Effective Process Management

Improving Your Healthcare Delivery

Kenneth R. Rohde

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About the Author

Kenneth R. Rohde is a senior consultant for The Greeley Company, a division of HCPro, Inc., in Marblehead, MA. He brings more than 27 years of experience in quality management to his work with hospitals and medical centers across the country. Rohde's roles in performance improvement and project management make him uniquely qualified to assist medical staffs and hospital leaders in developing solutions to their toughest challenges. He instructs, speaks, and consults in the areas of error reduction strategies, root-cause analysis, improving performance through process simplification, effective procedure writing, apparent cause analysis, engineering effectiveness and error reduction, Failure Modes and Effects Analysis, effective data collection, analysis trending, and patient safety evaluation and improvement.

Prior to joining The Greeley Company, Rohde served as director for Performance Improvement International and director of corrective actions processes at Westinghouse Electric Company. He has also participated in or managed projects to improve business effectiveness and business development for healthcare, nuclear power, and manufacturing facilities around the globe.

Rohde is the author of *Failure Modes and Effects Analysis: Templates and Tools to Improve Patient Safety*; *Making Your Data Work: Tools and Templates for Effective Analysis*; *Building Your Culture of Safety: Six Keys to Preventing Medical Errors*; and the *FMEA Reference Toolkit: Essential Templates and Charts for Your Hospital.*

Introduction

Goal: Safe, Efficient, Easy-to-Use Processes

Healthcare appears to be an incredibly complex business—and it really is. Every day, our hospitals, clinics, physician offices, and care facilities deal with a complex flow of actions and decisions, each of which needs to be performed correctly if we want the outcomes to be acceptable. Sometimes we marvel that we manage to hold it all together, from the apparent chaos in the ED to the complexity of making sure that billing and reimbursements are done correctly.

The complexity of healthcare has evolved over time, with every year getting more complex. While we have invested in our quality, risk management, performance improvement, utilization, and outcomes management functions, as a whole, healthcare still has not had the chance to step back and look at all the things that it does every day from an integrated process management perspective.

Although the concept of process improvement is likely a familiar topic, our goal in this book is to look at the bigger picture of process management—the whole cycle of making sure that your processes get it right the first time and every time. Hopefully, that will provide an integrated framework for all the activities that your organization is performing related to your processes.

If you have picked up this book, it is likely that you are a key player in the efforts at your facility or practice or in your community to move healthcare and your organization up a notch or two in process management. Our goal is to provide you with an approachable, quick, but useful guide down the path to moving your organization forward in process management.

Objectives: What you need to know

In your role as a process management leader, we suggest that it is important that you feel comfortable being able to support your organization by doing all of the following:

- Explain the vital role of processes in the culture of safety and reliability (Chapter 1)

- Describe the fundamentals of process management and a simple seven-step framework (Chapter 1)

- Begin the development and prioritization of your process list (Chapter 2)

- Understand the key concepts of process mapping (Chapter 3)

- Know the four tools to assist you in assessing your processes for risk (Chapter 4)

- Access simple techniques to assess your process for efficiency (Chapter 5)

- Be able to establish a change management program for your processes (Chapter 6)

- Recognize the importance of effective policies and procedures in implementing your processes (Chapter 7)

- Recognize the integration of the process with the workplace (Chapter 8)

- Use your data streams to better monitor your processes (Chapter 9)

There are a tremendous number of books that have been published on process improvement, Lean, Six Sigma, and related topics. The amount of technical and statistical guidance can often be overwhelming. Our goal here is to provide a practical framework so that you have the big picture and, therefore, have a way of better balancing all the different aspects of this challenging field.

Throughout the book, we have included tips. These are what we consider some of the most useful takeaways from our work in the process management area. We have also tried to format many of the tables so you can use them as impromptu checklists or mini-assessments within your group or with your leadership.

At the back of each chapter there is a Solution Quick Guide, which is designed to support you in both remembering and sharing the approaches with your team as you add process management to your culture of safety and reliability.

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The Vital Role of Process Management

Building the Culture of Safety and Reliability

A high-reliability organization will "get it right the first time and every time." To reach this level of achievement, we cannot rely just on individual performers; we need to be driven by the shared organizational values and beliefs provided by an underlying culture of high reliability and safety. "Culture of safety" is often talked about and, in some cases, has become a buzzword, but if we want to get it right the first time and every time, we need to make sure we take the concept seriously. A strong culture of safety and high reliability is what ensures that we can consistently deliver on our goals of:

- Patient safety

- Employee and physician safety

- Effective and efficient care

- Patient and family satisfaction

- Employee and physician satisfaction

- Economic business success

- Ongoing market growth

If we don't get everything we do right, we will not achieve these vital goals. So how do we get things right every time?

Behaviors and processes: Two keys to reliability and safety

A strong culture of safety and reliability focuses on two key areas:

- Making sure all employees, leaders, and physicians use safe and reliable behaviors every day

- Ensuring that, as an organization, we provide safe, reliable, and efficient processes for all our employees, patients, and physicians to use

We must do both of these. If we train our staff members on patient safety and error-reduction techniques and turn them loose to use processes that are fundamentally flawed or unsafe, we will not succeed.

Likewise, if we invest heavily in a massive process redesign program that develops world-class processes, and our employees and physicians don't pay attention to details or don't follow the process, we will not succeed.

> **TIP** *Make sure your "culture of safety" activities focus on the underlying processes in combination with safe behaviors.*

Adding process management to your culture

Much of the focus over the past five to ten years has been on improving the behaviors related to reducing errors. While there certainly has been a focus on doing root-cause analyses when there was a process or behavior breakdown or doing one to two Failure Modes and Effects Analyses (FMEA) each year as a proactive approach to improving processes, our cultures have not moved to the next level where they are seriously focused on process management. Without a balanced focus on both behaviors and process, we will not achieve the levels of performance that our patients, boards, and communities want from us.

Organizations often overestimate the level of robustness that they have in the management of their processes. They reflect back on recent performance improvement teams or maybe recent Six Sigma or Lean projects and assume that because they are doing such projects and collecting lots of core measures and outcome data they have good process management. That is rarely the case.

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Quiz: How robust is your process management?

To help us understand where our culture is on the relative commitment to process management, let's compare how we manage our employees to how we manage our processes.

Virtually all organizations have a strong cultural commitment to human resources management. They feel that it is a normal and expected task to manage a list of the 2,000–6,000 people who work at a hospital. In fact, most hospital staff members would be astounded if you suggested that the facility could be run without such a list of all employees. When we manage our employees, not only do we have a list of all their names, but we also have diagrams that clearly show how they fit into the overall organizational structure. We would feel remiss if we made an organizational change and did not update the organizational charts, usually within the week!

Let's go one step further. Our human resources management strives to evaluate every employee each year to ensure that he or she meets expectations, and then human resources assists him or her in developing the required competencies to succeed.

Do we manage our processes with the same level of robustness that we manage our people? Typically not.

How would you answer the following quiz for your organization? (See Figure 1.1.)

Who needs to improve their process management?

Process management and getting our processes under control is a vital part of any organization's quest for excellence or even survival. Especially as economic pressures increase and reimbursements form a more direct link with "getting it right," we all need to use process management as a vital part of our overall business.

> **TIP** ✓ *If your organization is making a significant investment in a new clinical information system or electronic medical records system, now is an ideal time to make sure your culture is focused on automation of a safe and efficient process—not just automation of the "old way we used to do it."*

FIGURE 1.1	QUIZ: HOW ROBUST IS YOUR PROCESS MANAGEMENT CULTURE?

Question	Yes/No
Do you have a list of all the processes used within your organization?	
Do you know what processes affect which outcomes? Are they written down?	
Is there a clear owner for each process who is responsible for the health and monitoring of each process? Does this person know he or she owns it? Does he or she know how to take care of that process?	
Do you know which processes depend on or interact with other processes? Is this information written down?	
Are the actions and decisions required to successfully perform each process clearly mapped out?	
Could someone find a copy of the process map for all the key processes?	
If someone asks you how safe a process is or how the safety of one process compares to another, could you answer honestly?	
Do you know how much wasted time, effort, or material each process generates?	
Do you know how capable your processes are to generate acceptable outcomes? Twenty-five percent of the time? Fifty percent of the time? Ninety percent of the time?	
Do your policies and procedures clearly describe what is needed to perform a process? Are they directly linked to the process?	
When you change a process or piece of equipment, are you confident that all the related areas are changed, such as the policies, procedures, spare parts, impact on facilities, etc.?	
Do your physical facilities match up with the needs of your processes? How do you know?	
Can you easily get process breakdown data from your occurrence report system? Do you code your occurrence reports by process?	

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Building a Process Management Framework for Your Facility

Often when the board or senior leadership team members decide to put a stronger focus on process in their culture, they assign a team to determine or ask one of their advisors, "Should we do Six Sigma or should we do Lean?" But that is really not the right question to be asking.

Six Sigma, Lean, cause analysis, FMEAs, etc., are all just tools to help us achieve our strategic goals. Organizations that focus on the tools often lose sight of the big picture of what they are trying to achieve.

We at The Greeley Company would suggest that a more effective approach for your organization is to clearly develop a process management framework that is focused on what needs to be achieved to get your processes under control and then apply the tools that fit best in your organization to the various parts of the framework.

This book is focused on providing you with a framework that can guide you as you make decisions as to what tools you will need. In addition, our goal is to help assist you in making sure that no matter what tools you use, you can put them into practice in a way that can help get your processes under control.

The following Seven-Step Approach helps move our focus beyond just process improvement to overall process management.

The Greeley Seven-Step Approach to Process Management

Throughout the remainder of this book, we will follow the seven steps to process management:

1. Map and understand your process

2. Evaluate the process for risk

3. Evaluate the process for effectiveness/efficiency

4. Communicate the process with effective policies, procedures, and job aids

5. Change the process, change management

6. Modify the physical work environment to support the process

7. Monitor the process for exceptions and outcomes

Collectively, these steps incorporate many of your regular activities into an overall framework that is designed to assist you in moving your organization forward, from focusing on simply process improvement to an integrated approach to process management.

| Map and under-stand your processes | Evaluate your process for risk | Evaluate your process for effectiveness | Communicate your process with effective policies and procedures | Effectively manage change | Integrate with your physical facilities | Monitor your process and outcomes |
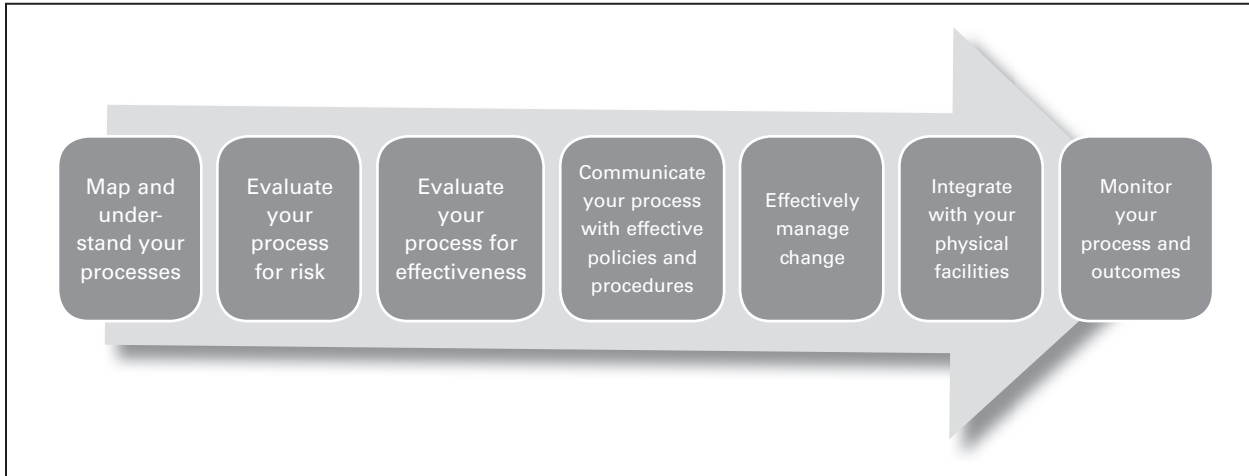
Before we start in on the process management cycle, we need to identify the list of processes for our organization and begin to prioritize them. The next chapter will focus on that task.

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SOLUTION QUICK GUIDE—CHAPTER 1

PROCESS MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

The Greeley Seven-Step Approach to Process Management:

1. Map and understand your process
2. Evaluate the process for risk
3. Evaluate the process for effectiveness/efficiency
4. Communicate the process with effective policies, procedures, and job aids
5. Change the process, change management
6. Modify the physical work environment to support the process
7. Monitor the process for exceptions and outcomes

Map and under- stand your processes	Evaluate your process for risk	Evaluate your process for effectiveness	Communicate your process with effective policies and procedures	Effectively manage change	Integrate with your physical facilities	Monitor your process and outcomes

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