



Chapter X

Using MetaProi to Improve Business Processes

MetaProi at a Glance

In my earlier discussion in this book about business process improvement and organizational learning, I have shown that business process improvement has the potential to foster interfunctional knowledge communication and, consequently, organizational learning. In previous chapters of this book, I have analyzed business process improvement efforts that led to levels of knowledge communication not normally seen in routine organizational processes. Those business process improvement efforts have all been carried out through business process improvement groups.

Given the potential advantages for organizations from conducting business process improvement groups, the issue of how to conduct such groups becomes very important. There are a number of how-to texts on business process improvement. Such texts describe a variety of normative approaches. Classic texts on how to improve business process quality written by Crosby (1980, 1984), Deming (1986), Ishikawa (1986), and Juran (1989) fed the quality improvement fever of the 1980s. Popular texts focusing on the improvement of business process productivity written by Davenport (1993), Hammer and Champy (1993), Hammer and Stanton (1995), and Harrington (1991), fed the reengineering fever of the 1990s.

In this chapter, I propose my own methodology for business process improvement, namely MetaProi, which, by necessity, is based on the texts just described, as well as other related publications. A previous book presents a preliminary discussion of this approach (Kock, 1995a). MetaProi's foci are on both quality and productivity. The methodology has been designed so it can be conducted through e-collaboration technology-supported and face-to-face meetings. One example of an electronic discussion based on MetaProi is provided at the end of this chapter.

MetaProi is a group methodology for business process improvement. One of its components is a group process (or meta-process). As a methodology, MetaProi can be fully defined as a set of activities, guidelines, criteria, and graphical tools to be used by business process improvement groups. Based on my past experience facilitating business process improvement groups using MetaProi, I would suggest group size to be between three and 25 participants, who would play the roles of group leader, facilitator, and ordinary member. The group's main goal should be to identify an organizational process where improvement opportunities exist, and propose changes in order to translate those opportunities into practical improvement.

MetaProi is short for *Meta-Process for Business Process Improvement*. It is referred to as a meta-process to indicate that it is a high-level process that describes how business process improvement ideally should be carried out in organizations. MetaProi is made up of three main stages—business process definition, analysis, and redesign. Each stage comprises interrelated activities. In order to define the criteria, guidelines, and tools to be used in MetaProi, it is important to identify the activities in each of the stages, as well as the group roles involved. Group roles in MetaProi are analogous to business process functions in organizations. The activities involved in each of the stages are summarized below.

- *Business process definition stage*
 - Identify problems
 - Identify business processes
 - Select a business process for redesign
- *Business process analysis stage*
 - Model the business process
 - Raise performance information
 - Highlight opportunities for improvement

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