

Every question from the summer series, answered in writing.

During the three sessions there was not enough time to do every question justice. Here they all are, each with its full answer. Is your question missing, or does an answer raise a new one? Feel free to email quincy@procestoppers.nl.

What the system can do

Does this work for every type of diagram, or only BPMN? (session 1)

The short answer: it works with every kind of diagram, from a simple flowchart to a cross-functional swimlane chart. The strong preference, and the best quality, lies with BPMN 2.0, because it is the richest and most transferable standard. Conversion works too: from flowchart to BPMN and back again. The input does not matter; unstructured documents, old work instructions and interview notes all work.

Does this only work for new processes, or for existing ones as well? (session 1)

Existing ones in particular. You can load your own process environment as XML; the system reads it, scans the entire environment including the top-level structure and the processes, and places your current situation alongside it. You can then compare, clean up, adjust and annotate; old processes go through it just as well as new documents.

Can our own conventions and house style be applied? (session 1)

Yes. You can supply your own conventions document, and there is an organisation scan that picks up company information and colours. The default colours are adjustable; if you want your activities green instead of blue, that is no problem.

Do we need an API connection to our environment? (session 1)

No. Import and export run through an XML document, so nothing needs to be connected to your environment. An API connection to a process platform is possible, but it is not a requirement for getting started.

Can you produce a shareable, printable view of the process model, so that people outside the process field understand it too? (session 2)

Partly already, and the rest is in development. There is an A3 or A4 printout that creates a view per section: for each cluster, the processes and the work processes beneath them. The complete process model in a single view (with hundreds of work processes) is not there yet; we expect it in the fourth quarter. The point behind the question is spot on: a process model that nobody understands does not get used.

Can the system also set up a business function model, and link the process model to the business function model? (session 2)

Not yet; it is on the roadmap. The order we see is this: first get the current situation filled in, then work towards the desired situation from every perspective, and that includes the business function model, as well as continuous improvement from a lean perspective. The comparison modules this requires are complex; they are on their way, but we will not promise a date we cannot keep.

Security and data

What happens to our data? Is it a closed system? (session 1)

The system runs entirely within Europe: a cloud environment in Ireland and applications hosted in Germany. It includes a pseudonymisation and anonymisation layer that automatically checks, for example, whether a document still contains personal data before anything is analysed. The algorithm then builds the diagram and you export the result to your own environment. For a pilot, we arrange confidentiality in advance; feel free to ask about our data processing agreements.

Where this tool fits in the profession

Surely most BPM software can already turn text into a diagram these days? (session 1)

Simple conversion, yes: a handful of activities in a small diagram. The difference lies in complexity and depth. Breaking a long, messy document into several work processes, placing roles in the right lanes, asking follow-up questions wherever the information has gaps, and doing all that at detail levels P3 and P4: that is where the difference lies. And you do not have to take our word for it: send your most difficult document and judge the result for yourself.

Can't you also extract the current situation from your systems through process mining? (session 1)

If your systems are set up well enough for it: yes, and then mining is valuable. In practice, at most of the organisations we walk into, the data being recorded is not yet at a level where mining produces usable results. Mining shows what actually happens in your systems; the modelled process is the agreed standard, approved by a person. You need both, and it is precisely the difference between the two that is valuable.

Can I watch the earlier sessions again? (session 2)

Yes. The recordings of all three sessions, the presentations and this collection of questions and answers are all on flowtopper.com.

Do our own modelling conventions carry over into a generated process? (session 3)

Not automatically; they have to come from somewhere, and there are two ways to provide them. One: you set out your conventions in advance in a conventions document, from the colours to what a decision point looks like and which text goes with which activity. Everything generated after that follows those conventions, specifically for your organisation. Two: when importing into your own environment, you choose your own stencils, and the conventions are applied there. Anyone who has spent years guarding a modelling handbook is right to ask this; the answer is not "the AI takes care of it", but an explicit agreement made in advance.

Does the interviewer also understand dialect, half-finished sentences and hesitant speech?

(session 3)

The honest answer: it hears the ums and ahs, the dialect and the sentences that go on for minutes, and on top of that sits a layer that asks: what was the question, what was the answer, what was actually meant? Every outcome is validated, and that process has a learning curve: it gets better with every round. Is it already perfect for every dialect and every intonation? No. Is it getting better all the time? Yes. We would rather say that honestly than pretend otherwise.

What is the difference from a general-purpose AI chatbot? (session 3)

A general model is a jack of all trades: broad knowledge of everything, master of none. We spent two and a half years building a model that knows only process management. It cannot tell you anything about bookkeeping, yet it can tell you everything about processes, down to the last detail: when to split a process, which questions to ask when there is a gap in the information, which lane each role belongs in. That is why the outcome is consistent, and why it advises you the way a colleague would.

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Questions anonymised. Is your question missing, or does an answer raise a new one? Email quincy@procestoppers.nl. Try it yourself: send your most difficult document and you will have a validated diagram back within 48 hours. Watch everything again: flowtopper.com