"HAMMER HAS DONE IT AGAIN!" -Stephen R. Covey, author of The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People HOW THE PROCESS-CENTERED ORGANIZATION Is CHANGING OUR WORK FROM THE BESTSELLING AND COAUTHOR OF OUR REENGINEERING THE CORPORATION LIVES

Foreward and Chapter 1

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To The Reader:

These are excerpts from the Preface and Chapter 1 of one of the best books I have ever read about the importance of "processes" and "process management."

It is written by Michael Hammer—the man who made reengineering famous.

But on page *ii* of the Foreword—he said, "I was wrong... the key word in the definition of reengineering is process."

"The process-centered organization is creating a new economy and a new world.... the time of process has come."

CEO and Founder,

Jack Gayson

APQC

Hammer	Page

FOREWORD

This book is not about reengineering; it is about reengineering's consequences, about its aftermath and its abiding legacy.

In the second half of the 1980's, a handful of companies – Ford Motor Company, Texas Instruments, Taco Bell, and a few others – embarked on programs of business improvement that would transform American industry beyond recognition. Faced with unrelenting global competition and ever more powerful and demanding customers, these companies came to realize their old ways of operating—their long-standing methods for developing, making, selling, and servicing products – were no longer adequate. They also discovered that their existing tools for improving operations were not making a dent in persistent problems of high cost, poor quality, and bad service. In order to address these problems, these companies had to take measures more radical than they had ever taken before. Forced to choose between sure failure and radical change, they opted for the latter. They began to reengineer. They ripped apart their old ways of doing things and started over with clean sheets of paper.

The good news is that these extreme measures, born out of desperation, succeeded far beyond anyone's expectations. These pioneering companies and the many others who followed them achieved breathtaking improvements in their performance. As word of their success spread, reengineering became a mass phenomenon, a vast global business movement. Only the willfully ignorant or those with private agendas question the impact that reengineering has on business around the world.

However, some bad news followed this good news. In the aftermath of reengineering, business leaders discovered that they no longer understood how to manage their business. Reengineering had not just modified their ways of working; it had transformed their organization to the point where they were scarcely recognizable.

The source of this dislocation was to be found in a modest and unassuming word in the definition of the term "reengineering." Since I first coined that term in the late 1980s, I have consistently used the same definition for it: Reengineering is the radical redesign of business processes for dramatic improvement. Originally, I felt that the most important word in the definition was "radical." The clean sheet of paper, the breaking of assumptions, the throw-it-all-out-and-start-again flavor of reengineering – this was what I felt distinguished it from other business improvement programs. This also turned out to be the aspect of reengineering that captured and excited the imagination of managers around the world.

I have now come to realize that I was wrong, that the radical character of reengineering, however important and exciting, is not its most significant aspect. The key word in the definition of reengineering is "process": a complete end-to-end set of activities that together create value for a customer. The Industrial Revolution had turned its back on processes, deconstructing them into specialized tasks and then focusing on improving the performance of these tasks. Tasks--and the organization based on them--formed the basic building blocks of twentieth-century corporations. The persistent problems companies faced in the late twentieth century, however, could not be addressed by means of task improvement. Their problems were process problems, and in order to solve them companies had to make processes the center of their attention. In taking this momentous step, corporate leaders were doing more than solving a set of vexing performance problems. They were bringing down the curtain on close to two hundred years of industrial history.

By bringing processes to the fore, reengineering turned organizations ninety degrees on their sides and caused managers to take a lateral, rather than a vertical, view of them. This shift has obviated the certainties and prescriptions of management textbooks. Virtually everything that has been learned in the twentieth century about enterprises applies only to task—centered enterprises, the hitherto dominant form of organizational life. For a world of process—centered organizations everything must be rethought: the kinds of work that people do, the jobs they hold, the skills they need, the ways in which their performance is measured and rewarded, the career they follow, the roles managers play, the principles of strategy that enterprises follow. Process-centered organizations demand the complete reinvention of the systems and disciplines of management. This book is a report on the early stages of this endeavor, a first draft of a business guide for the twenty-first century.

Beyond Reengineering is about the present as it becomes the future. It is not a book of speculation and imagination; it is based on observation and projection. The concepts and techniques we explore are all in use today. Tomorrow is not around the corner; it is already in our headlights.

Although this book had its origins in reengineering, its lessons are not limited to companies that have formally embraced reengineering. Some companies approach process centering by taking the high road of reengineering while others take the winding path of total quality management. Both inhibitors and the determinants of business success in the global economy are process issues, and only process-centered companies will be in a position to deal with them. Any organization that hopes to thrive in the twenty-first century must reach the destination of process centering.

In a sense, what follows is a prospectus for a series of books. Each of the topics we examine here – from work life to business strategy to the requirements for sustained organizational success – deserves a volume, or a set of volumes, of its own. I have tried to outline the broad themes of work and life in the process-centered world, but much more remains to be understood and to be written on all of these topics.

Four major themes are addressed in this book. Chapters 1 through 4 are called "Work"; they examine the nature of process—centered work and what it means for the people who perform it. "Management" is examined in chapter 5 through 9: the new role and nature of the managerial activity. Chapters 10 through 13 concern themselves with "Enterprise", the issues that must shape the agenda of twenty-first-century business leaders. The last three chapters, "Society," explore the effects of process-centered organizations on the lives of all who live in societies based on them.

This is a business book, but it is a book for everyone. We are all business people. Calvin Coolidge's often—mocked statement that "the chief business of the American people is business" was in fact very wise. Business is everyone's concern, for business is not merely the domain of profit and loss, of buying and selling, of stocks and bonds. Business is about productive economic activity, about doing work that creates things of value to others. Anyone who works lives in the "business world." Business is about getting things done; it occupies a central place in all our lives.

Business not only pervades our lives, it shapes our thinking and our words. The language of business is not just a technical argot used by specialists. We all speak of work and workers, of management and managers, of jobs and organizations. "Businesslike" is a term of high approbation. The ideas of modern business shape how we look at the world and how we see ourselves in it. Yet the language of modern business and the basic ides on which it is founded are undergoing profound change. Before long it will be as quaint to speak of workers and managers and jobs as it already is to speak of knights and squires and quests. The radical transformation of work has ramifications far beyond the walls of the factory, the office, and the stock exchange. Business is the seed that forms the crystal that is our society. As the seed changes, so does the crystal. The process—centered organization is creating a new economy and a new world.

The road to process centering awaits the leaders of organizations prepared for the journey. This book will, I hope, help to illuminate their path.

CHAPTER 1

THE TRIUMPH OF PROCESS

REVOLUTIONS OFTEN begin with the intention of only improving the systems they eventually bring down. The American, French, and Russian revolutions all started as efforts to ameliorate the rule of a monarch, not to end it. Reform turns into revolts when the old system proves too rigid to adapt. So, too, the revolution that has destroyed the traditional corporation began with efforts to improve it.

For some twenty years managers of large American corporations have been engaged in a relentless effort to improve the performance of their businesses. Pressured by suddenly powerful international (especially Japanese) competition and evermore demanding customers, companies embarked on crusades to lower cost, improve productivity, increase flexibility, shrink cycle times, and enhance quality and service. Companies rigorously analyzed their operations, dutifully installed the newest technological advances, applied the latest management and motivational techniques, and sent their people through all the fashionable training programs – but to little avail. No matter how hard they tried, how assiduously they applied the techniques and tools in the management kit bag, performance barely budged.

The problems motivating manages to make these efforts were not minor. The operating performance of established corporations was grossly unsatisfactory, especially when compared with that of aggressive international competitors or hungry starts-ups. Some cases in point:

 Aetna Life & Casualty typically took twenty-eight days to process applications for homeowner's insurance, only twenty-six minutes of which represented real productive work.

• When buying anything through their purchasing organization, even small stationery items costing less than \$10, Chrysler incurred internal expenses of \$300 in reviews, sign-offs, and approvals.

- It took Texas Instruments' Semiconductor Group 180 days to fill an order for an integrated circuit while a competitor could often do it in thirty days.
- GTE's customer service unit was able to resolve customer problems on the first call less than 2 percent of the time.
- Pepsi discovered that 44 percent of the invoices that it sent retailers contained errors, leading to enormous reconciliation costs and endless squabbles with customers.

This list could be extended indefinitely. The inefficiencies, inaccuracies, and inflexibilities of corporate performance were prodigious. This was not a new phenomenon; it was just that by 1980 these problems were starting to matter. When customers had little choices and all competitors were equally bad, there was little incentive for a company to try to do better. But when sophisticated customers began deserting major companies in droves, these problems rocketed to the top of the business agenda. The persistence of performance problems in the face of intense efforts to resolve them drove corporate leaders to distraction.

After a while, understanding gradually dawned on American managers. They were getting nowhere because they were applying task solutions to process problems.

The differences between task and process is the difference between part and whole. A task is a unit of work, a business activity normally preformed by one person. A process, in contrast, is a related group of tasks that together create a result of value to a customer. Order fulfillment, for instance, is a process that produces value in the form of delivered goods for customers. It is comprised of a great many tasks: receiving the order from the customer, entering it into the computer, checking the customer's credit, scheduling production, allocating inventory, selecting a shipping method, picking and packing the goods, loading and sending them on their way. None of these tasks by itself creates value for the customer. You can't ship until it's been loaded, you can't pack until it's been picked. A credit check by itself is simply an exercise in financial analysis. Only when they are all put together do the individual work activities create value.

The problems that afflict modern organizations are not task problems. They are process problems. The reason we are slow to deliver results is not that our people are performing their individual tasks slowly and inefficiently; fifty years of time-and-motion studies and automation have seen to that. We are slow because some of our people are performing tasks that need not be done at all to achieve the desired result and because we encounter agonizing delays in getting the work from the person who does one task to the person who does the next one. Our results are not full of errors because people perform their tasks inaccurately, but because people misunderstand their supervisor's instructions and so do the wrong things, or because they misinterpret information coming from co-workers. We are inflexible not because individuals are locked into fixed ways of operating, but because no one has an understanding of how individual tasks combine to create a result, an understanding absolutely necessary for changing how the results are created. We do not provide unsatisfactory service because our employees are hostile to customers, but because no employee has the information and the perspective needed to explain to customers the status of the process whose results they await. We suffer from high costs not because our individual tasks are expensive, but because we employ many people to ensure that the results of individual tasks are combined into a form that can be delivered to customers. In short, our problems lie not in the performance of individual tasks and activities, the units of work, but in the processes, how the units fit together into a whole. For decades, organizations had been beating the hell out of task problems but hadn't laid a glove on the processes.

It wasn't surprising that it took managers a long time to recognize their mistake. Processes, after all, were not even on the business radar screen. Though processes were central to their businesses, most managers were unaware of them, never thought about them, never measured them, and never considered improving them. The reason for this is that our organizational structures for the last two hundred years have been based on tasks. The fundamental building block of the corporation was the functional department, essentially a group of people all performing a common task. Tasks were measured and improved, the people performing them were trained and developed, managers were assigned to oversee departments or groups of departments, and all the while the processes were spinning out of control.

Slowly and even reluctantly, American corporations began in the 1980s to adopt new methods of business improvement that focused on processes. The two best

known and most successful were total quality management (TQM) and reengineering. Through a long period of intensive application of these techniques, American businesses made enormous headway in overcoming their process problems. Unnecessary tasks were eliminated, tasks were combined or reordered, information was shared among all the people involved in a process, and so on. As a result, order of magnitude improvements were realized in speed, accuracy, flexibility, quality, service, and cost, all by at last attending to processes. The application of process—oriented business improvement programs played a major role in the competitive resurgence of American companies and the revitalization of the American economy in the 1990s.

So far, so good. But to paraphrase an infamous statement from the Vietnam era, process—centered improvement techniques saved companies by destroying them. By bringing processes to the fore, the very foundations of the traditional organization were undermined. A disregard for processes had been built into the structure and culture of industrial era corporations. The premise on which modern organizations were founded, Adam Smith's idea of the specialization of labor, was in fact a rejection of process. It argued that success was based on fragmenting processes into simple tasks and then resolutely focusing on these tasks. By attending to processes instead, the new improvement efforts created stresses that could not be papered over.

Who would have control over the newly recognized and appreciated processes? Consisting as they did of diverse tasks, processes crossed existing organizational boundaries and thereby imperiled the protected domains of functional managers. The new ways of working did not fit into the classical organization. They often entailed the use of teams, groups of individuals with various skills drawn from different functional areas. But such teams had no place in the old organizational chart. Whose responsibility would they be? The new processes often called for empowered frontline individuals who would be provided with information and expected to make their own decisions. This was heresy in organizations where workers were considered too simple to make decisions and where the need for supervisory control was considered a law of nature. In short, it quickly became clear that the new ways of working that marvelously improved performance were incompatible with exiting organizations: their structure, personnel, management styles, cultures, reward and measurement systems, and the like.

There were only two options: Abandon the new processes that had saved the company or adapt the company to the new ways of working. The choice was clear, albeit difficult and, to some, unwelcome. The death knell was ringing for the traditional corporation. In its place would arise a new kind of enterprise, one in which processes play a central role in the operation and management of the enterprise: the process-centered organization.

No company adopted process centering as an end in itself, or because managers thought it would be interesting, exciting, or fashionable. Companies did it because they had no choice, because they could not make their new high-performance processes work in their old organizations. This transition began slowly in the early 1990s with a handful of companies like Texas Instruments, Xerox, and Progressive Insurance. Since then, the stream has become a flood. Dozens of organizations are now making this change, and hundreds more soon will be. Companies like American Standard, Ford, GTE, Delco, Chrysler, Shell Chemical, Ingersoll-Rand, and Levi Strauss, to name just a few, are all concentrating on their processes.

The change to process centering is not primarily a structural one (although it has deep and lasting structural implications, as we shall see). It is not announced by issuing a new organizational chart and assigning a new set of managerial titles. Process centering is first and foremost a shift in perspective, an Escherian reversal of foreground and background, in which primary (tasks) and secondary (processes) exchange places. Process centering, more than anything else, means that people—all people—in the company recognize and focus on their processes. This apparently modest and simple shift has endless ramifications for the operation of businesses and for the lives of the people who work in them. Before we begin to examine these, let's examine why process is such a departure for Industrial Age corporations.

We can think of a process as a black box that effects a transformation, taking in certain inputs and turning them into outputs of greater value. Thus order fulfillment basically turns an order into delivered goods. It begins with an order from the customer that describes a need and ends with those goods in the customer's hands. In fact we might say that the order fulfillment process creates three outputs: the delivered goods, the satisfied customer and the paid bill. This latter, seemingly obvious observation is revolutionary. It says that the operational work of order fulfillment goes beyond mere inventory handling and

shipping to include billing, receivables, and collections—the activities needed to actually get cash in hand. These latter activities have traditionally been the sanctified province of the finance department. To suggest that they should be linked with operational activities in a common process and that the line between operations and finance should consequently disappear defies one hundred years of corporate theology.

Product development is another process encountered in many organizations. It takes as input an idea, a concept, or a need and ends with a design or a functioning prototype for a new product. Many kinds of people participate in the product development process. Research and development (R &D) people contribute technical expertise, marketing people offer their knowledge of customer needs, manufacturing experts say what can be produced efficiently and economically, and finance people assess whether a product can be made and sold at a profit. The difference between product development on the one hand and R&D on the other is central: The former is a process whereas the later is an organizational unit, a department comprised of technical and scientific personnel.

People for R&D are needed in processes other than product development. In many industries, from electronics to chemicals, R & D people participate in the customer service process. When customers call with complex questions about sophisticated technologies, the technical people are the only ones who can respond. In other words, processes transcend organizational boundaries. Xerox executives discovered this when they constructed a simple matrix diagram. Across the top they wrote the names of their processes, down the side went the name of their departments, and in the squares of matrix an X went to any department involved in the performance of the corresponding process. When the diagram was complete, they were astounded to discover the nearly all the squares were Xs. Virtually every department was involved in virtually every process. This is the moral equivalent of saying that no one had any responsibility for anything. Or to put it another way, everyone was involved, but with a narrow focus on the activities of their own department, and so no one had end—to-end responsibility.

It is important to realize that companies moving to process centering do not create or invent their processes. The processes have been there all along, producing the company's outputs. It is just that heretofore the people in the company were unaware of their processes. People on the front line and their

direct supervisors were so focused on their specific tasks and work groups that they could not see the processes to which they contributed; most senior managers were too removed from the fray to appreciate processes. So the processes have always existed, but in a fragmented, invisible, unnamed, and unmanaged state. Process centering gives them the attention and respect they deserve.

Most managers are blind to the performance of their processes. I like to ask them such simple questions as: How long does it take your company to conduct such and such a process? What is its accuracy rate? What is the degree of customer satisfaction with it? What is its cost? The answers are almost always hopeless shrugs of the shoulders. Managers can offer huge amounts of performance data on tasks and departments, but not on processes, which are the very heart of the entire enterprise. Everyone is watching out for task performance, but no one has been watching to see if all the tasks together produce the results they're supposed to for the customer. At the end of the day, the question has always been, "Did you do your job?" So the warehouse maximizes inventory turns, shipping focuses on shipping costs, the credit department assures that credit standards are met. But no one asks, "Did the customer get what was ordered, where it was wanted, and when we promised it? So long as workers did their jobs, the result for the customer, it was assumed, would take care of itself. Nothing, of course, could have been more wrong.

Process centering changes all this by altering the perspective of an organization. As always, language is the key in shaping how people view the world. We have said that a process is a group of tasks that together create a result of value to a customer. The key words in this definition are "group," "together," "result," and "customers."

A process perspective sees not individual tasks in isolation, but the entire collection of tasks that contribute to a desired outcome. Narrow points of view are useless in a process context. It just won't do for each person to be concerned exclusively with his or her own limited responsibility, no matter how well these responsibilities are met. When that occurs, the inevitable result is working at cross—purpose, misunderstanding, and the optimization of the part at the expense of the whole. Process work requires that everyone involved be directed toward a common goal; otherwise, conflicting objectives and parochial agendas impair the effort.

Processes are concerned with results, not with what it takes to produce them. The essence of a process is its inputs and its outputs, what it starts with and what it ends with. Everything else is detail.

Another commonly encountered process reinforces this point: order acquisition. At first blush, "order acquisition" sounds like consultant mumbo jumbo. There ought to be, one would think, a clear, monosyllabic, red-blooded, American word for this process — namely, "sales." In fact, "sales" does not do at all. "Sales" is, first of all, a word that most organizations use for a department full of sales representatives; it denotes an organizational unit, a department. But even more seriously, it identifies only one of the many activities involved in the process for acquiring an order from the customer. "Order acquisition," in contrast, indicates the desired outcome, the purpose of the process--namely, getting an order in hand. The difference between the two terms is the difference between mechanism and outcome, between means and end.

The single most important word in the definition of process is "customer." A process perspective on a business is the customer's perspective. To a customer, processes are the essence of a company. The customer does not see or care about the company's organizational structure or its management philosophies. The customer sees only the company's products and services, all of which are produced by its processes. Customers are an afterthought in the traditional organization: We do what we do and then try to sell the results to customers. But a process perspective requires that we start with customers and what they want from us, and work backward from there.

A process approach to business is particularly appropriate today, for we are living in the age of the customer. For most of industrial history there were more buyers than things available to be bought. Companies were limited by production capacity, not by market demand. Though not technically monopolies, many industries behaved as though they were and took their customers for granted. This is no longer the case. Today, customers have ever more choices and they are very aware of them. A company that does not resolutely focus on its customers and on the processes that produce value for its customers is not long for this world.

The time of process has come. No longer can processes be the orphans of business, toiling away without recognition, attention, and respect. They now must occupy center stage in our organizations. Processes must be at the heart,

rather than the periphery, of companies' organization and management. They must influence structure and systems. They must shape how people think and the attitudes they have.

Some companies convert to a process focus in dramatic fashion. For instance, on January 1, 1995, American Standard, the \$5 billion manufacturer of plumbing products, heating and air conditioning systems, and truck brakes, totally converted itself to a process—centered philosophy. It abolished old titles, realigned management roles, instituted new measurement and reward systems, and implemented a host of other changes consistent with a process view of the company.

This approach is relatively rare. To begin to focus on its processes and become "process centered," an organization need not make official pronouncements, need not issue a new organizational chart, need not employ the term "process centered," need not go through any formal procedures whatsoever. It merely has to start behaving in a different manner. Most companies join the process revolution in a decidedly low–key and evolutionary fashion. Managers and workers alike simply start paying attention to their processes and eventually all aspects of the company are realigned with this new perspective.

To be serious about its processes, to start down the road to process centering, a company must do four things. First the company must recognize and name its processes. Every company has its own unique set of business processes. Earlier we mentioned order fulfillment, product development, and order acquisition as representative processes found in many different companies. But these are not universal, nor are they the only processes that companies have. Most enterprises discover that they have a relatively small set of key processes—typically between five and fifteen—but their identity depends on the company's industry and the key results it produces for its customers. "Market selection," "provide after—sales support," and "develop manufacturing capabilities" are examples of other processes I have encountered. Obviously, no small number of such processes will suffice to completely describe the work of a business. Often companies divide primary processes into a small number of subprocesses, which are then describe in terms of basic tasks or activities.

The identification and naming of a company's processes is a critical first step, and not one to be taken casually. It requires rigorous care to ensure that real processes are being identified. This is difficult because processes cross existing

organizational boundaries. A rule of thumb is that if it doesn't make three people angry, it isn't a process. Many organizations fool themselves by simply relabeling their existing functional units as processes. Process identification requires a new cognitive style, an ability to look horizontally across the whole organization, as if from the outside, rather than from the top down.

The second key step is to ensure that everyone in the company is aware of these processes and their importance to the company. They key word is "everyone." From the executive suite to the shop floor, from headquarters to the most distant sales office, everyone must recognize the company's processes, be able to name them, and be clear about their inputs, outputs, and relationships. Moving to a process focus does not immediately change the tasks that people perform, but it does change people's mind—sets. Process work is big—picture work.

One company where everyone appreciates its processes is Hill's Pet Nutrition, the division of Colgate-Palmolive Company that manufactures and sells animal nutrition products under such brand names as Science Diet. In the old days, if someone approached a worker on the Hill's manufacturing floor and asked what he did, the worker would have said that he was operating a machine. If the machine was running and he was meeting his daily quota, then he felt he was doing his job. If the output of his machine piled up, that wasn't his problem. If the product didn't get shipped, that wasn't his problem either.

If you ask the same question today, the worker will say that he works in the production subprocess of the order fulfillment process. Is this just new corporate jargon? Not at all. It represents a refocusing of the individual and his activities from the small to the large.

Now the worker realizes that he is not there merely to do his own thing, to run his machine. He's there to contribute to the overall effort, namely to perform the process that leads to the result of shipped goods. Now, if his output piles up, he will take it upon himself to see what's happening further down the line. He will do this not out of company loyalty, but because his sense of who he is and what he does has been reshaped by the shift from a task to a process orientation.

We have already remarked on the importance of language in any fundamental change in perspective. The Industrial Revolution not only turned peasants and artisans into factory workers, it practically created the term "workers" to describe

them. Today this term, with its narrow task connotation, is dead language; it doesn't fit as we move to a process focus. Instead of (task) workers, we must speak of (process) performers, people who understand that in doing their work they are contributing to the performance of a process.

The third step to process centering is process measurement. If we are to be serious about our processes, we must know how well they are performing, and that means having a yard-stick. Companies must identify the key measures by which each of their processes will be assessed. Some of these measures must be based on what is important to the customer. By studying customers and their requirements of the output of the process, a company can decide whether to measure cycle time, accuracy, or other aspects of process performance. Another set of measures must reflect the company's own needs: process cost, asset utilization, and other such typically financial matters. Measures are essential not only for knowing how the process is performing but for directing efforts to improve it. The converse of the old saw "that which is measured improves" is "that which is not measured is assuredly in the tank."

Whatever measures are employed, they must reflect the process as a whole and must be communicated to and used by everyone working on the process. Measures are an enormously important tool for shaping people's attitudes and behaviors; they play a central role in converting unruly groups into disciplined teams. "Team" is also an important word in process-centered organizations. Unfortunately, it has been much used and abused of late. A team is not a group of people who work together, or like each other, or share opinions. A team is a group of people with a common objective. The same measures for all performers of a process turn them, no matter where they are or how diverse they may be, into a coherent team. Some processes may be performed from beginning to end by individual performers, but, as a rule, processes are performed by teams.

The fourth step in becoming serious about process is process

management. We have already seen how the shift to a process focus began when companies applied process-focused improvement techniques to persistent performance problems. These efforts began the process-centering revolution; but process centering is a revolution that, like Trotsky's, must be permanent. A company must continue to focus on its processes so that stay attuned to the needs of the changing business environment. One-shot improvements, even dramatic ones, are of little value. A process-centered organization must strive for

ongoing process improvement. To accomplish this, the company must actively manage its processes. Indeed, we can now see that the heart of managing a business is managing its processes: assuring that they are performing up to their potential, looking for opportunities to make them better, and translating these opportunities into realities. This is not a part–time or occasional responsibility. Attending to processes is management's primary ongoing responsibility. Process centering is not a project; it is a way of life.

These four steps start an organization on the road to process centering, but they are not the whole journey. Process centering is a fundamental reconceptualization of what organizations are all about. It permeates every aspect of the business: how people see themselves and their jobs, how they are assessed and paid, what managers do, the definition of the business, and, ultimately, the shape of the societies that depend on these organizations. In succeeding chapters we will explore each of these themes, but let us start with the heart of the matter: the people in a process-centered organization and the work they perform.