

Chapter 14

Process Management for SMEs: Barriers, Enablers, and Benefits

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ABSTRACT

More than 90% of companies in Spain, and other European countries, are SMEs. Therefore it is imperative to support and develop their competitiveness due to their contribution to the national economy. Thus, process management is said to be a useful means to improve efficiency and achieve a competitive advantage. Taking this into consideration the aim of this study is to identify and rank the barriers, enablers and benefits that SMEs encounter when implementing process management and to propose different initiatives to ease the implementation process. In order to fulfil this objective, a survey was conducted among SMEs that have already implemented process management so that their experience could help other SMEs. Finally, a ranking of barriers, enablers and benefits is obtained and some suggestions for managers are proposed.

INTRODUCTION

Currently businesses operate in a highly competitive environment which has become tougher as a result of the economic crisis which started at the end of 2007. Thus, not only do companies have to offer their customers what they need, but they also have to do it in the most efficient way. Companies are obliged to overhaul their strategy in order to find new perspectives to efficiently manage their resources and achieve a competitive advantage. As a result, survival is closely related to competitiveness. It follows logically that the higher the company competitiveness the higher the chances of success. Companies have a wide range of philosophies at their disposal to improve their efficiency in order to achieve this. Among them, process management (PM) will be analyzed in this study, as it has been considered an empowering philosophy of quality and efficiency, the two paramount concepts in today's environment.

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On the other hand, due to the relevance that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have in the economic environment of most developed and developing countries, this study will be focused on them. Overall, the aim of this chapter is first to identify and rank the barriers, enablers and benefits that SMEs encounter when implementing PM and to propose different initiatives to ease the implementation process. Having said that, the authors organized the chapter as follows. The first section integrates the theoretical framework and a literature review. The second section describes the data and methodology. The third section includes the results and, finally, future research and conclusions are stated in section four.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Literature Review

PM has been widely studied in literature as Sidorova and Isik (2010) and Houy, Fettke and Loos (2010) concluded in their studies (see Table 1). In fact, both studies highlighted the dramatic increase in the number of articles published related to PM topics during the analyzed periods.

However, that increase was not equally distributed among countries (see Table 2) and more research is needed in certain areas. That was the case of Spain, which was placed in a rather unfavorable position with only four published papers about PM. Although the results may be biased because the used databases were mainly Anglo-Saxon, the difference was large enough to be taken into consideration.

Given this huge difference and the absence of literature reviews on PM focused on the Spanish literature, a review using Dialnet database, which is the largest repository for Spanish-written publications, was carried out by the authors (Sanchez & Blanco, 2014). Their study concluded that practitioners are interested in the PM concept. However, research is in the early stages of development.

Furthermore, a thematic analysis showed that, as in the international case, the implementation of PM systems is a recurring theme. However, some research gaps were detected on topics such as main PM factors (barriers, enablers, motivations, and benefits), human resources management, corporate culture and innovation.

Table 1. Main characteristics of the international PM reviews

TITLE	Business process research: a cross-disciplinary review	Empirical research in business process management-analysis of an emerging field of research
AUTHOR	Sidorova, A.; Isik, O.	Houy, C.; Fettke, P.; Loos, P.
YEAR	2010	2010
DATABASES USED	EBSCOHost	Two databases (not specified)
METHODOLOGY	Latent Semantic Analysis (LSA)	Scientometric methods
No PAPERS REVIEWED	2700	355
PERIOD	09/1927 – 12/2008	1991-2010
ORIENTATION	Theory	Empirical papers

Source: Authors

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