

[Leadership](#) • 4 min read

The Power of Process: How to Create Transformative Change

[Mike Hayes](#) • November 22, 2022

Andriy Onufriyenko/Getty

Digital generated image of buildings making arrow sign with airplane flying on blue sky.



To some, process is a dirty word. People hear it, and it sounds like bureaucracy, bottlenecks, endless meetings, and paperwork. They worry about being suffocated by rules and restrictions, and losing the freedom to innovate, to think out of the box, or to make the kinds of leaps that any successful business culture must foster. They see process as antithetical to being a lean startup, and a term that holds people back from progress.

[Cookie Settings](#)

To everyone vigorously nodding their heads: I'm writing this piece to insist that this kind of thinking is *absolutely wrong*. Process done right is what enables agility, innovation, and everything you need to succeed no matter your goals. Whether you're seeking pure growth and rapid customer acquisition or trying to optimize for value, process doesn't slow you down, it's what speeds you up.

Process helps you define your goals — and then effectively reach them

Today, companies are struggling with balancing short term needs with long term goals. With interest rate hikes and less capital — not to mention a looming recession — companies that were once focused on growth above all are cutting back on excess.

We know that good process can lead to cost-savings — but it goes so far beyond that. Companies still need to grow — and how you balance those needs, and create consistent, coherent goals for your organization, all comes down to good process. Without it, decisions are ad hoc, and don't necessarily point in the same direction. Process keeps everyone — across silos — on the same page.

At VMware, we are in the midst of an irreversible company-wide shift to becoming an as-a-service business. For a company this large to do that, there are inevitably short-term sacrifices for long-term benefit. Across business functions, choices have to be made — taking the time to improve a product may mean hurting sales, for instance — and so there have to be greater principles living atop the entire hierarchy.

Reid Hoffman of LinkedIn has talked about exactly this issue on his podcast, "Masters of Scale". Referring to Uber, he said, "When you have strong individual captains and an admiral who can't or won't build a staff to help manage the fleet, you end up with a disorganized group of unscrupulous pirates. This creates the potential for organizational collapse through a runaway cultural degeneration."

Simply put, you need unified leadership — "a centralized command," as Hoffman says, to enforce and communicate your principles. When I hear this, I hearken back to my time as a Navy SEAL Commander. Everything in the SEALs came back to the ultimate mission. We landed on the big goal, and only then could we figure out how to get there.

Process helps you buy down decision risk

Once you've set the course, you'll still have obstacles to navigate. One of those obstacles is that not everyone is always on board. When I arrived at VMware, our data foundation was

unacceptably scattered with insufficient hierarchy and governance. Yet when the stakeholders came together to talk about what tool we should use, there was little if any agreement. People had loyalties in every direction. We could have spent months arguing over which was right, but just as important was that once we made a choice, we needed everyone behind it. What saves the day in these situations? Process.

We took the specifics out of it and identified the attributes our new system needed, agnostic of platform. We created a ranking system — 20% weight on this attribute, 15% weight on that one, etc.— and then we took a hard look at our options and graded them against our universally-agreed-upon rubric. One platform ultimately proved to be the best for our needs — but, even more crucially, because we had implemented a clear and transparent system for making the decision, we overcame people's initial biases and had buy-in from the players who would actually have to live with the choice.

If you take the time to articulate good process on the front end, things will move faster on the back end because you won't have passive resistance. Process creates one team, which then delivers better outcomes. It allows you to align decisions and strategy, add discipline, and move forward with confidence.

Process creates clarity and enables speed.

The biggest thing that paralyzes an organization is WHO makes WHAT decision.

From my time in both the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations as Director for Defense Policy and Strategy, it was instantly clear that no president can make all of the necessary decisions that any White House must make. The only way to function is to create clarity around decision-making. Process enables velocity. Without this, the operational engine inevitably fails.

In business, it's no different. Who gets to decide how much margin to trade off in order to land that large new customer? Is it the field sales representative, the chief financial officer, or someone in between them? Process is what drives volume and performance — no matter what organization you look at.

What happens when the market changes? Process is what helps you pivot

Yes, process is great when the destination is clear. But often the destination changes, whether from shifting market forces, or internal barriers that present themselves. This is when

you pivot — and you can really only pivot quickly and successfully when you have a system in place to do so.

Companies struggle so much to be agile when markets change. The cost of labor goes up. A pandemic hits. A competitor launches an incredible new product. If you wait until you need to make a big move to decide how that move is going to get made, you're way too late. How will a company thrive without systems in place already, in order to handle whatever shifts need to quickly be made?

It needs great process.

About the Author



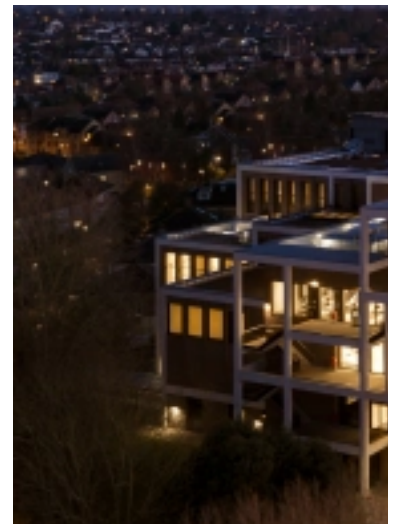
Mike Hayes

Senior Vice President and Chief Digital Transformation Officer

Related Articles



[Anywhere Workspace](#)



[Apps & Cloud](#)

Kingston Universi
Workplace Succe

The Future of Work: How to Encourage Innovation and Connection in a Distributed Workforce

The latest VMware news. Your inbox.
Get updates straight from our press room to yours.

SUBSCRIBE



Company

Corporate News

Awards & Recognition

Environmental, Social & Governance

Sustainability

Partners

Leadership

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

[All Company Articles >>](#)

Industries

Education

Financial Services

Government

Healthcare

Manufacturing

Retail

[All Industry Articles >>](#)

Technologies

Apps & Cloud

Networking

Anywhere Workspace

Security

Future Tech & Innovation

[All Technology Articles >>](#)



Twitter



YouTube



Facebook



LinkedIn



Contact Sales



1-877-486-9273

© 2023 VMware, Inc

[Terms of Use](#)

Your California Privacy Rights

[Privacy](#)

[Accessibility](#)

[Site Map](#)

[Trademarks](#)

[Glossary](#)

[Help](#)

[Feedback](#)

