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## The Document Review Process:

Automation of your document review and approval

*A White Paper*

BP Logix, Inc.

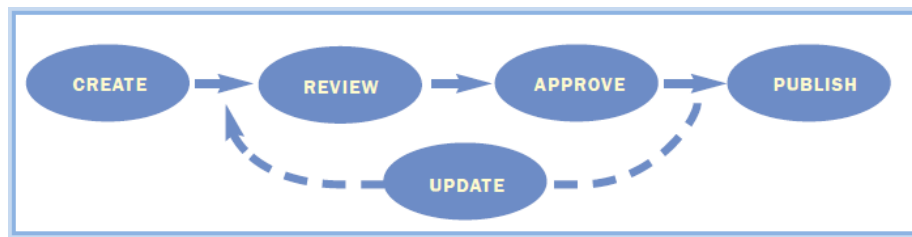
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# The Document Review Process

A document encompasses many forms – technical documentation, product data sheets, press releases, product brochures, legal and medical documents, architectural and engineering drawings, white papers, and even Web pages. Whether reviewing electronic documents or printed documents, the review process is similar - and the problems people face are very much the same.

The document review process is defined by a workflow. The review is a series of processes or steps that are performed in sequential order. A typical scenario often includes one or more authors creating a document that is then reviewed by a number of others and ultimately approved by a specific individual.

The document review cycle, for both electronic and print documents, consists of several stages. After the document or Web page is created, it is made available to a group of people for review, either concurrently or sequentially. This stage generally requires some collaboration between the reviewers. After all of the reviewers' comments and suggestions are approved or rejected, the document is then updated with the changes. At that time, a review may occur again. Once all collaborators have completed their reviews and all updates are made, the final document is published. This cycle repeats itself, usually indefinitely, because rarely is a document ever “completely finished.”



Document Review Cycle

In the printed or paper-based world, the document review process may even be inefficient and error prone as it involves the distribution of printed copies to many reviewers. Each reviewer then marks up, places sticky notes, writes on, and even attaches other material to the copies of the original document. All of these copies are then given back to the author, who has to discern what is being requested by each reviewer, if the reviewers can even be identified. Typically, there are numerous versions of the document “floating” around, complicating matters further.

Documents in electronic form have simplified some of this process, but the review process still exists -- and it still faces many of the same challenges. Even today, many companies take electronic documents, then print and distribute them to reviewers. In order to be truly

effective, the electronic document review process must take full advantage of new tools now available, including Internet/Intranet delivery, workflow, and routing to make the review cycle more comprehensible – and more efficient.

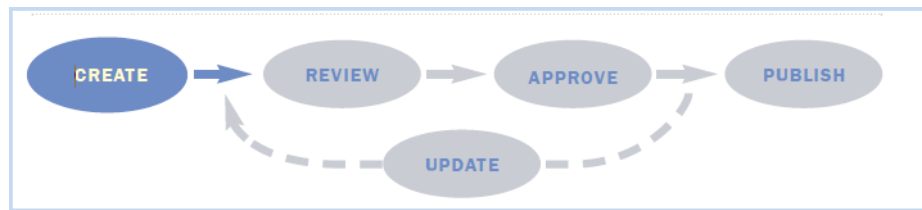
This white paper will describe the tools and methodologies that can be used throughout the various stages of a document review cycle. It will also demonstrate how Process Director can be used to streamline that cycle.

## Five Stages of a Document Life Cycle

Whether print or HTML-based, the life cycle of a document is comprised of five stages: creation, review, approve, update and publish. Let us look, first at the document creation stage to view how it participates in the document review process,

### Document Creation Stage

After an author has completed the initial draft of a document, it must be made available to a group of reviewers. This can be done in a variety of different ways. Converting the document to a format that is viewable online using a browser, however, provides the highest degree of access from both local and remote locations. This also eliminates the requirement for costly (client) software on all of the reviewers' PCs, as only the author needs an editing package installed.



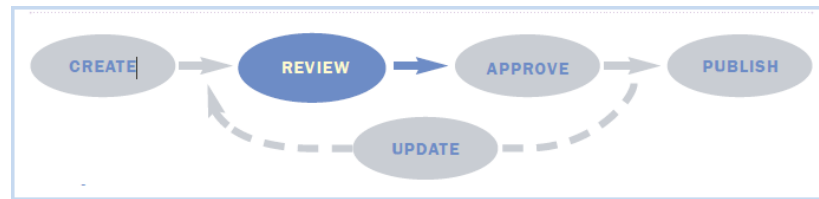
Document Review Life Cycle Stage 1: Create

The most common online formats for documents are HTML and PDF. Each has its own advantages and, to an extent, disadvantages. Converting documents to HTML is supported by most word processors and other editing packages. It is generally easy to publish and provide access to remote users, as well as being the most familiar format to online users. HTML provides the standard formatting and font size, allowing the reviewer to choose the appropriate font sizes and layout for readability.

The other common format is PDF. This requires the Adobe Acrobat™ software be installed on the author's PC, but provides the advantage of preserving the look and feel of the original document (e.g., layout, size, etc.). PDFs are also familiar to online users and are viewable over the Web from within a browser, similar to HTML.

## Review Stage

The concept of the review stage is simple, but it can be time-consuming and error-prone. Authors do not want reviewers to also be their “editors” -- only a limited number of “authors” should be editing a document. In most cases, multiple users will review the document and will convey the errors, corrections, and suggestions they want in the document to the author(s). During the review phase or process, reviewers generally benefit from collaborating with each other, improving their productivity.



Document Review Life Cycle Stage 2: Review

Reviewers must communicate desired changes to the author(s) of documents and there are many techniques to accomplish this. Unfortunately, many of them are “low tech” and, as a result, often fail to convey the real meaning of the request. They also rarely provide an adequate history of the changes. And, as new reviewers join the process, the confusion becomes ever greater.

Some common low-tech approaches used to communicate changes to electronic documents include the reviewers:

- ✦ Editing the *original* document. -- This approach can add errors and confusion, as multiple people are actually editing the source document, changing, and possibly tainting, its contents. Additionally, there is no approval stage possible in this approach.
- ✦ Printing the document, marking the requested changes on it then faxing it to the author. -- This can lead to multiple versions of a document being reviewed - and there is no control over which versions of the documents are “floating” around.
- ✦ Describing the desired changes to a document over the telephone. -- The phone can only be used to review smaller documents only, as there is no adequate way of describing extensive changes.
- ✦ Sending an email describing the request, identifying the document and the portion of it that needs to be modified. -- This approach (which is sometimes combined with “screen-shots” of the original document) is normally not an efficient method of communication. Additionally, errors can occur as a result of “interpretation” (ex. “Can we remove the second sentence on the third page?”)

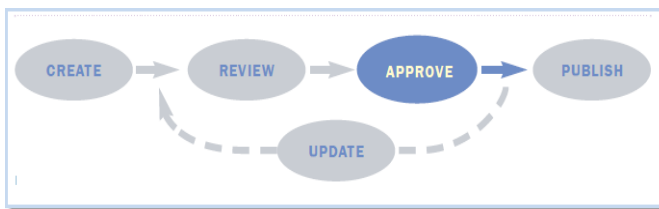
Although often used, these methods are not ideal. The key to having a successful review cycle lies in the reviewers’ ability to communicate changes -- as well as the reviewers’ ability to collaborate with one another. Reviewers can benefit from seeing what others have done.

By knowing who has requested a change, and why, reviewers can leverage the work of one another. This prevents multiple members of the same review team from notifying the author of the same typographical error, or some other correction.

Once this process is complete, the reviewers then notify the person(s) responsible for document approval, the next stage in the review process.

## Approval Stage

Now that the review stage is completed, the approval stage begins. During this stage, the person(s) responsible for the approval of the reviewers' comments can resolve duplicate or conflicting information and requests.



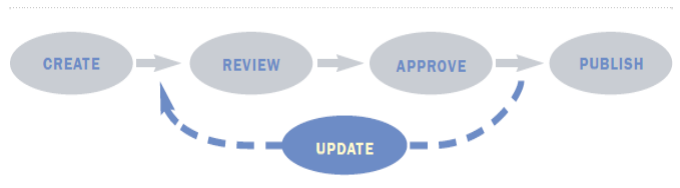
If required, more information can be requested from a reviewer about a particular comment. The change requests are then either accepted or rejected.

Document Review Life Cycle Stage 3: Approval

When the change requests and corrections have been accepted, they are assigned to the author so the document can be updated.

## Update Stage

During the update stage, the author makes the approved changes to the original document, having previously received the reviewers' approved change requests and corrections. After the author has completed updating the document with the changes, the document or Web pages move either to the publish stage or are routed back to the review stage. This depends on the type and number of updates made to the document.

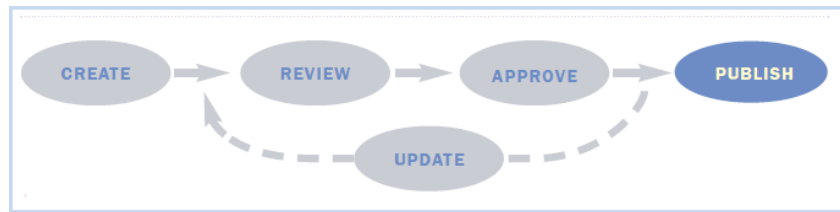


Document Review Life Cycle Stage 4: Update

If there are a significant number of updates, an additional review may be required. If the document is routed back to the review stage, the author makes the new document available to the reviewers – and the cycle begins again.

## Publish Stage

The publish stage is the final step of the review process. The documents or Web pages are published and made available to the appropriate audience.



Document Review Life Cycle Stage 5: Publish

## BP Logix Process Director and the Document Review Process

Process Director is a key component during the entire document review cycle.

Because reviewer's comments should be immediately available to both the authors of documents and other reviewers, regardless of their current workstation or location, there should be an easy ways to track the change request history of a document and to search for requests based on data including reviewer, document, date, etc.

Process Director provides simple and obvious interfaces that allow users to apply annotations to online documents. These annotations are made using tools that are already familiar to all of us: sticky notes, highlighter pens and free-form drawing tools.

All annotations are stored on the Process Director server, separate from the original documents. Reviewers, approvers and authors are instantly in-sync with a visual representation of the changes requested; they can see changes overlaid on top of the online documents.

Process Director is highly scalable and meets the document review needs from small departments to the largest enterprises.

### *BP Logix Process Director in the Creation Stage*

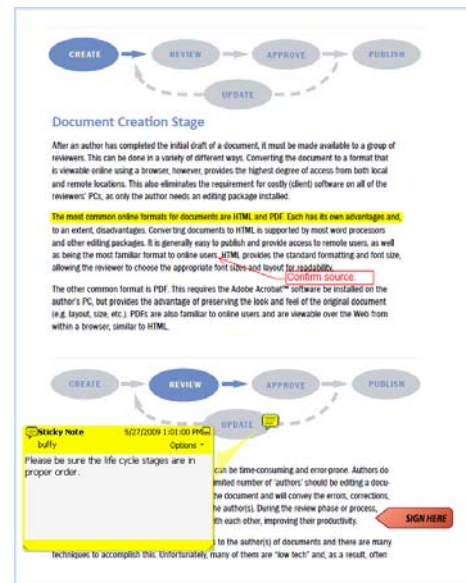
Process Director can assist in this part of this workflow by automatically converting source documents into one of the "viewable" formats previously described. Both source documents and the viewable documents can be stored in the product database or in an external filesystem, providing convenient ways for reviewers to access the documents. Additionally, permissions can be set up to allow only certain reviewers to have access to particular documents.

Notification facilities within Process Director also allow authors to notify all of the appropriate reviewers when documents are ready for review. Additionally, authors have the ability to track the reviewers' progress as they work on the documents they have written.

### BP Logix Process Director in the Review Stage

This may be the most important stage of the review process. Process Director is designed to make this stage more productive. Our premise is simple: We should have all of the advantages of reviewing paper documents, while leveraging the benefits of electronic documentation. Process Director allows reviewers to use the same annotation capabilities that are used in the paper-based review process – and more! Annotations and markups available from text document and/or PDF editing applications can take the form of sticky notes, free-form drawings and text highlights.

The review stage is greatly assisted by leveraging the collaboration of reviewers and authors. Process Director allows participants within a workflow to collaborate with other users in the same step or users in previous steps. This allows a participant to view annotations and comments from any users and engage them in threaded discussions. This is particularly important in the iterative document review phase. Authorized participants in this step can make the decision to advance to the next step in the workflow, or ask more questions of the previous reviewers about their comments and annotations.

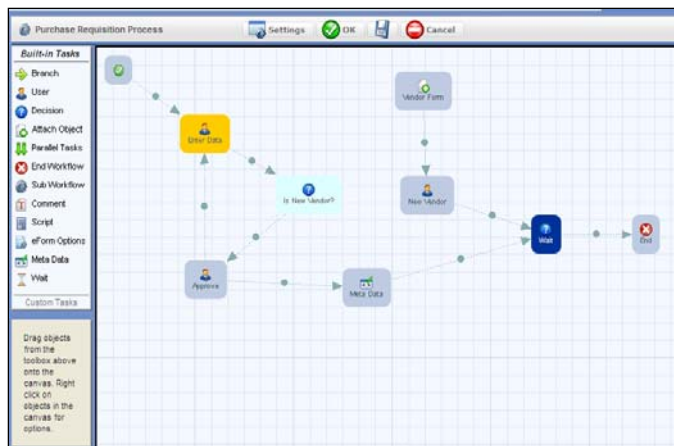


### BP Logix Process Director in the Approval Stage

During the approval stage, it is important to have the ability to see all reviewers' comments in an easy to use, visual manner. Process Director allows the reviewers' markups, notes, and annotations to be displayed either one reviewer at a time or all simultaneously.

Process Director provides the workflow engine necessary to predefine and to automate a document review and approval process. Workflow definitions can be created for different document types, eForms, or organizational processes. For example, a workflow definition can be created that defines how Press Releases (PR) are created, reviewed, approved and ultimately published. Another workflow definition could identify how a newsletter or administrative notice is approved by a legal department before being routed to a corporate portal.

The workflow defines the path or route a document must take. Each step in the



workflow path defines the task, the participants, and the rules that govern how the workflow will advance or transition to the next step.

During the document approval stage, accepted changes and requests from the reviewers to be routed back to the author(s) so the document can be updated. This part of the workflow process allows all of the reviewers' comments in their original form to be routed back to the author.

### *BP Logix Process Director in the Update Stage*

To make the appropriate document updates, authors must have the ability to see all of the reviewers' markups and annotations regarding the changes requested. Process Director provides the author with a visual representation of the original requests, allowing the reviewers' intended meanings to be accurately conveyed. If the original document is stored in the Process Director, the document can be "checked out," preventing others from editing the document simultaneously.

### *BP Logix Process Director in the Publish Stage*

Once the final documents or Web pages are published, the original documents need to be archived for future reference. All versions of the source documents are stored in Process Director can be subsequently retrieved and compared against other versions.

## **CONCLUSION**

As more information takes the form of on-line documentation, tools that support the document review process enabling us to collaborate more effectively with one another in real time, will become a greater and greater necessity. As companies strive to bring products to market faster to create and/or maintain their competitive advantage, tools like Process Director will assist them in being more efficient and effective with their review process.

For more information about BP Logix Process Director, visit our website at:

<http://www.bplogix.com>.