

What This Is For

Most process problems are invisible until they accumulate. An owner who walks the floor sees that things are happening, not how long each thing takes or whether two staff members are running the same step in measurably different ways. This worksheet captures completion times for each mapped process step across a single working week — enough data to show whether variation exists and where it is concentrated.

The trigger for reaching for this sheet is any of three signals: a new process has been standardized and you want to confirm adoption is consistent; a step keeps generating questions or rework without a clear explanation; or you are preparing to configure a system and need to know whether staff variation is below the 20% threshold that makes system configuration meaningful. One week of honest time-logging answers all three questions with numbers rather than impressions.

Benefits

What you get when you actually run this worksheet on a real situation:

- Identifies which process steps are running as two different unofficial versions, diagnosed by time variation rather than by guessing.
- Detects undocumented exception paths: a single staff member whose own times vary by more than 30% across the week is handling a situation the written procedure does not cover.
- Provides the pre-standardization baseline needed before any system configuration — no vendor can configure a step that two staff execute in 8 minutes versus 22 minutes and call it one process.
- Creates a concrete, dateable record of process performance that makes improvement measurable rather than subjective.
- Surfaces the one or two steps worth a focused redesign session, ranked by where the time is actually going rather than where management assumes it goes.

Framework To Use

— Variation Diagnostic Grid

Four quadrants by variation type: same-person variation signals exception paths; cross-person variation signals undocumented standards; low variation in both dimensions signals a standardized step.

What the Variation Pattern Tells You

Low cross-person variation	High cross-person variation (>20%)
Low within-person variation: Step is standardized. Candidate for automation evaluation.	High cross-person, low within-person: Two versions of the process running in parallel. Document one standard before configuring any system.
High within-person variation (>30%): Undocumented exception path. The exception needs its own written procedure.	High variation in both dimensions: Process is not a process — it is improvisation. Full redesign from output required before any other work.

How To Use

Follow these steps in order. Each one builds on the previous.

- 1 List every step in the process being tracked in the first column. Use the process map or SIPOC as the source — not what you think the steps are.
- 2 Identify which staff roles execute each step. Each role gets its own row for the same step if multiple roles run it.
- 3 Each day, after completing the step, the staff member records their actual time in minutes. Not estimated. Not rounded to the nearest five. The actual elapsed time.
- 4 At the end of the week, calculate the average for each staff member across the five days. Write it in the Avg column.
- 5 For steps where more than one role appears, calculate the variation percentage between the two averages: (higher minus lower) divided by lower, multiplied by 100. Write the result in the last column.
- 6 Flag every step where cross-person variation exceeds 20%. Those steps are candidates for a focused standardization session before the tracker is run again.
- 7 Flag every step where a single staff member's own times vary by more than 30% across the week. Interview that staff member about what happened on the slow days — the answer is the undocumented exception.
- 8 File the completed tracker with the date. The next tracker run, after standardization, is the before-and-after comparison.

Example Use

A wholesale distributor with 14 staff has just documented its goods receipt process. Before configuring a new inventory system, the owner runs the tracker for one week across the two staff who handle receiving.

The goods receipt process has six steps: receive delivery order, verify PO match, count physical goods, inspect for damage, fill receipt form, submit form to admin.

After five days, the owner reviews the tracker. Steps 1 through 3 show similar averages for both staff: 3-4 minutes variation. Step 4 (inspect for damage) shows one staff member averaging 7 minutes and the other averaging 19 minutes. Cross-person variation: 171%.

The owner asks the faster staff member how she inspects. She checks only the outer cartons. The slower staff member opens one box per pallet and photographs the contents. Neither approach is written anywhere in the process documentation.

The difference matters: in the past two months, two damaged-goods claims were filed -- both for inner-box damage that outer-carton inspection would not catch. The slower, more thorough inspection is the right one.

The owner writes a one-paragraph inspection standard: outer cartons plus one opened box per pallet, photographed. Both staff now run the step the same way. Average time settles at 14 minutes. The inventory system is configured around the documented 14-minute standard, not around two different ones.

Reflection Prompts

After filling in the worksheet on the previous page, work through these.

1. Any step where two staff show more than 20% variation in average completion time is running as two different processes. Before any system configuration, bring that step to one documented standard. Write the standardization decision in the notes below the table.
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2. Any step where a single staff member's own times vary by more than 30% across the week: write what happened on the two slowest days. That explanation is the undocumented exception -- it needs its own one-paragraph procedure added to the process map.
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Tips and Traps

TIPS

- Run the tracker during a normal week, not the busiest or slowest week of the month. Abnormal weeks produce data that cannot be used as a baseline.
- Tell staff what the tracker is for before they fill it in. 'We are checking whether the documentation matches reality, not measuring individual performance.' Unexplained time-logging produces inflated or averaged numbers.
- If a step shows no variation at all across all five days for both staff members, that is the healthy baseline. Note it and move on -- do not redesign what is already working.
- Calculate variation as a percentage, not as an absolute difference. A 5-minute gap on a 6-minute step (83%) is more significant than a 5-minute gap on a 45-minute step (11%).

TRAPS

- Using estimated or end-of-day recalled times rather than times recorded immediately after the step. Memory averages. The tracker needs actual elapsed times.
- Measuring only staff who are fast at the step. If one of the two staff members is absent during the tracker week, the data is not comparative -- note the absence and re-run.
- Concluding that high variation means one staff member is wrong. Sometimes the slower version is the correct one. The tracker identifies where to look, not who to blame.
- Treating the tracker as a one-time exercise. Run it again three months after standardization to confirm variation stayed below 20%. Process drift is slow and invisible without measurement.

Appendixes

Appendix A -- Variation Threshold Reference

Cross-person variation thresholds (same step, two or more staff):

- < 20% : Within acceptable range for a standardized process
- 20-40% : Flag for review; document one standard before system config
- > 40% : Two different processes running simultaneously; redesign required
- > 100% : Redesign from output; the step has no consistent definition

Within-person variation thresholds (same staff, five days):

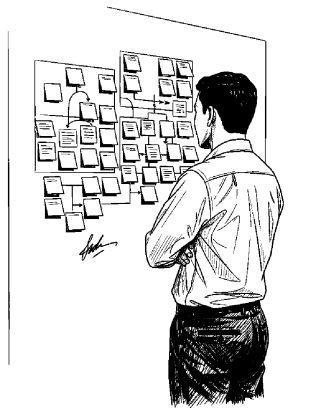
- < 20% : Consistent execution; step is understood
- 20-30% : Minor exception handling; document the exception
- > 30% : Undocumented exception path; interview and write the procedure

Appendix B -- Staff Briefing Script (Before Running the Tracker)

What to say to staff before the week begins:

"This week I am asking you to write down the time each step takes when you finish it -- not an estimate at the end of the day, the actual time. I am not measuring performance. I am checking whether the process documentation we wrote last month matches what actually happens in the field.

If you find a step that takes much longer than the documentation suggests, or that you handle differently depending on what arrives, write a note in the last column. That note is more useful to me than a perfect time."



WHERE THIS WORKSHEET COMES FROM

Business Process Reengineering

A Process That Has Run a Long Time Is Not Necessarily a Correct Process

by Ibrahim Anwar

This worksheet is one of nine in the *Business Process Reengineering* companion worksheet pack. The full pack is grouped into three categories: high-volume worksheets you can run weekly, niche-search worksheets for rare but high-value situations, and specific-case worksheets that walk you through a single concrete scenario.

Every framework, decision filter, and figure used in these worksheets is drawn from the chapters of the source book. The book sets the diagnosis, the worksheets give you the form to act on it.

Read the source book on Google Play Books:

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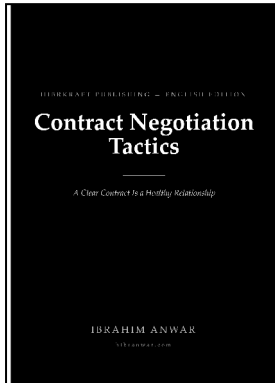
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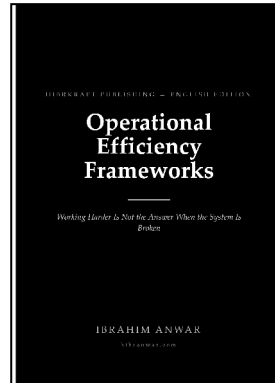
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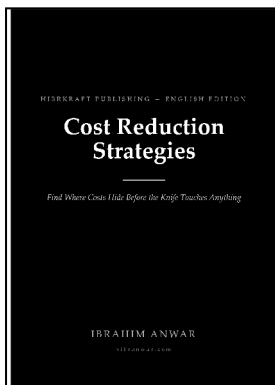
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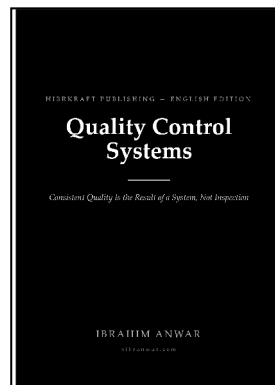
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