

The Process Isn't Broken—The Operating Model Is

When performance declines, customer satisfaction slips, or growth stalls, organizations often arrive at the same conclusion: *"We need better processes."*

That instinct makes sense. Process maps, workflow redesigns, automation efforts, and continuous improvement programs are now common responses to operational challenges. And BASG serves its Clients with all those efforts.

But what if the process isn't the problem?

In our experience, many organizations do not suffer from broken processes; they suffer from operating models that no longer support the way the business needs to function.

The Symptoms Look Like Process Problems

Consider these familiar situations:

- Decisions take too long.
- Teams duplicate work.
- Projects consistently miss deadlines.
- Customers receive inconsistent experiences.
- Employees complain about management.
- Leaders say, "We need more accountability."

These symptoms frequently trigger process improvement initiatives. Organizations document workflows, identify bottlenecks, and redesign procedures. Sometimes those efforts help, but more often, the improvements are temporary because the underlying issue remains untouched.

Four Problems That Process Mapping Won't Solve

1. Unclear Decision Rights

Many organizations have well-documented processes but unclear ownership.

When decision ownership is unclear—whether several leaders claim authority or no one does—work slows down. Teams wait for approvals, revisit prior decisions, and spend more time aligning internally than serving customers. The delay is not caused by the process; it stems from unclear governance.

2. Misaligned Incentives

Imagine one department measures success in reduced costs, while another measures success based on customer responsiveness.

Each team optimizes for its own objectives, even when those objectives conflict. The result? Processes become workarounds for competing priorities instead of efficient paths to business outcomes. No amount of process redesign can overcome incentives that encourage people to pull in different directions.

3. Leadership Misalignment

Even the best-designed operating procedures fail when leaders communicate different priorities.

One executive pushes speed. Another demands extensive review. A third introduces new initiatives before existing ones have stabilized. Employees adapt by creating unofficial processes simply to navigate conflicting expectations. What appears to be operational inconsistency is often strategic inconsistency.

4. Governance That Hasn't Kept Pace

Organizations evolve. New products are introduced, acquisitions occur, markets change, and technology advances. Yet governance structures often remain frozen in time.

Responsibilities become blurred, committees multiply, and approvals accumulate because no one revisits how decisions should be made. The result feels like a process problem. The real problem is an operating model that has outgrown its original design.

Why Process Improvement Alone Often Falls Short

Process improvement is valuable—but only when it addresses the right problem.

When governance is unclear, better workflows only move confusion faster. When accountability is weak, procedures do not create ownership. When leadership priorities conflict, automation accelerates inconsistency. Organizations may spend months redesigning workflows, only to find that employees still rely on informal workarounds to compensate for deeper organizational issues.

The process wasn't broken. It was adapting to a system that was.

Start With the Operating Model

Before simply redesigning a process, consider a separate set of questions:

- Are decision rights clearly defined?
- Does our governance enable timely decisions?
- Do our organizational incentives reinforce the behaviors we want?
- Are leaders aligned around shared priorities?
- Is accountability understood across functions?
- Does our organizational structure support the strategy we are trying to execute?

These questions often reveal opportunities that no process map alone can uncover.

Sustainable Improvement Starts Above the Process

Operational excellence is not achieved by documenting every workflow. It is created when people understand who makes decisions, what success looks like, how work moves across functions, and how leadership expectations align. Only then can process improvements become sustainable.

Organizations that focus solely on processes may improve efficiency around the edges. Organizations that strengthen their operating model improve how the entire business functions.

That is a much harder challenge—but it is also where the greatest opportunities for lasting transformation are found.

At BASG, we have found that meaningful business transformation means unearthing root causes, not simply treating symptoms. We work with our Clients to help them better understand the system in which their processes operate—not just the processes themselves. We work with them to build a solid foundation for success, based on a thorough investigation of governance, organizational alignment, decision-making structures, and operational execution.

Because sometimes the process is not broken. It is the operating model.

But if it is the process, at BASG we are particularly good at recognizing and solving that problem as well.