

# Process Integrity Attributes

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As customers we all are frequent victims of poor processes. Studies show poor quality, missed commitments, and mistakes and errors are more often the result of poor process than human error. Software bugs, autos with high defect rates, and even a sales associate who won't let you return that shirt your spouse bought last week are all probably caused by poor attention to process. As managers, we often blame our people for problems when we should really be looking at the processes we did or didn't design for them. Let's not forget that the Japanese almost wiped out the U.S. automobile industry because of the single reason they had better processes than we did. And ironically they learned how to do this from us in the form of Edward Demming!

So let's examine Process Integrity as a vitally important tool of good management. By definition, it is closely related to the concept of Validity, in that it means "a process consistently does what it purports to do, time after time." In business, we heavily rely on processes to insure the quality and repeatability of the output. It makes sense then, to have clear rules (note I am not using the term guidelines) on how to build, or design, or run a process so that problems and errors are eliminated or minimized. A process does not have integrity if periodically it is performed differently or incompletely.

Watts Humphrey, one of the greatest process experts, said *if you want to know what the real process is, observe the organization under stress*. This is a masterful insight. If at the end of the quarter your process is thrown out in order to get the shipments out, or the sales in, then that behavior is the real process, not what is posted on the wall or done when there is a leisurely pace and time to do those nice-to-do things.

Often, perhaps even most of the time, there is a considerable gap between what is actually done and the description of the process. This creates a dangerous management illusion that we think we have something under control when it is not. This gap is frequently due to lack of adequate discipline in execution, although it often can be attributed to poor process design. Does the process consider the human tendency to take short cuts? Is it mapped to available resources and skills? Does it adequately consider your customers? (That's a big one) Were the people who do the work consulted and involved in the design of the process, or was it put together in corporate headquarters a thousand miles away by someone who has never performed the work?

Think about the times you have found yourself a victim of poor response in a customer service call center. Was it because the employees there don't care about good service? You might be tempted to think so, but this is almost never the case. It mostly has to do with poorly designed processes that are automated and combined with rigid or unrealistic procedures.

The attributes of sound process can be applied to your work, your projects, or even to improve vital activities such as your business review meetings. Remember that sound processes are our responsibility as managers!

## The Ten Attributes

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Here's the ten attributes of Process Integrity. You need all of them. Eight out of ten is not a B grade. Read each one and then use this to examine one of your key business processes. Where are you doing the right things, and where do you fall down?

<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
<b>1. Entry Criteria</b>	Clear and detailed criteria serve as a gate – These must be in place and completed in order to begin the process, or the next process step.
<b>2. Speed</b>	Short cycle times (total time to perform the step) and work times (person hours) are essential.
<b>3. The Process</b>	Must be clearly defined and known by all users.
<b>4. Each Step</b>	All steps must add value. Steps that add little value or fuzzy benefits should be eliminated or redesigned.
<b>5. Accountabilities &amp; Ownership</b>	Clear accountabilities are defined for all roles and the users feel a sense of ownership for deliverables and results.
<b>6. Roles</b>	These are clearly defined and known – each person knows what the roles of others are.
<b>7. Tools</b>	Wherever possible these are put into place to ensure consistent practices and methods. These are also deployed for the purpose of ease-of-use.
<b>8. Leadership</b>	There is a clearly defined singular leader of the process that is responsible for process integrity. The leader accepts responsibility.
<b>9. Feedback</b>	Loops are put into place at critical points to ensure timely feedback for correction and improvement. Deviations are quickly identified.
<b>10. Exit Criteria</b>	Clearly defined and detailed criteria must be met in order to complete the process or process step.

Adapted from and thanks to: Watts Humphrey, *Managing The Software Process*