knowledge
management
for process centricity

Process for IT services in a globalized world

"You are not a global company in the true sense"! This was the statement made by an established retail company about Atos nearly 10 years ago. This company had been visiting three countries where Atos solutions were being implemented with the intention of signing a global IT service contract for managing its applications. These Atos country units were showing different processes, different tools and different reporting for the same customer requirement.

Result – the company never worked with Atos

This incident was a shock and an eye opener for the top Atos management. After many brainstorming sessions and deliberations, need for unified and uniform global processes was identified which will prevent such embarrassing incidences in future.

Thus 'Global Delivery Platform' (GDP) was born which provided a common language, common process and common tools to the geographically-dispersed Atos business to serve its clients consistently.

This process is now used by more than 1,200 contracts around the world and is continuously improved to the satisfaction of the Atos customer, the Atos management and Atos employees.

Having said that, it was easier said than done! Rome was not built in a day. It took humongous efforts and time to build a working environment with an ambition of great standardization.

It involved extensive knowledge management, end-to-end process design and change management. Knowledge Management (KM) prevents wanton creation efforts and also provides a practical base for process design.

Process design ensures well-modelled, understandable and consistent processes. Change management is used for deploying improved ways of working across the organizations and the multitude of projects. Let's have a look at a few of the steps which actually contributed to the evolution of GDP.

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Atos
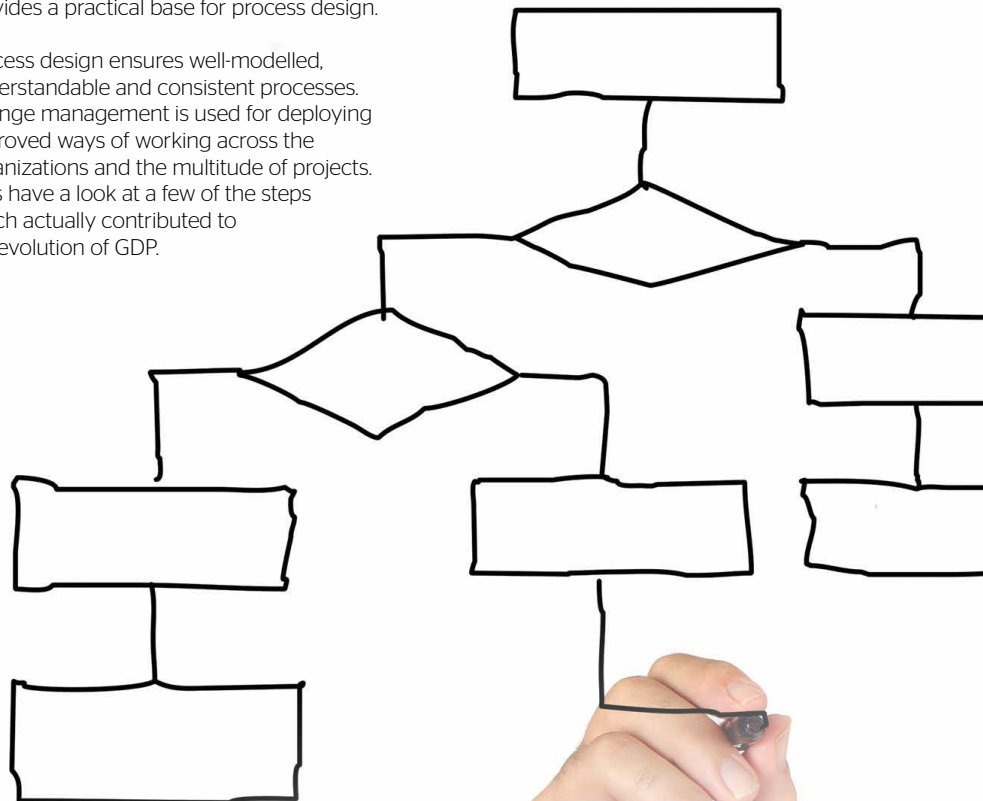
Global delivery platform – built on best practice

Initiating a significant implementable process design for a large company starts with bringing best practice together.

A certain number of process areas are identified and for each of them, good examples of execution are identified. The process areas were in line with the business of Atos Systems Integration and initially covered application development and application management (support and maintenance). The process areas were identified as follows:

▶ Management processes for initiation, project management, application management, and contract closure and risk management
▶ Engineering processes for requirement analysis, software development and testing modules
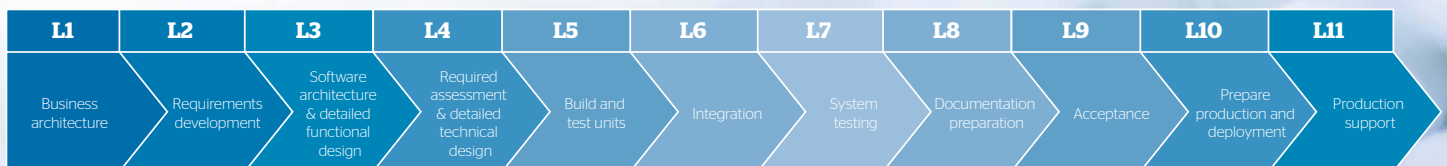▶ Supporting activities for managing configuration, process and quality, metrics and estimation.

Great sources of data collection are the plans used by the projects. Plans like project quality plans, project management plan or service delivery plans are a great source of information as they reflect the way activities are organized and executed. Other documents such as test plans, requirement management plan, requirements, and design and specifications documents are also useful.

From this first step of best practice collection, the next big achievement was the elaboration of the software development lifecycle in 11 steps which was used later for establishing the estimation and productivity baselines but also to structure the software development planning and schedules.

This lifecycle was built with contribution from units of seven countries. The significance of this huge process design exercise lay in the opportunity it presented for process experts to learn to work together.

The collected best practices are published in the GDP repository and are made available for various projects. They provide adequate guidance for running live projects and also result in some productivity gains due to reuse of proven solutions, thus enabling successful implementation of projects.

Atos Software Development Life Cycle

L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9	L10	L11
Business architecture	Requirements development	Software architecture & detailed functional design	Required assessment & detailed technical design	Build and test units	Integration	System testing	Documentation preparation	Acceptance	Prepare production and deployment	Production support

Designing and deploying the core process

After gaining some maturity from the best practice collection and publication, the process design begins. Based on the process model drafted during the best practice collection exercise, a final process model is established, process identification cards are elaborated that provide goals, activities, and also input and output.

These identification cards provide a very good insight into the process but all details required to run the process cannot be made available, neither can detailed instructions, roles and measures. The relations from the process are also not that easy to follow. To overcome these issues, Atos used the Rational Method Composer from IBM to enable cohesive process modelling and representation. This tool is made available in the Atos Share Service Center which provides a process reader, HTML representation with strong navigation capabilities across processes, work product (input and output), as also roles and related documents with (guidelines, templates and checklists).

Two key sets of information – the glossary and the role repository – enable the development of the process model. The glossary describes all terms used in the process that are specific to Atos and also provides the acronyms used in the company. It constitutes the common language used by all entities to which Atos delivers. The role repository provides a list of roles of people that are operating the process. It forms the base for identifying accountability, responsibility, consultants and informed people.

As soon as the process is designed, its deployment and process quality assurance starts. Deployment consists of training practitioners on the process, then supports them for using it in the organizations and the contracts. These services are provided by local deployment teams. Process quality assurance verifies the use of the process in the contracts. It ensures that the contract is compliant to the process.

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Elaborate methodologies – from process to professional view

Methodologies include the application of the process in professional activities required for delivering specific products and services. Methodologies are a great source for references, learning and re-use. References are provided in the proposal Atos makes to customers. Learning helps to get our managers and engineers up-to-speed to the knowledge required to run their activities. Reuse prevents 're-inventing the wheel' and thus makes Atos more competitive by re-applying what was already successfully implemented.

Developing methodologies are possible when the management and engineering processes are mature and consistent. As an illustration, in the GDP for project, the activities of initiation, execution and closure are defined in such a way that they can be applied to any IT project. Combining these management processes and an engineering lifecycle makes the foundation of a methodology cohesive and fruitful. Let's take two methodologies based on the same core GDP process: waterfall software development and agile GDP. Both are based on the same GDP core process and can be verified with the same process.

Improve – never stop cycling

Process improvement starts with the first step but becomes truly efficient, beneficial and exciting as soon there is a base which is well defined and effectively deployed. Moving forward, additional best practices are identified, the process is optimized and the methodologies are constantly improved.

Developing methodologies are possible when the management and engineering processes are mature and consistent.

Organized to deliver improvements

Process improvements requires an instance to sponsor the activity, an instance to steer the activity, team to develop and improve the process asset, a team to deploy the process and a team to verify the process adherence and the process efficiency. All these instances and teams are organized in an improvement loop.

Global Consulting and System Integration (C&SI) and the C&SI practices provide guidance about innovation and business strategy. They are also sponsoring the GDP process improvement.

The Software Engineering Process Group (SEPG) is steering the process improvement. All the main Atos country organizations and some global functions are represented in this group. SEPG provides requirements for process improvements. SEPG also validates the GDP design before publication. The SEPG assigns subject matter experts for providing expertise during the design and review of any process.

Process Definition, Support and Training team (PDST) executes the process improvements based on the SEPG requirements. It delivers the improved process in releases (one or two per year).

The deployment teams are organized by Global business unit and Global delivery centers. Their role is to deploy the GDP process and tools in the contracts and ensure a seamless fit.

The contracts are executed according to the GDP process. Post the execution:

▸ Feedback is provided in case of any defects in the process or issue for using it
▸ Lessons learned are produced that may impact the definition of the process
▸ Best practices are identified
▸ Reusable items are identified and made available from the Central Reuse system.

The feedback is provided at least once at the time of contract termination and moreso when any opportunities for improvement are identified.

Quality, Security and Compliancy organization verifies the use of the process in the contracts. Non-conformances are managed within the contract and potential process improvements are addressed to the SEPG.

Every Atos employee is invited to contribute to the process improvement via the social network tool blueKiwi. Any employee can raise queries on how to use the process and the queries will be resolved within a finite time. Already 1,900 employees are part of this social network.

Now any client who visits Atos during presales can see that the methods of working and reporting are uniform everywhere. No matter in which country the client needs our services; it will be delivered to the same level of excellence based on our GDP process and tools.

The world of Information Technology is moving faster than one can anticipate. But Atos GDP is tuned to evolve with new technologies and new ways of working. Atos now has a very mature and consistent delivery process, recognized by several ISO audits and CMMI assessments. This level of excellence will be maintained by constant 'cycling in the improvement loop'. This means that there is no downtime when it comes to catching up with new service requirements for Atos. Challenges will result in us leading the competition with delivery that is faster, better and cheaper.

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About Atos

Atos SE (Societas Europaea) is a leader in digital services with 2014 pro forma annual revenue of €11 billion and 93,000 employees in 72 countries. Serving a global client base, the Group provides Consulting & Systems Integration services, Managed Services & BPO, Cloud operations, Big Data & Security solutions, as well as transactional services through Worldline, the European leader in the payments and transactional services industry. With its deep technology expertise and industry knowledge, the Group works with clients across different business sectors: Defence, Financial Services, Health, Manufacturing, Media & Utilities, Public Sector, Retail, Telecommunications and Transportation.

Atos is focused on business technology that powers progress and helps organizations to create their firm of the future. The Group is the Worldwide Information Technology Partner for the Olympic & Paralympic Games and is listed on the Euronext Paris market. Atos operates under the brands Atos, Atos Consulting, Atos Worldgrid, Bull, Canopy, and Worldline.

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