

Twelve Signs that It's Time to Change Your Business Process

By Terry Bird

Clinical research is a complex enterprise with many complex business processes. Efficient processes employ modern information technology to operate quickly, consistently and securely, automatically collecting data and converting it into information with minimal manual intervention, especially from skilled professionals who have better things to do.

The following 12 signs indicate that your business process needs improvement:

- 1. You employ spreadsheets or paper forms, sometimes with multiple copies in multiple locations.**
2. You print documents for "wet" approval signatures.
3. You train your people in the "quirks" of the process...and they still ask experts for help.
4. Your SOPs do not describe the real process.
5. You spend lots of time handling "exceptions" and "work arounds" that the automated system cannot handle.
6. You are not sure where to find the correct versions of spreadsheets and paper documents for auditing...and, even then, can't find an audit trail.
7. You manually transfer data from one automated system to another.
- 8. You manually consolidate data for reports or to support management decisions.**
- 9. You employ "data managers."**
- 10. You use personal technology to get your job done.**
- 11.** It is not always clear who has what authority or who is responsible for what.
- 12.** You feel like you are serving the system instead of the system serving you.

Your team might not complain about the time they waste locating and updating paper forms, replacing outdated information, replicating and filing documents, tracking lost documents, etc. Why? Because that "that's the way it is." They will do the best job they can with the resources they have.

It might take some probing to discover the true state of affairs, but once your team realizes that you really want to help them achieve their objectives, their minds will open up with a flood of creative ideas to improve cost, quality and timeliness. Without all the wasteful activity, your staff can get their important work done without the stress or long hours.

Author

Terry Bird is Founder and Managing Partner of VACAVA. Contact him at 1.507.252.9076 or tbird@vacava.com.