



# The Key to Rapid, Cost-Effective, and Painless SDLC Process Implementations

A White Paper by Venae Sears-Ellis

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## INTRODUCTION

Sadly, there are still software development managers who bravely choose to run their organizations without a predictable, repeatable, and clearly documented SDLC (software development lifecycle) process. As a result, they must valiantly attempt to protect their busy teams from drifting dangerously into the rocks of missed project deadlines, budget overruns, and customer complaints. Eventually, they discover that without the benefit of a map or a warning beacon, most software development teams will devolve into a culture of frustration, confusion and chaotic anarchy resulting in low morale and high employee turnover.

## CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH SDLC PROCESS IMPLEMENTATIONS

Over the last 20 years, I have observed IT practices as a developer, business analyst, IT project manager, IT process improvement professional and now technology management consultant and I can fully attest to the fact that deciding to sail into deep waters without the aid of adequate navigational tools (or a life boat) is never an easy decision to make. I have engaged in several vigorous discussions and heard a variety of compelling explanations from IT managers for the scarcity of detailed process documentation in their areas. Here are the most frequently mentioned challenges:

- 1) “My employees are too busy with daily operations to actively participate in process implementation workshops, interviews documentation reviews and training sessions.”
- 2) “My limited budget will not allow me to hire a process management expert, either internally or externally, to provide leadership to this effort.”
- 3) “Typically, process implementation projects are difficult to persuade my employees to “buy” into due to the perception; process implementation = loss of jobs or changes in current job descriptions.
- 4) “There are process implementation efforts initiated, that never fully come to fruition because stakeholders get hung up and stall while working on a particularly problematic process redesign. They lose site

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**HIGHLIGHTS**

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***IT Managers are frequently caught between a rock (i.e. chaotic anarchy) and a hard place (i.e. process implementation – aphobia) when faced with the inevitable need to improve their SDLC organizational processes.***

***All software development organizations must have a repeatable, clearly documented, high-effective, end-to-end software development lifecycle process based upon industry best practices. However, traditional SDLC process development methodologies (e.g. Waterfall, Iterative, Extreme, ICONIX, etc.) do not address the problems faced by IT managers around implementation time, cost and employee buy-in.***

of the end game with all its associated benefits and then lose interest in the entire project effort.”

- 5) “Most end-to-end process implementation efforts take too long to yield accurate documentation. By the time downstream processes in an organization are fully documented, organizational changes have typically occurred rendering the upstream process documentation obsolete.”

Dishearteningly, (especially for a dedicated process management professional), these observations are not intentional distortions or grotesque misperceptions of the truth. In fact, they are pretty close to bullet target accurate. As a fellow victim and witness to a “few” poorly delivered process implementation projects in my time (never a perpetrator) I can empathize with the angst experienced by IT managers of being caught between a rock (i.e., chaotic anarchy) and a hard place (i.e., process implementation - aphobia).

**HOW TO RECEIVE THE BENEFITS WITHOUT THE PAIN**

The simple truth is, even with all the latest advancements in information technology, software development continues to be a complex, high risk, and unpredictable endeavor fraught with projects not meeting defined requirements around time, budget and quality. All software development organizations must have a repeatable, clearly documented, highly-effective, end-to-end software development lifecycle process based on the latest industry best practices. However, traditional SDLC process development methodologies (e.g. Waterfall, Iterative, Extreme, ICONIX, etc.), do not directly address the problems faced by IT managers around implementation time, cost, and employee buy-in. These methodologies provide very insightful theory and helpful best practices, but do not provide the practical details for daily application.

The ideal SDLC process implementation solution to stop software development teams from “running with scissors” could be implemented quickly, in a matter of weeks instead of months. It would be cost-effective by providing pre-defined, but updatable, documentation (process flows, templates, job aids, etc.) eliminating the need for hours and hours of documentation preparation completed by expensive consultants or by internal staff members who are taking time away from their daily company-related responsibilities to “help out” with the process implementation effort. It would also be stakeholder and project team-friendly, providing an easy to

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**HIGHLIGHTS**

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***Pre-defined process diagrams, templates, job aids and training materials eliminate the need for lengthy process improvement workshops requiring heavy employee participation.***

***A “process blueprint” diagram provides the big picture for a process implementation effort allowing stakeholders to quickly see the benefits of having standardized processes that eliminate unnecessary confusion and re-work caused by unclear, ad hoc or non-existent processes.***

follow blueprint providing a visual map of the processes to be implemented and comprehensive training materials to ensure a successful implementation.

Specifically, the ideal solution would address the top challenges experienced by IT managers with the following tools:

**<Challenge>** Staff members are often too busy to actively participate in numerous data gathering interviews, workshops, and review sessions.

**<Solution>** Pre-defined process diagrams, templates, job aids, and training materials built with the latest industry best practices incorporated eliminate the need for lengthy current-state versus future-state data gathering, documentation creation and analysis requiring heavy employee and stakeholder participation.

**Challenge>** SDLC process implementation projects can be very expensive

**<Solution>** Hours of required research and documentation preparation are completed ahead of time, eliminating the need to pay expense consulting fees or sacrifice internal staff time. Also, the solution is “tools agnostic” requiring no special application or software purchase to effectively perform your process implementation or ongoing process management. It can also be easily automated utilizing any internal process management software tools currently being used within an organization.

**<Challenge>** Active participation can be painful for stakeholders who are not quite sure what direction the process effort is heading in (i.e. headcount reduction, re-distribution of staff workloads) or do not see or understand the potential benefits to be derived from the effort.

**<Solution>** A process blueprint diagram provides the “big picture” of the implementation effort, outlining, end-to-end, the high level process flows, sub-process flows, templates, best practices, and job aids team members will be using to make their jobs a lot easier. Stakeholders quickly see the benefits of having a standardized SDLC processes that eliminate unnecessary confusion and re-work caused by unclear, ad hoc, or non-existent processes in their area.

**<Challenge>** Implementations typically require a lot of time

**<Solution>** A pre-defined, turn-key solution that does not require organizations to start from ground zero would allow organizations to exponentially cut down on the time required to fully complete a process implementation effort. A process blueprint solution would drastically reduce the time and cost associated with traditional process improvement by laying an effective foundation for SDLC organizations to build upon. It is not meant

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**HIGHLIGHTS**

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***Having repeatable, predictable, high quality processes allow a SDLC team to operate seamlessly; controlling quality, risk, time and budget effectively. Providing a rapid, cost-effective and painless SDLC process implementation solution will allow more IT managers to lay the foundation necessary for their teams to be successful.***

to be a one-size, fits all solution recognizing that each organization has its own distinct culture. The solution would allow for easy configuration and/or “branding” for seamless incorporation into daily operations.

**SUMMARY**

The benefits of having standardized processes in any organization are well-documented as well as the hazards of not (those scary “running with scissors” scenarios). Within a software development environment, the stakes are considerably higher due to the complexity and number of critical activities required to ensure defined requirements are met. Having repeatable, predictable, high quality processes will allow a SDLC project team to operate seamlessly; controlling quality, risk, time and budget effectively. Providing a rapid, cost-effective, and painless SDLC process implementation solution will allow more IT managers to lay the foundation necessary for their teams to be successful.

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**For more information**

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