

The DDC Group: BPO



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Business Process Outsourcing

Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) is the leveraging of technology or specialist process vendors to provide and manage an organization's critical and/or non-critical enterprise processes and applications. The most common examples of BPO are call centers, human resources, accounting and payroll outsourcing and order processing. Business process outsourcing often involves the use of off-shore resources.

An offshoot of BPO is KPO (Knowledge Process Outsourcing) which involves the use of subject specialists (for example, lawyers, accountants, doctors, engineers etc) to perform subject-specific tasks for client companies. Examples of this would include engineers providing technical documentation, doctors or other medical professionals performing patent analysis or journal interpretation, etc. KPO can be very wide ranging in it's subject coverage and is often concerned with the recruitment of specialist skill-sets on clients' behalf.

Use of a BPO as opposed to an application service provider (ASP) usually also means that a certain amount of risk is transferred to the company that is running the process elements on behalf of the outsourcer. BPO includes the software, the process management, and the people to operate the service, while a typical ASP model includes only the provision of access to functionalities and features provided or 'served up' through the use of software, usually via web browser to the customer. BPO is a part of the Outsourcing Industry. It is dependent on Information Technology, hence it is also referred to as Information Technology Enabled Services or ITES.

BPO often, but not always, produces cost savings for the outsourcer and this remains a primary driver. The use of offshore BPO is particularly effective in this regard but outsourcers usually also aim to achieve process improvement through BPO. The very concentration of process with an external provider in itself can produce improvement as can the re-examination and documentation that is a necessary part of any transition. A move from a paper-based environment to a "paperless" environment can be beneficial and is also commonly achieved during a BPO transition.



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