

A Good Idea

By Ben B Graham

The Ben Graham Corporation

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Over sixty years ago, Ben S. Graham had a good idea. What if we could take management tools that were contributing to the success of world-class manufacturing companies and adapt them to help us improve our paperwork processes? One of the more powerful tools was the flow process chart that enabled a person to document the flow of a part through a manufacturing process so that the flow could be analyzed and improved. When Graham applied the flow process chart to paperwork processes he quickly recognized a significant limitation – paperwork flows tended to include related flows of multiple documents and a person couldn't make changes to one item without considering the effect of that change on the other items in the process. This led to his development of a multi-flow process chart that showed the flow of all the items in a process AND their relationships. He gave his charts to the people who did the process work, and entrusted them to make their processes better.

Graham developed this new flowchart method while working as the Director of Formcraft Engineering at Standard Register Company. The tool enabled Standard Register salesmen to document the paperwork processes of potential clients and show the clients clearly and specifically how Standard's forms and equipment could improve the process. Over the course of the next decade, Graham became Standard Register's Ambassador for "Paperwork Simplification" touting the benefits of this new tool to business leaders at over 100 venues annually and contributing scores of articles to business and professional magazines. Standard Register CEO, M A Spayd, recognized the value of this new tool and its supporting methodology. He was concerned that clients might not recognize its real value coming from the Standard Sales force. So, in 1953, he discussed with Graham the possibility of Graham developing a training workshop and conducting it as an independent venture. In October, 1953 the first workshop was conducted under the name of Ben S Graham Conferences.

For the past fifty-three years, the Ben Graham Corporation, based in Tipp City, Ohio, has been silently infusing organizations across the US, Canada and internationally with a simple and effective methodology for inspiring teamwork and streamlining business processes. A methodology that works! Ben S. Graham and his disciples have helped thousands of organizations save millions of dollars.

When analysts are introduced to this empowering, people-oriented, team approach to improvement, a common response is, "I wish I had known about this a long time ago." Team

members commonly respond, "It's about time they finally asked us."

The methodology is straight-forward and easily fits in with many of the improvement techniques and methods that are being used today. The improvement methodology is built around its powerful flowcharting method. The method does not try to force complex business processes with tens or even hundreds of documents, forms, screens, reports, etc. into a single line flow, but rather addresses each item individually, showing what happens to that item and how it relates to other items in the process. It breaks the work down into fundamental parts that can be addressed individually and at the same time as a part of a much larger whole. It gives PEOPLE at all levels in the organization the opportunity to engineer their work processes. While some of the thousands of people in organizations around the world who have used Graham Charts to improve their business processes are engineers, most are not. They are analysts, accountants, auditors, clerks, underwriters, police officers, paralegals, doctors, dock workers, miners, scientists, equipment operators, etc – you get the picture. It takes some skill to prepare the charts, but ANYONE in an organization can work with them to improve the work processes they are involved in.

Ben B Graham is President of The Ben Graham Corporation and author of the book 'Detail Process Charting: Speaking the Language of Process' published by John Wiley Publishers. His company (founded by his grandfather in 1953) pioneered the field of business process improvement, and has provided process improvement consulting, coaching and education services to organizations across North America since 1953. Ben has worked with many organizations to build libraries of business process maps and develop effective, process-focused, continuous improvement programs. His organization publishes Graham Process Mapping Software, which is designed solely for preparing detail process maps. More information about the software is available at <http://www.processchart.com>