



Worth Doing

PETER DRUCKER once warned that there's "surely nothing quite so useless as doing with great efficiency what should not be done at all." Just because you *can* improve your operations, he argued in "Managing for Business Effectiveness" (HBR May–June 1963), doesn't mean that you should.

In *The Process Edge*, Peter Keen writes about the very real dangers of improving the wrong processes. He warns that in many cases "even dramatic levels of process improvement don't translate into better business performance." Keen stresses the importance of improving processes so that they produce new value someone will want to pay for.

To distinguish worthwhile initiatives from those that waste time and money, look for projects that are visible to customers, affect core capabilities, or differentiate you from competitors. Limit your investments in processes that are mandated and avoid altogether refining processes that simply perpetuate traditions. Above all, pay attention. Innovation can suddenly either make vital processes pointless or transform today's routine operation into tomorrow's customer-pleasing, profit-driving one.

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