

# GLOBAL PROCESS STANDARDIZATION— The Happy Meal® Lesson

by Mike Ledyard and Kate Vitasek

For many global companies, standardizing processes is a difficult and often frustrating task. But perhaps managers are trying too hard to enact exactly the same process across the globe, and should step back and concentrate on standardizing the goals the process is intended to drive. Standardized processes are intended to:

- ensure customer satisfaction
- drive consistent output
- ensure consistent quality
- drive consistent cost and time
- ensure that required information is gathered



We can learn from the Happy Meal® model. No matter where you go in the world, you can order a Happy Meal® at a McDonald's restaurant. Different regions have different selections, but this meal always includes a main entrée, a side, and drink, all delivered in a box, and, of course, the all-important toy is a part of the deal. Your meal is served hot, fresh, and better yet, you can customize it according to your preferences. Quality and corporate image is maintained from region to region, and location to location. In other words, you know what you're getting even before you place your order. Now, that's standardization! Like a Happy Meal®, a company's processes can be standardized to ensure that quality is consistent and corporate goals are met.

So, how can global companies drive standardization? They start by recognizing that there are three major elements to processes: 1) a standard framework, 2) customized regionalization, and, 3) user choice. Each element requires differing degrees of corporate control and oversight.

## 1 STANDARD FRAMEWORK

A Happy Meal® is based on the set meal concept delivering five components (a box containing the main entrée, a side, a drink, and a toy). The meal is marketed to kids using the corporate branding messages and continually updated promotions. Processes should fit into a similar standard framework. Processes should meet and support company standards for quality, documentation, measurement, and company policies on health, safety, and the environment. But, by specifying that these corporate standards be met rather than specifying the exact methods by which they are met, the desired flexibility and regional freedoms can be accomplished. A company will find it easier to enforce standardization around these goals.

When the specifics are defined by region, acknowledging local systems, limitations, and work methods, adoption and compliance are far more likely to occur.

PROCESS STRUCTURE	
Standard Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quality management program</li> <li>• documentation standards</li> <li>• measurement standards</li> <li>• health, safety, and environmental standards</li> </ul>
Regionalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• modify for region (language)</li> <li>• flow of process document</li> <li>• how presented (text-flows-pictures)</li> <li>• address regional quality issues</li> <li>• address local health, safety, and environmental issues</li> <li>• support regional equipment/tools of structures</li> </ul>
Customer Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how to view the process</li> <li>• customer-required data</li> <li>• customer-required output</li> <li>• how to train/learn</li> <li>• how to record data</li> <li>• flexible measurement</li> </ul>



## 2 REGIONALIZATION

When you order a Happy Meal® in another country, you will find that it has been changed to meet regional food choices, preparation, packaging, and labeling needs. The packaging will also reflect a local theme and language. Standardized processes should also reflect regional needs, while maintaining corporate requirements. For example, processes should:

- be written in the local language
- support local tooling and equipment
- reflect local quality regulations in addition to corporate standards

To accomplish this, processes may need to be in a different format, incorporating pictures and diagrams into the text. Process steps may also need to be grouped or sequenced differently to meet local needs. As long as the process meets the goals of consistent quality and output, regional differences should be encouraged, as this will make them more effective, and again, more likely to be adopted.

## 3 USER REQUEST

When you order your Happy Meal®, you have choices in your entrée, side, and drink from a set group of choices. This lets you select items that meet your personal taste and nutrition needs. This practice can also be viewed in the context of postponement—delaying final configuration helps keep inventory levels low (and, therefore, hot and/or fresh) while assuring that the customer gets what he or she wants. We should allow for some user choice or customer-driven differences in standardized processes. Choices should be limited to a set of selections so that process control is not lost.

User choices are not limited to physical products either. They may also include documentation. For example, one may supply either paper documents, digital files on media (CD or similar), or links to electronic files stored on a web page. If electronic files are provided, choices may include pictures and diagrams, or text only. Other examples of customer choice may include special documentation or labeling, or customer-specific notifications or data capture. By allowing for variance in customer needs and requirements, the processes become more usable, and, therefore, more stable and likely to be followed.

## ★ FIVE COMPONENTS

As mentioned earlier, the Happy Meal® is made up of five components: a box, the entrée, a side, a drink, and a toy. Like the Happy Meal®, good processes should include five components: the documentation, the process steps, critical information, process checks, and process measures.

Like the Happy Meal® box, the *Process Documentation* keeps all the process information together, driving the corporate goals, and providing structure. The *Process Steps* are like the entrée—the meat of the process. They drive consistency. *Critical Information* adds valuable details about significant factors of the process, like how the side complements the meal. Adding *Checks* to a process, whether quality checks or process checks, helps ensure necessary control, just as a drink is necessary to the enjoyment of the meal.

The last component in a Happy Meal® is the toy. One could do without the toy, but most kids would protest that the “happy” part of the meal had been removed. Likewise, one could leave out the *Metrics*, but in doing so, you would lose a valuable opportunity to drive the improvements that keep everyone—customer and management alike—happy.

Take a lesson from the Happy Meal® when standardizing your global processes. Standardize around your corporate goals, allow for regional variations, and let users and customers have some choice. ■

PROCESS COMPONENTS	
Process Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contains all process information</li> <li>• presents it in a format that is understandable and easy-to-use</li> <li>• ensures that corporate goals are clearly presented</li> </ul>
Process Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• process steps are the descriptions of the primary work being accomplished</li> </ul>
Critical Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• additional details such as safety, warnings, risks, or other important data</li> <li>• links to other processes</li> </ul>
Checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quality checks</li> <li>• process checks</li> </ul>
Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• key measures and metrics</li> </ul>



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