

Creating a Flow-Chart or Service Blueprint

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A **flow-chart** or **service blueprint** is a detailed, step-by-step outline of a process or service. It clearly identifies each step in a process and the sequence in which the steps are to be performed. A flow-chart also articulates divergent paths, based upon one specific variable, and may be utilized to illustrate parallel processes as well. Flow-charts are very useful as training tools and are commonly utilized to evaluate or streamline a process as well as to identify bottlenecks within a process.

Three (3) primary shapes are utilized in a typical service blueprint. The process should begin with an oval which outlines the initial input or start of the process as well as end with one or more ovals, which identifies the potential output(s) or outcome(s) of the process. Rectangles represent each step in the process and diamonds are utilized represent points in the process at which alternative paths are possible. At times, it may be useful to utilize inverted triangles, like a yield sign, to identify bottlenecks or critical steps in a process.

The flow of the process is designated with arrows, which connect the various shapes. Arrows utilized to direct the flow of the process should never cross. Flow-charts generally flow from top-to-bottom or left-to-right; however, depending upon the complexity of the process, space available to illustrate the process, or the number of divergent paths, the illustrator may need to deviate from this convention. The key is that the flow of the process is logical and clear to the reader. It is critical that all paths lead to a possible outcome of the process and that there are no dead-end paths. Again, arrows that depict the flow of the process should never cross.

Each step in a process should have its own box and no single process should be listed multiple times. When appropriate, divergent paths should merge back together if, at a specific point, two or more paths flow into a common step in the process.

Flow-charts or service diagrams may be utilized to illustrate both customer or external processes as well as internal processes for a single job position, department, an entire organization, or sub-sets of an organization. A flow-chart that illustrates a specific customer service process is often referred to as a **service blueprint**. A service blueprint will often include a **line of visibility**, which is illustrated as a dotted line that clearly separates the steps in the process that are visible to the customer from the steps that are not visible to the customer. A flow-chart that depicts customer processes or service blueprint may also include a **line of interaction**, which define points at which customers of the firm interact with the firm's associates or surrogates of the firm (e.g. the firm's website, an automated telecommunications system, etc.); the line of interaction therefore identifies the '**moments of truth**' within the process. Finally, a **line of support** may also be included, again represented by a dotted line, which illustrates the points at which management or another support function or department within the organization interacts with the process or service provider in order to provide additional inputs, direction, guidance, or support.

Please see the various examples of flow-charts or service blueprints, included with these instructions, to assist you in more fully understanding how flow-charts or service blueprints may be created to illustrate service processes. Well-illustrated flow-charts ensure that the process is clearly outlined, easy to follow, and complete—including all steps in the process.