

The magnetic process symbols enable employees to easily alter the process. They are tangible, comfortably to hold in the hand and there is enough space to add details with a dry marker. Furthermore, new symbols may be added and symbols no longer required may be removed. It is not necessary to wipe texts or marks from the whiteboard or write on the board since everything is presented through the magnetic symbols. This reduces the inhibition level to actually alter and modify the process: Due to the company's corporate culture it is not usual to declare the work results of others as "incorrect", wipe out and correct it. But the flexibility the whiteboard offers provokes to overcome this restraint. Creativity is encouraged and process modifications may be straightforwardly visualized. This approach generates plenty ideas of potential improvement. If necessary, the original condition is quickly restored. Therefore, employees take "before and after pictures" so as not to lose any alterations. A small digital camera is attached next to the whiteboard for this purpose. Employees are asked to upload their pictures (voluntarily) to a central folder the department of *Process Management* has access to. Hence, those pictures and suggestions are also an interesting indicator and important instrument for business analysts. If necessary, they can then identify the respective employees using the file name and discuss open questions about the process model with them.

However, the discussions within the departments – provoked by the magnetic whiteboard – are even more important. As a starting point, employees receive a whiteboard showing the target state of the process model. Based on this model, the department members discuss and simulate options for change. When there are no ongoing discussions, the current status quo should always be represented. It is not unlikely that the status quo within the department ("How things are done here") differs from a centrally prescribed ideal state of process. A deviation from the target process is not forbidden or unwanted – it may have reasonable causes and positive effects. By displaying the actual process, business analysts and BPM-experts notice quickly how the process actually takes place on site. This may be an important starting point for further discussions with the staff. Moreover, as already mentioned, digital photos offer the opportunity for further evaluation. Thus, local optimization can be harnessed for the whole company.

5.2 Critical Reflection on the Method

The method "Magnetic whiteboard" had to undergo an evaluation as well (pen-and-pencil-interview as well as personal interviews; supplemented by the observation of business analysts).

The interviewees particularly acknowledged the support of discussions about process related topics (5 out of 5 points). The aspects clarity („Method is neat and instructive“) and promoting participation also scored high (with 4 points each). The results indicate that this method creates an experience and encourages creativity at a moderate level – with both of these characteristics in the middle of the field (3 out of 5 points). Taking into account the evaluation of the "Process card game", it becomes obvious that the "Whiteboard" is a useful supplement as it addresses and considers the

weak points of the card game exactly. The results of the overall evaluation are summarized in the following figure:

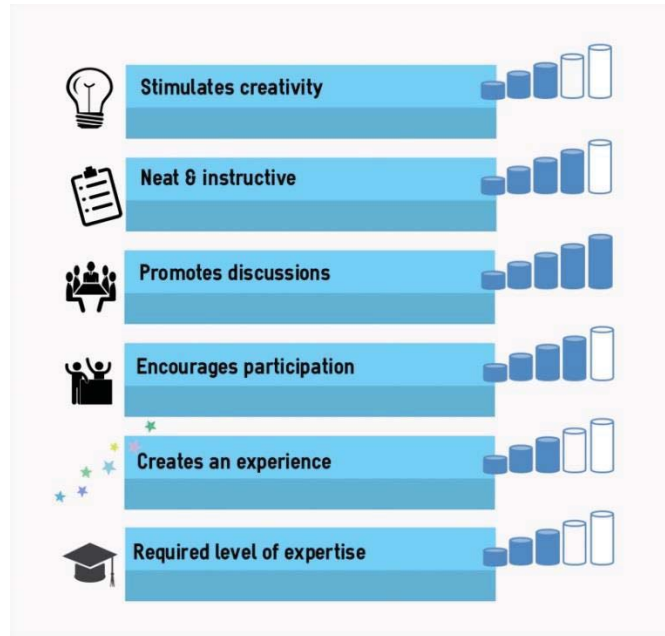


Fig. 6. Evaluation results for the method “Magnetic Whiteboard” (Source: own illustration)

All in all, the magnetic whiteboard is an effective instrument especially for small and medium-sized enterprises that do not want to invest in costly digital screens on walls or in table form but still want to pursue a professional management of their processes. For them, the described method is a cost-efficient instrument for a neat and supportive representation of their business processes.

6 Summary and General Lessons

Process models have to walk a tightrope: On the one hand, they have to serve different areas of application (process analysis, process improvements attempts, documentary purposes, form the basis for certifications, trainings, communication etc.). This again favors an inherent complexity of those models. On the other hand, it is important to consider the perspective of employees who are not familiar with process thinking and who in turn might be overwhelmed by this complexity. The benefits reaped by business process management implementations might be negatively affected if employees do not apply the available models to the desired extent.

Since high complexity often interferes with comprehensibility, we argue that those complex process models should not necessarily be the only tool for communication. Bearing in mind these critical remarks, we provide the following conclusion: New and innovative approaches are needed to balance the trade-off between the claim of com-

pleteness on the one hand and the desire for intelligibility on the other. Hence, the implementation of business process management should not be completed with the creation of detailed process models. The trick is to use these models as a foundation for new methods which are better adapted to “arouse” the process, turn it into something tangible and, hence, serve as a supportive communication tool.

The methods presented in this paper indicate ways to handle the challenges presented above. They encourage non-BPM experts to discuss processes intensively and really develop an understanding. All in all, our new methods close a gap between business analysts (experts in process modelling) and specialty departments (experts in their field of knowledge, but often lacking a deeper understanding of process management methods). However, one important finding is that computer-based models (e.g. based on BPMN 2.0) form an essential basis for the newly introduced methods, which therefore can be characterized as an enhancement rather than a substitute.

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