

A service to manage benefits

Summary of dissertation for the degree of Master in Information Systems and Computer Engineering

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ABSTRACT

Benefits Management (BM) is a way for organizations to align the drivers with the objectives and benefits that projects should deliver through change. The phases of BM allow an adjustment to change and a current reassessment of the benefits. However BM is not correctly applied in organizations due to difficulties in the definition of benefits and data collecting, setting targets, attributing benefits to owners, weighting different benefits and dis-benefits, and also in defining timescales for benefits realization. To address the problem we propose an approach based on a service to implement BM, the service will ally a software tool and the know-how of a consultant.

In order to conduct our research we used Design Science Research, and to demonstrate the proposal, instantiations of parts of the service on a software, a website and digital marketing. To evaluate the demonstration, interviews, questionnaire and the demonstration itself were used.

Keywords

Service Design, New Service, Innovation, Benefits Management, Multilevel Service Design, Service Blueprint, Service Experience Blueprint

1. INTRODUCTION

Several reports (cited in [1]) suggest that exists the shared knowledge between organizations and academics that projects are a structural way of implementing business changes. Projects are the way to successfully execute the strategy and vision of an organization, and benefits management fits the project within the business.

Benefits management don't lack different definitions throughout the literature [2]. For example, Ward et al. [3] focus around benefits that arise only from IS/IT, while Farbey et al. (cited in [2]) identify the importance of recognizing unexpected benefits. In spite of the differences they follow the same line of thinking and see Benefits Realization and Management (BRM) as a process that realizes, prepares and manages for planned benefits through change.

From published research documentation we can see that there is a poor understanding of benefits management within a project or an organization context [4][5]. Even if some scholars (cited in [1]) suggest that BM makes a project value and strategy more clear and allows strategic governance to deliver planned benefits and reduce the failure rate of projects, those practices aren't wildly employed mainly due to the difficulty in implementing BM.

1.1. Research methodology

Design Science Research Methodology (DSRM) will be used in order to develop this thesis. A methodology in DS includes three elements: conceptual principles to define what is meant by DS research, practice rules and, a process for carrying out and presenting the research, which is composed of six activities: Problem identification and motivation, define the objectives for a solution, design and development, demonstration, evaluation and communication.

2. BENEFITS MANGEMENT

The management and realizing of benefits from investments has emerge in the sector of Information Systems and Technology in the late 1980s and early 1990s [6] [7].

The interest in benefits realization coincided with the increasing use and complexity of IT and low success of technology implementations related to the expected business benefits to organizations.

In organizations one of the reasons IT has a poor reputation is due to be seen as not delivering “value for money” [5]. The Cranfield Process is based on the clear identification of expected benefits, a detailed plan how the benefits will be realized throughout the implementation, a progress review and achievement, both during the project and after completion. An important element in this approach are the stakeholders, who will be responsible for changing the way they work and make effective use of the new SI/TI.

The Ward and Daniel approach has two fundamental tools, the BDN and the Business Case (BC). In order to develop a BC and a viable plan to deliver benefits seven questions have to be answered:

1. Why do we have to improve?
2. What improvements are necessary or possible?
3. What benefits will be realized by each stakeholder if the organizational objectives are achieved and how will they be measured?
4. Who owns each of the benefits and will be accountable for its delivery?
5. What changes are needed to achieve each benefit?
6. Who will be responsible for ensuring each change is made successfully?
7. How and when can the changes be made?

The benefits management process has five phases:

1. **Identify and structure the benefits** - where according with the drivers objectives are established, benefits are identified, understand how the benefits can be achieved through IS/IT and business changes, assign an owner to changes and benefits that are responsible or achievement. And provide an outline business case to decide if the investments are worth pursue.
2. **Plan benefits realization** – create a benefits plan and a business case that will further submitted to management for approval with the description of the benefits, changes, owners, measures, the evidences of achievement and a Benefits Dependency Network.
3. **Executing benefits plan** - consists in carrying out and adjusts as necessary, as issues and events affect the viability. During this stage, further benefits may also be identified and the activities of the second stage are revisited. Equally the conclusion that benefits are no longer feasible or relevant also could lead to stage two, with a reassessment of the benefits plan and even the business case.
4. **Reviewing and evaluating the results** - assessment of the investment and organizational learning.
5. **Establishing the potential for further benefits** - gathers the main stakeholders in a creative process like stage one in order to search for benefits at the end of the project.

Concluding, if the maximum value is to be obtained the identification of benefits should be a continuing process from which IS/IT and business change projects are defined [3].

3. VALUE PROPOSITION CANVAS

A business model describes the rationale of how an organization creates, delivers and captures value [8], a Business Model Canvas (BMC) is a way of representing the business model through 9 blocks that shows the logic of how a company intends to make money. The blocks relate to the main areas of a business: customers, offer, infrastructure, and financial viability.

The VPC can be considered a zoom-in on the Business Model Canvas (BMC) that details how an organization creates value for customers, permitting a match between the customer segment, the group of people an organization plans to reach with a dedicated value proposition, and the products and services that create value for that customer segment [9]. In order to accomplish that, the VPC poses questions about the customer jobs, gains, pains, products and services, gain creators and pain relievers.

4. SERVICE DESIGN

Service Design (SD) has been described as “a form of architecture that involves processes rather than bricks and mortar” [10]. The concern of Service Design is the use of design tools and techniques in order to concretize the structure and infrastructure or concept of a service.

In order to assure the entire elements are properly integrated and the focus is on satisfying the customer, the entire customer related issues should be incorporated into the design of the service delivery process and the service system.

The service system includes the delivery process, that is, the end-to-end process that interacts with the customer and comprehends all the steps the customer goes through since he first interacts with the process until he exits the process, and the supporting processes, that are all the other processes that constitute the service system.

Technology created new ways for customers and organizations to interact and co-create value in new and innovative interfaces, turning nearly every business into a virtual business [11]. According to Patrício et al. [11], one way of overcoming the design complexity brought by this is to implement design methods capable of dealing with multiple interfaces and the technology associated within the frontstage and backstage.

4.1. Multilevel Service Design

In order to better understand the service experience in a holistic view of the service is necessary to address all the interfaces and channels that the customer uses to interact with the service. Patrício et al. [11] proposed Multilevel Service Design (MSD) in order to bring a systemic view over the Service Design levels and at the same time maintain a flexible oversight into the value co-creation process experienced by customers.

A MSD approach to design a new service relies in four steps [12]:

1. **Study the three levels of customer experience** - with qualitative and quantitative studies.
2. **Design the Service Concept:** understand the Value Constellation Experience (VCE) and Design the service concept with the Customer Value Constellation (CVC).
3. **Design the Service System:** understand the service experience; design the Service System Architecture (SSA) and the Service System Navigation (SSN) models.
4. **Design the Service Encounter:** understand the service encounter and Design the Service Experience Blueprint (SEB).

4.1.1. Service Experience Blueprint

Service Experience Blueprint was inspired by Service Blueprint (SB) first proposed by Shostack, SB is a picture or a map that shows the service system in a way all stakeholders can understand; it details the service delivery, roles of customers, employees and visible components of service. The SB method helps identify the points in the service that need special attention, where customer may be confused, waits are likely to occur and when additional intervention may be needed. Is mainly used to differentiate the part of the operation that is visible for the customer (frontoffice) and the part that is visible only to workers (backoffice).

Service Experience Blueprint is a representation technique that maps the service experience at each service interface. SEB blends technology and service design issues, integrating interaction diagrams with service blueprint. To evaluate the service interface the customer experience requirements are used, also SEB allows to explicitly designing links between interfaces.

The SEB method has three stages [12]:

- **Stage I:** Assessment of the service experience for different service.
- **Stage II:** Service Design at the multi-interface.
- **Stage III:** Service Design at the Concrete interface level.

4.2. Service Innovation

In a service logic is possible to say that innovation looks at how a “situation” has changed for a customer, that is, to what extend the client can do things better, easier, faster, cheaper, with higher satisfaction, collaboratively and so on.

Summarizing we can say that Service design and innovation go hand in hand, since a great part of the work involves shifting clients from an industrial mindset to thinking in a service paradigm. In the end, insights that drive innovation confidently answer the question: “Will our offering make sense in the context of people’s lives, and will they find it valuable?” [13].

5. Problem

When following the Benefits Management some issues may arise [14] [3] regarding the definition of benefits and data collecting, setting targets, and attributing benefits, weighting different benefits and dis-benefits, and also how to define timescales for benefits realization.

Defining and measure benefits is not a “neutral” process, given scope for different approaches, such as the extent to which quality is incorporated, the ambiguity in the definition allows for different interpretations as the information on benefits is collected. Setting targets is also difficult given the low degree of control on benefits realization by organizations. Moreover the cause-effect along the benefits chain is usually complex, but the assumptions being made at each stage are often not made clear. The stakeholders vary in interest according to the

benefit, what is a benefit for a stakeholder is perceived as a dis-benefit by another. Furthermore the benefits realization extends beyond the life cycle, after the project is finished.

When BM is mandated by senior managers but they do not fully understand the methodology this generally leads to frustration by the ones who understand, and a sense of impossible task [15]. The problem we will address is the difficulty in **implementing a BM methodology by organizations**^{1,2}[16][17].

6. PROPOSAL

In this section we present the objectives of the solution for this research and also the Design and development phase of the artefact itself. This section relates to DSRM as activities two and three of the process.

In accordance with the problem identified, the implementation of BM within organizations, we aim at (1) Take BM to large and small organizations (2) Increase the implementation of BM, (3) Help organizations while they go through the BM methodology, (4) Help organizations connect with their network of stakeholders.

6.1. Design and development

To design the service the respective process will be followed that includes four stages, the Inspiration, Ideation, Reflection and Implementation.

6.1.1. Inspiration

This phase consisted in studying the stakeholders, their experience, behaviour and context in a user-centred design approach. The goal is to understand the overall customer experience and also the customer experience at each service encounter. With that goal in mind we used surveys and interviews to gather information.

The information gather allowed us to validate de problem and discover what are the software current used, what where the main problems and advantages with them.

After the information gather and analysis, personas where created in order to represent the customers we were developing the service for.

6.1.2. Ideation

This phase goal is to understand the customer experience at three levels: designing the service concept, designing the service system, and designing the service encounter.

We first addressed this stage with service blueprint, but found it lack multiple interface support, that could be better addressed using multilevel service design.

Design Service Concept

In order to Design the service concept the Customer Value Constellation (CVC) was used, allowing the designing of the service concept, the firms positioning in the customer value constellation, which includes not only the organization offering but also the partnerships.

Design Service System

To design the Service System the Service System Architecture (SSA) and the Service System Navigation (SSN) were used to design the service encounters, the moments of interactions also called touchpoint between customer and firm.

Design Service Encounter

The last level, designing the service encounter, makes use of the Service Experience Blueprint to map the actions of the different participants.

On the **first stage** we gather customer experience requirements (CER) that permit the service designer to understand how each service element influences the customer experience, the outcome of the interaction between what is offered by the organization and how is used by the client.

¹ <http://www.projecttimes.com/articles/why-is-benefits-management-so-hard-to-do.html>

² <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/Crossing-benefits-chasm-why-is-3569453.S.5946553428359548930>

From the interviews was possible to understand which requirements were preferable by the customers segments. The requirements gathered were: ease to use, simple, attractive interface, efficient; well balanced between collaborative and management, workflow well defined and, flexible.

Regarding **stage II**, Our finding regarding interfaces shows that most of our customer segments are connect via mobile most of the time, and use this to do several tasks. The mobile interface can be used while traveling at anytime and anywhere. From there is assumed that the system must be responsive, and that the registration process is mostly done by mobile.

Other tasks can be done either by tablet or computer, except the actual Benefits Dependency Network that is more complex and isn't feasible by mobile.

The **last stage** of SEB allows the design at a concrete interface. For the service registration the customer may use any interface with access to the Internet, being computer, tablet or mobile.

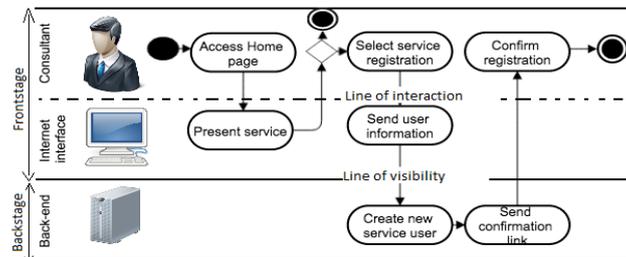


Figure 1 - Service Experience Blueprint for "1 - Service registration"

The line of interaction on Figure 1 represents that there's a direct contact with the client, below the line of visibility every activity made isn't visible for the client. The SEB starts with the customer (in this case the consultant) accessing the service homepage and registering, after submitting the information the backstage system has to create the user and send a confirmation link through email, the customer then needs to access in order to activate the registration.

Website

In order to test the concept, validate interest in a Service to Manage Benefits and, spread the word the service exists, a website was developed having in mind a Landing page approach. The landing page was developed along four axis [35] content, look and feel, functionality and navigation/structure. Figure 2 shows the website and video developed.

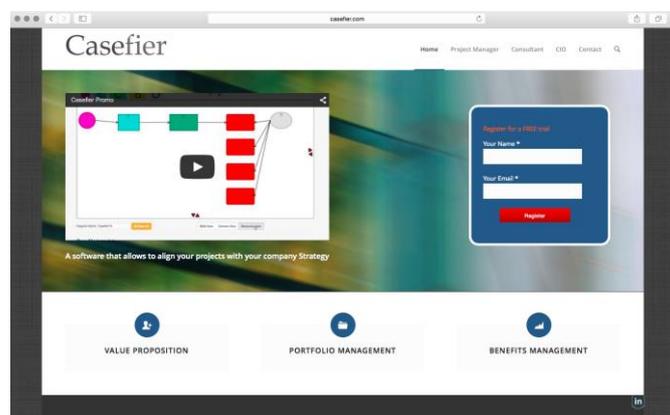


Figure 2 - Website at www.casefier.com

The website addresses the several personas identified as potential customers to the service. The home page explains the details of the software and features. The other pages are specific for each customer segment pinpointing the ways the service can help them on the tasks they currently do.

With the landing page done, we moved our focus to Google AdWords and Analytics to test the landing page and gain insight about the clients.

Google AdWords and Analytics

Google AdWords is a pay-per-click program where an advertiser can choose keywords that will trigger the ad. The payment is done only if the ad is displayed and clicked by a searcher, this way it assured that the ad is seen and the advertiser pays only when someone arrives at the website [36].

We used 20€ and received a promotion of 60€, given a total of 80€ in Google AdWords. Several campaigns where designed along with a marketing plan.

Summarizing, the sessions where mainly from the US, using Chrome or Internet Explorer browser, we got 641 page views, from those 481 where unique and an average of time on page of 1:26 seconds. We got a total of 94 clicks with 80 euros but 0 acquisition clients; this could be due to various factors including the ad not appearing in the first page due to the low budget definition, lack of recognized brand, or the marketing campaign itself since it's a try and error learning.

6.1.3. Reflection

Reflection includes prototyping a service in order to help the stakeholders to understand how the service will look and work [18], and requires testing the role of people, process and physical evidence.

This phase relates to DSRM demonstration and Evaluation, section 7 and 8.

6.1.4. Implementation

Implementation is the management changes that are necessary for the operationalization of the service; this can be done by the use of the tool role script that indicates for each situation what the customer has to do, with notes, comments and advices.

7. DEMONSTRATION

Demonstration is the stage in DSRM that uses the artefact to solve an instantiation of the problem. An instantiation represents a concrete realization that demonstrates the feasibility and enables researchers to actually test their concepts under real world conditions and learn more about the real world [35].

In order to demonstrate the service the software developed by Mário Cardoso was used in accordance with the service that allowed for an instantiation of parts of the service designed. The demonstration was made using a simulation scenario that started by applying the Value Proposition Canvas to the development of the software tool to the students at ISGB - *Instituto Superior de Gestão Bancária* of the AISI - *Avaliação de Investimentos em Sistemas de Informação* and also students from IST - *Instituto Superior Técnico* from OGFI - *Organização e Gestão da Função Informática*.

The demonstration was made using a simulation scenario that started by applying the Value Proposition Canvas to the development of the software tool. We started by identifying the jobs the customers of the software are doing, Project Managers, CIOs, Consultants and the level of importance.

Customer jobs:

- Make sure department goals are achieved;
- Manage department budget;
- Troubleshoot problems that may arise;
- Analyse costs and be prepared to justify them to the Chief Financial Officer;
- Plan SI/IT support;
- Select projects to implement;
- Check on teams progress;
- Verify IT and suggest upgrades to upper management;

Next we identified the pains customers have:

- Scan e-mails for urgent situations;
- Strict budget;
- Stakeholders want feedback on the proposal;
- Justify project with upper management;
- Monitor project and their progress by teams;
- Prioritize projects;
- Last minute changes on project scope;

Following the pains, the gains what our clients want to achieve:

- Default proposal template for stakeholders;
- Discussion traceability;
- Align business with strategy;
- Simpler way to implement a Benefits Management Methodology;
- More collaboration;
- Stakeholder engagement;

Next we delineate the Products and feature we should present our customer in order to allow them to alleviate the pains and achieve the gains, that is, project portfolio management, benefits management and value proposition canvas. Afterward we match all the pains with a pain reliever, how we will relieve that pain from our customer.

Prioritize projects with Project selected based on value deliver;

- Justify project with upper management with value proposition canvas;
- Monitor project and their progress by teams with Benefits management methodology, monitoring and review.

Finally we match the gains with gain creators, indicating for each gain how our proposal will deliver them:

- Discussion board and shared proposal with more collaboration and stakeholder engagement.

After this stage is complete, the user can share the proposal with all the stakeholders in order to enrich the information. The decider (the stakeholder with power to make decisions) can then follow the proposal or not. If he chooses to go further to a more detailed business case, he takes the proposal to discussion, in this step all the five elements of the Benefits Dependency Network (BDN) are put to the scrutiny of all the stakeholders, listed by type.

In the discussion board the stakeholders can select an item and comment, suggest alterations or just give their opinion and vote on the other stakeholder's comments.

It is also possible to add objectives and more benefits since the gains from the proposal will show as benefits. To add a benefit the user has to write a description, select an owner, add a measure and associate the benefit with the respective objective.

To add business changes and enabling, the description, owner and measure are also necessary, the only difference between business changes and enabling changes is that business changes are related to objectives and the enabling, to the business changes. Finally the BDN is complete after identifying the information system or technology necessary to accommodate the changes and obtain the ends.

To the decider is also given the task of delimiting the discussion time, after that time he is also responsible to select the correct information to pass to the BDN and be monitored.

After creating the BDN it is also possible to edit and make changes, including adding due date, expected value and milestones. Milestones are the periodicity in which the owner of the benefit has to report the state of achievement. For changes is also necessary to add evidence of completion and resources required.

The demonstration lasted normally around 40 minutes, plus the interview time, an average of 60 minutes.

8. EVALUATION

The central propose of evaluation is to rigorously demonstrate the utility of the artifact being evaluated, the results of the demonstration.

In order to evaluate the artifact we consider that Information Systems artifacts can be considered a system, and viewing them as such provides a holistic view of their evaluation, organizing the evaluation criteria along the fundamental dimensions of systems [39].

With this in mind we select to evaluate the artifact accordingly with the system dimensions, goal efficacy, and environment consistency with people and organization and, structure homomorphism.

In order to evaluate our proposal we will be using:

- **Demonstration** - comparing the objectives to the observed results obtained on the demonstration activity we can say that when sharing a proposal with all the stakeholders involved they feel part of the project and that their opinion is valid, helping unite all the stakeholders in a common goal. Regarding the objective of helping implement Benefits Management is possible to say that in some extent that was accomplished based on the feedback given by the interviewees.

- **Interviews** – Gather feedback, suggestions and critics from the demonstration and use of the software, focus on the flow analysis and deliverables at each phase. We can conclude that when there aren't knowledge of the benefits methodology the presence of a consultant that can answer questions and be present during the process was appreciated. Also they found the collaboration strategy a very good approach, the flow easy to follow.
- **Questionnaire** - Assess how well our proposal achieves its goal, environment and structure criteria [19]. From the questionnaires gathered the majority strongly agree with that the service is important and useful in order to provide a detail flow to implement Benefits Management, and that it provides an overview of the entire service. The last statement (Accordingly with the Benefits Management Methodology professed by John Ward, Peppard and Daniels all the steps in the methodology where designed in the service) the majority agreed. That may be, because it wasn't doable append all the design as appendixes on the questionnaire, being just the overview with the SSN and service concept.

9. CONCLUSION

Services are an important area in the global economy, and services that assist the customers' needs are now arising.

We started by evaluating if the problem we identified was viewed as such and were still valid through interviews that helped validate our initial hypotheses.

To address the design of our service we used the four stages of Service Design. On the inspiration stage, interviews and surveys were made in order to collect data to create personas, moving to the ideation stage we started with the goal of helping implementing Benefits Management through the representation of the expected process of the methodology using Service Blueprint, it could be done but with some limitations, starting with the use of only one interface. After switched to Multilevel Service Design (MSD) that uses several diagrams to design the service concept, the service system and the service encounter.

Following the MSD methodology the customer value constellation was designed followed by the service system architecture and service system navigation (SSN) that represents the user activities and tasks in each interface and possible customer journey. Accordingly with the SSN and the customer experience requirements the service experience blueprint was designed for each touchpoint.

Afterwards our focus shifted towards "create awareness", since the service has no value if not used, a website was develop along with pay-advertisement in Google AdWords campaigns. With Google Analytics was possible to assess who could be interested on service to manage benefits, most clicks came from the United States however there was no customer acquisition.

The stage three and four of the service design reflection and implementation has a direct relation with the design science research methodology activities demonstration and evaluation. Using the software develop by Mario Cardoso we instantiate the service and demonstrate to the customer segment identified initially. As a final stage we proceeded to the evaluation, making use of interviews and questionnaire and also the demonstration activity.

Based on the evaluation we can then conclude that the service helps implementing the benefits management methodology and that can be useful for people and organization..

9.1. Lessons Learned

The contributions made are related to the actual design of the benefits management in order to be further implemented as software.

We added a more focused approach to establish the fit between the customer segment and the value created to that customer, from the use of the value proposition canvas, when assessing and following a lead.

It's possible to approach the development of services in several ways, we used Service Design with four stages named Inspiration, Ideation, Reflection and Implementation but there are also other possibilities. Each design activity can be address with multiple representations having in consideration its recipient and representation they produce, among them are the service blueprint and personas.

Also staring at the consultancy process, there are processes with different number of activities, even if there some that are standard across them, some modifications are made by senior consultants having in consideration their own experience targeting on understanding the clients real problem and manage expectations.

The interviewing process is not as simple as my appear at first, since the interviewer must be very carefully not to influence the questions, formulating questions that are based on "suppose that" doesn't retrieve the correct information and can be misleading while developing something new.

Regarding the design of the benefits management methodology we can say that, even if all the steps have the goal of realizing the benefits they are quite complex and it wasn't easy manage the complexity while designing the service and maintain the balance between being easy to use and produce value to the correct implementation of the stages.

Implementing benefits management adds an extra effort to the project, this extra effort isn't well received even if the methodology promises to reward that extra effort with more benefits achieved later on after the project implementation.

9.2. Limitations

When developing our artefact we faced several limitations, being as a side effect of using the specific tool or by time restrictions. The use of interviews can be seen as a limitation given the difficult in understanding the meaning behind the interviewee's words. The number of interviewees in total of 21 wasn't considered relevant to do a quantitative analysis.

One last limitation was the impossibility of, observe and inquire on the field the actual implementation of the methodology, in order to gather data needed for the design. The design and requirements where based on studies, written applications and the clients knowledge.

Regarding the demonstration, the limitation is that there wasn't possible to apply the service on a real project and evaluate the results.

9.3. Communication

The communication activity of DSRM is the last activity of the methodology that involves communicating the problem importance, the proposed artefact in order to solve it, and demonstrating the results to academics and practitioners

On that purpose we make use of this document in order to communicate our research to the academic community. On what concerns the practitioners, we received the opinion of Professor John Ward that developed the Cranfield Process and also of Professor Mario Romão, the last with a positive feedback.

9.4. Future Work

Considering the opportunity for future work on this research topic, is possible to identify the following points:

- For a better understanding of the customer jobs and tasks related with benefits management we would like accompanying a real application of the methodology on a project. This would allow for a better assessment of what are the tasks involved and if they are correct implemented, where do users have more struggles and where to focus our efforts.
- To evaluate the service, we could create a mock-up and receive feedback, especially if it where practitioners in the field.
- The design of the creation of the business case could be further refined, and a more deep study done in order to develop a robust business case.
- Not every organization have the necessary culture to implement benefits management nor have a collaborative culture, to address that limitation a maturity model could be first applied regarding this two points.
- We focused on the implementation of the methodology, but a first step before that and future work should be define the parameters for the actual implementation, that is, how will Benefits Management be implemented in the organization, the resources requires with definition of roles and responsibilities, define the frequency of post implementation reviews, and for how long the benefits will be tracked, and how to avoid that the same benefit be counted more than one.

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