

Understand your customers experience.

FLOW DIAGRAM

A flow diagram is a tool to help understand business processes and make meaning out of lots of data. It's also particularly helpful in providing teams with a clear understanding of workflow's and identify any potential waste in business processes.

Flow diagrams are used to structure and order complex systems, or to reveal the underlying structure of the elements and their interaction. A flow chart or flow diagram is a diagram that visually displays interrelated information such as events, steps in a process, functions, etc., in an organized fashion, such as sequentially or chronologically.

A good flow diagram helps to understand the systematic flow of information in the system.

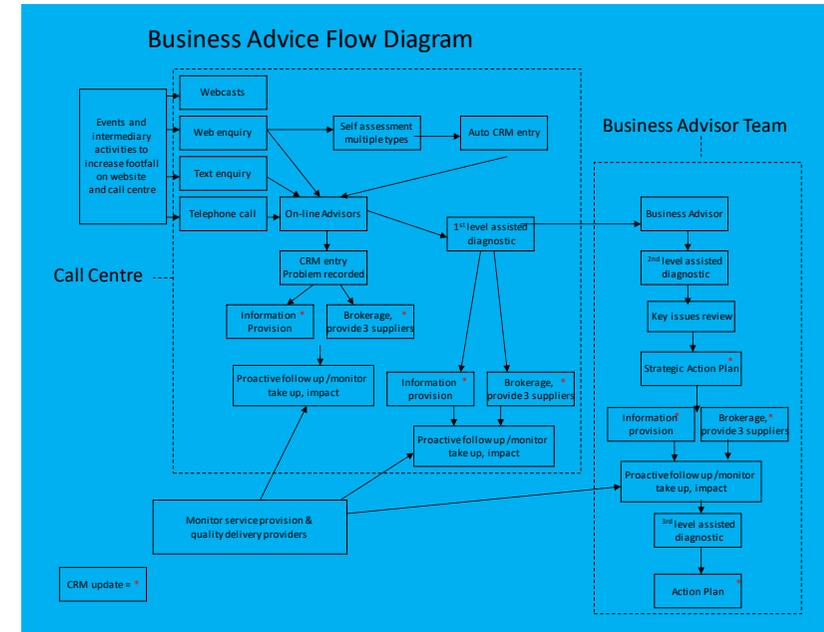
Although there are many symbols that can be used in flow diagrams to represent different kinds of steps, accurate diagrams can be created using very few of them (the attachment at the end of this document summarises some of the standard elements of a diagram). The basic element of a flow diagram is a simple action and is represented by a box containing a description of the action. The mapping of 'what follows what' is shown with arrows between sequential action boxes, as shown in the illustration opposite.

In drawing an effective flow diagram make sure you;

- Gather the team who are to work on describing the process. These should include people who are intimately involved in all parts of the process, to ensure that it gets described as it happens, rather than an idealized view;
- Define the process boundaries with starting and ending points;
- Complete the big picture before filling in the details;
- Clearly define each step in the process;
- Identify time lags and non-value-adding steps;
- Circulate the flowchart to other people involved in the process to get their comments;

Flow diagrams don't work if they're not accurate or if the team is too far removed from the process itself. An effective flow diagram should provide a clear view of how a process works. With a completed flow diagram, you can:

- Identify time lags and non-value-adding activities.
- Identify responsibility for each step.
- Identify problems in the process.
- Determine major and minor inputs into the process with a cause & effect diagram.
- Choose the most likely trouble spots with the consensus builder.
- Follow the process through to a useful conclusion (end at a "target" point).



Sample 'connectors' in a flow diagram;



Terminator

Indicates the beginning or end of a program flow in your diagram.



Process

Indicates any processing function.



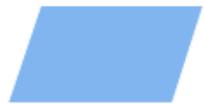
Decision

Indicates a decision point between two or more paths in a flowchart.



Delay

Indicates a delay in the process.



Data

Can represent any type of data in a flowchart.



Document

Indicates data that can be read by people, such as printed output.



Multiple documents

Indicates multiple documents.



Subroutine

Indicates a predefined (named) process, such as a subroutine or a module.



Preparation

Indicates a modification to a process, such as setting a switch or initializing a routine.



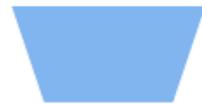
Display

Indicates data that is displayed for people to read, such as data on a monitor or projector screen.



Manual input

Indicates any operation that is performed manually (by a person).



Manual loop

Indicates a sequence of commands that will continue to repeat until stopped manually.



Loop limit

Indicates the start of a loop. Flip the shape vertically to indicate the end of a loop.



Stored data

Indicates any type of stored data.



Connector

Indicates an inspection point.



Off-page connector

Use this shape to create a cross-reference and hyperlink from a process on one page to a process on another page.



Off-page connector



Off-page connector



Off-page connector



Or

Logical OR



Summing junction

Logical AND



Collate

Indicates a step that organizes data into a standard format.



Sort

Indicates a step that organizes items list sequentially.



Merge

Indicates a step that combines multiple sets into one.



Database

Indicates a list of information with a standard structure that allows for searching and sorting.



Internal storage

Indicates an internal storage device.