

Workflow Diagram Analysis Cheat Sheet

Use these tips from process experts Scott Chaiken and Giles Johnston to extract insights and information from your workflow diagram.

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Check Approval Points

Are approval and decision points and transitions from one step to another holding things up? To investigate, list steps and match each to the responsible role.



Consider Process Flow Analysis

According to engineer Giles Johnston, process flow analysis classifies steps in a process. Categorizing the process steps helps you to identify waste and other problems. Compare the steps in your workflow diagram to the list below. *Hint: you want only operations steps and as few of them as possible.*

1. **Operations:** Doing something, such as manufacturing, creating products, or writing paperwork.
2. **Inspection:** Examining and testing products or services for defects, quality, or quantity.
3. **Transportation:** Moving parts, products, or carrying papers to get signatures.
4. **Waiting:** Locating records, waiting for people or items or approval signatures.
5. **Storage:** Storing inventory or storing items for later use or more work.



Look in the Right Places

Focus is important. – Giles Johnston

- If you're looking at speed, look at handoffs.
- If you're looking at quality, see where things can go wrong.
- If you're looking at costs, look at where the process consumes time.



Revise Rework Loops

When an item or output must return to a previous step before it continues in the process, that's a rework loop. Rework loops can waste time, materials, and effort.



Study Handoffs

"If I did a simple block flow diagram of who's doing what in a transaction, I may get enlightened as to poor handoffs and decision-making, and accountability that's missing." – Lean Manager Scott Chaiken

"Handoffs are an opportunity for things to go astray. They're like a relay race. Someone receives the baton; they just chuck it down. It rolls into a hedge. The next person has to look for it. Now it's probably covered in muck. And then, they say, 'Why is my process not working?'" – Giles Johnston



Think Outside the Process Box

Mapping one process may not reveal problems in that particular process. Map related processes to understand their effect on activities.



Use Your Whole Toolbox

Consider analyzing transaction results with Ishikawa (cause and effect) diagrams, Pareto charts, a process behavior chart (a run chart), or process simulations.

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