



P-Glossary



Business process reengineering (BPR)

Reengineering is about radical change. Business process reengineering (BPR) differs from continuous (incremental) improvement programs that place emphasis on small, gradual changes, of which the object is to improve on what an organization is already doing. This incremental change to improve business performance typically takes one of several forms, e.g., quality (total quality management), automation, reorganization, downsizing, and rightsizing. In contrast, BPR is:

- ▶ Not just automation, although it often uses technology in creative and innovation ways.
- ▶ Not just reorganization, although it almost always requires organizational change.
- ▶ Not just downsizing, although it usually improves productivity.
- ▶ Not just quality, although it is almost always focused on customer satisfaction and processes that support it.

BPR is a balanced approach that may contain elements of more traditional improvement programs with which it is often confused. However, BPR is much more than that. First, BPR seeks breakthroughs in important measures of performance rather than incremental improvements. Second, BPR pursues multifaceted improvement goals, including quality, cost, flexibility, and speed, accuracy, and customer satisfaction concurrently.

To accomplish these outcomes, BPR adopts a process perspective of the business, while other programs retain functional (departmental) perspectives. It also involves a willingness to rethink how work should be done, even if it means totally discarding current practices if that should prove necessary. BPR also takes a holistic approach to business improvement, leveraging technology and empowering people, which encompasses both the technical aspects of process (technology, standards, procedures, systems, and controls) and other social aspects (organization, staffing, policies, jobs, career paths, and incentives) (adapted from Manganello R.L. and Klein M.M., *The Reengineering Handbook*, 1994).