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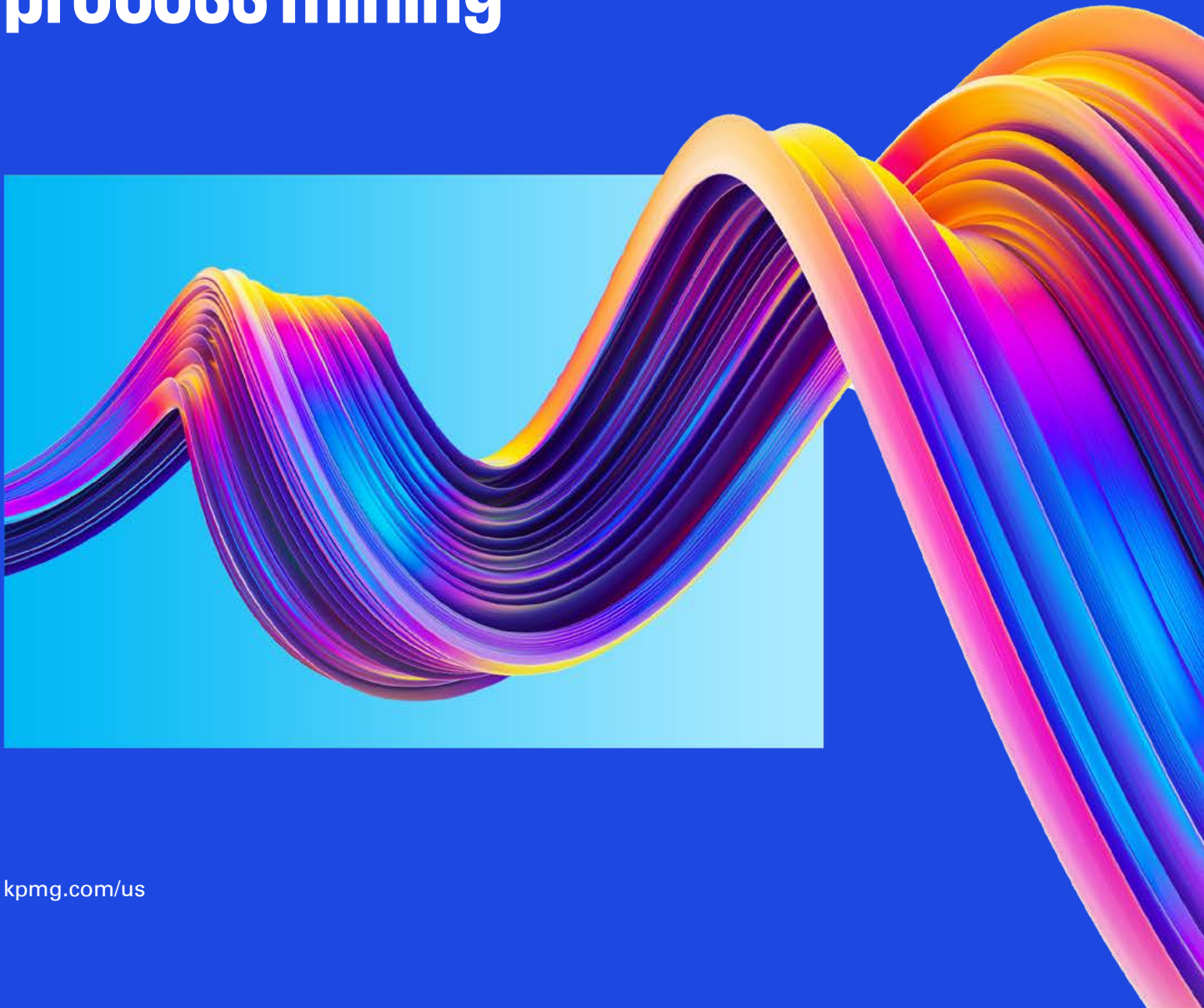
Six key considerations to supercharge process efficiency through process mining

Introduction

Though we may not always be aware of it, we are constantly interacting with processes that organizations rely on to keep their operations running smoothly. Each time we make a purchase, take the mail out of our mailboxes, or receive a paycheck, for example, we are engaging with processes that have, at some point, been carefully mapped out and engineered to deliver a desired outcome through a combination of technological and human effort.

When we look deeper at what goes into creating those individual outcomes, we often find a vast interworking of related tasks grouped into workflows, which themselves are parts of larger processes. Using the paycheck example, your salary or wage is based on information housed in an HR system, which also includes records for time off that could impact the current pay period. This is connected to an accounting system that calculates withholdings and taxes and allocates the expense of your wage against your employer's balance sheet. Payroll information then has to be transmitted to the printer to create a physical check or routed to your bank for direct deposit.

None of the data that drives this vital workflow is visible to the person receiving the paycheck. Even those involved in carrying out the process don't see most of the data that's necessary to deliver employee pay. However, any disruption to any part of this process could result in very unhappy employees.

For this or any other process, as long as things run smoothly, there's little to worry about. But when you start to notice delays, discrepancies, bottlenecks, or other issues that impact the efficiency of your processes, you need to rectify the situation before it causes financial or reputational harm. When processes are long-running and complex, or involve multiple systems, digital technologies, and people carrying out individual tasks, how do you pinpoint exactly where the issues are? This is where process mining can provide valuable insights to guide your process optimization initiatives.

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What is process mining?

Process mining allows you to analyze your processes—down to the individual tasks—and create a visualization that depicts how work flows, including where it gets stalled, where steps or tasks are repeated or skipped, or where unnecessary steps are added. By discovering these issues, process mining tools can help you identify where you need to focus your improvement efforts.

How does it work? Your systems generate data—or digital footprints—at every stage within your processes. This data often contains detailed information such as the order in which tasks are carried out and by whom, what larger process the task belongs to, and the amount of time needed for each task, for example. Process mining tools gather and interpret that data, rendering it in a visual format that makes it easier to spot the areas in need of optimization.
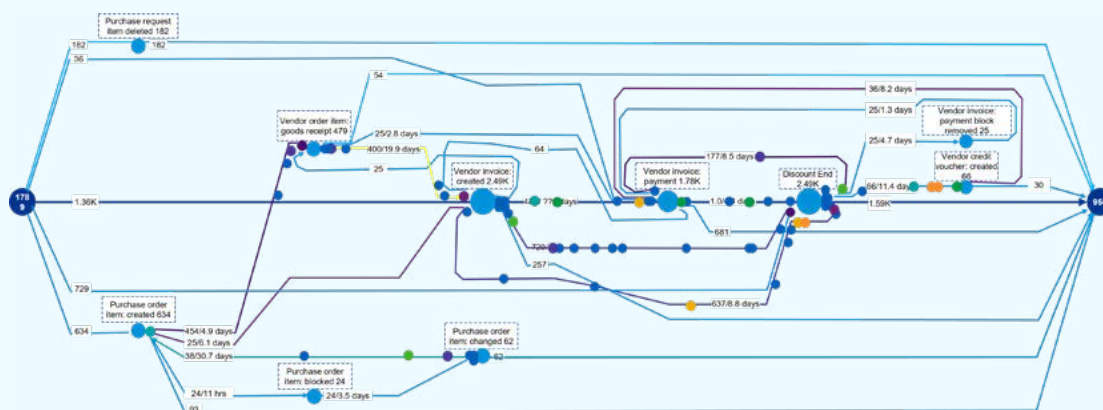
Process mining is the visualization and analysis of your processes using digital footprints in your IT systems

Process mining tools give you an accurate view of your as-is processes that serves as a blueprint for your optimization efforts. Process mining takes the ambiguity and bias out of process discovery, which means you can be certain that any steps you take will be focused on the areas that will make the most impact. Analysis can be run as many times as needed to gauge the effectiveness of improvement measures you put into place, creating a continuous feedback loop. Regardless of the type of project you're running—application modernization, process improvement, operational cost reduction, or risk mitigation, for example—wherever you embed process mining, your transformation agenda benefits.

What kinds of benefits can you expect from process mining?

Process mining is seeing an accelerated uptake in the tech market. We predict a 30–50% growth in adoption of process mining technologies through 2026. If you implement process mining to optimize your organization's processes, you could see results in line with what others have already achieved, including the following:

1   **2–6 percent revenue leakage identification**

2   **50–100x potential return on investment**

3   **2–4 percent value capture on working capital looking at discounts, days sales outstanding, and functions such as accounts payable and receivable**

4   **15–20 percent uplift in visibility into optimizing cost and effort to serve**
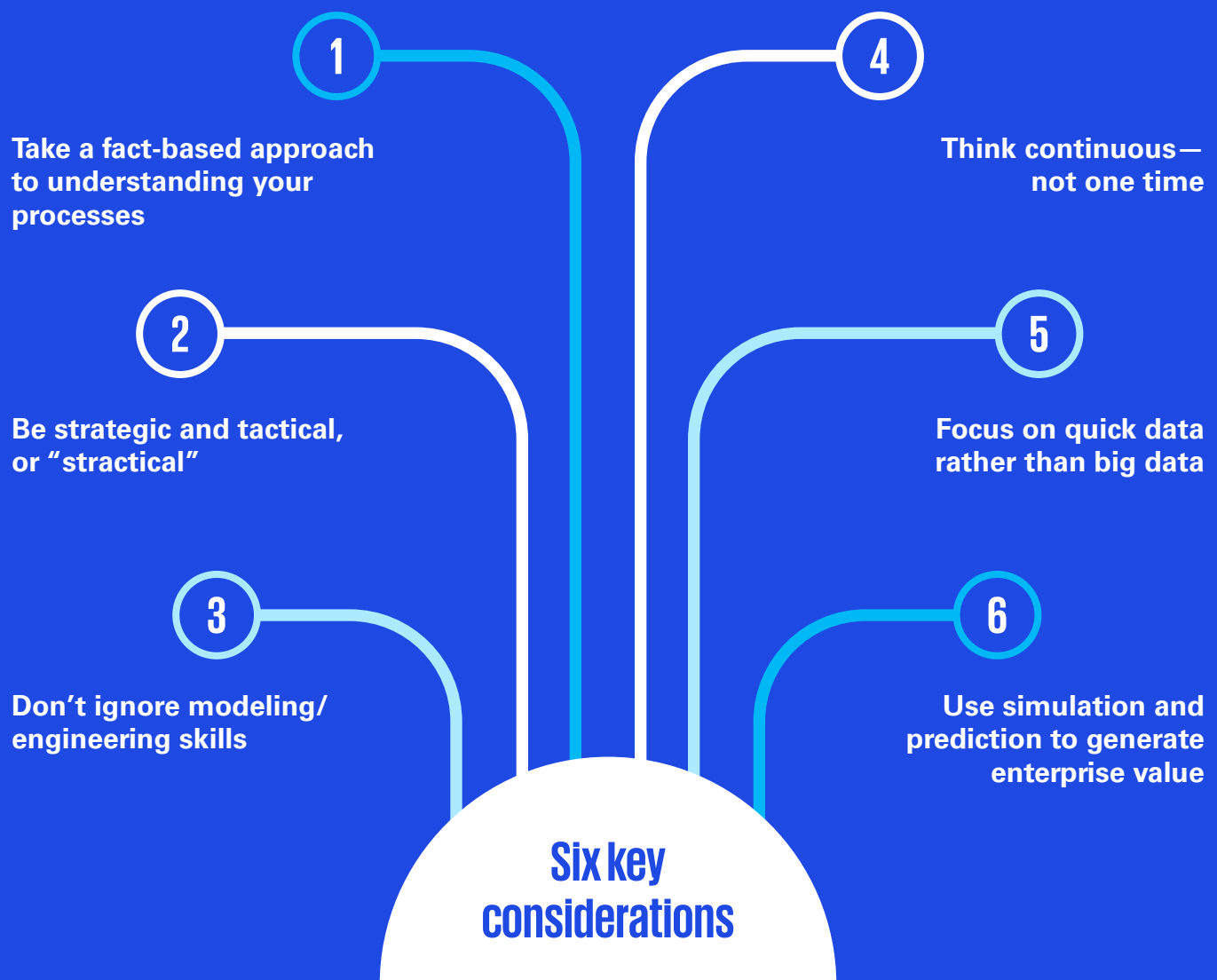
How should you get started with process mining?

No process is without its hiccups, which means that all processes are potential candidates for process mining. The hardest part may be narrowing the field of all the possible areas where process mining could deliver value. So what are the best targets for a process mining initiative?

- Historically, process mining has been used with great success for processes such as purchase to pay, order to cash, and most supply chain areas. But over time there's been more broad-based uptake with processes spanning front-office, mid-office, and back-office functions as well as customer journeys. Process mining is therefore universally applicable within your organization.

- It's best to focus on the data-rich opportunities. Where is the most data available? What are the areas with the highest data quality and completeness?

- Some processes have a greater impact on your broader operations than others. Leveraging process mining to optimize these high-impact processes could produce quantifiable wins that can be used to obtain stakeholder buy-in for additional process mining projects.

- If there are areas where IT and business teams are not aligned as effectively as they should be, process mining can help bridge that divide by providing fact-based insights to use as the basis for optimization measures.

Six key considerations for successful process mining

1 Take a fact-based approach to understanding your processes

2 Be strategic and tactical, or "stractical"

3 Don't ignore modeling/ engineering skills

4 Think continuous— not one time

5 Focus on quick data rather than big data

6 Use simulation and prediction to generate enterprise value

Six key considerations

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Before embarking on a process mining project in your organization, consider these six key recommendations to increase your chances of success:

1 **Take a fact-based approach to understanding your processes.** This is the key differentiator between this approach and the more manual approaches of the past. Though the people who regularly interact with and manage your processes likely have expert knowledge, they will still only be able to provide a subjective evaluation of what's going on at each stage and may not have true end-to-end insight. Process mining is objective and based on metrics that will clearly show which kind of improvement measures will deliver what kind of benefit.

2 **Be strategic and tactical, or "stractical."** You need to be strategic—taking a big-picture approach and looking at the process end to end—but you also need to be tactical. Avoid the temptation to get too deep into the details of the process at the very beginning of your project. This approach could potentially drag a relatively quick project out to a 12-month timeline. It's best to start with just two use cases, with the first project taking a maximum of 10 weeks. These tactical parameters will help you to not get bogged down in the specifics when taking the end-to-end view.

3 **Don't ignore modeling/engineering skills.** Data analysts and data scientists—the ones responsible for being the gatekeepers of the data and helping the rest of the organization understand the larger implications of the data, for example, through visualizations and trend/opportunity analyses—will play important roles in your process mining project. But it's your data engineers who make sure the data exists in formats your scientists and analysts can use. They design and build the infrastructure and systems that house the data, and are vital to any effort that requires a deep dive into the data, as process mining does.

4 **Think continuous—not one time.** The initial stages of any process mining project—locating the data, obtaining permissions to access the data, and then transforming the data and applying algorithms to it—are the most time-consuming activities. It's important to get these steps right initially, as once they are in place, you can run your data as many times as you want to both gauge the success of your optimization measures and adapt plans for any additional measures. In this sense, process mining should be viewed as a continuous improvement project.

Longer-term impact is also seen in how you work with data going forward. Process mining provides a structure to better recognize what data is relevant, which will have an impact on your outcomes. This saves time and effort when kicking off any future digital transformation initiatives.

5 **Focus on quick data rather than big data.** The term "big data" has been around for about 30 years, though at that time no one could have predicted how truly enormous our daily data creation and consumption would become. Big data quickly reached a volume that simply can't be analyzed in its entirety. So, a smarter approach—and one that is used by process mining technology—is to focus more on subsets of your data to obtain true, real-time insights. This is what we mean by "quick data."

6 **Use simulation and prediction to generate enterprise value.** Process mining delivers fact-based insights for decisions based on metrics that show which improvement measures will deliver what kind of benefit. As part of a unified low-code platform, process mining enables easy comparison between the as-is state of your processes (as depicted by your process mining spaghetti diagram) and the desired, or target, state. Low-code process modeling capabilities enable you to map out your processes, highlighting automation opportunities and other time- and effort-saving adaptations. Once you've taken steps to optimize, you can rerun your process data to determine the extent of the value you've achieved. The more projects you run, the easier it will be to accurately predict which automation technologies will deliver the best results and how much value your optimization efforts will deliver.

Conclusion

Whether you're looking to optimize well-established processes, create workflows to address changes in your business requirements, or just generally bring more efficiency to your operations, process mining is a fact-based means of achieving these goals. When natively integrated in a low-code platform, process mining provides insights you can immediately transform into action. Using low-code visual tools to model both your as-is and targeted processes, you can zero in on the areas most in need of optimization and directly apply automation technologies with the most impact. These improvements can deliver value to your customers, constituents, employees, and any other stakeholders who come into contact with your processes.

Contact us to learn more about the power of process mining and low code.

Contact us

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