



“WORLD CLASS”

WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN?

INTRODUCTION

“World Class” is a term that is becoming common, particularly with marketing departments. What does it mean, or rather, what should it mean?

In laymen’s terms you’d expect “world class” to be the absolute best possible quality available on our planet. In business process terms we define the best possible process as **effective** (i.e. meeting customer expectations), **efficient** (i.e. using few resources of time, money, and product), and, most importantly, **continues to improve** (i.e. is agile to continued change and improvement).

LEVELS OF BUSINESS PROCESS

Business process improvement activities recognise the following levels (1):

Level 6: A process is of **unknown** status.

Level 5: A process is **understood** & operates as documented.

Level 4: A process is **effective**, it is systematically measured, streamlining has begun, & customer expectations are met.

Level 3: A process is streamlined & is more **efficient**.

Level 2: A process is highly effective (**error free**) and efficient.

Level 1: A process is **world class** and continues to improve.

The hundreds of processes in an organisation will all be at different levels. The important ones are the ones which add value to customer service/products. The other processes may support the operations of the business, but really the customer doesn’t care too much about these generally. Even so, these may also be vital to the functioning of the business, e.g. Pay Staff, or Submit Accounts to Government.

“World class” comes only from awareness and visibility of the current situation. Many companies are so vast and complex that the exact processes become invisible in the clutter of work performed. Notice that level 5 (and above) requires documented processes, indeed quality certification such as ISO 9001 focuses on this. Unless a process is recorded, who is to say how it should be done, or whether it is being done wrong?

“WORLD CLASS” REQUIRES

End-customer expectations are met & exceeded, even many customer desires are met. Benchmarking shows the company exceeds the other companies. The process is error free for all end customer and in-process control points. Suppliers meet expectations. Documentation is world class. Employees’ skills are measured & they are trained as required. Benchmarking is ongoing. In the last 6 month period, there are no customer complaints. An independent survey confirms the process is world class. Plans are in place to be even better.

Quite rightly therefore, the term “World class” should be reserved for the best of the best. To confirm a process is the best it needs to be benchmarked against the same process in other organisations (see our Benchmarking document, & our Business Process Management Survey, or contact us).

Reaching “world class” status is a difficult process. Reaching the lower levels though all bring rewards worthy of pursuit. It’s important for an organisation to match its class desires to its business objectives, indeed to the expectations of its customers.

REFERENCE

(1) *Business Process Improvement*, HJ Harrington, 1991.

- Effective, Efficient, Agile
- Continues to improve
- Expectations exceeded

“No matter how good your business is, you can not stop improving. When you do you are slipping backwards because your competition is constantly improving and seeking to beat you”

