

IMPROVEMENT SKILLS CONSULTING LTD.

“Simply, improvement...”



Cloud plus Process:
Recipe for success?

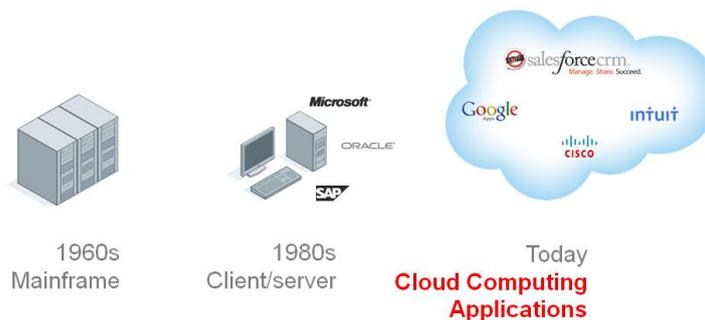
Cloud plus Process: Recipe for success?

“There is no such thing as an IT Project; only business projects with an IT component” [Anon.]

Cloud computing is here

Several organisations that we have been working with over the past year have been adopting Cloud Computing solutions to give themselves up-to-date IT support for their business processes.

We're all part of the movement to the Cloud



Cloud computing is also described as “software as a service”; it’s only available as an online offering which means you can have all the benefits of state of the art software, with none of the disadvantages of having IT hardware to manage. If you can access the internet, you can use Cloud services such as Googledocs, Zoho Office and Salesforce.com.

Implementing Cloud solutions to improve your business processes should not be seen as “an IT project”. This is a business improvement project, that just happens to be enabled with some really good Cloud computing services.

In this article I want to focus on implementation of process improvements using Salesforce.com, one of the longest-established and most respected Cloud solutions. Salesforce.com's award-winning Customer Relationship Management (CRM) application can help organisations to improve their sales/marketing processes,

client case management and many other organisational processes. It is being widely used in the private sector and increasingly in the public and charity sectors as well.

From a recently conducted survey of charities using Salesforce.com, we know that the application is quick to implement, that organisations report an ROI of 89% in just six months and experience an average 23% increase in their income.

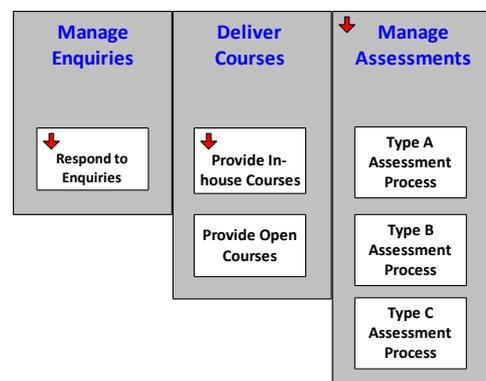
Preparing for a Cloud solution

We find it very helpful in preparing to help implement a solution such as Salesforce.com to review existing operating procedures and also to meet with managers and staff to discuss their “vision” for working practices with the new IT solution.

Understanding today’s processes is clearly important if organisations are to be able to make effective use of IT to deliver their business requirements. While it is often feasible simply to automate today’s processes, Hammer and Champy (authors of the best-selling “BPR: Reengineering the Corporation”), described this approach to automation as “paving the cow-paths”. This approach misses out on many additional potential improvements to be gained from taking a “clean-sheet” approach. Our team’s expertise includes significant organisational re-design work, which we believe enables us to help clients to create streamlined and faster processes, enabled by IT (Cloud-based, or otherwise).

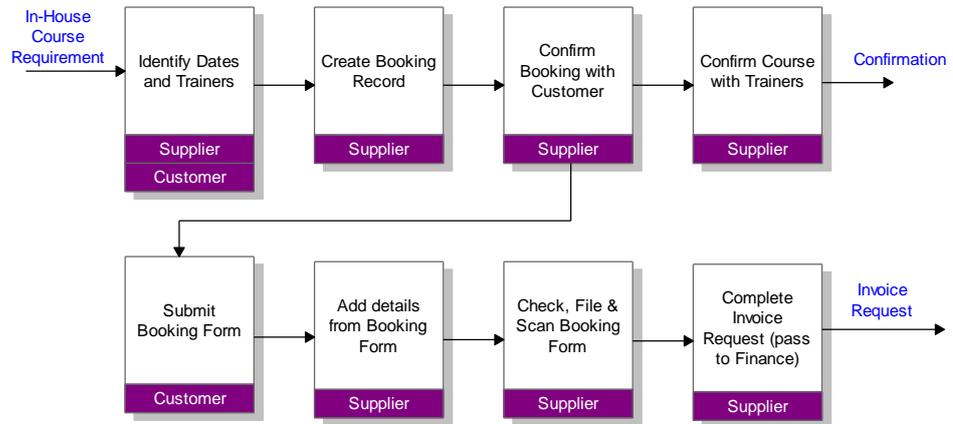
In order to understand a client’s current processes more fully, we convert their “As Is” procedures into process maps, using Nimbus Control Process management software.

Some examples of the High-level processes of an organisation providing training and an accreditation service are shown here...



Each of these High-level processes can be “drilled down” (the red arrows) to lower levels to help identify how the current processes operate at a day-to-day level. These lower level maps then begin to highlight re-design opportunities, including parts of the process that would benefit from implementation of Salesforce.com (or any other Cloud solution).

In the example below, you can see a process that was heavily paper-based and involved several hand-offs between the supplier and customer (and also to other departments in the supplier’s organisation).

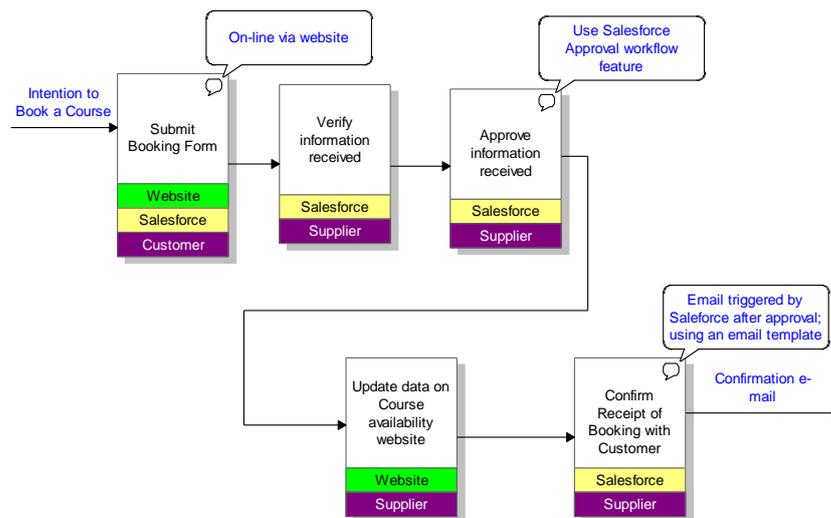


How much change do you want?

One of the most valuable aspects of being able to discuss the client’s vision and ambitions for their new process(es) is that it unearths how much they are “up for change”. We can use Nimbus Control to model a number of different “To Be” process scenarios and walk these through with the client to gauge their reactions.

These walk-through exercises reveal some of the practical implications of each potential re-design. For example, how willing would customers be to engage with a particular approach, how easy would it be to integrate this process with existing support processes (e.g. Accounts processes), how capable would staff be and what training issues would it raise?

The example below is a “To Be” process scenario with Salesforce.com-enabled steps highlighted.



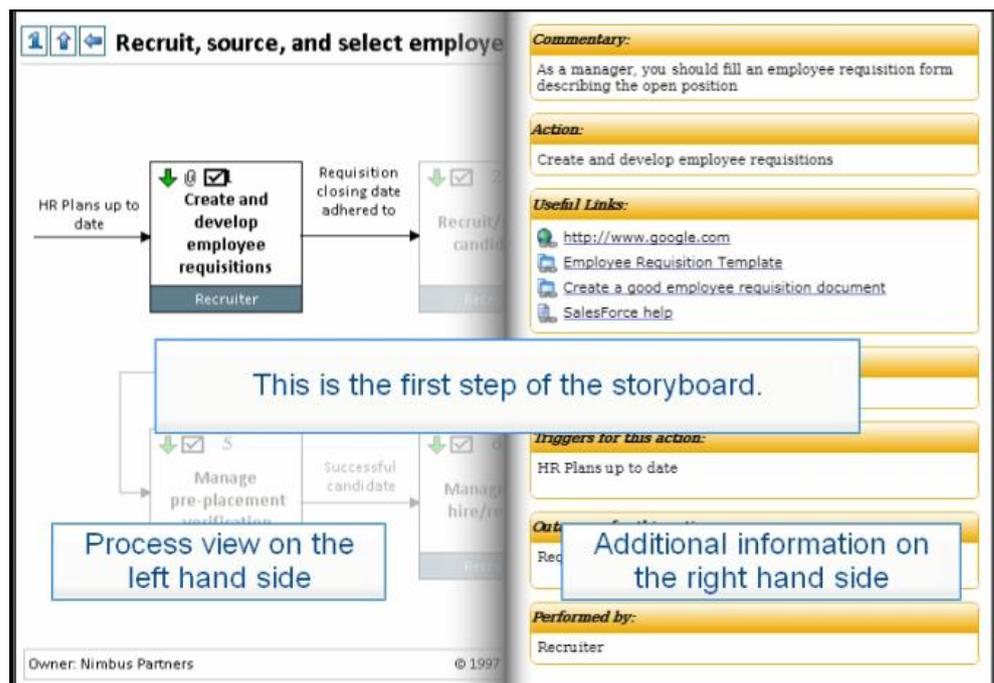
As well as testing the client’s reactions to the range of possible re-designs, this also begins to scope the design of the Salesforce.com solution that will be needed.

Adoption is key

However well-designed and technically clever an IT solution is, it will be of little value if it is not, or cannot be, used by staff.

Many consultants that help organisations to implement IT solutions end up simply training staff to “use the software”. What we are able to do is provide staff with an understanding of the processes as well as the software. Nimbus Control has a really helpful bit of functionality called “Storyboards” which are step-by-step walk-throughs of any process. These can be used as a training resource or can possibly replace operating procedure manuals. Because we create the process maps while designing the implementation of the software, they are readily available to be converted into Storyboards as needed.

An example of a Storyboard layout is shown below (for a Recruitment process).



It is even possible to embed the Nimbus Storyboards within Salesforce.com to provide a truly integrated solution: **Cloud, plus Process.**

The benefits of this approach include:

- Client participation in the design of their Cloud solution and processes builds their understanding and commitment
- Clients can decide how much change they need, want and can cope with, by testing out a range of scenarios
- Development of the Cloud solution is quicker, with fewer re-work loops because of the high level of client engagement
- Adoption of the Cloud solution and return on investment is higher because staff can learn the new processes as well as learning the new software

Our track record

Our consultants have been helping organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors to manage and improve their processes for over two decades. We have supported European Quality Award winners in their approach to process management.

We are not wedded to a particular methodology and we are technology-agnostic. We help clients identify their improvement goals and then develop an approach to achieve these, supported by the appropriate technology. We ensure the client's people develop the skills to make further improvements themselves.

Please contact us for more information about how we can help you to manage and improve your processes, with or without new technology!

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