

In the nearly 40 years that I've had responsibility for managing people, one of the most frustrating moments for me is when I would get a communication from an employee that informed me that they will not be at the office today. Unplanned downtime drives management productivity down as we determine the impact of the absence and how to prioritize the tasks of others to ensure that critical work gets done.

We certainly understand that situations do arise that are unforeseeable such as:

- ✓ The nanny is sick, and I need to stay home with the kids.
- ✓ I've got a sick kid who can't go to school, and I need to stay home.
- ✓ I've come down with the flu and should stay away from my co-workers, etc.
- ✓ Bereavement.

Then there are the more creative / interesting ones:

- ✓ The flu excuse on a Monday or Friday (especially around a long weekend, the employee's birthday or some other celebration).
- ✓ The dog, cat or other pet is having surgery, or has some ailment, and needs tending to.

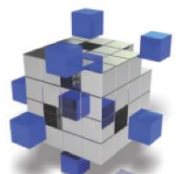
Lastly, there's the one that all of us that work in climates such as Canada's and the northern USA know is going to happen at least once per winter: Snow Day! For those readers that are unfamiliar with this phenomenon, that's when school buses don't run, roads are icy and dangerous and it's the employee (and the manager) may be digging out after a very large snowfall. I do understand that there are other climatic conditions (rainstorms that result in flooding, etc.) in other areas of the world that could cause a comparable situation to occur.



### **How Does an Organization Maintain Productivity?**

If the employee happens to be a machine operator on the shop floor, a warehouse forklift driver or is in a position where meeting people directly (e.g., a grocery store check-out person or a nurse in a hospital) then there's not much that management will be able to do but react to the unplanned downtime. Hopefully, cross-training has taken place, and suitable resources will be available for critical operational functions.

However, if the person works in finance, customer service, purchasing, operations planning or engineering, etc. and has an internet connection, they can be working from home on a list of prioritized tasks as effectively as if they were sitting at their desks. But...say some managers...how do I know they are actually working and getting things done based on priorities?



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*There's a methodology that Emercomm has produced  
named VOPM...Virtual Office Process Management.*

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VOPM is an Organizational Change Management (OCM) and *Integrated* Technology solution that works with an organization's other business solutions to ensure that business processes are under control. If, for some reason, the employee has a time-sensitive task that doesn't get done within the given time limit, the task will appear for other employees to execute or be escalated to management to redirect to another person. It's the same technology solution that allows organizations to reduce elapsed business cycle times, human effort, and overhead costs. It's also the same solution that would enable an organization to implement a 'work-at-home' program to reduce employee-related overhead costs, greenhouse gas emissions and stress levels by reducing employee commuting.

### **Business Process Management (BPM)**

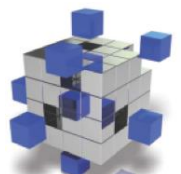
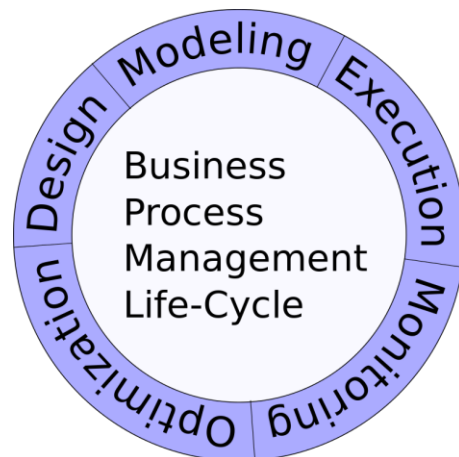
When we're discussing BPM, it's important to distinguish between the types of solutions that are commonly referred to as BPM.

**Business process mapping** solutions are just that...they give the user the ability to graphically document the process map and add notes. This type of solution is commonly used when ISO processes need to be documented.

**Business process modeling** solutions the next step up from mapping. They commonly allow the user to put metrics into the task and stage levels of processes so that factors such as elapsed time, human effort, costs, and risks can be entered and reported upon.

**Business process automation** solutions are those that allow the organization to control what the user is doing through the automation of the processes and their integration with other systems such as ERP, CRM, CAD, QMS, AWM, credit management (e.g., D&B or Transamerica), human resources, payroll, and others. These solutions will escalate processes that are falling behind schedule or need management attention and allow management to produce audit reports for processes such as employee discipline, health and safety, regulatory compliance, and overall process systems performance. *The automated BPM solution provides the execution and monitoring of the business processes that have been automated and provides the reporting that allows for optimization.*

Then there's the technology that is referred to as BPM but does not fulfill the needs of Lean Management initiatives. Some solutions marketed as BPM will



only allow the automation of workflows within a particular solution (e.g., within the functional scope of an ERP system). If the solution that you're looking at does not allow for the modeling of the processes (necessary for Lean Management metrics) and the automation of integrated processes to multiple systems, then you are not getting the full benefits of a complete BPM solution.

### ***Unified Communications & Collaboration (UC) Technology***

UC is the integration of communication tools that assist people (any group of stakeholders) to exchange ideas or collaborate more effectively. This includes IP telephony; instant messaging; team chat facilities; use of webcams (singular, shared or conference room systems, etc.); document sharing facilities; tablet technology; AI; and others that are integrated to make the sharing of information and collaboration on ideas and issues seamless.

### ***VOPM Summary***

A methodology that assists an organization to implement an integrated organizational solution that facilitates an organization's human resources to work remotely while management of their processes are under control.

Being able to utilize UC tools with a properly engineered and implemented BPM automation solutions accomplishes a number of objectives:

- 1** Allows the organization to conduct, and manage, business processes when an unexpected absence occurs;
- 2** Allows the organization to explore the opportunities to reduce non-value-added costs related to office occupancy; and,
- 3** Provides timely and accurate feedback to management, and those responsible for continuous improvement, of opportunities for further reducing elapsed cycle times, human effort and non-value-added costs while also enhancing risk reduction and management initiatives.

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