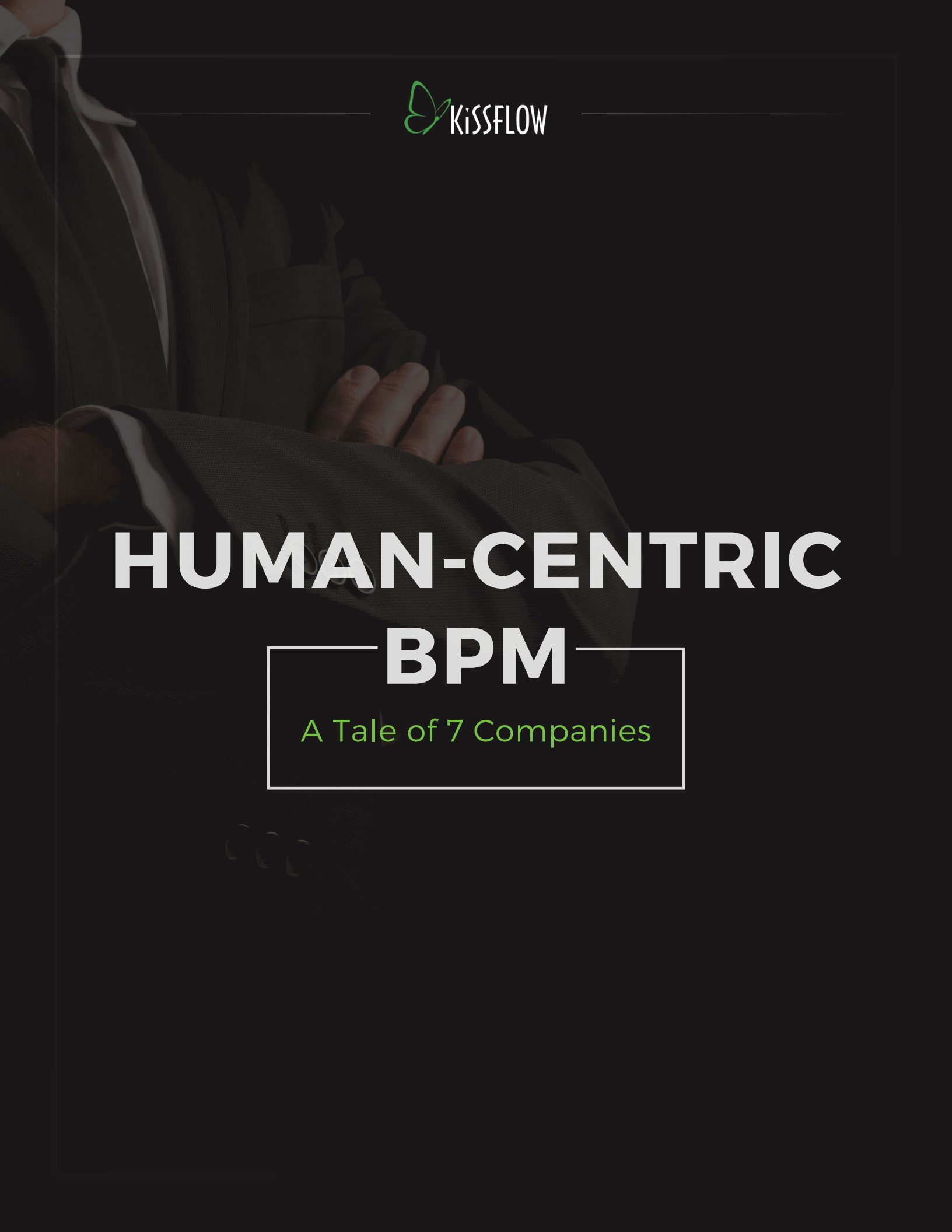
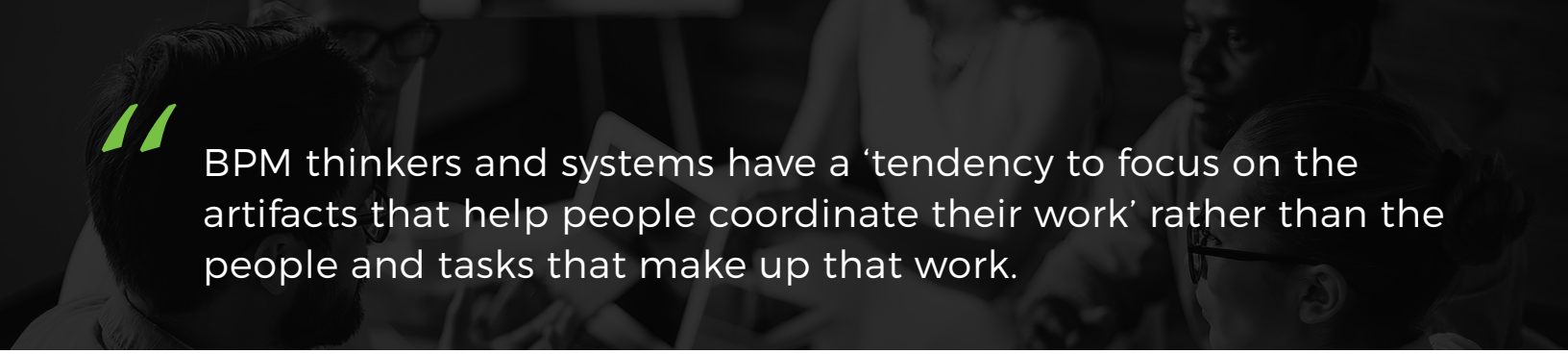


KISSFLOW

HUMAN-CENTRIC BPM

A Tale of 7 Companies



> BPM thinkers and systems have a 'tendency to focus on the artifacts that help people coordinate their work' rather than the people and tasks that make up that work.

Raphael's team is generally in chaos. They manage marketing campaigns for international companies across several industries. His team is very talented, but projects are often delayed and every day is a new emergency in handling exceptions, additions, approvals, and edits. His team's inboxes are constantly overflowing with messages from clients, vendors, and freelancers.

Raphael has tried several options to streamline the flow of work at his office, but it never seems to stick. His team quickly abandons forms and checklists as soon as a client makes a change and they go back to manually managing the process. Now, he's looking to finally cure his problem with BPM.

BPM by the Book

BPM's job is to develop, run, measure, improve, and keep the business process in the optimal condition. However, when Raphael seeks help from BPM, the response is not what he expected.

Practically speaking, BPM focuses on data: how to capture it, translate it, parse it, reference it, analyze it, and communicate it. It thinks about how to allow systems to pass information back and forth down a common chain. In Raphael's example, a typical BPM consultant might do a gap analysis and come back to Raphael with a detailed map of how his data flows from his web forms to a CRM to project files and how that data gets manipulated along the way.

However, this focus on the data can leave some business leaders like Raphael unimpressed. BPM comes across more as tracking a pinball going around a machine rather than solving the glaring problems that stare business leaders in the face. In the words of Swenson and Farris, BPM thinkers and systems have a "tendency to focus on the artifacts that help people coordinate their work"* rather than the people and tasks that make up that work.

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*Swenson, Keith and Farris, Jim. "Human-Centered Business Process Management". Fujitsu Scientific and Technical Journal. Vol 45, No. 2. April 2009. 163.

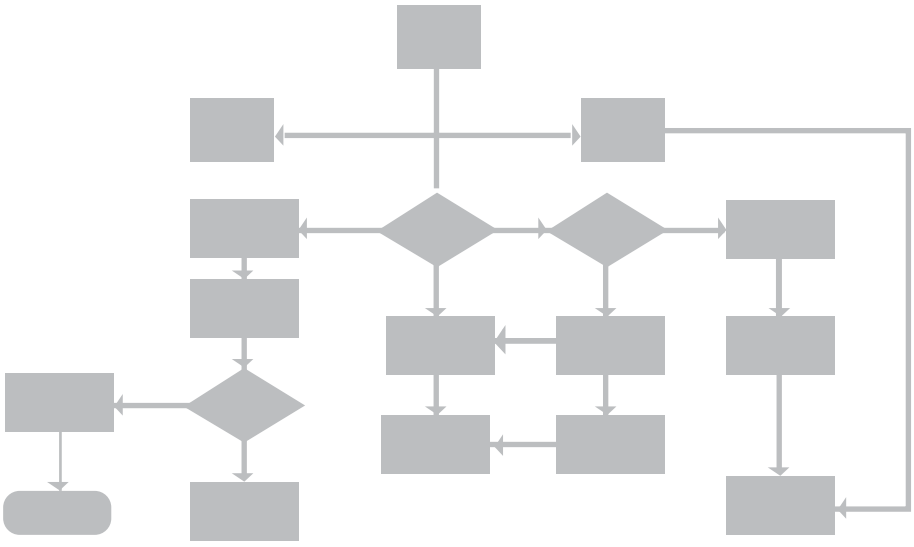
BPM for Humans

Raphael doesn't think of his business process in terms of data, so a typical process map isn't useful for him. For him, 'Generate Creative Brief' is one step owned by an individual. He doesn't want to see exactly what happens if he sends a creative brief back to be redone because the process is already intuitive for him. Raphael wants the diagrammed process to look the same way it looks in his brain - tasks owned by people. What he gets from traditional BPM is confusing and difficult to follow.

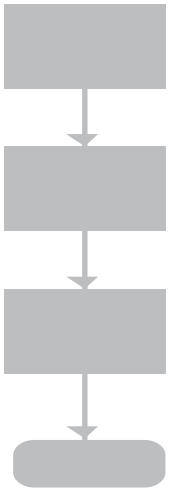
Raphael's desired workflow is a good example of what is called human-centric BPM. Human-centric BPM puts the human elements of a business process at the forefront when designing and diagramming a workflow. More specifically, it is "a process that is human-centered is designed for people to use."*

A human-centric workflow diagram looks extremely simple and takes for granted the work that systems do in the background. It might look useless to a programmer, but makes immediate sense to a business leader. Raphael may be impressed with BPM's suggestions to move data from his CRM to his client meetings, but it doesn't solve his first problem: getting everyone to do their job on time.

What BPM Gives



What Business Leaders Want

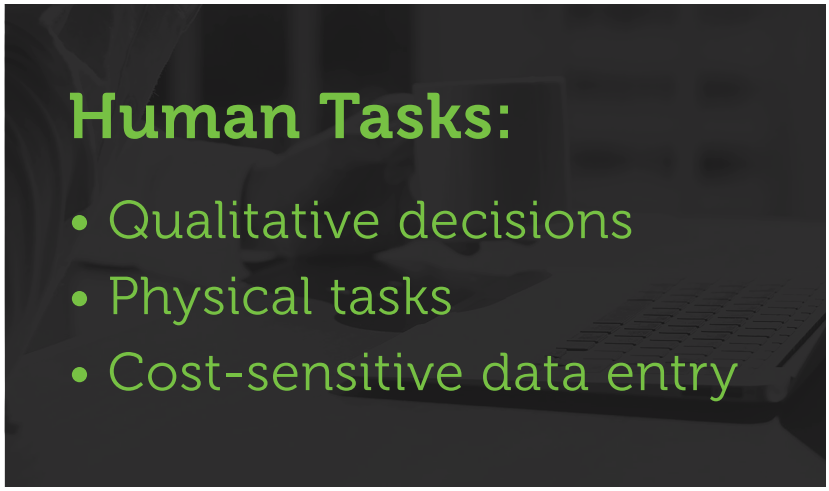


* Swenson, Keith and Farris, Jim. "Human-Centered Business Process Management". Fujitsu Scientific and Technical Journal. Vol 45, No. 2. April 2009. 160.

Human Tasks vs. System Tasks

Every process is made up of human and system tasks. System tasks include recording, generating, referencing, copying, analyzing, updating, and deleting data. However, in human-centric BPM, all of these tasks are done in the background. Although they are essential to the process, they aren't included in the design stage and are handled by the system in the background.

Human tasks come in various shapes and sizes. Some human tasks involve qualitative decisions, such as when Raphael approves a certain marketing campaign. He has to consider the work done previously for the client, current world events, and matching stylistic elements that are very difficult to code. In another example, most companies are unwilling to allow the hiring process to be completely automated because they feel that a manager's ability to assess a personality match is beyond what a system is capable of.



Other human tasks often include creating, improving, reviewing, judging, approving, or translating. Certain physical tasks like transporting goods, video editing, taking a patient's temperature, or doing a visual inspection of home damage are also done mostly by humans. Many of these things may be performed by systems in the future, but most organizations still rely on humans for these tasks.

Some companies have determined that certain tasks like data entry are cheaper to do by humans rather than spending the time creating and maintaining a new system to handle it. Many of these processes change so rapidly that it is cost-prohibitive to hire an expensive developer to come and make a change every time the process is altered.

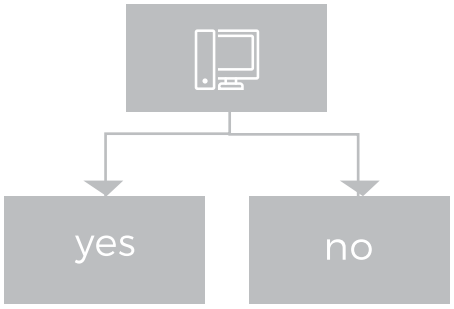
Humans are also generally good at facilitating the flow of an entire process and handling exceptions. If you want to monitor systems and identify when a variant needs to be addressed independent of an automated system, a human is still the best option.

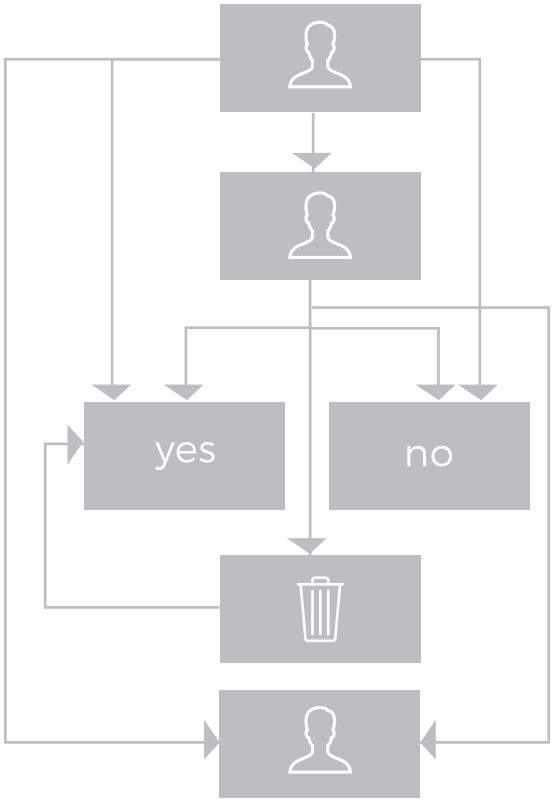
Human Responses

Within a traditional data-focused BPM, a system can have two responses to a task: completed or failed. A failure might result in an error message, but a system is limited in how it can respond to a task assigned to it.

However, humans can have a multitude of responses when they are completing a task. For example, when Raphael is reviewing a marketing campaign, he can approve it, reject it, request more information about it, send it back to a specific task, or approve it after making his own edits. Similarly, the graphic designer on his team can complete a task, ask a question about it, partially complete it and save it for later, or send it back to a previous step to get more information.

Therefore, the process of designing a system with human tasks must include many types of responses. Human-centric BPM understands the complexity of how a human may react to a task and creates room for more than just a binary response.

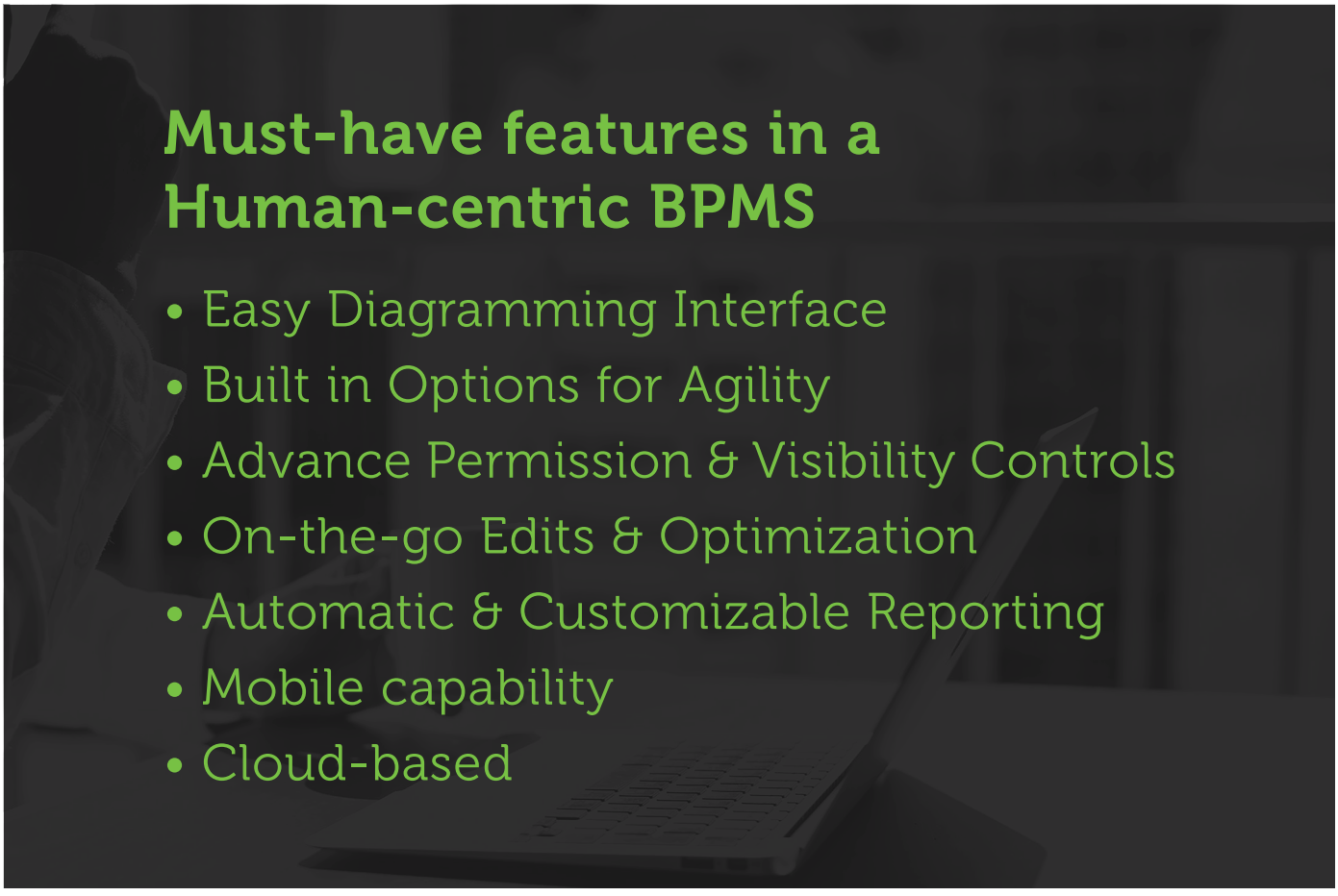




Where Does Automation Fit?

Within BPM, automation is the practice of transitioning human tasks to system tasks. Some tasks such as data analysis and conversion can be better handled by a system when it is cost-effective. There is even scope for decisions to be automated when all of the data can be objectively analyzed.

Human-centric BPM is not against automation; in fact, it encourages as much automation as possible. Human-centric BPM is as concerned about who does the tasks as it is about who designs the process. A human-centric BPM approach can still make use of automation while still presenting a simple workflow diagram. Even within a process that seems to have several human tasks, automation is still used for notifications, recording, and communication.



As Alan Earls said, "Automation can't encompass everything."[#] Human-centric BPM can still fill the gaps to provide the necessary input and decisions to advance a process.

What Is Important to Have in a Human-Centric BPMS?

A human-centric BPM system should make intuitive sense to a business leader as soon as he sits down with it. When modeling and diagramming the process, the interface should primarily focus on the tasks that need to happen and the software should handle all of the system tasks such as notifications, recording of tasks, deadlines, and reminders in the background.

The system should be built for agility. As scholars have noted, "employing a typical BPMS to automate the [human-centric] process and impose a specific sequence of actions would not only be inappropriate, but in addition would hinder agility"*. Because humans have so many responses they can give, they need to be able to change things mid-stream. Human tasks may need to be individually reassigned, or one person's tasks may need to be delegated to someone else while she is on leave. A great system should be able to handle this without any problem.

A human-centric BPM system should also have a lot of customization around permissions and visibility of data at every task. Each task should present the owner with only the exact data she needs to complete the task. Overwhelming the task owner with too much data, not giving enough information, or revealing confidential or distracting data all go against the principles of human-centric BPM.

Aside from a great modeling tool, the best human-centric BPM systems will be easily editable and customizable, generate reports automatically, and integrate simply with other systems. Business leaders should only need a basic knowledge of APIs and webhooks to be able to link their BPM system to other software.

The best human-centric BPM tools will be cloud-based, not only so that they are lightweight and accessible everywhere, but primarily so that your business leaders don't have to assume responsibility for updated versions, downtime, and installation. Ideally, your IT team should not need to be involved at all in managing a human-centric BPM system. The system should work seamlessly on a mobile phone as well to facilitate work from any location.

Alan Earls. "People and Processes: Taking a human-centric approach to BPM". eBizq. 16 Sept 2011. http://www.ebizq.net/topics/workflow_management/features/13249.html. Accessed 20 July 2016.

* Alexopoulou, Nancy, et. al. "An Event-Driven Modeling Approach for Dynamic Human-Intensive Business Processes". Business Process Management Workshops. BPM 2009 International Workshops, Ulm, Germany, September 7, 2009. Revised Papers. 393-404.

Is a Human-Centric Approach Right for You?

A human-centric approach to BPM is ideal when it comes to business leaders who think in terms of tasks first, and data second. If you are looking for a way to help your team function better and to coordinate the work of several people, then you need to start with human-centric BPM. Using the principles of BPM will help you clearly define each role and diagram the ideal flow of work. BPM principles will also help manage predictable exceptions and conditional paths for data to follow.

Human-centric BPM works best when you have a few critical processes that require frequent updates and changes, or the workflow needs to be able to change suddenly in the middle of a process. Human-centric BPM is essential if you do not have access to a dedicated IT team or a BPM consultant, and your business team leaders need to have control over the process.

See How Others Have Benefited From a Human-Centric BPMS

Over the next few pages, you will be introduced to companies and business leaders who took charge of their own processes and used a human-centric BPM system to build their own workflows and forms. Each case study represents a different industry and region to highlight the universal application of human-centric BPM.

Raphael's marketing company can greatly benefit from a human-centric approach to BPM. Automation can still play a great role in the process of streamlining work and clarifying expectations. See what is possible in your team too!

#1

Hero:
Bumi Armada

Industry:
Offshore Oil
Field Services

Business Process:
Supplier
Pre-qualification and
Supplier Evaluation

The Problem:

Bumi Armada was growing at a very fast pace. To keep up, they needed to add dozens of new suppliers and vendors. The head of procurement was trying to track hundreds of vendor applications at the same time. Vendor assessment involved making an informed decision based on multiple data points about quality, price, scale, and many other requirements.

The procurement head's main challenges were tracking the progress of each item out of email and reducing the current time of 3-4 weeks per application.

Read the full case study here

Solution:

The procurement head didn't have time to sit with a technical consultant and wait for development time. He needed a workable solution immediately.

After trying a few different options, the procurement head tried KiSSFLOW and was able to immediately map out the process he needed in a way that made sense to him. He set up every task that his team needed to do in the right sequence and had the process rolling in less than a day.

Bumi Armada now can process a vendor application in just a few days, and they can immediately know where each application is without searching through emails.

#2

Hero:
Reed UK

Industry:
Recruitment

Business Process:
Purchase Requests

The Problem:

Every financial transaction at Reed UK required the approval of the Finance Director or the Managing Director. With the huge volume of transactions taking place, tracking and closing each request had become increasingly difficult. Approving each item required considerable coordination and communication between teams.

Read the full case study here

Solution:

Reed UK initially tried to string together several Google Forms and Apps Scripts to create a workflow. It was functional, but consumed more time and effort than they realized. Small changes required a lot of effort and they were not able to track individual requests the way they wanted.

When they started to use KiSSFLOW, the executives at Reed UK were blown away at how easy it was to make their own changes. One product owner said, “KiSSFLOW allows us to react quickly to organisational change. It is easy to maneuver and enables us to change the process on the fly.”

#3

Hero:
Vonage

Industry:
Telecommunication

Business Process:
Customer Order
Subscriptions

The Problem:

As Vonage saw explosive expansion, they planned ahead to create a custom workflow system to manage customer orders and requirements. They spent a lot of money and time working with developers to create the perfect process. However, when they started rolling it out, the system proved to be too complex for the average user. People quickly found manual workarounds and avoided the workflow.

Read the full case study here

Solution:

The leaders at Vonage realized that in creating a custom solution, they had overlooked the need to keep the user experience simple and easy to use. Their processes were highly complex, but that didn't mean that users and editors had to see that complexity in every step.

They used KiSSFLOW to go back and recreate the process in a way that all of their team members understood and could follow along with. At each step, they determined the right data to display for that task owner and kept the layout very simple and easy to follow. Now, Vonage's entire team follows the same process from end-to-end.

#4

Hero:
Wayne Metro

Industry:
Non-profit, NGO

Business Process:
Customer Order
Subscriptions

The Problem:

The Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency is a non-profit organization deeply invested into supporting the community of Detroit. It provides programs and services in the areas of financial coaching and early childhood care. With around 300 employees, Wayne Metro is one of the largest organizations of its kind in Detroit. Due to the nature of its work, Wayne Metro must do a lot of screening for applicants and a lot of approvals are necessary. They were averaging about five working days to approve a new hire. For those on the field, five days is the difference between meeting a need and having to turn someone away from an important service.

Solution:

Being a non-profit, Wayne Metro was not in a position to find to explore high-cost custom options. And they needed something that their existing staff could manage on their own without the help of the one IT person on staff. Being able to communicate across departments and platforms was also very important.

KiSSFLOW offered the team a chance to build their own hiring approval app in a simple way that made sense to them. After implementing the process, Wayne Metro was able to cut its approval time down to 1-2 days.

Read the full case study here

#5

Hero:
Enjoy Fitness

Industry:
Sportswear

Business Process:
Order Fulfillment

The Problem:

Enjoy Fitness designs and produces custom sportswear for cyclists and runners in South Africa. They were managing their entire order fulfillment project using email and spreadsheets. However, it soon became nearly impossible to track over 100 orders at a time and ensure all of them were moving along at the right pace. It wasn't practical to rely on face-to-face interactions and hope someone updated the right version of the spreadsheet.

Read the full case study here

Solution:

Some leaders in Enjoy Fitness had previous experience using workflows in other companies, so they knew what was possible. However, as a startup, they did not have the massive financial resources required to invest in heavy duty software.

Instead, Enjoy Fitness started using KiSSFLOW to map out their entire order process, spanning dozens of steps. Immediately, they were able to track their orders better. Because of the comprehensive way their workflows were set up, Enjoy Fitness also had to work in several 'safety valves' so that managers could alter the flow of work mid-stream. This was easy to set up and gave them the agility and power they needed.

#6

Hero:
Damamax

Industry:
Telecommunications, Networking

Business Process:
Customer Service Requests

The Problem:

Damamax is a medium-sized telecommunications company that provides high-speed fiber internet and hosting services for SMBs in Jordan. Most of Damamax's operational service requests are routine: setting up direct internet access, Digital Powerline processes, and FTTP processes. They had been handling most of these services with internal IT systems, but employees soon began to request more complex workflows features that were not possible to incorporate. The lagging systems soon became a big headache and Damamax needed something quick to fix it. "We needed something cloud-based that was easy to use."

Solution:

The key feature that Damamax required was being able to track items and generate custom reports. Once they realized how easy it was to set up a process, they immediately brought in those closest to the process to be a part of designing it. Damamax also had full control to record and present their data any way it wanted. KiSSFLOW gave them access to data they didn't know was possible

Read the full case study here

#7

Hero:
Lumière

Industry:
Market Research

Business Process:
Administrative Tasks

The Problem:

Lumière Business Solutions is a research and consulting firm that provides marketing research solutions to its large clientele. Their core team focuses on conducting market research and interacting with clients, so many of its back-office processes were ignored and understaffed. They needed a way to plug these gaps without increasing their staff.

Solution:

Lumière had been using a custom system built into their intranet, but they could never see the status of individual requests and many of them were getting lost somewhere. The business leaders were able to create the entire process on their own in KiSSFLOW and could immediately see the impact. It allowed them to communicate better across departments and keep their staff numbers low.

Read the full case study here

KiSSFLOW

is a cloud-based platform to help business leaders create, modify, and use automated business applications from a human-centric perspective. You can make each application with beautiful, easy-to-use, and modern technology. You get the functionality of high-end BPM software with no coding or complicated mapping required, so you don't have be a programmer to create amazing applications.

Learn more at https://kissflow.com or https://help.kissflow.com/faq/