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6S METHODOLOGY

Classifying Business Process Types – Part 2

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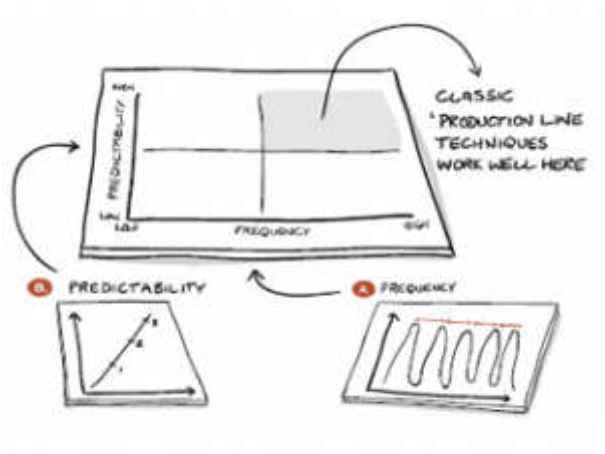
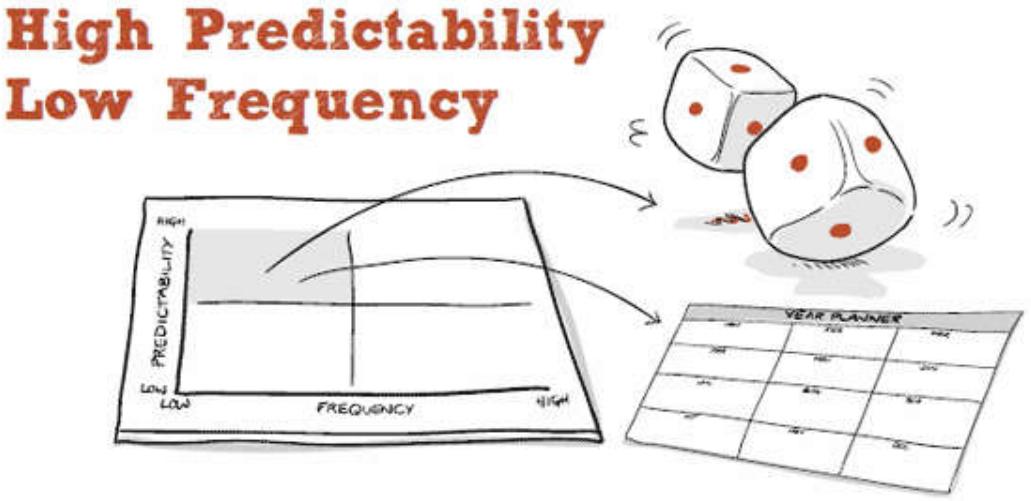
Classifying Different
Process Types Part 2

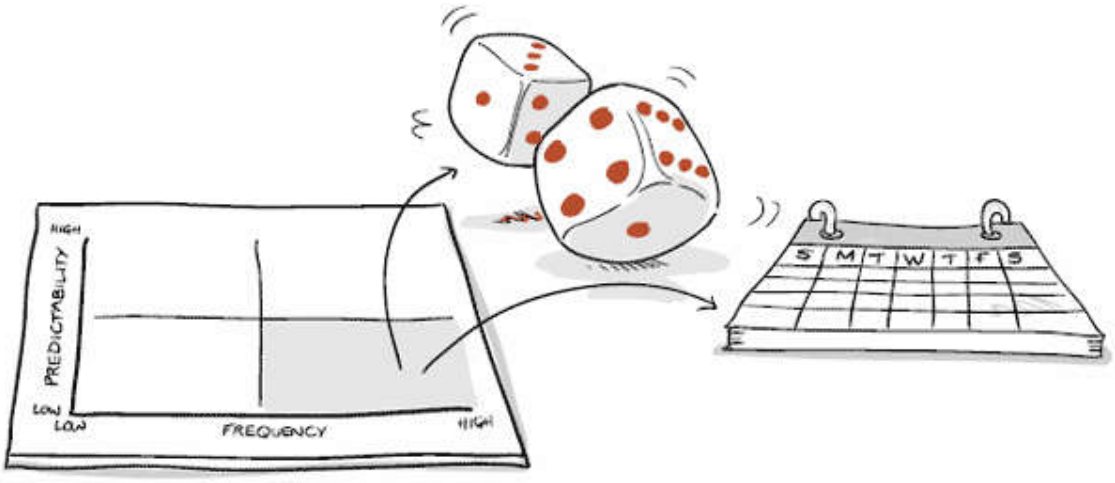
In part 1 of this 3 part series, Classifying Different Process Types, I introduced the idea of the parameters of predictability and frequency of process. And we looked at how we might plot these two parameters against each other. Then I showed why processes that fall into the high frequency-high predictability quadrant are suitable for standard process improvement methodologies. So now we are going to examine what happens in the other quadrants?





Let's look at a class of processes that have a high degree of predictability but low frequency. And what if I went to the extreme and said there was only ever a single instance of a particular process? What do you call a one-off sequence of events that we can plan in out in advance? Most people would recognize that as a project. Now, it might seem a bit silly to call a project a one off process but that is exactly what it is. I have clients that try and standardize their projects when they see that they are repeated over and over.

For example, I know a creative agency that uses a project management system to juggle artwork jobs for multiple clients. Each job is treated as a project. And there is a project template for each kind of job. The template performs the same function as a process diagram in that it attempts to set out a standard sequence of steps. It works with mixed success because the projects actually vary quite a bit. But the system is useful for managing the inevitable resource conflicts.



High Frequency
Low Predictability

So far we have covered the standard process improvement and projects approaches to process. Those are the easy ones. But what happens when the predictability is low and the frequency is high. This is where my friend from part 1 is with his performers and their highly variable IT needs. So what can we do here? Well, this is where the right approach might be **case management**.

Case management is not sequence based, it does not demand that the steps in the process be preordained so it allows for a lower degree of predictability. Instead, in response to a problem, an issue or an event, a "case" is opened. There might be an overall goal for the case, but the path to it might be unclear, i.e. unpredictable. An example would be a legal case or a complex customer service issue. Now, as those involved take the steps they think are appropriate, they record their progress and make decisions about how to proceed as they go. The big difference is that the sequence of events in the case is not preordained. Users have that responsibility. So the process emerges from the steps that are taken. The case system functions as a record rather than as a blueprint.

Case management is about gathering the documentation together in one place and communicating developments to the interested parties. The emphasis is on collaboration until some end point is

reached and the case is closed. You see this approach in the US healthcare system and of course in law firms. But you see it elsewhere. Even though they don't call themselves case management applications, some CRM systems are exactly that. Client data is recorded and progress on issues and decisions made all go into the same client focused system.

So that leaves just the last quadrant, **low frequency and low predictability**. What do we do here?

In the final part of this series, we will look at this in some detail. We will discover how prevalent these low frequency – low predictability processes are, where to find them in your own organization and what we can do about them. So stay tuned.

Even though this is not the last article in this three part series, feel free to add comments or questions. Meantime here are quick links the the full series:

Classifying Process Types Series: Part One, Part Two, Part Three

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- ***On average we reduce our clients operating cost by 12%***
- ***On average we increase our client's process efficiency cost by 60%***
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Gabe is an Operations, Engineering, and Business Process Improvement professional with over 9 years domestic and international experience. He is a practitioner of Lean and change management strategies, a licensed industrial engineer, and Master Six Sigma Black Belt. Gabe experience includes managing key segments of medium size and larger, industry leading consumer products manufacturers, automotive component suppliers, and smaller technology and engineering based organizations. His manufacturing knowledge spans from raw material conversion, through component fabrication, coating, assembly, and packaging. He also has extensive experience off the manufacturing floor implementing ERP systems, and leading improvements in transactional processes. He has a drive for "improving every day" through the use of effective change management techniques, a strong technical skill set, and the application of process analysis/improvement tools. Gabe holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Engineering from the University of Alabama "In the global and competitive environment of today and tomorrow, organizations must rethink and reshape their approach to execution in order to stay competitive. Operational Excellence is the strategic initiative under which this process can take shape." View all posts by Gabriel Daniels PE,.

2 thoughts on "Classifying Business Process Types – Part 2"

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