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Tips for Documenting Your Business Process

Erecruit Best Practices

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Documenting process provides stakeholders and users with a clear blueprint for how you expect the business to operate

Technology is automating more and more business processes, so it is more important than ever to document what it takes to accomplish desired business outcomes. Once you have selected your new technology you will want to design and document what your processes will be after the new technology has been implemented, i.e. future state processes. After the new technology has been implemented, your future state business processes become your current state, and you can begin analyzing opportunities to improve and designing your next future state process to be implemented.

Documenting your business process has many benefits. Process documentation acts as a blueprint that:

1. Clarifies what you are automating
2. Ensures everything needed to enable your business has been thought through and accounted for in the future state
3. Sets expectations for who, what, when and how activities are to be accomplished
4. Articulates how it all fits together into the big picture so that everyone is on the same page, including your technology vendor
5. Helps you to spot weaknesses and opportunities so that you may further improve your process before implementing it
6. Helps stakeholders and users see and understand the change by being able to visually compare the current and future state
7. Is easily augmented (e.g. add screenshots, small details) to become process-driven training, which is more digestible for end users

There may be a number of reasons that your staffing firm has not taken the time to document your business processes in the past: it's too much work, too tedious, no resources, the responsibility has not been assigned to anyone, you feel they don't have the tools or you don't know how.

We can all agree that implementing new technology without a business blueprint is not a wise idea; it can result in a technology implementation that does not maximize your staffing firm's potential return on investment; or, even worse – you are more likely to end up bringing all the flaws of your current state into your future state design.

This guide aims to provide a high-level "how to", making it easy for staffing companies to get started documenting their business process.

Documenting Your Current State Process

Any time is a good time to get started documenting your current state business process. A documented current state can prove to be a helpful aide during your software selection because it helps ensure that you are considering the businesses functional needs across the entire end-to-end process, including up and downstream impacts and needs. Internal stakeholders and users, as well as prospective technology vendors, can review your current state and provide insight and ideas on how it may be improved – perhaps thinking of software features that you weren't even aware you needed.

Process-oriented companies commonly invest in comprehensive current state documentation and capture all of the processes and process variations. This is an excellent practice, but many staffing firms may not have the resources available to take this approach. At Erecruit, we take an abbreviated approach to capturing the current state of our new customers, which you may wish to utilize:

1. **Identify processes impacted by the new technology.** Make a list of the business processes that may be impacted by the new technology to ensure that you are considering all of the users and existing tools that are in scope.

2. **Observe the current state in action**
   - **Reverse demos.** Have a super user talk you through how they use your legacy system(s). Build your understanding of the full scope of how each system is used, variations in how the tool is used, what's working well, pain points and wish list items. Get reverse demos of current software applications, third party tools, key spreadsheets that are outside the system and key reports.
   - **Interview users via current state workshop(s).** We recommend that you gather a cross-functional set of users and ask questions, process by process, until you have a solid understanding of how key activities are accomplished, by whom and **<u>why</u>** (i.e. the business rationale or need). At the same time, capture key variations (e.g. national accounts versus retail, professional versus commercial staffing activities).
   - At Erecruit we favor a workshop format for the interview, but group-by-group interviews can also be effective in gathering the current state.

3. **Capture the process highlights**
   At Erecruit, to save time and budget we capture key current state process activities in a bulleted, short format, but do not typically document the current state workflows. In addition to key activities, we capture who is responsible for the activity, key pain points, key variations and other key elements such as candidate/contact rules of engagement. Check your work against your process inventory (Step 1, above) to ensure you have covered the full scope of the new technology.

   If you intend to capture the detailed current state process rather than bullet points, feel free to do so. See *How to Document Business Process Flows* section within this document.

4. **Validate documentation**
   Now that you have drafted your current state, you may present the documentation to the workshop attendees for feedback, or even a wider group, to ensure that your understanding is accurate.

In addition to high-level process highlights, Erecruit typically includes the following in our current state documentation:

- **Scope.** Detailed process scope, project objectives, other projects/dependencies, key factoids (e.g. number of active contractors/temps, average placement length, average time to fill). Note that this information may be handled in a project charter instead of current state documentation.
- **Strategy.** Technology's role in enabling key market/operational differentiators, business strategy that may impact the future state (e.g. globalization plans, adding a new staffing segment, acquisition plans, centralization plans) and key metrics
- **People.** Key roles, their responsibilities, reporting structure and estimated number of people in each role.
- **Technology.** List all of the tools used to support the process.
- **Data conversion, training and change management considerations** (e.g. known data quality issues, amount of data, training delivery preferences, bifurcated technology user adoption profiles)

How to Document Business Process Flows

We recommend the following 7 simple steps that anyone can follow to document business process flows:

1. **Draft.** Jot down processes in a verb-noun format (e.g. Submit candidates to client, Enter payroll deductions) on sticky notes, using pencil/paper or a white board so that you can iterate easily. Review your notes from your reverse demos, workshops, etc. to make sure you've got a sticky note for each business process.
2. **Layer** processes so that each process fits on a single sheet of paper – *See Staffing Process Flow Example.* You need to keep the layers to less than 20 steps/boxes per process in order to keep it to one page.
3. **Swimlanes.** Associate each step with the main role that drives/accomplishes them. In our *Staffing Process Flow Example,* we have created horizontal "swimlanes" but vertical swimlanes also work.
4. **Reorganize.** Keep the flow simple and keep rearranging it until it's easy to read. If you feel more detail is needed, add notes at the bottom of the flow or on a separate page.
5. **Pick a tool that you are comfortable with and recreate your flow in the tool.** There's no need to be overly fancy. Choose a tool that is affordable and available to you and other stakeholders, such as PowerPoint, Visio or Lucidchart. Everyone and anyone should be able to read and create business processes.
6. **Validate & Iterate.** See Step 4 in Documenting Your Current State Process.
7. **Share.** Post the documented processes on your Intranet or on a shared drive so that everyone has access to them.

Designing Your Future State Process

The best time to document your future state business process is after you have selected the technology that will be enabling your process.

Partner with your vendor. Whenever possible, you want to follow the business process that allows your users to be most efficient in the new technology. Partner with your technology vendor to understand the flow and business processes that are most aligned with the tool so you can adopt them. **Only consider customizing technology to align with your business process when your business process is truly differentiating**. In order to minimize customization and custom reports and to maximize efficiency gains, you will want to take your vendor's lead.

Analyze each process to ensure value-add. Analyze each process step to determine if there any additional opportunities to eliminate steps, automate, simplify, streamline hand-offs, etc. **Be objective, open and honest in your analysis to ensure that you and other stakeholders are not simply recreating the current state in your future state, when it does not serve you**. Double check each process to ensure that you can clearly explain how each step adds and maximizes business value.

Analyze hand-offs. Analyze roles and business process, and **confirm that hand-offs between business units or teams add value; if they don't remove the hand-off**. Add hand-offs if centralizing tasks reduces overall costs and/or improves quality.

Be thorough. To ensure that you've covered everything in your future state, review your project scope and current state documentation to ensure all of the business needs have been enabled, you've addressed all of the pain points and know how key variations will be handled.

Handle gaps. If there are gaps between what you think you need and what the technology does, try to eliminate the need if at all possible. When solutioning the technology gap you may need to create a workaround (which reduces process efficiency), customize the solution (increases the cost of maintenance) and/or work with your vendor to add new features (delays go live and benefits realization). It is extremely important to work together to minimize gaps.

Articulate the benefits. Understand and document the benefits of the future state process, process-by-process and role-by-role. In order to maximize user adoption of both the technology and the business process, it's likely that you will need to express how things are changing and how each user will benefit. Make sure you know if any processes are getting worse for users and be ready to explain the cause. For example, it's not uncommon for front office users to spend a little more time entering data to reduce downstream pay/bill issues.

Additional Process Documentation Considerations

- Recognize that in real life things may happen in a slightly different order – your processes don't need to be perfect.
- Process documentation typically covers the happy path, where everything works out in the best possible way. Make sure your User Acceptance Testing (UAT) scenarios include alternative and error path testing, as well.
- Don't waste time documenting processes or situations that don't occur very frequently and/or are not very impactful. Add UAT tests to verify these edge/uncommon cases can be adequately supported.
- **As your process changes over time, keep your business process documentation (and your technology configuration) in sync and up-to-date**.
- **Leverage a technology implementation / replacement project as an opportunity to improve your business processes as much as your organization can handle**.
- If your organization tends to resist change, hire a consultant to ensure you are not re-creating processes in your current state that you no longer need in your future state.
- Don't get stuck in process analysis paralysis – just make sure you have a plan for tuning the technology to your business process throughout the implementation and beyond.

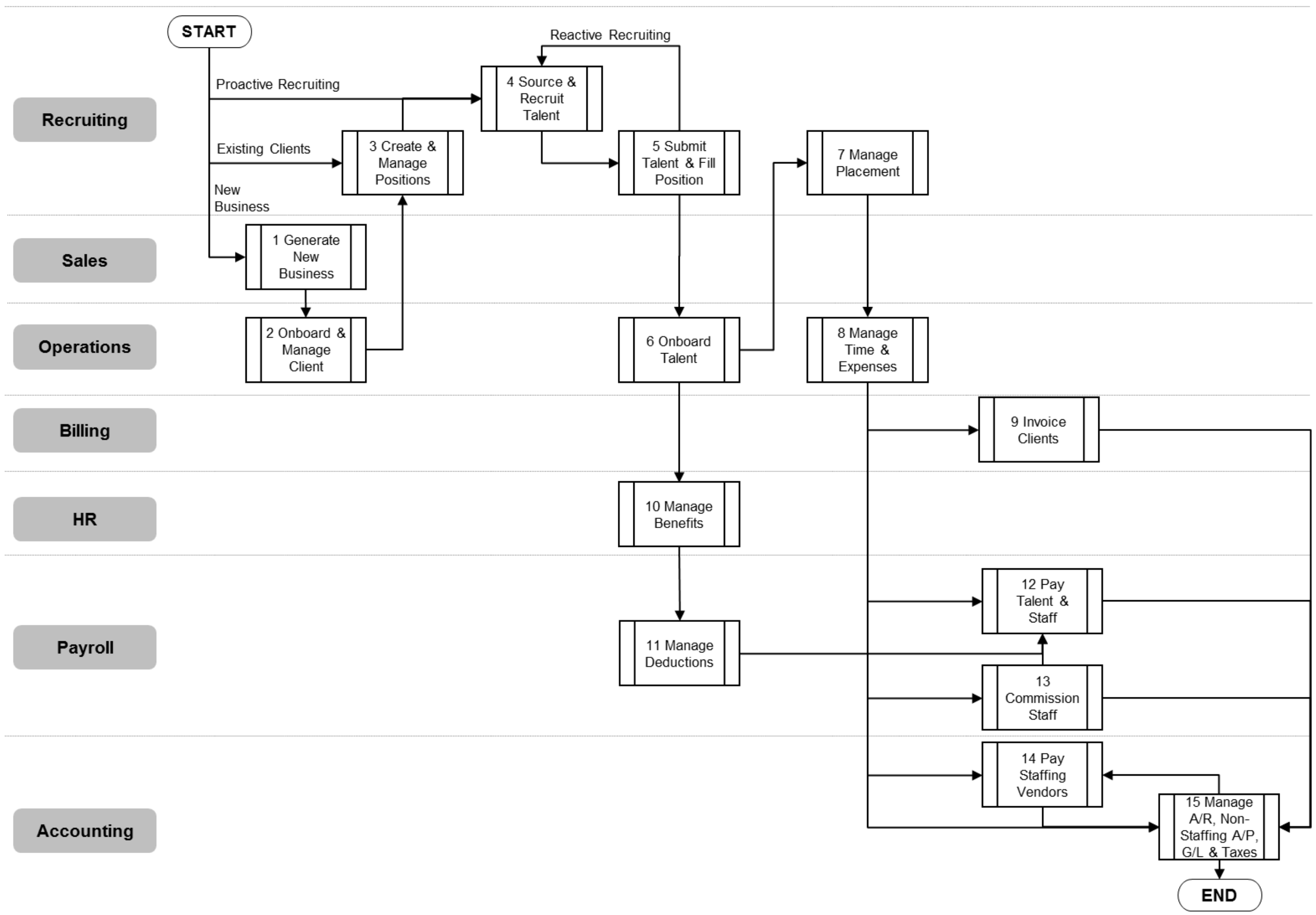
Staffing Process Flow Example

Use these examples of how you might layer your business processes and as an example of what a clean, easy-to-follow flow looks like. These processes were created in PowerPoint and copied as pictures into this document.

Level 0

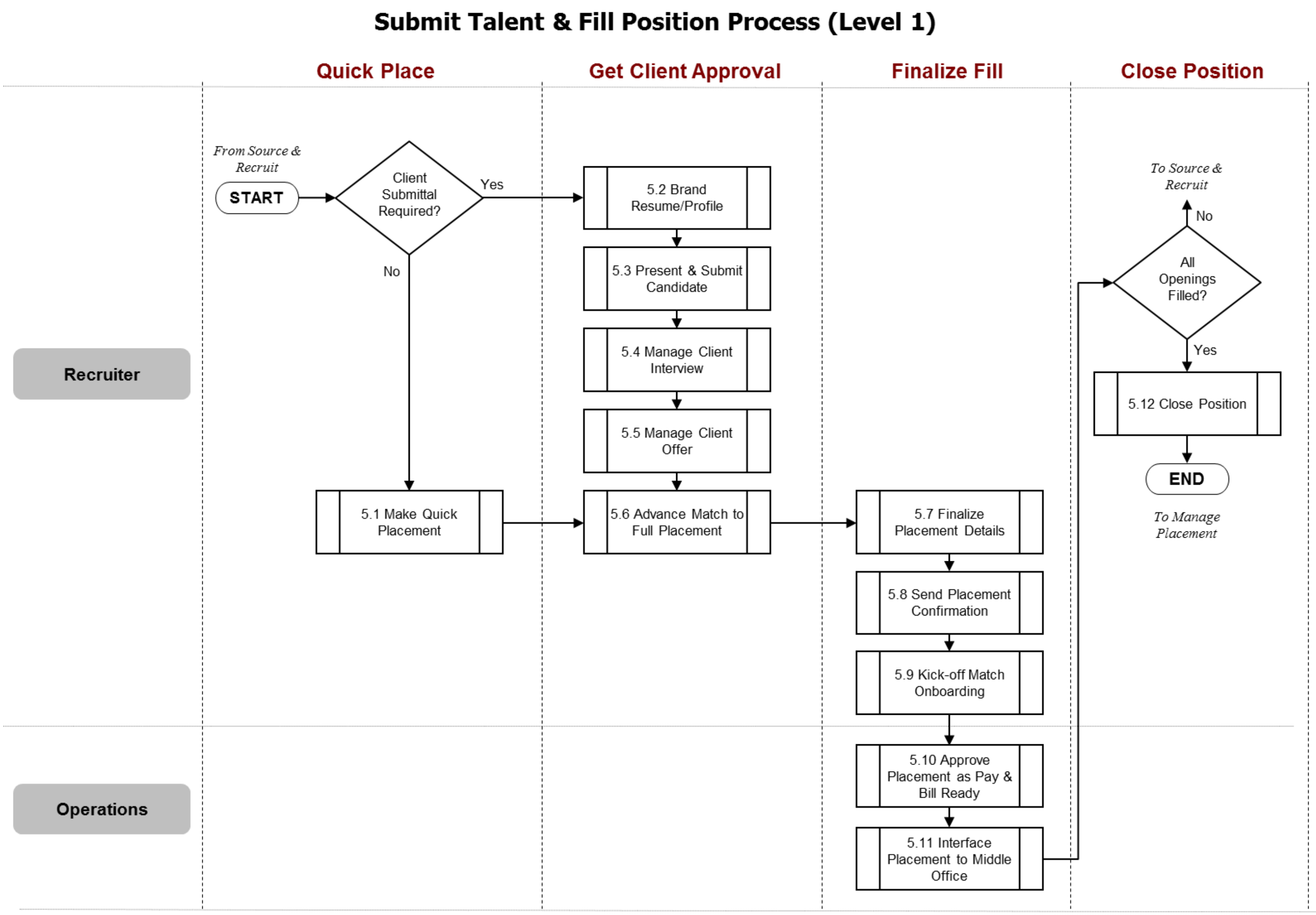
The Level 0 flow represents the core staffing business processes. Each step/box on the Level 0 diagram has its own Level 1 process flow.

High-Level Staffing Business Process (Level 0)



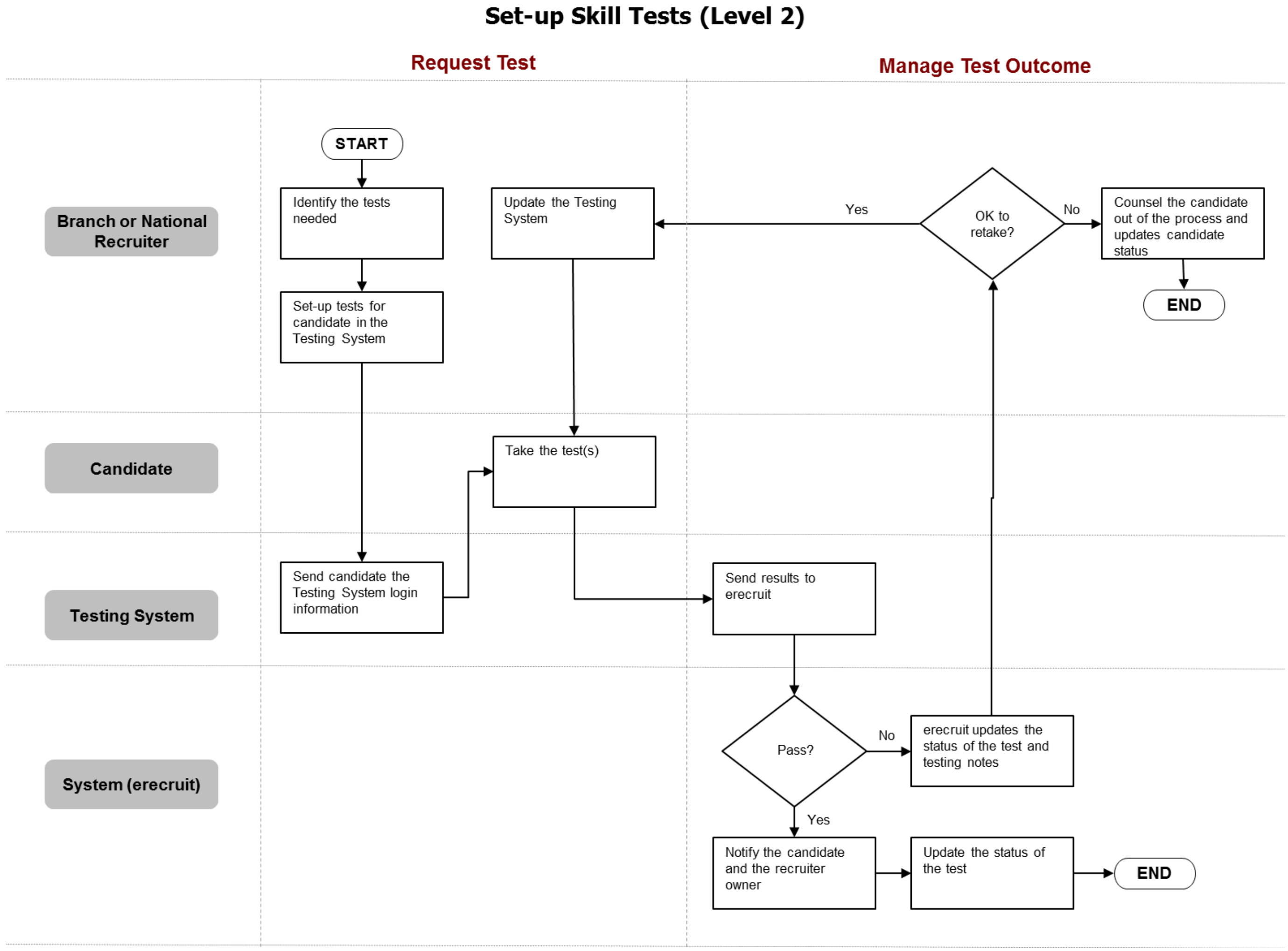
Level 1

The Level 1 flow describes the "Submit Talent & Fill Position" process that was included in the Level 0 flow. Each step/box on the Level 1 diagram is further detailed in a Level 2 diagram.



Level 2

The Level 2 process flow, below, details the steps involved to Set-up Skill Tests, which is an activity that was included in the Level 1 diagram. There will be one Level 2 for each step/box on the corresponding Level 1 diagram.



You may wish to detail the flow by adding additional process levels. We have found that documenting the process down to Level 2 is sufficient. We have also found that the majority of business users are most comfortable working with a Level 1 picture and prefer reading Level 2 details in a bulleted format.

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