding the richness of understanding of the nuances of the process we are also discarding many potential opportunities for improvement.

We may find that the credit department is actually doing something like this:

- receive credit request
- confirm application completeness
- return for re-work (if and as required)
- confirm applicant legal name
- identify critical shareholders
- confirm profitability
- confirm cash flow volume
- confirm debt-to-equity structure
- confirm credit score
- make final credit decision
- draft credit decision comments
- communicate final credit decision

(Notice that every one of these steps is a verb – some action is actually getting done).

Next time you find yourself mapping a process, try enforcing the 'verbs only' rule. I think you'll find the process of analyzing the process is itself significantly improved.