Chapter XI

A Close Look at Twelve Business Process Improvement Groups

A Structured Description of Several Groups

In this chapter, I provide a structured description of 12 business process improvement groups conducted at MAF Quality Management and Waikato University, both in New Zealand. I facilitated these groups based on the MetaProi methodology described earlier in this book, and the majority of the communication in these groups took place through an e-collaboration system. The group descriptions provided in this chapter and other group-related information have been used in several analyses discussed in previous chapters. Each group description comprises the following elements:

(1) Motivation: Describes why the business process improvement group was conducted. Here, I describe general problems faced by the organizations that called for business process improvement attempts. I also describe related pressures faced by prospective group leaders, which motivated them to undertake the business process improvement initiatives.

(2) Formation: Includes how the business process improvement group was begun and identifies the individuals invited to take part in the business process improvement group discussion.
(3) Features: Includes general features of the business process improvement group, such as duration, total number of members, number of members who posted at least one electronic message to the group, number of electronic postings exchanged by members, and proportions of total time spent by members interacting electronically and orally.

(4) Stages: Describes how the business process improvement group stages of business process definition, analysis, and redesign were conducted.

(5) Results: Describes the outcomes of the business process improvement group discussion in terms of actual business process improvement and short-term organizational implications.

As mentioned before, the business process improvement groups described in this chapter were taken from two New Zealand organizations. Nevertheless, I believe that the range of situations that are reflected in those groups is fairly broad, and the behavior of the group members is typical of what one would probably encounter in other countries, especially Western Hemisphere countries. This opinion is based on my past experience facilitating over 100 business process improvement groups in the U.S. and other countries. In my view, the range of situations addressed in this chapter is broad enough so that readers can have a good general idea of what e-collaboration technology-supported business process improvement groups are all about.

As discussed in previous chapters, there are striking similarities between the e-collaboration technology-supported business process improvement groups I studied in New Zealand and other similar groups I studied in the U.S. and other countries. Those similarities allow me to conclude that the range of situations covered in this chapter is fairly comprehensive.

The e-collaboration system used by the business process improvement groups described in this chapter was developed based on the Novell GroupWise e-collaboration environment, commercialized by Novell Corporation. Essentially, the e-collaboration system enabled the creation of one e-mail distribution list for each business process improvement group, as well as access by group members to discussion archives and other business process improvement-related documents.
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