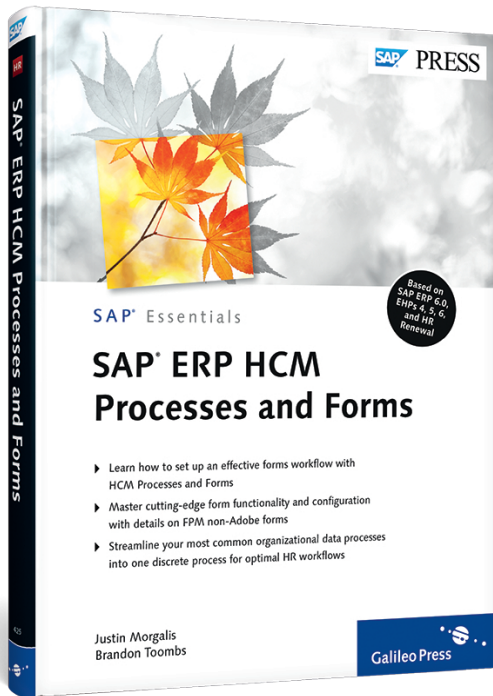


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SAP® ERP HCM Processes and Forms



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Now that we have briefly reviewed the capabilities of the HCM Processes and Forms toolset, it makes sense to spend some time describing the business objectives to be met with the toolset and some design guidelines to meet these objectives.

3 Integrating HCM Processes and Forms into Business Processes

This chapter delves into the business objectives to be met by HCM Processes and Forms and how the right design can make the difference between achieving business objectives and falling short. As discussed in the previous chapter, HCM Processes and Forms is a toolset of rich functionality that enables collaboration between employees, managers, and HR administrators in HR processes. However, just having the right toolset is not enough. Your processes must be designed to fit within the cultural, technical, and resource restrictions of your organization.

In this chapter, you'll learn about the business objectives, common barriers that stand in the way of your objectives, and how to design to overcome the barriers. We'll also take time to discuss a special design consideration, Dynamic Actions, and how their existence impacts the overall picture of HCM form design.

3.1 Business Objectives

Organizations often undertake an HCM Processes and Forms implementation under the banner of "modernization." Moving work online has become an obvious tactic for improving HR operations. But modernization is not in and of itself a business objective. Below is our summary of the real business objectives that can and should be achieved by an HCM Processes and Forms project (in order of priority).

3.1.1 Process Efficiency

Organizations are in constant pursuit of increased speed of data processing. Getting an employee on-boarded or their promotion completed in a timely manner is an obvious business imperative. This can pose a challenge for some organizations, especially those still tied to paper-based processes. The other aspect of process efficiency is the idea of taking less time from administrative staff, which ultimately results in labor cost savings.

3.1.2 Recasting HR: Paper Pusher to Business Partner

A less obvious but in our view more important benefit of process automation freeing up HR time is the opportunity to pursue more strategic agenda items. For decades HR was too busy just managing payroll and benefits to think about doing anything else. Now, HR is slowly shedding its image as a collection of “payroll trolls.” This is being replaced with image of HR as a capable partner to core business operations. Freed of the responsibilities of intensively manual paper processes, HR can devote time to its core purpose: ensuring that the organization's workforce is capable of supporting the strategic objectives of the business.

3.1.3 Data Quality

Capturing the transaction at the source reduces the opportunity for the data to be mistranslated. Any child who has played the classic game of telephone understands that the more times a message is related, the more opportunities there are for the message to change. The cost of bad data quality can range from the low end of simple rework and off-cycle paychecks all the way to losing a key employee once he discovers that he has been underpaid for a year.

3.1.4 Process Consistency

The purpose of approvals is to ensure that company policies are being followed with respect to the decisions made by managers. As many organizations can attest, the lack of consistency in pay/promotion practices can be the basis of litigation or fines from government agencies. In the United States, pay equity is becoming an increased point of emphasis for the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, which has regulatory power over most U.S. companies running SAP systems.

3.1.5 Clarity

The HCM Processes and Forms toolset also provides views that allow all participants to know where a given transaction is within the process. This clarity has several benefits:

- ▶ Provides comfort on the part of the initiator that the process is on track
- ▶ Prevents unresponsive participants within the process to blame missing paperwork and so on to mask their own lack of diligence
- ▶ Increases process measurability overall to allow for tracking of progress over time

3.2 Barriers to Use of HCM Processes and Forms

As some companies can attest, the above objectives can sometimes go unmet. As SAP practitioners, we can state without hesitation that achieving the objectives of HCM Processes and Forms implementations is often more challenging than other SAP HR projects. Now that we have looked at the key business objectives, let's look at some of the most common barriers we have encountered during HCM Processes and Forms implementations and some approaches to overcome these barriers.

3.2.1 Manager Impatience with HR

One observation to be made by anyone who has worked in a large organization is that managers typically have little time or patience for any task that they see as not central to their operational goals. This is often the case with personnel transactions. Managers are notorious for having little patience to fill in forms. HR groups can often lack the clout necessary to get managers to try out the new forms.

3.2.2 The Legacy of Paper-Based Processes

The efficient flow of personnel transaction requests has been a goal of HR systems since before the onset of computers. However, until the advent of web-enabled systems, paper-based processes ruled the day. Consider a typical example:

- ▶ Manager dictates to his secretary a request to give a subordinate a raise.
- ▶ The administrative assistant types up the request.

- ▶ Through intra-office mail or fax, the request goes to the administrative assistant of the manager's boss.
- ▶ That boss signs the request and, for good measure, tells the administrative assistant to walk over to the accountant's office to get another signature.
- ▶ The request is sent to the payroll department, again through intra-office mail or fax.
- ▶ The change is added to the ledger or mainframe to be reflected in the next payroll run.

It is easy to see the inefficiency and points of failure of the above example:

- ▶ Slow speed of intra-office mail
- ▶ Risk of inaccurate dictation
- ▶ Ability of paper to become lost
- ▶ No proactive ability to enforce business rules, ensuring that the raise amount or number of approvals meets with company policies

What is less apparent are the advantages that the paper-based process enjoys. Paper-based processes are flexible: If an extra approval needs to be added to the process, no programming is required—just more footwork on the part of the administrator. Moreover, one division/location of a company can readily deploy a different approval process from the rest of the organization at the whim of the head of said division. The lasting legacy is that that the current generation of company leaders became first-time managers when the idea of standardized processes was not the norm, and therefore those leaders are used to this level of flexibility.

3.2.3 HR Administrators as Gatekeepers

For individuals who see serving as gatekeeper for individual processes as their primary avenue for adding value to the organization, an implementation of HCM Processes and Forms can be threatening. When properly implemented, HCM Processes and Forms can systemize company policy, reducing the role for HR administrator discretion on an individual transaction basis. In our experience, threatened HR administrators often share their concerns with the line managers they support, which bolsters any existing resistance on the part of the line managers.

3.3 Design Guidelines for Overcoming Obstacles

This section describes elements to include within your design to increase your chances of success. Please note that these are elements of the end-state design. In Chapter 4 we will discuss techniques for the project itself that also aid in overcoming obstacles.

3.3.1 80/20 Rule

The definition of the 80/20 rule is that 20% of scenarios yield 80% percent of the volume (Figure 3.1). In the case of HCM Processes and Forms, the percentage may actually be more like 90/10. The problems occur when the design team attempts to make input forms handle all possible exceptions within scenarios. This results in two major issues:

- ▶ Form design becomes much more complex. Complexity results in more development time, more latent bugs, and increased time to test.
- ▶ Form complexity reduces usability and therefore decreases adoption.

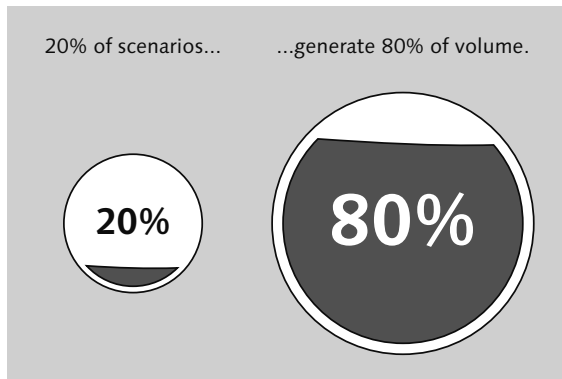


Figure 3.1 80-20 Rule

Having the design team understand this concept can be very difficult in some circumstances. Forms projects are typically funded out of HR. Because of this, the team can feel obligated to ensure that the HR needs are served by providing automated solutions to unique scenarios. This is further exacerbated by the fact that the person whose life would be made easier by instituting the automation may be sitting in on the design decision meeting. It is often difficult make the case to

that person that saving him a few hours a week may not outweigh the long-term company-wide cost of overall decreased flexibility and reduced usability.

3.3.2 Have a Safety Valve

The corollary to enforcing the 80/20 rule is that the design must provide a simple way to handle the exceptions—a “safety valve,” a way to handle the other 20% of transactions that do not fit the pattern. The options for the safety valve are as follows.

Option 1: Handle Exceptions Outside of the HCM Processes and Forms Environment

It should be made clear at the outset of the design process that the objective should not be to handle all business processes through HCM Processes and Forms. In our experience most companies simply do not find it practical to use a forms-based approach for company reorganizations or mass promotions in conjunction with the annual merit process.

It can also be prudent to handle other exceptions outside of HCM Processes and Forms. Possible criteria for this approach are:

- ▶ Some of the data required for the business rules resides outside of the SAP HCM environment.
- ▶ The business rules change often.
- ▶ The business rules are localized.
- ▶ The change occurs infrequently, so it is impractical to invest in automation.

In this scenario, it may make sense to have the initiator of the change email directly to an administrative specialist, who then inputs the required change via PA30/PA40. In those cases, use of the document upload capability within PA30 can provide the necessary audit trail.

Option 2: Create a Follow-Up Step within the HCM Process

Consider the scenario where the initiator of the process is a line manager. In this scenario 90% of the time, the change can go straight through based on the user's input. However, in 10% of the scenarios additional follow-up is required. An additional conditional step can be added within the workflow to cause the form

that would otherwise automatically become activated in the system to stop with an HR administrator. The HR administrator would then apply the more complex business rules or insight. The change could then either be input into the form or manually input into SAP HR.

3.3.3 KICS – Keep It Consistent, Stupid

The phrase “Keep it simple, stupid,” or KISS, has been a design principle for a number of years. In our experience a more important acronym on many projects may be KICS, or “Keep it consistent, stupid.” In many organizations the approvals process and business rules can vary widely from one part of the organization to another. Sometimes the change is for a legitimate purpose; the approvals process in place for promotions for a manager in charge of a group of engineers may legitimately differ from those for a convenience store manager giving promotions to clerks. However, in our experience, often, the primary variance can be because Joe is in charge of division A and he likes to approve every last dime, while Sue is in charge of division B and she believes more in empowerment.

Variations in processes present significant challenges. On a technical level, maintaining multiple versions of forms for different areas of the company increases code complexity. On a support level, differing job aids may have to be written, maintained, and presented to the user depending on location.

Combating Unnecessary Inconsistency

The most effective way to combat unnecessary inconsistency, in our experience, is the top-down approach. If your project can influence executive leadership to mandate “one company, one process,” the issue can be quickly resolved. But often the cause of the inconsistency is that two leaders of different business units differ in philosophy, and the HR group often lacks the necessary clout to influence the top level of management to champion consistency. It is at this point that a data-driven argument can carry the day. We have found that pulling together the following information can aid in conversations with higher-level managers:

- ▶ Incremental development costs due to complexity
- ▶ Higher support costs due to complexity
- ▶ Higher effort for testing due to complexity

To combat the need for numerous levels of approvals, the team should rightly be able to argue that the new HCM process provides increased visibility to the employee transactions within the company. Reports and notifications can be delivered to organizational leaders to keep them apprised of the activity within their area. The team should not be shy about promising liberal notifications. Notifications are fairly easy to develop and are much less effort to support and to test.

3.3.4 Simplify Language on Forms

HR users who work with the SAP system on a daily basis can lose sight of the fact that much of the description and labeling that come with the product is less than intuitive to uninitiated users. *Employee group* and *personnel area* do not have the same connotation to a line manager, and it is unreasonable to expect a line manager to take the time to learn what these and other HR-specific terms mean. Table 3.1 lists some key SAP terms and how these can be translated into terms that a manager can more readily comprehend. Note that since the use of the SAP values are unique at each client's organization, the table is provided as an example only.

SAP Term	Translation For Manager
Employee group	Full time/part time
Personnel area	Work location
Organizational unit	Department
Pay scale	Pay level

Table 3.1 Translations for Common SAP Terms

3.3.5 Provide the Right Level of Help Text

If the HCM Processes and Forms are delivered through the SAP portal, numerous opportunities exist to integrate content. Depending on design, content can be added above, below, left, and right of the HCM forms windows (we will discuss the portal in greater detail in Chapter 10). Given the capabilities, well-meaning HR designers can become overzealous in providing help text to managers. Figure 3.2 shows what can happen when content creation goes too far. The result is a page that can be overwhelming to the manager, which will reduce the adoption of the forms.

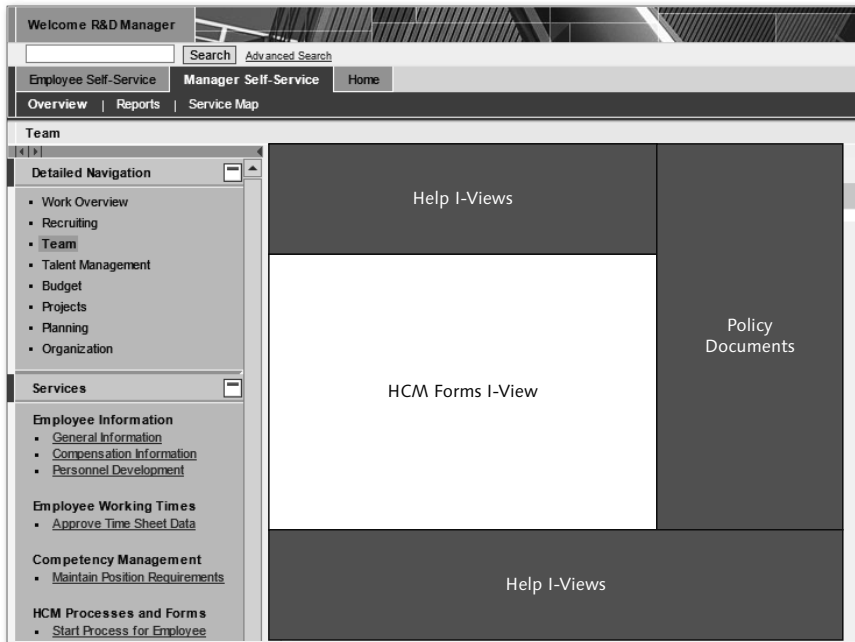


Figure 3.2 Complex and Busy Portal Screen

Recognizing the Limitations of What Can Be Expected from Line Managers: The Water Bill Test

It is our experience that if providing extensive guidance to managers is required, then there is an issue with design. Either the instructions are being “over-explained” or the form itself is too complex. If the issue is the former, working with a focus group should help fine-tune the guidance. If the problem is the latter, some design elements may need to be rethought. It is at this point that we would introduce an effective test for form design: the water bill test. On average, a manager will fill in an HR form once a month and expects to spend five minutes or less doing so. This is on par with the frequency and amount of time most people spend reviewing and paying their water bill. Therefore, a good rule of thumb is that your form should be no more complex than a water bill.

3.4 Interaction with Existing Dynamic Actions

At this point we need to shift gears to address an important design issue that deals with backend processing rather than frontend design. Since the earliest versions of

SAP HR, SAP has provided a toolset called Dynamic Actions. The purpose of Dynamic Actions was to provide a way to automate the processing of one infotype based on the values of another. Dynamic Actions were widely adopted in HR implementations in large part because users could make updates without programming knowledge. For example, a user can use a Dynamic Action entry to automatically create a new home work tax area entry when an employee's home address changes. We will review the limitations of using Dynamic Actions, the alternatives and options for working with existing Dynamic Actions, and how to conduct dual maintenance and utilize the decoupled infotype framework.

3.4.1 Limitations of Dynamic Actions

In earlier versions of SAP HR, there were fundamentally only two ways to make employee data updates: having a live user making updates through the Windows graphical user interface (GUI) or through a background process. It was widely understood that live user sessions used Dynamic Actions, while background processing did not use Dynamic Actions.

As SAP began to add new methods for making updates to employee data such as Employee Self-Service (ESS) and Manager Self-Service (MSS), they made the conscious decision to limit the use of Dynamic Actions to only foreground processing through the Windows GUI. They did not relent on this restriction when HCM Processes and Forms was created; Dynamic Actions are not called within HCM Processes and Forms.

The reason for this limitation is that Dynamic Actions are built into the core of the personnel maintenance transaction (PA30) itself. Dynamic Actions were created before all of today's current user interface possibilities were imagined. Figure 3.3 shows how in this model the business logic is buried within the user interface. That's not good.

3.4.2 Current Landscape

While the fact that Dynamic Actions were not accessible outside of the Windows GUI was documented in some of the SAP materials, this limitation was not widely disseminated within the SAP community. Therefore, the reliance on Dynamic Actions has continued unabated.

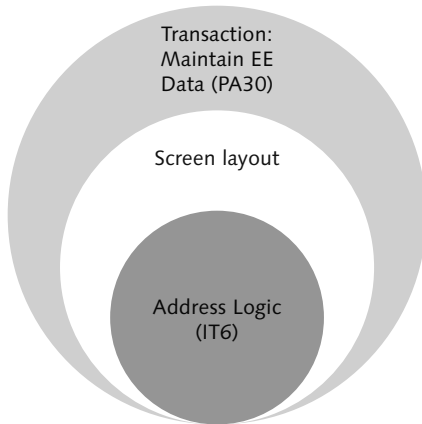


Figure 3.3 PA30 Logic

When we visit clients looking to implement HCM Processes and Forms, we seldom encounter clients that are not heavily relying on Dynamic Actions as part of their processing. Our clients are almost always surprised that their investment in Dynamic Actions does not translate into HCM Processes and Forms.

The Future of Dynamic Actions

As of the time of this writing, there is no official word from SAP about an alternative to Dynamic Actions that can be utilized within HCM Processes and Forms. However, from discussions we have had with SAP, they are aware of the dilemma faced by many customers and are working on a long-term solution. Stay tuned.

3.4.3 The Alternative to Dynamic Actions

SAP has delivered a new approach for handling dynamic logic using something called the decoupled infotype framework. The idea behind the decoupled infotype framework is that the business logic should be the same regardless of the user interface, as illustrated in Figure 3.4.

While a detailed discussion of implementation of the decoupled infotype framework is beyond the scope of this book, we will attempt to provide a summary of the concepts and skill sets required.

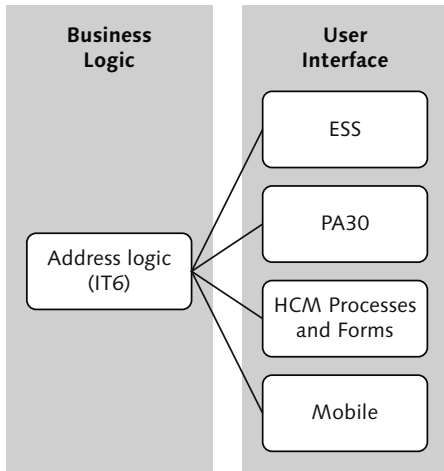


Figure 3.4 Example of a Decoupled Infotype

What It Is

The decoupled infotype framework enables the company to implement specialized processing utilizing ABAP classes. The benefit of classes is that they are designed to handle simple or complex logic. If the organization employs a standard SAP system, the methods can be left as-is. However, where necessary, the organization can override the logic provided by SAP with their own. And the decoupled infotype framework can be called from all existing user interfaces: Windows GUI, ESS, MSS, and most important for us, HCM Processes and Forms.

3.4.4 Options for Dealing with Existing Dynamic Actions

Existing Dynamic Actions embody key processing logic and therefore need to be accounted for as part of the HCM Processes and Forms implementation. The following are the options for dealing with Dynamic Actions.

Dual Maintenance

In this approach, if a requirement relates to both HCM Processes and Forms and traditional transactions, both the Dynamic Actions table and the decoupled infotype framework are simultaneously maintained. The benefit of this approach is that the short-term risk to current GUI-based processes is mitigated, as there is minimal change to the way current transactions behave. The obvious downside is that it locks the support team into maintaining business logic in two different ways in

different locations. This doubles testing requirements and increases the possibility of inconsistent results.

Calling Dynamic Actions from the Decoupled Infotype Framework

This approach is the “have your cake and eat it too” approach. The development is created to call the Dynamic Actions table within the decoupled infotype framework. While this idea is promising in concept, in reality it is problematic. The standard decoupled framework enables companies to use the framework on the infotypes only where it is necessary to do so. In order to ensure that the Dynamic Actions table is called in all cases, this requires a customer-specific decoupled infotype class to be called for all infotypes, which is often impractical.

3.4.5 Migrating to the Decoupled Framework

Our recommended approach is to migrate away from Dynamic Actions and on to the decoupled infotype framework. For existing clients, this is a major undertaking. Therefore, we recommend a phased approach for migration:

▶ **Phase 0**

If new infotype requirements are identified, they should utilize the new framework.

▶ **Phase 1**

Migrate infotypes directly updated through ESS to use the decoupled infotype framework.

- ▶ Address (IT6)
- ▶ Personal Data (IT2)
- ▶ Bank Details (IT9)
- ▶ Work Tax (210)-US

▶ **Phase 2**

Transition all remaining infotypes aside from IT0 (Actions) or IT1 (Organizational Assignment).

▶ **Phase 3**

Migration of Infotypes IT0 and IT1.

Migrating away from Dynamic Actions is a little like updating a plumbing system. Doing the work can be time-consuming, with little immediate positive feedback. However, over time your outcomes will be improved.

3.5 Summary

In this chapter, we discussed business objectives, common barriers that stand in the way of your objectives, and how to design to overcome the barriers to an HCM Processes and Forms implementation. Some take-aways for this chapter should be the following:

- ▶ A well-designed HCM Processes and Forms project should always begin with an acknowledgment that managers view HR processes with skepticism. The impact should be that additional effort is expended to ensure that the forms are intuitive.
- ▶ Aiming for a consistent process design is perhaps the most important step in the development of HCM Processes and Forms. This can often be one of the most difficult challenges facing any implementation. Consistency requires that the group work toward a design that can result in process and culture changes within areas of the company. This type of change can be one the most difficult within the organization, particularly if some parts of the organization have come to be part of the whole through an acquisition.
- ▶ The design time should be heavily biased toward consistency. However, there can be valid reasons for handling the same business processes differently.
- ▶ It is essential to provide the right level of help to managers while they are filling in HR transactions. Too little help can leave managers feeling isolated. Too much help can overwhelm the manager and make him seek ways to avoid completing the form.
- ▶ Dynamic Actions present unique challenges to project teams because they are typically already embedded in the HR design. Because they are a form of business logic and they are not accessible for form processing, the team must determine how to handle them. We recommend migrating away from Dynamic Actions toward business logic accessible from both HCM Processes and Forms and legacy HR business processing.

Now that we have talked about process design, in the next chapter we will talk about how to actually formulate your design and implement it through a well-planned project.

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