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**IMPLEMENTING PROCESS ORGANIZATION IN SERBIAN  
WATER SUPPLY COMPANIES**

*The research goal is to measure the degree of knowledge and willingness of organizations to implement a new system of process organization. This article is based on the research done in water supply companies on the territory of Vojvodina, Serbia. The results show the unreadiness of companies for process management while the need of such an approach is getting clearer. The lack of understanding in management of business processes will be a new challenge in the justification of process orientation, because it represents an area of great untapped possibilities. This paper also identifies inappropriate management practices; lacks of adequate process organization knowledge as well as the urgent need for improvement and reengineering.*

*Keywords:* process organization; organizational structure; Serbia; water supply companies.

*JEL classification:* L95, M11, P31.

**Блаженка Пиюкович Бабічкович, Зелько Войнович, Петер Хармат  
ВПРОВАДЖЕННЯ ПРОЦЕСНОГО МЕТОДУ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЇ  
НА ПІДПРИЄМСТВАХ ВОДОПОСТАЧАННЯ: ЗА ДАНИМИ СЕРБІЇ**

*У статті зроблено спробу оцінити рівень обізнаності та бажання організацій впроваджувати новий метод управління – систему попроцесної організації. Дослідження проведено на матеріалах підприємств водопостачання Воєводини, Сербія. Результати дослідження демонструють неготовність компаній до нового методу управління, незважаючи на те, що даний підхід стає все більш розповсюдженим. Відсутність розуміння з боку менеджменту щодо управління бізнес-процесами може стати суттєвим викликом, отже необхідними є подальше обґрунтування та пояснення нових можливостей, які відкриває цей метод організації та управління. Описано головні проблеми сфери управління підприємств водопостачання Сербії: невідповідні управлінські практики, недостатність знань щодо організації процесів, термінова необхідність реінжинірингу.*

*Ключові слова:* організації процесів; організаційна структура; Сербія; підприємства водопостачання.

*Табл. 3. Літ. 15.*

**Блаженка Пиюкович Бабічкович, Зелько Войнович, Петер Хармат  
ВНЕДРЕНИЕ ПОПРОЦЕССНОГО МЕТОДА ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ  
НА ПРЕДПРИЯТИЯХ ВОДОСНАБЖЕНИЯ:  
ПО ДАННЫМ СЕРБИИ**

*В статье сделана попытка оценить уровень осведомлённости и желания организаций внедрять новый метод управления – систему попроцессной организации. Исследование проведено на материалах предприятий водоснабжения Воєводини, Сербия. Результаты исследования демонстрируют неготовность компаний к новому методу управления, несмотря на то, что данный подход становится всё более распространённым. Отсутствие понимания со стороны менеджмента к управлению бизнес-процессами может стать существенным вызовом, в связи с чем необходимо дальнейшее обоснование и объяснение новых возможностей, предоставляемых данным методом организации и управления. Описаны главнейшие проблемы сферы управления предприятиями водоснабжения Сербии: неподходящие управленческие практики, недостаточность знаний об организации процессов, срочная необходимость реинжиниринга.*

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*Ключевые слова:* организация процессов; организационная структура; Сербия; предприятия водоснабжения.

**Introduction.** All developing countries are undergoing a tough transition crisis which manifests itself in a variety of unwanted effects. Overcoming deviant effects depends greatly on the readiness of developing countries to see the situation in which they are as realistic as possible and to accept new knowledge and perform necessary changes on all levels.

In modern business the existence of those organization models are considered which are turned towards user with a large degree of adaptability of business systems (Ahmetagic et al., 2011). It is obvious that classic, functionally focused organizations, have a known product as a result, employees are oriented towards the demand of supervisors, and there is no understanding of the mission and the goals of the organization with an expressed division of interests between business functions.

M.E. Porter (1985) indicated the demand for process management, as well as the need to measure the realization of the set objectives, both at the level of the entire process and the levels of the subprocesses and specific work tasks.

Core flaws of the functional approach are management rigidity, lack of innovativeness and conflict with project tasks. That is why the process approach is becoming more and more popular in management (Kravchenko et al., 2011). The primary significance is given to the processes which will, through technical and technological as well as other transformations, result in the newly formed, market verified value. Business processes have a goal of achieving performances which will satisfy target functions of all stakeholders while ensuring continuity of a business cycle. In order to conduct management of business processes in an organization, it is essential to introduce process focused organizational structure oriented at the mission and goals of the organization, and at the same time flexible and mindful of consumer needs.

The society as a whole has a great responsibility dealing with the issues of production and distribution of water, as well as drainage and recycling of waste waters, since this is of crucial significance for life and survival on the planet. Serbia is in the group of European countries which in particular have problems in the production and distribution of water of satisfying quality, and it is also facing problems in recycling waste waters. Based on the experience of developed countries, there is a need for more intense and more significant resource investments in the development of water supply companies, with investments not only in equipment and resources but also in new knowledge, new technologies, innovations in organization and management etc.

Transformation of water supply (public utility) companies and improvement of their business are the prerequisites for fostering the overall economic development, and also one of the conditions for Serbia to join the EU (Bogdanovic, 2005; Lukic, 2008).

Organizational structure in water supply companies can be the main disruptor of their development in many cases. In order for water supply companies to become active innovative companies, they need to undergo transformation of their classic organization into one oriented to business processes. Implementation of the concept of managing business processes means that water supply companies can achieve and sustain all demands set by world standards in this area (ISO 9000, ISO 14000, HACCP).

**Introduction of the process approach in an organization.** Rapid development of science and technology, acceptance and application of new achievements, cause constant change in all aspects of society, leading to the need for change of organizational forms of the companies which want to follow new demands and trends, to adjust and by doing so be in sync with today's world. Organizations have evolved from the classic rigid hierarchy organizations through functional ones to process focused organizations. Transition from one organizational form to another is neither quick, nor easy, nor simple, because it is a revolutionary change. Acknowledged worldwide P. Drucker suggests that organization needs to become the key subject of change, because the most effective way to manage changes is for changes to be initiated by themselves. Also, he warns that imposing innovation in a traditional company will not succeed if the company is not the generator of change, and that demands leaving things which have been shown as obsolete and continuous improvement of all products, services and processes inside the company (Drucker, 2002).

Process approach promotes the idea that each organization is a collection of mutually related processes, and implementation of process organization structure should be the result of efforts from all its individual process participants. Additionally, customer approach is fully integrated in this approach and has a primary part in it (Anupindi et al., 2012).

Success in the use of the process approach mostly depends on the capability of top management as on their knowledge and dedication towards the implementation of a new organizational form.

Implementation of the process model brings to better quality management and economic efficiency of a company. Based on the previously stated, it is obvious that process management represents an organization system of mutually acting elements of the organization structure and strategy through business processes of a company (Kravchenko et al., 2011).

**Results of the research conducted in water supply companies.** The research of the existing levels of organization has been conducted in 73.33% of the companies which deal with water supply and are located on the territory of Vojvodina, Serbia. The research has been conducted by means of a survey questionnaire in the period from October 2011 to May 2012. With this research the segments were analyzed as the key for the evaluation of the usage level of the business process management concept in these water supply companies. Companies that took part in the research had a very serious approach to completing the questionnaire. In each of these companies 8–10 employees with the best knowledge of the company's work responded to the questions. They covered different segments of the labor and operations of their companies.

The survey covered 7 areas:

- organization performance;
- general information;
- organization business;
- organization management;
- business processes;
- improvement processes;
- internal checkup.

**1. Organization performance.** Out of the total number of companies which participated in the survey, 11% were founded prior to 1960, 50% prior to 1970, and 39% after 1970. 59.9% of the, have up to 100 employees, 13.64% – between 100–200 employees, 27.27% have over 200 employees.

With staff structure analyzed, non-qualified and over-qualified workers range in between 6.5–47% in these companies, while qualified and highly qualified workers range 5–50%. High school diploma have 19–63% of staff, college degrees have 0–19%, university degrees – 0.5–18.8% of workers. Out of the 22 surveyed companies, 6 reveal master's degrees graduates among employee and their range in staff structure was 0–2%, while PhD's are employed in only 2 companies, so their range is 0–0.3%.

The given data leads us to the conclusion that staff structure in water supply companies is largely consisted of non-qualified, half-qualified, qualified, and highly-qualified and high school degree workers. This information indicates that it is highly necessary, while implementing process orientation in these companies, to create a suitable employee education plan, basing on the level of education.

In the analysis of necessary preconditions for implementing process-oriented organizations, (Eicker et al., 2008) concluded that employees engaged in implementing the concept of business process management get new roles, or have their present ones altered. Individuals can have more than one role in business process management.

Additionally, there is a potential need to hire experts in certain segments, e.g., consultants in BPM (Business Process Management) implementation. Considering this aspect, an unwanted situation can be described as "the processes are still not well understood, left unmanaged and poorly executed. With business schools teaching primarily function specific and narrow and IT schools focused on narrow technical, learning and understanding "process view" and "integration" is left to the individual" (Seethamraju, 2012).

**2. General information.** The authors wanted to know whether quality management system is applied in water supply companies, or to see if there is an employee development program or just any trace of it within companies.

Through this group of questions companies have declared if they understand and dealt with the term "quality management systems", and if so, they defined what they think is a "quality management system". Out of 22 companies that have agreed to participate in this research, 81.8% indicated they met this term, while 18.2% stated they had not. In relation to the question what they meant under quality management system, 72.7% gave the correct formulation of this system. In all investigated companies there was a declared desire for acquiring new knowledge, but it was concluded that without the implementation of adequate training by competent persons, top managers of these companies will not have necessary knowledge and skills to carry out the process of transformation from the classical organization to business processes oriented one.

The number of companies who do not use quality management system is almost double than those who do. This points to the fact that, globally compared, water supply companies on the territory of Vojvodina are in a poor position and drastic changes are inevitable.

The second group of questions also contributed the information that in 72% of these companies there is no employee development program available.

**3. Organization business.** The research conducted regarding organization business had the goal to find out if water supply companies are focused only on this business or they're providing other services.

Most of the companies have mixed businesses (59.09%), 40.91% had activity only in water production and distribution, as well as drainage.

In the third group of questions, the companies needed to state the water supply technology which they use. 4.5% claimed their technology was modern, 45.4% claimed it was partly modern, 9.2% admitted the use of an outdated technology, and 9.2% claimed they are in the process of investment. Additionally, 13.6% claimed their company plans to invest in the near future, while 18.1% did not answer the question at all.

The questioned companies also had a chance to tell their opinion and grade the technical-technological level of water supply in Serbia. 22.7% consider it adequate, 22.7% consider average, and 36.5% claimed that it can be graded as poor. 18.1% of the companies did not answer this question.

In this group of questions companies also stated their opinion on the processes in their organization which represent business excellence or superior performance. Out of 22 companies, 6 answered that there are processes which represent business excellence in their organization, most claimed them as: technological process of processing raw water, process of water disinfection with remote surveillance and computer control, and the process of waste water treatment. Last information is just one more indicator of the very low level of business process management use in water supply companies.

**4. Organization management.** In the fourth group of questions the aim was to find whether these companies have adopted team work. Rentzhog (2000) states that the management of key processes is possible only if there is a functional cooperation between managers and all parts of the process. This is achieved by forming a team of process managers made of people from different parts of a process, who should have knowledge of their own process part as well as the authority to change the way of work within their functions.

Naming the process owner and forming the management team is the assumption for the start of management and development of every key process. The process owner's responsibility is to keep the system functioning as a whole (Bosilj et al., 2008).

*Table 1. Availability of team work in the researched water supply companies, authors'*

Do you have problem solving teams in the organization?	Yes	No	No answer
1. Within the organization unit	10	3	9
2. Interfunctional teams	4	7	11
3. Ad hoc teams	10	3	9
4. Quality team	7	14	1

Table 1 shows that a certain number of companies did not want to answer whether they have team work or not. The failure/success regarding this question rep-

resents the acknowledgement of non-existence and non-effectiveness of team work in these companies.

**5. Business processes.** In this group of questions, the most important thing was to see if the companies have defined their key business processes and subprocesses. The results show that 7 companies did not define their business processes, 7 companies claimed they defined their key business processes and subprocesses and 8 companies reported they defined key business processes but did not define subprocesses. As the survey included individual numbering which key processes and subprocesses are defined within the organizations, the conclusion was that in some organizations that was done in a very unclear, illogical, and probably wrong way, but that opens the possibility of pointing out the mistakes to those companies.

8 companies claimed to have defined key processes, but did not break them down, and that they do not have defined subprocesses. This is again evidence of an inadequate attempt to accept process approach and their not understanding of it. According to (Rentzhog, 2000) this very breaking down of processes or their separation to logical process parts is necessary in order to understand process flow and the way it works. With this break down the ones who execute activities in the process are aware of the big picture and how their activities fit into the complete process which secures the value to consumers. In that way the large process goals are split into smaller goals for each process part, and the attention is focused on the process part levels because they are the ones who contribute to the improvement of the complete process. Additionally, it is very important that all process participants become aware of their consumers, to cooperate with them in order to understand their needs, to ensure feedback because the process should have the ability to continuously satisfy customers' needs, and it is also important to achieve suitable cooperation with distributors.

Companies cannot improve their processes all at once, due to resources limitation, meaning time and attention of top management, so it is necessary to pick the processes they will improve first. The criteria for process priority should be also the contribution to the creation of value for consumers and to notice process problems (Janicijevic, 2010).

Also, in this section of the survey, the aim was to research what kind of communication companies have with their consumers, and as a result 45.5% claimed that their staff has no problems in consumer communication, and 50% claimed they have certain problems, but no more than in other institutions and that this is a result of staff overload. One company did not respond, which represents 4.5% with no answer.

In order to successfully apply process approach in an organization, it is very important that those organizations define measurable indicators of successful application of business process. Based on the research the results show that, unfortunately, only 31.8% have them defined, 59.1% do not have them defined, 9.1% did not answer.

In the IT era, information, data and knowledge become equally important organization resources as are raw materials, energy, workforce, finance etc. Thanks to the use and support of an IT system, companies and specialized departments can better focus on their basic processes and jurisdictions, with an also necessary fast information flow – all of which leads to the improvement of processes and development

of competitive advantage (Kuhn, 2011). Because of this there is the need to see the level of use of integral IT systems in water supply companies. The research shows that an integral IT system is present at 54.5% of the companies, out of which only 22.7% use it to track quality of system and services. Regarding updating the IT system, only 36.4% update it on a daily basis, 4.5% weekly, 9.1% monthly and 50% did not answer this question. This success/failure in answering the question regarding the use of an integral IT system to track system quality, as well as the question of updating the IT system in water supply companies indicates an evident problem and confirms the underdevelopment and/or aging of IT system in these companies, as well as the fact that BPM is approached partially.

**6. Improvement processes.** The group of questions on improvement processes had inquired, among other things, the goal of shading a light on the current situation in water supply companies, access to efficient tools for process analysis and improvement methods, and if these companies follow evaluation, checkup or data analysis. Are they establishing or conducting improvement activities based on the determined problems, suggestions and do they execute corrective (preventive) measures. More information on this is given in Table 2.

*Table 2. Conducting the improvement processes in water supply companies, authors'*

	Yes	No	No answer
1. Do you have efficient tools for process analysis and improvement methods?	5	10	7
2. Do the plan documents estimate evaluation, checkup and data analysis and conducting the improvement methods?	8	7	7
3. Does the management or expert team create elaborates about problem analysis?	7	9	6
4. Are corrective (preventive) measures done based on the results of the analysis of the determined problems?	10	5	7

Out of the total number of companies, only 22.7% claimed they have efficient tools for process analysis and improvement methods, 36.4% claimed their plan documents contain evaluation, checkup and data analysis as well as the improvement methods. Management or expert teams base their work on problem analysis in 31.8% of the companies, and base on the analysis results of the determined problems their corrective (preventive) measures in 45.5% of the companies. This information shows that a relatively small amount of companies have a good basis on which successful business process management can be built.

**7. Internal checkup.** With the seventh group of questions the goal was to see the conduct of internal checkups in the companies, their documentation and corrective measures done after these checkups, as well as processing and graphic representation of such data. In Table 3 the answers are shown to the significant questions from which the conclusions can be made about internal checkups and their analysis.

63.3% of the companies conduct internal checkups in accordance to the documented plan and program, and 40.9% has adequate documentation on internal checkups. It is interesting but also alarming, that only 31.8% has specific documentation related to documenting irregular products or services, although 54.5% claimed they conduct corrective measures after internal checkups. Submitted data is analyzed

and graphically shown in 40.9% of the companies, while process stability grade is shown in only 22.7%.

*Table 3. Internal checkups, their documentation and conduct, authors'*

	Yes	No	No answer
1. Are internal checkups conducted by the documented plan?	14	5	3
2. Is there any documentation on internal checkups?	9	4	9
3. Are corrective measures done after internal checkups?	12	1	9
4. Is there any specific documentation which documents irregular products and services?	7	6	8
5. Is the management capable for data analysis by using suitable methods and techniques?	7	7	8
6. Is the data processed, analyzed and shown graphically?	9	6	7
7. Is the process stability value shown?	5	8	9
8. Is the efficiency of corrective and preventive measures tracked?	9	6	7

From the table above it is easy to conclude that the number of companies which did not give answers in this seventh group of questions ranges between 13.6% and 40.9% which shows that besides a number of them which have openly declared they do not have adequate documentation, that they do not do internal checkups according to a plan and program etc. These companies without declared information can also be considered as potential targets where it is necessary to take serious steps leading to certain improvements in tracking and documenting all checkups and measures being done in their business.

**Discussion and analysis of the existing levels of business process management organization in water supply companies. Suggestions.** Data and information obtained from the conducted research shows that most of the water supply companies in Vojvodina have a functional organizational structure and a classic management system in place, and only a small part of companies is making steps towards BPM implementation. Research has shown that a certain number of companies want to implement transformations but there is insufficient understanding of the business process management concept, as shown through a partial approach to the process-based system. Water supply companies are on different levels of process maturity, and there is an evident need for these companies to adopt the process approach to business as soon as possible. Some of the reasons because of which water supply companies start changes in business processes are: the need for better control and lowering costs, an attempt to get more consumers, problems with non-transparency, bottlenecks, constant changes, lack of job satisfaction for employees and business partners, low quality of products and services, missing implementation of ISO standards, inadequate environment protection etc.

The conducted research indicates that process orientation is still not fully understood by water supply companies, because defining key business processes must be done in sync with the way the organization is managed. It is necessary (Bosilj et al., 2008) to avoid inconsistencies with horizontal processes and traditional management system, because in most cases this leads to conflicts and failures.

For water supply companies there is a need to use suitable methodology, to conduct transformation from classic organization to an organizational structure oriented on business processes (Ahmetagic et al., 2013).



Identification and defining business processes represents a very important issue for organization planning to implement structural changes from the traditionally focused internal hierarchy to the structure which is flexible to consumers. By defining primary (basic) business processes in water supply companies, the way is shown how these companies meet the needs of consumers. Exactly because of this, while defining them, a clear understanding of base business is necessary with the analysis of the value it creates for consumers, as it is also necessary to understand how each part of the organization approaches achieving main goals of a company. Mainly, it is important to be aware why the organization exists and functions, its business ideas, vision and strategy, but it is also necessary to understand the results of strategic analysis as well its business situation.

Hence, as it is suggested by (Rentzhog 2000) for all companies, including water supply companies that they should conduct an analysis of company's macroenvironment, business environment and internal situation. It is necessary in order to find out business ideas, vision and strategy, and for defining processes. Business ideas, vision and strategy and primary processes are mutually linked, so it is crucial to view them together. When choosing primary processes, top managers should guide themselves with business ideas of the company, because a model base process should describe how the organization executes its goals. By breaking tasks of business ideas into sub-tasks the processes that were defined will be fully executed in given sub-tasks. Using this way of defining key processes also means the use of consumer perspective as a viewpoint on subtasks as the result of process flow. When identifying and defining key processes, it is necessary to put strategic questions into focus because of the strengthening effect on the strategy of the organization leading it closer to its vision.

The hardest task in defining key processes is leaving the functional way of thinking, and actually applying the consumer perspective, and not the management perspective, as well as to observe processes as flows, and not as activities or work tasks. This is accomplished by tracking products or services which fulfill the needs of consumer feedback. The defined key processes represent a structure which will enable continuous management and improvement of organization.

It is clear that defined primary (basic) business processes in water supply companies do not cover the activities in their complete organization, so it is also necessary to define support processes and management processes at the same time.

Selection of appropriate organizational structure is very important for companies that want to implement transformations from the classical organization to business processes-oriented organization. The task of top management in water supply enterprises is to make the choice of organizational structure that will be appropriate to a particular enterprise (activity), employees, considering its strength and market position. On this basis, it brings managerial decisions to the level of redesigning the structural parameters and transformation of the existing functional hierarchy. Managerial decisions ranging from the lowest level when the functional grouping only complements the permanent teams to manage individual processes, up to the highest level when the organization fully organize around processes. For the majority of Serbian water supply companies a suitable form may be the concept of gradual redesign. The existing fully functional structural design or fully functional grouping should be gradually converted into a design which is a combination of functional and

procedural groupings. In this way these companies maintain centralized crucial business functions, while other activities would be grouped around business processes.

In order to manage business processes it is necessary to continuously implement performance measurement review and continuous improvement of processes. This is the only way to timely identify problems and then with continuous monitoring processes enable improvement.

Managers in water supply companies through monitoring and control of business flows will be able to provide utility services that meet the expectations of users and to improve the financial performance of organizations through effective production. Additionally, with the processes of water supply and wastewater treatment, detailed physical, physico-chemical and chemical properties of both drinking water and wastewater can be defined according to relevant regulations and standards.

**Conclusion.** The urgency of implementing business process management is confirmed by numerous studies on this subject around the world. The significance of this especially comes to light at the markets in transition. The process of transformation from functional organization structure to a structure oriented to business processes which will be implemented in water supply companies in the countries in transit, has to be accompanied by a suitable methodology. The research conducted in water supply companies had a goal to analyze the level of the BPM concept use in these companies. The results give an orientation point for further research which will go deeper and give systematic knowledge in this area, bringing them closer to these companies.

Zakic (2009: 115) states that business processes management is not suitable for the organizations which seek partial solution and fast ways to improve their performance without essential changes.

Water supply companies can achieve long-term development only if they manage to continuously improve, innovate and implement their business processes. Opportunity for successful implementation of the aforementioned is seen in achieving cooperation with experts from developed countries basing on analysis and training.

This research proves the need for more intensive work on reorganization, not only in forming process organizations, but also in other aspects of projecting contemporary organizations (such as decentralization, complexity, control range, coordination, standardization etc.).

Based on the results it can be concluded that in order to move forward successfully in business processes management, it is very important for an organization to be oriented to the processes of fulfilling consumer needs. Constant improvement should become a part of organizational culture. The presented approach (Ahmetagic et al., 2011) seems to be the only way for water supply companies to achieve progress in their processes leading to the fulfillment of company's goals. Being more rational/cheaper and as well as to supply more quality water with processing of waste waters in accordance with global standards should become the primary aim for them.

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